

TRANSCRIPT #: 1004

'My Self-care Pain Story'

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[00:00:10] Good evening. It's good to see some familiar faces and some new faces. So hi everybody. Welcome. So yeah, just jump right into my pain journey, **my pain story**, I guess. So it started with **low back pain as a teenager**. Which was, it was a surprise because I was, I was very physically fit. Played soccer. Was crazy about skateboarding. Did TaeKwonDo. I was in really good shape and then threw my back out. And it was sort of a big surprise. Like how, how is that possible? Well, it turns out I was just lifting really big, heavy things at work, the wrong way. And a chiropractor helped me understand that. But he also helped me deal with my pain. He handed me some **hydrocodone** at the time. Actually, it was codeine at the time, and told me to learn to lift better and sent me out the door.

[00:01:05] And that sort of started my whole, it was just a recurring thing over the years of just, I would do something stupid, throw my back out, whatever. Go to the chiropractor or the doctor. Get some more pain meds and just push through. Eventually I became a **carpenter** and just the same routine. Did that for years. Just would **work hard, and play hard, and get hurt hard**. And pretty much the solution was go and get some pain meds and move on. And it was basically a few decades of doing that.

[00:01:42] The change came... well, so in 2015, I had an accident. In 2016 my leg got crushed. It broke my leg really bad. In 2016, I **lost my left foot** to an amputation. And it was about a year later. I was learning to walk again and ended up in physical therapy to help me with my gait and whatnot, and a **lot of back pain**, more associated with my gait

than heavy lifting. I hadn't done any lifting in a while. And met a couple physical therapists, one in particular who's, I almost said she's not with us anymore. She's still with us. She's just moved to the other side of the country. But, she made a huge impact on my life. She shared with me the Pain Triangle, started to explain how pain works.

[00:02:32] Maybe I'll just mention that real quick. The **Pain Triangle** is there's three components to the Pain Triangle. Obviously tissue damage is one of those not necessarily tissue damage, but tissue damage is one of those. You've got a physical pain. Then there's a cognitive aspect, how our brain works with that. And then an emotional aspect, and how we feel about that pain or other stuff in our lives. In that pain, in and of itself, is a construct of those three things. And, ideally, if we take one or a couple of those things out of that equation, we can reduce or even take our pain away. Sandy's got some stuff at the end, I think that'll help, some resources at the end that I think will explain some of that. So for those of you that don't know about the Pain Triangle, there are some resources that you'll be able to get to at the end of this.

[00:03:28] So that's the Pain Triangle, and Veronica introduced me to that and then invited me to the MMAPS class. Quite honestly, I fell in love with the MMAPS class. I stayed for a year. It's a eight week thing, and I just kept staying. Changed my life. And so one of the first things we learned in the class was that **pain is a protector**. It's not a punisher. It's there for your protection. And quite honestly, that was like a paradigm shift for me because my view of pain had always been it's bad. Let's get rid of it. What do I gotta do to get rid of it? Well, I mean, for me, it was just go get some more pills, pop 'em, and move on with my day. I don't think I was alone in that. I actually knew a lot of guys that that's kind of the way, all my carpenter buddies, we got through just getting it done, you know? So that revelation that the pain is there to protect me was, I mean, that was just like, what the heck is that all about? So just really trying to wrap my brain around that, and it actually, honestly took a couple years of that in and of itself. As I've been looking at my pain over the last few years. So, that was four years ago that I started, that I took that class.

[00:04:49] Let me go on with my story a little bit. So over the last couple years, well, this last year with COVID. It kind of sucked. Maybe you all had a better experience than me, but it's kind of sucked. It's been a hard year. And so for me, it was like the first time that I really started to really look at more of some of the **emotional stuff in my life**. And to really kind of dissect my pain from that more emotional aspect as things have really gone kind of sideways this year.

[00:05:22] And even throughout the class, I was really dealing more with still the physical, the tissue damage kind of things. And it's in this last year, I've really been kind of reevaluating, just emotions, cuz I've actually had **more back episodes** in this last year

than I have in years. And really as I've kind of dissected it all, I can totally see my emotions are totally affecting my back pain. There's nothing physically that's changed, you know?

[00:05:55] And I mean, cognitively, I, you know, I'm just a simple guy. Let's just leave that at that. So just really trying to understand like, as I've been dissecting, like why do I have so much more back pain this year? Well, because it's been a hard year. So it's finally helped me. I knew about the Pain Triangle, but I just couldn't put it into practice in a way that was really making sense to me until this last year of going, "Okay, I see why I've got a lot of back pain." Cuz there's no more physical tissue damage going on here. It's **just stress**, stress, stress. So kind of a good revelation in spite of it all.

[00:06:37] So the first two things I learned were the Pain Triangle and that pain's there to protect you. It's not there to punish you. It's there to protect you. If you have pain, it's like a **smoke detector**. I love that analogy there of, we don't want the fire, so, you know, if the smoke detector's going off and you hear it, you wanna be looking for what the real problem is and making sure that it's not there. I think that's a great example of what pain is. It's like, "Hey, you've got a big problem here. Let's see if we can figure it out before it really bursts into flame and burns the house down."

[00:07:14] I guess I'll just move on. The one thing that I go to all the time from the MMAPS class, and we were given so many tools, I've got a lot of tools in my toolbox, but the one I go to every single time, first thing as I start to have back pain is the **Handful of Health**. And Sharna'll appreciate this. She's the one that taught me this. And that is there's five things that we can do to change our health, to change our pain experience. And again, this is just one tool, but it's the one I use most every time. So that Handful of Health is there's breathing, drinking water, food, rest and exercise, and then thankfulness.

[00:07:59] And, and actually there's a kind of an in and out, yin and yang, kind of a thing with each one of these. So **breathing** is breathing in, breathe out. I would include perhaps even meditation into this one. Though it might be a little over here too. Just getting more oxygen into your body can change your pain experience. And it does for me. If I just slow down and breathe, it changes my pain experience

[00:08:24] Drinking, lots of **water**, and pee. You gotta pee. Pee it all out. That's the second thing. I'm always drinking lots more water. If my back even starts to twinge a little bit, I gotta go drink some more water, you know.

[00:08:37] **Food**, make sure that you're eating well. Obviously a crappy diet is not gonna do you well. So, you know, if you start, if you're having chronic pains, you know,

persistent pain, look at your diet, you know, and then make sure that your BMs, that you're pooping nice and normal.

[00:08:59] Rest and exercise. Am I getting enough rest? Am I getting enough sleep? Or is it exercise? Do I need to stretch more? And exercise is a word that, that for, I think for people with persistent pain is a scary word. I think in America, when we say exercise, we immediately think you gotta go to the gym. At every turn we're being marketed that you've got to do heavy exercise. And one of the greatest things that the MMAPS class taught me is that **movement** doesn't have to be going to the gym. We can do movement in our chair. We did a lot of Tai Chair Chi and things like that. That movement. Another Sharna saying is "Motion Is Lotion" Just start moving. Walk around. Move your arms, whatever it takes. These things make a huge difference. Just a little bit of movement can make a huge difference in your pain experience.

[00:09:55] And then lastly is **thankfulness** and, and I would say toxicity for me. You know, what can I add to my life? And, what can I think of in my life that I am thankful for? And, and I've got a lot to be thankful for: family, job, friends. This last year sucked. Nonetheless, I still have so much to be thankful for. If I just stop and think about it. You guys, I've got you friends, you know. And then toxicity. There's plenty of crap in our lives. What can we do to get that stuff out of our life? It's just making healthy choices, even if that means removing certain people outta your life. Part of the stress I've had this year is because of people.

[00:10:39] So anyways, the Handful of Health, that's the one I honestly, I go to more than anything. And so those are the **three tools**. The Pain Triangle, pain is a protector, and then the Handful of Health. Those are the three things that I learned in the class that I'd love to impart. I mean, I'm sort of a, you know we're called "painiacs" or I'm kind of a pain evangelist. When you get me going, I will share with you and you just almost think that I'm freak. But I'm very happy to share these things with people and hopefully help them change their pain experience.

[00:11:17] The last thing I do wanna say is I still am taking pain meds. I still do take hydrocodone. It's like I go through all of these before I pull that out of my toolbox. Where I wasn't mindful about taking pain meds before, it was, it was my only tool. That's just, that was the go to. It was like I'm in pain. I go to the doctor and get some more pain pills and move on. Now it's the **last thing on my list**. It's like, okay, am I breathing? Am I getting food, and water, and exercise, rest? Am I getting going through all that? And I go it's three o'clock in the afternoon. I've got a few more hours of work. I'm not gonna make it without, at that point, I mindfully make that decision. I'm gonna take some pain medication. But, I rarely have to take pain medication anymore. So at least at this point

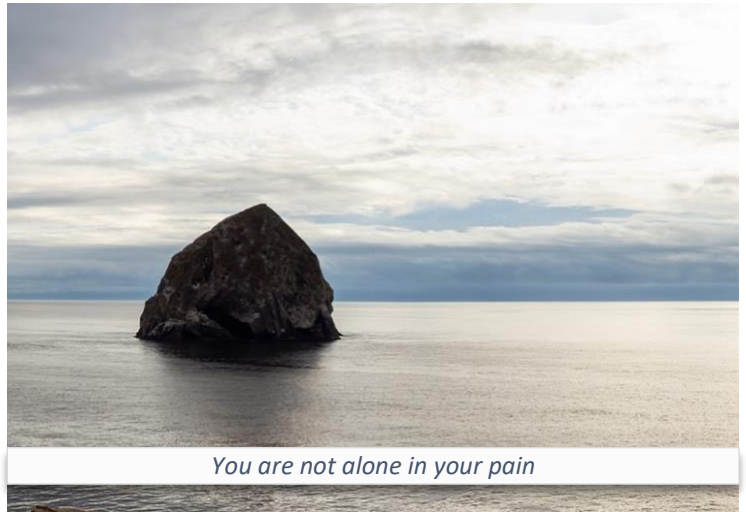
in my life, it's finally a mindful thing. I've been addicted to it. So I'm not now. So that's my story.

[00:12:17] I hope it encourages somebody and thanks for listening.

About Pain Science Life Stories

Formed in 2018, the Oregon Pain Science Alliance (the Alliance) is an all-volunteer nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation. Our members come from the health care community, their patients, and others who follow pain science research.

We seek to share current information on how pain experiences are formed in the brain and influenced by biological, psychological, and/or social factors. Through community education events, health care workers describe how pain-science-based practices have changed their interaction with and care for patients, and patients tell stories about their experience with learned pain science tools used to help master chronic pain. We can now share these collected and curated stories, and other unique features, through the Alliance “story website” launched in early fall of 2022.



How to get involved?

Do new Pain Science insights and practices resonate with you?

We welcome anyone interested in collaborating to find or produce good stories and insights, then curating them to display on our website. Sharing in our discoveries and making them broadly available is both personally positive, and mutually satisfying.

The phone number or email address below will get you more information about us; then use the website link to the Member page for the steps to become an Alliance member, if that makes sense to you.

If you have a story using pain science tools and practices, and would like to share it with the larger community through our website, please send us an email. We would love to hear from you.

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