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ACUTE PAIN

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Acute Pain treat with tenderness

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Acute pain can be a sharp pain that takes your breath away and immediately triggers panic or at the very least worry. Acute pain can be caused by trauma to soft tissue...how painful is a paper cut!?! On the OUCHY scale it sits at a 10! During a recent run, I started to feel a bit of a niggle, soreness in the back of my lower leg, that appeared from nowhere, the kind of pain that one shrugs off and carries on with. It then turned into such a sharp pain, a pain so intense that I couldn't put my full weight though my leg and tears sprung from my eyes!

Acute pain is immensely frightening and is exacerbated by negative (and darn right unhelpful) mental chatter, that generates fear and worries like you will never be out of pain or ever be able to run again!

Another type of acute pain is one that just appears overnight, sometimes literally when you wake up with a crook neck or are leaning over the sink, brushing your teeth and your back spasms. Painful, very scary, a sense of loss of control, panic and gloom. In these instances, there is no acute tissue damage, but an accumulation of tension (and very likely trigger points, more on these blighters later) due to, to name but a few, a combination of poor posture, habitual movement patterns, dysfunctional breathing causing loss of tone to the diaphragm (key to spinal stability), anxiety, stress, poor sleep and nutritional choices.

Acute pain exacerbates everything that is already out of balance...we become more anxious, we make choices that numb us like eating cake and drinking alcohol, we stop moving, our mental chitchat fuels us with even more crappy, unhelpful dialogue and we sleep less. And what happens...? Our pain is amplified; it shouts louder, and we stay on a downward spiral.

In both instances we are very likely to hide away...take to our beds, or couch to watch box set after box set. We think that our pain must mean that we have inflammation, so we take anti-inflammatory medication. We may also put ice on the area of a pain. Historically we were advised to RICE...Rest. Ice. Compression. Elevation.

This is outdated advise.

The body heals quicker if we continue to move within a pain free range and gradually build back up to where we were before our injury. Typically strains to muscles and tendons do not have any inflammation, so avoid taking anti-inflammatories and if you need pain relief opt for paracetamol or similar (always seek advise from your General Practitioner before taking medication). If inflammation is present, this is part of the body's natural healing response, to remove the injurious stimuli, heal and return the body back to balance (or more accurately homeostasis).

'Ice Ice Baby' yes to use as pain relief or to stop bleeding, but that's all folks!

So, instead of the outdated RICE, think of how to deal with acute injury as PEACE (man!) The body is clever. You are amazing. The body is set to return back to balance. You will recover from injury especially if you are kind to yourself and think PEACE!

The P in PEACE stands for protection...this doesn't mean taking to your bed or sofa for hours on end. This means move but within a pain free range. The E in PEACE refers to elevation. When you are watching a box set then elevate the injured body part higher than your heart. This is simply increasing blood flow, transporting all of the bloods healing goodies to the site of injury.

The A we have covered...AVOID anti-inflammatories (and ice – I slipped this in earlier) as they reduce the body's natural and yet oh so effective healing mechanisms. C in PEACE is for compression. If swelling is present and you suspect a broken bone then apply a compression bandage to the affected area, this will reduce swelling and is helpful for x-ray imagery at A&E. E is for Education! Have faith in your body's fabulous healing ability, as more often than not, if you offer yourself kindness, and move within a pain free range, then your body will heal, and your pain will go. If you push for a diagnosis or an MRI, then sometimes the big medical words are scary and not particularly helpful as the advice will remain the same... PEACE!

Clinical Massage Therapy level 5 or 6 (I am currently in my second year of studying BTEC level 6 with Jing Massage – the only providers of the BTEC level 6, the highest level of massage therapy in the UK!) is of huge benefit for those finding themselves in acute pain and can genuinely speed up the healing and recovery process. Whether or not the acute pain is due to injury or an accumulation of musculoskeletal and fascial tension, there are bound to be trigger points lurking! Although some can be stubborn and will need repeated attention, they can be simply treated with a knowledge touch. You see, trigger points are bands of tension and tender spots of pain found within muscles and fascia, but they hide themselves, like I said they are sneaky!

Where they lurk is often not the site of pain, but pain being referred from their hiding places. I'll give you an example, the big triangular bone that sits above your butt crack, the sacrum, when painful is often diagnosed as sacroiliac joint dysfunctions (another scary label which is likely to spiral you down the doom and gloom path, and thereby increasing the amount of pain you experience!). What it actually might be are lurky trigger points in the gluteus maximus, your butt, and the quadratus lumborum muscles found deep in the lower back. Offer them gentle compression and a stretch, "Bobs your Uncle" pain gone! Acute pain conditions if treated early may only need 3-6 treatments and will prevent this building to a chronic pain condition, which is a lot lengthier to treat. So, my last bit of advice...seek out your local [Jing Massage Therapist!](#)

Fairweather R and Meghan S. Mari (2015) Massage Fusion – The Jing method for the treatment of chronic pain. Handspring Publishing, East Lothian

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