

*"I severely dislocated my right shoulder in Jan 2013. I'm a painter by trade and play cricket. I'm also right handed. Which left me wondering if i could ever paint properly and for long durations again. Playing cricket was also possibly out of the question. With Matthew Cleary's advice, knowledge and ability to physically help me recover with treatments and him educating me on maintaining my shoulder with corrective exercises etc. I've been able to paint full time and play cricket with no issues at all. Matthew is clearly passionate about helping people sustain a healthy lifestyle which i really admire."*

**- Hamad Rushton, Doreen**

*"I attended Advanced Myotherapy with a left hip issue which had prevented me from running further than 5 km for a number of months. After my initial appointment... my hip immediately felt better and I was able to run with a significantly less amount of discomfort in my left hip and leg...I have since been back three times and after each visit, my leg has felt better. I feel more confident that I will be able to return to my distance running in the very near future."*

**- Filip Wos**

*"I had chronic pain since an accident several years ago, both in my leg and chest. I was diagnosed with "chronic pain syndrome" suffering to the point of being hospitalised. I was prescribed drugs and receiving multiple forms of treatment, unable to exercise for 4 months with no success taking anti-inflams. I was ill to my stomach with medication and receiving ongoing physiotherapy until I found you. I tried Bowen therapy, Osteo, Chiro, Massage and everything, but since treatment at Advanced Myotherapy, there has been significant improvement. I feel so much better knowing what really helps."*

**- Danni West**

*"Over all of the years I have been seeing the Physiotherapist, not once have I learned what you taught me today about caring for myself in the right way. What a difference I feel already. Thank you."*

**- Alda Verde**

*“The best treatment in Melbourne. After four weeks of a chest infection and sore ribs from constant coughing, the doctor advised there was no more they could do except for me to take the antibiotics. One hour with Matt and I am breathing deeply again and have stopped coughing. Do yourself a favour and experience the magic of this myotherapy clinic!”*

**- Rose Gigliotti**

*“Matt, I’d like to thank you for the awesome work on my back and legs. 6 months ago I couldn’t walk and now I have done the Dandenong Mountains 1000 steps 2 weeks in a row. You are a lifesaver. I feel so much better and happier with all the pain gone. Keep the good work up. Again thank you”*

**- Nazih Dib**

*“I recently went to Advanced Myotherapy and was amazed by the results. I have had chronic stiffness as a result of a childhood accident. I practice yoga to help self manage my pain, but there are some postures I find difficult. After just one session I am able to go much deeper into my postures. I’ll be going back! And I’ll keep you updated as to the long term outcome :). Good luck to anyone else out there recovering from accidents, I have hope for the first time in ages!”*

**- Angie**

*“I read your book in one day! It has changed my life! My mother passed away 2 months ago and I wasn’t feeling myself anymore. I lost my spark. Your book inspired me! I even came home a day early from my trip so I could start organising everything, I was so excited about changing my life! Everything makes sense now. The way you explained everything really helped and everything you have done with your life is really amazing!”*

**- Jessica Espinas, Northcote**

*(On Heal Yourself - A NaturalPath Without Medicine book)*

*"I was privileged to read your absolutely life changing book, Heal Yourself. I saw the book, which you gave to Andrew Erzen, and I thought, I will only have a look. Finding myself an hour and a half later, on page 53, I could not agree more with your words... Reading your words, gave me hope, that I can find my way back to balance, after a crazy year of studying and well... having different priorities. Reading every page carefully, nodding to what is written and after putting the book back on the shelf, starting step by step following your advice. My intention was to let you know that your book makes people, who are struggling finding themselves, make the right decisions. You have an amazing gift of writing, and at the end of the day, you truly make a difference. Thank you for sharing your story. It will be an absolute privilege to recommend your books further on, even back in Slovenia."*

**- Maja Lotric**

*(on Heal Yourself - A Natural Path without Medicine)*

*"The vibe as soon as I walked in here was good, I felt relaxed straight away and out of all the therapists I've seen, no one has ever treated me like this. It's just amazing."*

**- Jan Grima**

*Medical Administrator*

*"I followed your advise and have made just a few small change in my life and have experienced the most profound change in my health than I ever have. I have lost weight and have far more energy now. It's amazing and has changed my life. Also, your reading was so spot on. I did not see all of this coming but the job change came as you said, and it has truly been a blessing to know that this is what was meant to be. I felt more prepared to embrace it with confidence, knowing it was part of my evolution. Thank you for everything!"*

**- Justine**

*“Well said Leah, you’re never too young & you’re never too old, you’re right, age should never be a barrier to one’s potential.”*

**- Steven J. Scharenguivel**

*“Sacred wisdom directly from an inspired heart that could help heal your life.”*

**- Dr John F Demartini,**

*Best-selling author of Count Your Blessings – The Healing Power of Gratitude and Love  
(on The Sacred Psychology of Healing book)*

*“Leah’s heartfelt approach to her work is very inspiring. Her genuine commitment to making a difference shines through as a practitioner and teacher.”*

**- Katia Krassas,**

*Holistic Counsellor & Reiki Master*

*“Nature has given us so many treasures if we care to dig and explore. Leah Jade has done the explorations for us and wrapped it all up in this easy-to-read guide map. A vital read for any conscious person who is ready to take their health and life in their own hands and discover what true healing is all about!”*

**- Katrina Zaslavsky,**

*Founder of Birth Goddess & Author of A Modern Woman’s Guide to a Natural Empowering Birth (on Heal Yourself - A Natural Path Without Medicine book)*

# MOVING BEYOND PAIN

By Leah Jade & Matthew Cleary  
Featuring Hannah Beggs & Jessica Curl

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## *Dedication*

*To all those who seek a healthy, fulfilling and active life. May this book empower you to move beyond pain and live the highest quality of life.*

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## INTRODUCTION

*Moving Beyond Pain* is a title that reflects not only what Advanced Myotherapy stands for, but what I myself am deeply passionate about. Together with Matthew and the team, we have had the privilege of helping literally thousands of people with their pain, since opening in 2008. A few of the stories I share here in this book and I do so because they are absolutely inspiring. What they demonstrate is the power of *Self Care* and simple changes. What can be achieved through simple awareness is amazing and many of our clients are proof of this.

Both Matthew and I are proof of this ourselves, as are our team members who each have their own incredible stories of personal transformation through *Self Care and Natural Therapies* (mostly Myotherapy, Massage, Yoga, training and Physical Therapies). I myself was diagnosed with Scoliosis in my teens and saw countless practitioners of different kinds, but discovered after spending a great deal of time and money, that changes come when we take our health in our own hands.

My passion for *Moving Beyond Pain* has also come from significant challenges in my early life that lead me to develop a great love for health and healing. I witnessed some pretty difficult health and lifestyle conditions prematurely take the life of my mother and then my father as a youth, which gave me incredible drive to find healing for not only myself, but others, simply because I realised how powerful lifestyle can truly be in determining not only our quality of our life, but the length of it.

Matthew has had his own life changing injuries that lead to some pretty grounding wake up calls himself. His injury was a result of him being a victim of crime which leads to brain surgery for a head trauma. He was told he would never drive again and would be dependent on drugs for a long time, but neither of those turned out to be true. He lives an incredibly active and inspirational life, helping a great number of people overcome their own debilitating conditions as someone who has been there and understands, not just from a musculoskeletal perspective.

Matthew and I entered the *Natural Health* field in the year 2000. Since establishing Advanced Myotherapy in 2008, we have earned a reputation we are proud of. It is what has enabled us to continue helping more and more people, with this as our platform. We started out by growing the business to the point where our bookings exceeded our capacity. We became fully booked for weeks at a time.

It was at this stage that we began to grow our team, to not only meet our demand, but help a greater number of people. We have expanded the clinic and continued to grow which brings us great excitement about the future. We are constantly anticipating our next project as it brings us great joy. We live and breathe Advanced Myotherapy!

As two people who are no strangers to trauma, we know it takes a lot for some people to trust others with their body... and we take it seriously that they in fact do. Now having multiple service awards, we have a foundation of recognition upon which people base their choices to come to us for their recovery, pain conditions and

injuries. People come to us often because of the reputation we have, for helping people acknowledge and respect their own role in both their pain conditions and recovery. It is with the help our of wonderful and inspirational clients that we have been able to spread this good word. This is something we are truly and deeply grateful for.

Be it an accidental injury or chronic pain condition, we all... have an undeniable role in our own recovery! Our clients, team and both Matthew and I are proof of that. This is the message we are inspired to instill in our work. It is our mission to inspire and empower people far and wide, to overcome obstacles of pain, to live well and live long. I hope that through our work and this book, you can create changes in your own life that propel you forward towards your goals for health and fulfillment.

It is this kind of transformation that takes place in the lives of our clients that propels us forward to continue building momentum in our clinic in the way of a reputation for results. It is what gives us the drive to keep sharing this sorely need information that helps people free themselves of debilitating pain. Why we love doing so is because people are enabled to live life to the fullest once more, with a sense of gratitude for the mobility and freedom that they regain, sometimes for the first time in a very long time!

## **CHAPTER 1**

### *Preventing Pain*

Often when pain has developed, there have been a number of signs that have been ignored along the way. We have a habit of disconnecting with our bodies and forget to consider the sensations that might be telling us something. Our gut feelings go unlistened to, our intuition is drowned in the white noise of *to do lists* and ideas of what should be done. Self care and maintenance get's forgotten. We put on weight, we don't drink enough water, our brain gets foggy, we lose muscle, grow weaker and our flexibility disappears, to the point where we would snap at the first demand on our body for agility. This is where injuries occur.

People tend to prioritise the tasks that they are not even sure aligning with their highest potential and it costs them in many ways. This is the kind of pattern we see in the clinic all the time! It is in the painful states that arise, when habits such as sleeping the wrong way, leaning to one side, sitting all day, driving for lengthy periods or standing in one position, are not balanced or reversed with their opposites, that stress is placed on us. This is when it becomes harder to hold ourselves together with little balance. This is when our nerves become frayed and our sensitivity is heightened. Pain patterns arise out of such habits when they are not corrected with sufficient lengthening and strengthening activities on a regular basis.

Our quality of life is greatly enhanced by having a commitment to prioritising our well being on all levels. My own mother was a prime example of this. She never seemed to prioritise her health, suffering deeply with Depression, drug and medicine

addiction and many health conditions (too many to name). By age 51 she was dependant on a walking frame and passed away! Afterall, our physical body is a representation of our energy body, what we think about, what we *thank* about, what we focus on and give our energy to. This is why I am so passionate about health now.

This was the mindset behind my strong focus on Birth Preparation while I was pregnant. I know that we are the control centre for the rest of our lives, whether we like it or not! Preparation leads to Success in all areas of life and the results we get are a mirror of what we put in. There is just no escaping it! Preventing the need for medical intervention was a big goal for me personally, for birth. Using all of the natural pain management tools I possibly could for birth, as I myself became a mother, was one of the things I did to help me reach that goal.

You will read my birth story in *chapter 9* and you can also find it on my *Beautiful Birth and Beyond* facebook page [www.facebook.com/beautifulbirhandbeyond](https://www.facebook.com/beautifulbirhandbeyond) in the notes area. If you have not yet read many positive birth stories, I highly encourage you to immerse yourself in this story and many more like it. I was blessed enough in pregnancy to be able to take time off to focus on learning all about birth. Since then I have created what I call the Ultimate Birth Preparation Package. It's basically (most) of what I did during my own pregnancy. I talk more about this in *chapter 9* where you will find the key elements of a natural birth plan. Importantly, I feel it's vital to slow down in pregnancy, which you will find most experts in the field agree.

Taking heed of the hints we get along the way allows us to slow down and enjoy life more, as we listen to our own needs. It is in doing this, that we are able to live a more fulfilling life, in much less stress than when we ignore our stress and stiffness. Think of the tortoise and the hare. When we slow down (stop thinking that everything else is more important than our health), it can actually give us the stamina and the energy that we need to cross that finish line! Labour is an especially demanding experience on the body. Sadly, not many people give it much thought. The thing is, it's an endurance sport really. It takes all of what a woman has, to give birth.

Birth really is one of those times in which we have to slow down (in labour) to maintain energy for the big "*finale*". Labour is exciting yes, and because of that it's easy to get worked up. We can easily forget to conserve our energy, especially with food and rest during labour. This becomes a problem when in hospital; women are not fed enough in labour, nor rested enough, and soon become exhausted before the big moment arrives. This is when they need their inner most reserves more than ever!

I was able to have a beautiful birth, because I planned well for it. I would love to tell you there is a magic bullet and that it can just happen, but often without *preparation* and natural pain management, it simply doesn't. You must invest your time and energy into your health to get results, but they are worth it! I didn't want a natural birth to be a "*heroine*" as some people seem to assume. I wanted it for the health of my baby and to help me recover faster. A cesarean is major surgery and to recover from that (as one example) would have

taken much, much longer. Drugs are a whole other story which carries their own risks.

I share my story here with you because I was able to have a natural home water birth without any pain killers, and It's an example of how powerful prevention is. I prevented that need for drugs in birth because I learned all I could about the body in labour, the birthing hormones and how to prevent intensity from becoming overwhelming.

I used simple tools like the breath, movement, mindset, sound (music and crystal bowls /vibrational therapy), aromatherapy and the warmth of the pool, to ease the muscles into a state that was able to surrender to what was happening. This allowed me to be at a place where I needed to be physically, to allow birth to happen. These are all things that help with pain in general, which is why I share this story, as a demonstration of what is possible when we use what nature has to help us work through whatever we are going through.

I was able to have the energy, through 3 whole days of labour! Yes you read that right. I had a 3 day labour! And it wasn't just any old pre-labour. The first two days consisted of contractions that were 7-5 minutes apart. That's pretty close to active labour, the whole way through. So I stand here now, telling you that when you take care of yourself, you can (most of the time), prevent pain, and the need for medical intervention.

I made sure I had plenty of food, plenty of rest, plenty of space, no *distractions* ... and the environment at home that supported

me in feeling comfortable enough to relax and surrender. It was just Matthew and I! No one else even knew I was in labour. Except that one sneaky text to Riccardo Donnini I later found out! The phones were (otherwise) out of sight! This is what I feel made a huge difference. Oxytocin is a birthing hormone that is enhanced by comfort, and is the hormone that propels labour forward.

Don't let my 3 day labour fool you into thinking it was an abnormally slow birth. Well I guess it was but I was happy to wait. Afterall, my body knew what to do. The reason behind it was a surgery I had at age 20 for precancerous cells on my cervix. This surgery left scar tissue that had to be broken up as the cervix opened for baby. This made it all the more challenging, however is another reason I have the experience to say, with the right preparation, you can prevent pain and get through it naturally. I used relaxation techniques, *movement* and breath to get me through this experience, and have full confidence in the body as a result.

Preventing pain, in all of its forms with a little self care and placing a priority on balance, mindset and coping tools, helps us allow sensations to be. This makes it far easier to reverse and heal naturally, rather than fighting it. Let's face it; we all want to avoid drugs. They save lives and great pain especially short term, even chronic and extreme disease...but our goal is not to need them, because they come at a cost in many more ways than one!

We all have illness at certain times in our lives. It's natural. The only difference is, healthy people heal efficiently, before it becomes apparent whereas a weaker immune system will develop symptoms. And there are many ways to support even the youngest

immune system! More than most people understand! This is where my passion comes from to write about it. The first and one of the best ways to support the immune system from the start is by breastfeeding and natural birth.

There is a vast amount of research on it, however I will just say here, that if you wish to look more into this area, then follow Dr Sarah Buckley. She is an Obstetric trained Physician who had several natural home births and is a birth educator. Breastfeeding provides an incredible amount of antibodies to a baby / toddler, whose saliva is read by the mother's immune system so that the mother can produce *exactly* the type of antibodies that baby needs at any one time! It's truly amazing. I highly encourage any breastfeeding mothers or mother's to be to follow *The Milk Meg, Meg Nagle*. Meg is a *Lactation Consultant*, author and speaker on the topic of Breastfeeding. The reason I mention her as a resource is because breastfeeding, particularly in the early days can bring significant pain. To prevent that pain, you really need to know how important it is to simply "*feed as much as possible*".

It is vital to ignore the advice about routine when it comes to breastfeeding times. Routine is great for so many things, but not breastfeeding (especially long term). This is my opinion however I encourage you to ask a professional in this area specifically. Some maternal health nurses don't even seem to have up to date information, so please, look to Meg nagle and certainly the *Australian Breastfeeding Association* for support. My apologies to the men reading this, however, you can share this with special mother's to be in your life, so the knowledge is not completely useless to you ;).

In fact it is since breastfeeding, becoming a new mother, that I discovered the true power of self *care and taking time out*. Especially as there are such high energy demands of being a new mother. With all of the night feeds and little rest, it becomes vital that you fill the empty tank regularly. When we simply look ahead and plan time out for ourselves to maintain our body, we focus more clearly, have more energy and function better in every way. This is what helps us avoid pain from developing into more serious symptoms and conditions.

Think of holding a glass of water. At first, it doesn't feel heavy. But continue to hold that glass for minute upon minute and you begin hurting as it takes more energy to keep grip. This is exactly what happens when we carry imbalances in the body and energy! They take more and more energy to hold onto. It becomes more and more painful. Though at first it seems like such a small thing!

Lean to one side for a moment. At first there is no pain. After a while the strain is evident. Everything begins to compensate. One side is overused. The other weakens. Anyone who has broken a limb will know this. Imbalance is often less evident! When we leave pain untreated and unaddressed, muscles tighten further, especially if masked by painkillers. When taking drugs, people are less likely to change their *habits* that cause the pain. This makes the problem worse than when it began by continuing on doing whatever led them to the condition.

It is the long term result of not paying attention to our pain symptoms that leads to more serious issues such as slipped, bulging and herniated discs, which then begin to cause degeneration nerve damage. This is where conditions escalate far beyond people's ability

to cope. This is where people reach the point when surgery becomes the recommended option in many cases.

Our purpose is to help people prevent such conditions as well as reverse them naturally, to the best of their ability. Teaching people better habits is such a simple thing. Yet, the ripple effect it has on their lives is so deeply inspirational and gratifying! Courtenay Moxon was one such client more recently who took this to the level where he has now lost 20 kg and in his words *“saved his hip pocket from the surgeon’s scalpel”*. Simply by learning better habits! Looking at the small changes that make the biggest difference is our core focus at the clinic. This is why we are putting our work into this book...to help you do just that.

Just think of it as some sort of vehicle, which is what we really are. If we are heading in a certain direction in life and we ever-so-slightly change that direction, by a mere degree or two, then how far away from our original destination would that take us in the end? Well, this is what determines how far we can really go.

Alter one small thing now and you have the potential to make a significant difference later! It’s all in the details! Small, fine details about *how* we live our lives...now. In clinic we offer a number of different programs and packages to help people specifically in the prevention and recovery of injuries, pain conditions, as well as surgery. Mostly our work, though focused on treatment, is all about educating clients in how to make changes to their lifestyles that will lead to better health.

We offer Myo-Balance classes as something beyond just Myotherapy to enable us to reach that next level of achievement in our partnering with clients in their recovery or health goals. Our Myo-Balance classes, workshops and programs are designed to enhance mobility quite simply. It is that one goal that we have, that is inspired by the quality of life it facilitates. Mobility after all... is the foundation upon which people can enjoy life more and live life more, free of restriction and pain.

Why we are inspired to move in this direction with our clients, is because of the sound evidence there is that the tools we use, work so well in moving people towards better health in general. We all know that people who enjoy great fitness and physical strength and stamina, generally have great attitudes that serve them well. There is most certainly a connection between the mind and body here. Mental health issues are affecting Australians in a big way, just as obesity, diabetes and heart disease is. To us, it's pretty evident there is a correlation.

Between the largely sedentary lives we as a nation are living, coupled with the poor food choices we have demonstrated by the packaged and fast food industry stability, along with the pharmaceutical industry, there is enough to suggest that we are simply living wrong. Suicide rates are at an all time high! We need to start moving beyond our pain. Movement is life. Movement generates happy hormones, quite literally! This is how gym "*junkies*" are created! Because it feels good to move! Endorphins are stimulated, which are natural painkillers! They are anti-depressants!

Taking time out for ourselves is essential to maintain mental health! The two are not separate! The reason I wrote my first book *The Sacred Psychology of Healing - Secrets to Awakening the Mind-Body Potential*, is because people need to learn, the Mind and Body are one! And just as the title suggests, Healing IS a mindset! This is why I have just released another new book called *Heal Yourself - A Natural Path Without Medicine...*To educate people around the “*alternatives*” there are, that are natural and within our own power, to Heal ourselves.

What I can't stand about most conventional medicine is that it complicates things often to a degree that people are disempowered, rather than educated around how to better their own health. What I love about what we do is that our team work together with clients to help them learn the principles of recovery in a practical way. This is what saves not only money in ongoing medical treatment for temporary relief, but also in drug dependence as a pain solution. Because let's face it, drugs don't change the habits that created the pain!

We offer simple solutions for natural pain management that we share here in this book. After a thorough assessment and consultation, our purpose lies in providing insight into how pain symptoms arise in the first place, in order to help prevent them from recurring. We are known for our educational approach to our work. You can gage this from our many testimonials. I believe that very approach gives our clinic a whole different level of success and results that go the distance, rather than keeping people dependant on temporary fixes. Beyond just treatment for pain, we take a thorough look at the root causes of symptoms to address how they developed.

It's why we are now sharing these tools, to help reach a greater audience and impact as many lives as possible.

*"Myo"* means *"muscle"*, for those of you who are new to this type of treatment. Melbourne is currently the leading city in Australia when it comes to Myotherapy, so we look forward to being part of its continual growth in helping it become more widely and rapidly developing as it has been. In recent years especially its momentum has skyrocketed with the power of social media and the internet.

Preventing the need for pain medications requires you to make a conscious effort and place a high value on your health. As the title *"Moving Beyond Pain"* suggests, it is really all about *"moving"*. Pain comes from stagnation. It is a result of stiffness and shortening of rigid muscles that are imbalanced. What that means is they are either overused or not enough. This is why we run *Myo-Balance* classes that are Yoga based and classes that are strength based. Our slogan is *"Lengthen and Strengthen"* for good reason.

Muscles that are tight or off balance, being weak in one area and overused in another, lead to strain that builds up, ultimately causing pain. This can and does often lead to spinal disc degeneration if left to worsen. Changing your habits now will ultimately result in a very different condition and quality of life later. The issue is, it does not always happen overnight. In fact, it is our habits that lead to the greatest impact and change. Consistency and continuity are the most powerful pillars of any success!

We believe in the *mindful practice of Yoga* and living an overall healthy life, holistically that contributes towards greater balance, less

stress and better physical alignment for a pain free life. Our Myo-Balance classes are based on a philosophy that is very much aligned with Yoga; however our therapists also incorporate training into treatment plans for clients wanting that next level of results that make the difference.

When tight muscles lead to compromised spinal discs, the potential to cause nerve damage increases which is among the most painful of conditions. The best way to avoid such problems to begin with is good posture. If you don't want pain, then taking care of your posture with regular corrective exercise such as but not limited to Yoga and strength training, is essential.

The reason we feel our Myo-Balance classes and training are superior to others, is because we have a strong focus on the individual pain patterns present. We do have the advantage of also offering one on one attention in our small classes which gives clients the attention to work on specific areas of imbalance rather than working through a more general and larger class that can fall short of its potential to make a difference in the areas of pain and stiffness in the body.

We have helped so many clients prevent surgery and recovery from acute and chronic, even old and recurring injuries with our treatment and training programs. Grant was one such client who was recommended surgery, who came in on a recommendation after seeing countless therapists of different kinds. The client who recommended Grant see us was Matthew's, from over a decade ago, who came for treatment with a herniated disc himself and was able to recover fully as well.

Grant recovered from his herniated disc within a few months and after being recommended surgery, reporting back to us that he went for a follow up MRI scan that showed his spine had healed and returned to its natural alignment. This is the kind of change that is possible with posture correction through the right type of commitment and care.

What we did with Grant was focus on “*opening*” and softening the muscles in his lower back with Myo-Balance classes on a weekly basis for a few months, alongside regular treatment with our Maintenance Care Package. Through these classes he was able to lengthen the muscles around the lumbar spine. This took the pressure off the discs that had been forced out of alignment because of the shortened, overused lower back muscles.

Slow gentle stretching and gradually developing flexibility in Grant’s lumbar region, allowed for the softening needed to open space between the spinal discs once again. This is what gave Grant the chance he needed to recover from his condition and regain mobility and return to work.

It’s these significant differences that Myo (muscle) therapy, Yoga and stretching makes in people’s lives that inspire us to continue doing what we love each day, striving to help more and more people do the same. To avoid surgery just like Grant and many other clients of ours, you need to take responsibility for your own well being. It’s simple, but essential that you commit. You need both sufficient movement and rest. It really is balance at the end of the day that brings recovery, more than any one thing. It is a culmination of all of the little things that make the difference.

Preventing pain really requires that we become aware of our role in creating it. It also requires that we understand the gift of pain as a message for us and a feedback mechanism to help us understand our body. Later in the book I share the story of Jessica Curl, a client come team member of ours. We feel her story demonstrates very well, the warning signs that we can take heed of to help ourselves prevent pain in a big way.

Jess came to Advanced Myotherapy as a client who was working extremely hard as a trainer in a gym, also training herself for Strongman competitions. Why we love Jess' inspiring story is because watching her recover has again once more, demonstrated the potential the body has to heal. I feel that before we delve further into the warning signs that Jess experienced, I need to clarify the importance of prevention, as the key to living "*Pain Free*".

A huge reason people commonly develop lower back pain as one example, is due to long periods of sitting. Sitting wrong and for too long eventually leads to the hip flexors shortening to create an anterior pelvic tilt. This pelvic imbalance is one of the things that leads to the all- too-common lower back pain, so it's vital that we stretch both the quads and hips flexors regularly to prevent this problem.

Here in this piece below, our Yoga teacher Hannah who facilitates many of our Myo-Balance classes, shares some simple ways you can prevent lower back pain naturally.

As a teacher of yoga and a part of the Advanced Myotherapy team, I hear many unique bodily complaints. All are valid and deserve correct care and attention. Lower back pain is a common

issue that often stems from multiple factors, which are individual and may be a sign of more serious issues. It is best to seek professional support so that you can fully understand the cause of your pain and eliminate the issue completely. Here I offer you some general tools that can be used in the recovery or avoidance of lower back pain.

**You will need:**

- a comfortable quiet space
- a heated wheat bag
- a large sleeping pillow
- a blanket

To begin I recommend thermal therapy in the form of a large heated wheat bag. Place the wheat bag along the ground and arrange your lower back to lie onto the heat. Lay down on your back, with the head in line with the spine, arms a little away from the body, the knees bent and the feet wider than hip distance apart. The knees can fall into one another here to flatten the lower back and align the spine. The heat will allow the lower back to relax and prepare muscles for lengthening. Close the eyes, breathe deeply into the abdomen and focus on the movement and sensation of your breathing and your body.

*(5-10minutes)*

Now that you are centred and the muscles relaxed we can safely work on some stretching and strengthening exercises.

**Mula Bandha**

The mula bandha, or root lock, plays an important role in the stabilisation and posture of the entire spine. Activating it takes the pressure off the lumbar spine. Here's how to locate this specific muscle area. Men contract the area between the anus and the testes while women, contract the muscles at the bottom of the pelvic floor, behind the cervix.

To begin with contract the whole network of muscles in this region. With practice, guidance and awareness you can get more specific. For now stay in your lying down position, remove your wheat bag, check that you are comfortable and explore the contracting your mula bandha. Work on activating, holding for 5 seconds with steady breath, then releasing for 10 seconds with steady breath. Do this 5 times, or any other amount that is comfortable for you.

### **Pavanamuktasana - wind relieving pose**

*(2 minutes)*

Keep the spine and back of the head on the ground and draw the knees into the chest, bringing the hands to the knees to squeeze them into the trunk of the body. You can spend some time circling the knees around to massage the lower back on the ground. This pose will help to gently lengthen the spine, relieving tension in the lower back, hips and thighs that can lead to pain and poor alignment.

## **Supta matsyendrasana – reclined spinal twist**

*(2minutes)*

Now make sure your pillow is close by, place the feet on the ground as close to the buttocks as possible, and let the knees fall over to the right side of your body. The knees are stacked on top of one another and can be supported by a pillow if they don't comfortably meet the ground. Reach the arms out wide in opposite directions and in line with the shoulders, keeping both of your shoulders in contact with the floor. Then turn the head to gaze over the left, creating a complete gentle spinal twist. When moving into the stretch be mindful of sensation and practice full embodiment – being present in your body.

## **Bidalasana – cat cow posture**

*(3 minutes per side)*

Consciously move from a supine position into a comfortable table top position. Check the alignment of the joints – wrists (or fists for those with wrist pain) directly below shoulders, knees below hips (maybe a blanket under the knees for knee discomfort) and the feet in line with the legs. Elongate through the crown of the head and the tailbone in opposite directions. Inhale to drop the belly and draw the tailbone and gaze upwards (cow pose), pause to breathe into the stretch then exhale and arch the back, draw the navel and *mula bandha* in, reaching the crown of the head towards the tailbone (cat pose).

When you are comfortable with the two poses you can move comfortably with your breath deep and slow breath between the two.

Inhale to cow, exhale to cat. Maybe close the eyes to focus inwards here. This allows for the expansion of self awareness and prevents injuries by helping you explore and honour your own boundaries.

### **Balāsana – child’s pose**

*(3 minutes)*

Open the knees wide, sit the hips back onto the feet and begin to walk the hands and upper body forward until the forehead can rest on the floor (or stacked fists). Arms can be supporting the forehead, stretched forwards in front of the head or down beside the body. Take the support of a cushion under the pelvis and belly if you need. This is one of Yoga’s most restorative postures and will help relieve the stress and tension that often comes with pain as well as the physical tightness in the lower back.

### **Savasana – corpse pose**

*(5 minutes)*

Finally lie down on your back, take a cushion under the knees, and cover your body with a blanket. Now extend the legs down hip distance apart and let the feet flop to the sides. Bring the arms a little away from the body with the palms facing upwards and the head in line with the spine. Finally tuck the chin slightly into the chest to lengthen the back of the neck and close your eyes. This is the best way to finish your practice and offers the opportunity to relax on all levels. Focus inwards on your breathing and allow the body to be still, tension free and open to receiving all the benefits of your Yoga practice.

(5 -10 minutes)

**A few tips...**

- ✓ Try to practice these postures daily
- ✓ If pain or discomfort is experienced through this sequence discontinue and see myself or one of the therapists at Advanced Myotherapy
- ✓ Your sleeping position is important to get right when it comes to lower back pain. Try adjusting your sleep posture to savasana with a cushion under the knees or a side sleeping position with the spine in a straight line and a cushion between the legs.
- ✓ Avoid all unconscious lifting and bending. Always move with a straight spine and when squatting activate the mula bandha and core to project your spine.
- ✓ Learn how you sit, stand, and move in a way that keeps your spine in proper alignment and alleviates strain on your back.

Most importantly, make space in your life for your pain. It is present and means that something needs attention. *Don't numb the pain or try to push through it, honour the pain, adjust your lifestyle and try to allow it for what it is.* A chance for healing, an opportunity to build on your self-understanding and self-compassion. The more you look after and love your body, the incredible vessel for your being, the richer your life experience will be.

What I will add to this pieces from Hannah, is the *importance of developing and maintaining strength in the glutes and pelvic floor as well as the core*. These two elements are vital to support the lower back to prevent pain in the area. As someone who has practiced Yoga for many years now myself, my weakness has been in the area of strength. I will further clarify that it may be due to my love of Yin and Hatha Yoga that has not offered me more in the way of resistance. I take full responsibility for this now and work more on strength now than I ever have, even as a long distance runner and basketball player growing up.

I used to run 10 km most days and play basketball in most of my youth. But now as a mother especially, I have realised the importance of strength. I feel it is especially important after childbirth, because of the significant loss of core stability after pregnancy. I myself had significant abdominal separation and took some time to recover from it, so appreciate now more than ever, the power of the core muscles, in helping prevent lower back problems. It is since becoming a mother that I have realised how common it is for people (mother's especially) to say that they don't have time for themselves.

### **Making Time for Yourself...Why It's So Important**

So many people say that they don't have the time to exercise, do yoga, train, eat well and take care of themselves. The biggest hurdle we have in communicating to people the importance of overcoming this barrier, is clarifying that we are each responsible for creating time and space for the priorities of our life. If we were to

really account for every hour of our day for a week, we would realise how much spare time we really have.

Our priorities are directly linked to our values which determine our fulfillment in life. *Dr John F. Demartini*, one of my greatest mentors, a world renowned and leading specialist in the field of Human Behaviour, who I was fortunate enough to have endorse my first book *The Sacred Psychology of healing*, has a wonderful tool on his website to determine your values so that you may best assess how you can better serve them, and so yourself. <https://drdemartini.com/values>

When it comes to money being the barrier in people leading pain free lives, our passion at Advanced Myotherapy is educating people around how little resources are truly needed to take care of yourself. Our mission is to provide natural solutions that are drug free, surgery free and therefore cheaper long term. Our classes are designed to demonstrate just how easy it is to look after yourself. With simple exercises and stretches you can prevent pain naturally.

Any excuse really comes down to priorities and values. We either have excuses or results in any area of life. Excuses get in the way when we continue to focus on distractions. If we have our priorities right, nothing gets in the way. This goes for any area of life.

## CHAPTER 2

### *The Warning Signs*

Pain has the tendency to slowly creep up on people who leave it too late when symptoms have developed before doing something about it.

*“Pain that is experienced presently has its roots in the past - trauma , injury, illness , loss , stress, thought patterns, emotions and memories all contribute.”*

**- Hannah Beggs**

Why it's important to learn the warning signs of pain is because maintaining awareness of the body's potential and knowing when we begin to form limitations, can help us in understanding it's time to *move beyond* them.

People have a tendency to ignore the warning signs and normalise pain to the point where it surprises them that they develop chronic and acute pain conditions and injuries.

*“Here in the clinic we come across many painful injuries that have stemmed from unconscious movement. Unconscious movement happens when the individual is not listening in to the signals of the body, not practicing embodiment - keeping the awareness within the body or not practicing self care - honouring the signals and boundaries of the body.”*

**- Hannah Beggs**

If we can pick up on the warning signs then we can be empowered to end the spiral of suffering and live to our full potential, returning to our balanced alignment. Long term, it's all about mobility. Now you may feel a little stiff, but later on, in older age, things become extremely difficult, in many areas of life. Even before we get to our older years, ignoring our body can result in injury far before then. *Jessica Curl*, who is our very own Strength and Conditioning Coach, has a story that demonstrates just how bad things can get when we don't slow down a little.

Jess was (is) a client of ours who has joined the team since her recovery from not just one but two surgeries! Jess ruptured her Achilles while she was training for a Strongman competition. She had been not only training clients and working hard, but was pushing herself to the point an athlete often does. The problem was, she was not listening to the warning signs of her body, to slow down.

It was in training that the injury took place when she snapped her achilles while doing intensive box jumps. Jess shared that both the Surgeon and the Physiotherapist told her she would never get feeling back down the outside of her foot.

After 2 sessions at Advanced Myotherapy with Matthew, of doing trigger point needling, stripping the ligament and some deep tissue work, she was already getting sensation back! Her mobility had increased immensely and her ankle bone had reappeared from breaking down the scar tissue! In her words, *"It's amazing what the body can do given the right tools!"* Her recovery since the second devastating surgery has been inspiring to say the least.

I just love seeing that kind of feedback. It is one of the many reasons we love having Jess as part of our team now. She is able to offer insight into how to overcome debilitating injuries, since suffering her own. Along with Jess, our very own Myotherapist & Yoga Instructor *David* is also a wonderful example of healing. Like Jess he too suffered with debilitating pain conditions, and has been able to recover from and manage them himself, through self care. We love that our team can offer this personal experience.

It's exactly why Jess (like David) is now such an ideal team member as a class facilitator at our clinic! She has learned the hard way to be aware of the body and train sensibly. She is also now a *Functional Diagnostic Nutritionist* as well as being a Strength and Conditioning coach and we could not be more thrilled to have her on board since her recovery. It's been amazing to watch her heal! Another benefit is having her around to whip us into shape and help keep us accountable for our own integrity, walking our own talk! It's about practicing what we preach.

We too, like anyone, have our own repetitive actions. Matthew especially is a prime example of this, being a therapist for over 16 years now! Imagine day in and day out treating people (many athletes). I mean, have you seen his forearms! Those extensors and flexors are machines! From our habitual life of repetitive actions and daily functions, often people develop imbalances, be it weakness or rigidity. One example of this would be anterior loading / forward leaning, where the shoulders begin to round, creating a hunch (like you tend to do on a laptop or desk). This is technically called a kyphotic curve, but never mind the jargon.

Often we find that people, who develop these habits, without correcting them, end up with pain and numbness in the wrists and tingling down the fingers, where the origins are from too much pressure around the neck, creating nerve pain.

It truly is the ripple effect, just as stress often creates headaches for example. It's the cascade of tension from the jaw, to the head; to the neck and shoulders and as far as you really let it go! This is all about heeding the warning signs. When we "*cover up*" our pain with drugs, we are in no way addressing its cause.

## **THE COVER UP**

By covering up our pain with painkillers and non vital surgery, we are essentially bypassing the whole message, shutting down our symptoms. This ultimately means we can continue on our merry way without suffering the consequences of our actions or learning from them. It may seem harsh, but that's the reality. Surgery can and does save lives yes. I'm not denying that. The problem is, it also, in the case of musculoskeletal conditions, often simply covers up the problem. When the roots are left unaddressed, the problem will likely resurface.

We at Advanced Myotherapy are like gardeners, weeding out the roots of pain, so as to deal with it for good. From its origins, we educate people in how to care for themselves in a way that minimises the potential for problems with pain and mobility. Taking drugs to cover up pain will offer a temporary solution. The issue is, this

creates dependence. You'll need to keep taking them and paying for them in more ways than one.

Treating pain with medicine is like pulling out a weed from its tips and expecting it not to grow back. When you don't change anything (habits) you will continue to create the same pain patterns. You absolutely do not want to cover up the warning signs! Why? Because they are telling you something you need to hear. Telling you to change something. Telling you change is vital at this point in time. They are like those reflective pumps on the side of the freeway, there to wake us up and tell us to change our direction! They tell us we have strayed off the path. This is why illness, symptoms and disease are gifts. They carry messages and are designed to make us appreciate our bodies once more.

Postural pain is the same as any pain. Heartache and suffering of the emotional and energetic self carries the same lessons. When pain presents itself, we need to wake up and smell the roses... to enjoy life more consciously and aware of what we are doing and how we are doing it. It's all about our own role and the responsibility we need to take in living our lives well, on all levels.

*"To balance out the regular forward leaning activities we can put the body into positions that are opposite. One of the best visible tells a tale sign of pain is posture. The body is made to be in alignment and functions best when it is. How you stand, move and hold your body communicates a lot of information. Good posture allows energy to move through, organs and systems so as to function well."*

**- Hannah Beggs**

## **UPPER BACK PAIN CARE**

The following contribution is by our Strength Coach Jessica Curl. Jessica is a facilitator of our Myo-Balance classes and Bootcamp. We are so thrilled to have her with us since her inspirational recovery from an injury resulting in multiple surgeries. She is a great example of how self care can speed up recovery far beyond expectation.

Everything in life is about balance that perfect sweet spot between too much and too little. Sunshine is a great example. While you need 15 minutes of sunshine daily for your vitamin D levels but don't to exceed 1-2 hours, you run the risk of skin cancer. Spend an hour a day walking, stretching and moving, but don't push yourself so hard that you're unable to walk the next few days. Work really hard to support yourself and your family but don't run yourself into the ground so you don't have time to enjoy them.

Just like life our bodies need to be in balance as well. Standing and sitting, pushing and pulling, moving and relaxing, it's all about that sweet spot.

If we look at the world today: everything predisposes us to be forward loaded, i.e., rounding the shoulders, head leaning forward, tight chest muscles and hip flexors, weak glutes and hamstrings, poor posture and lacking upper back strength.

Think of your computer, eating, cell phones, driving, breast feeding, etc all of these movements are done anteriorly (or in front of) and have a tendency to do all of the mentioned above.

It's not that these movements are bad - we have to eat ;) - but most of the time people are not aware of their movements, how they're sitting and what their posture is like. Sitting is inevitable, even though it does things like crush your organs and shut down blood flow to your legs among other things, it cannot be avoided... but if we teach ourselves to become aware of our posture, the way we sit and how we move we can then be in these positions and not cause as much damage.

One of the biggest things I see with people who come to the clinic is rounded shoulders, head poked forward with a lot of upper back or shoulder pain and tension in their necks. This posture is pretty common for the average person and if you don't start to do something about it now it will eventually cause pain and other issues down the track. So, what I want to give you guys is my top few reasons in detail why you need to strengthen and reverse upper back weakness and pain along with a few exercises to help you fix it.

## **1. Tension Headaches**

When you have rounded shoulders and a forward tilting head, what starts to happen is your pulling muscles (rhomboids, lats, and external rotators) become very weak and lazy. Thinking about balance what we would ideally like to have is equal strength between our *fronts* (anterior muscles) and *backs* (*posterior muscles*). What happens when we have this forward progression without the combination of *working* our pulling muscles is: they *forget* how to work and instead of your upper back muscles helping keep your head and torso upright: all the pressure to keep your 5kg head on

your shoulders, goes into your neck and more specifically your trapezius.

This can often be a major cause of tension headaches. Basically your traps have to do all the work to keep your head sitting on the spine which can also tend to draw them up towards your ears creating tightness through that upper back and a lot of unwanted tension.

I find it helpful myself if I am sitting/ standing at my desk all day: to take a small break every hour and do some shoulder circles. I focus on picking my chest up to the ceiling and rolling my shoulders down and back about 10-15 times, trying to feel a nice simple stretch of movement around the shoulder joints and traps.

## **2. Shoulder Impairment**

The shoulder joint is very complex. It moves forward, back, side to side, internally, externally and 360 degrees - or it should anyway. The majority of those with poor upper back strength begin to lose some of that range of motion mentioned above. You may be thinking, *"why do I need all the movements?"* A mobile joint, one that moves with fluidity and pain free is a healthy joint - that's why!

When we have weak upper back muscles our shoulders down to our finger tips start to internally rotate towards each other creating a rounded look of the upper body. Ideally we should all be walking around with shoulders down and back and a big proud chest with hands in neutral position. The internal rotation of the

shoulder causes limited range of movement through the shoulder joint. Instead of being able to move 360 degrees freely it is now short changed to 180 degrees. With the shoulder being pinched inwards this means it has to be collapsing onto something, could be tendons, ligaments, tissues or even hitting bone on bone - regardless, it's going to cause discomfort in the body.

On top of that, some of these internally rotated people go to the gym and instead of understanding what they're limits are: throw 100kg on the bench press and train those pushing (anterior) muscles of the body to be even stronger and really exasperate this issue. It will only be a matter of time before they push that limited range of motion so much that it eventually causes pain.

A good test and also a great activation exercise to see how well your external rotation is through your shoulders is Wall Slides. In a wall slide you want to stand with your back against a wall. Heels should be touching the wall with spine flat against the wall as well. You will find this super easy if you cheat and don't push your thoracic spine flat. Once you're completely against the wall, your arm come up to make a Cactus position, meaning arms are at shoulder height and elbows are bent to 90 degrees. From there, while keeping your spine, head and arms as flat as you can against the wall you slide your arms up until they are above your head in a straight "Y" position, and then moving back down again. This exercise should be done slowly and controlled: really focusing on keeping everything as flat to the wall as possible, while going through the movement. I suggest doing 2 or 3 rounds of 10 repetitions up and down.

### **3. Nerve Damage**

We talked about tension headaches above, explaining how it comes from that rounded shoulder and tilted head position. Now another issue with that forward protruded head is the pressure put on your cervical spine. The forward head progression not only highly strains your neck but causes the cervical spine to become misaligned. Our vertebrae sit one on top of another and are made to bend and move freely in a healthy state. Through the middle of each vertebra we have our spinal cord which is the master messenger from the brain to the body. It literally controls all that we do, so it's very important we keep it healthy and we keep what's around it healthy and stable as well, aka your spine.

What happens in many people is their posture starts to become poor, rounding their shoulders forward and letting the head hang heavy and what starts to happen in those vertebrae is instead of sitting nicely one on top of the other, they can start to slightly shift. There are so many delicate nerves in our spinal cord that it's easy when this shift starts to happen they may get pinched. This pinching, depending on where it is in the spine, can cause things like numbness, tingling, pain or referring of pain down limbs and restricted range of motion.

It's not a good time for anyone and sometimes when this happens it feels like the end of the world because this pain has seemed to *"come out of nowhere"*. Luckily, if caught early this type of pain and damage can be alleviated quite quickly and in a non invasive way.

My favourite movement for spine health that I think can and should be done every single day is the Jefferson Curl.

The Jefferson Curl is a great exercise for decompression of the spine, loosening up the whole posterior chain and getting a healthy range of motion and movement through the spine. You can start this exercise with just body weight but as you get better you could start to add a little weight to it. You want to start standing up tall, shoulders down and back with a proud chest. You move first by tucking your chin to your chest and begin curling the spine dropping your head to the floor. I like to think of moving vertebra by vertebra, slow and controlled with a 10 second count on both the way down and up. Focus your attention on the back of your body and being mindful of where you feel things pulling. You will keep your legs fairly straight through the whole movement and only going to whatever your range of motion is.

If done daily, over time you will become more flexible and be able to move further than when you started. I would suggest starting with 2 set of 6-10 rounds. Focus on your breathing, not rushing things and feeling what's going on in the back of your body.

## **Poor Posture Creates Pain**

I hope that those few exercises from Jessica really get you going and help you restart your inspiration engine! See, many people are not even aware of how much posture can create pain! But once someone can see this, they can begin taking charge of their lifestyle

by way of exercise, movement and corrective therapies to resolve the issue.

It's fantastic that our clients come to see us for their postural related pain, but our main concern is what they are doing in their daily lives that lead them to our clinic. Poor posture affects every physiological function of the body by influencing the spinal column and the nervous system as a result.

Excessive use of technology such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets is one of the many modern day concerns we have for people developing postural related pain conditions. People are now using mobile devices far longer than they were even recently as the dependence on technology rapidly increases.

The side effect of mobile use leads to a dramatic increase in the degree of spinal flexion which puts an enormous strain on areas that have great influence over our posture. One of the fastest and most cost effective ways you can open up the chest and release any tightness in the back is with foam rolling.

### **Foam Rolling for Pain**

Foam rolling for myofascial release and posture correction to bring the shoulders back, can help relieve many pain symptoms in the body. From headaches and neck and shoulder pain, foam rolling can reduce a range of physical complaints from muscular imbalance.

Myotherapy incorporates a holistic approach in educating clients in self care for long term results. Office workers and trades

people often have rounded shoulders as a result of their working habits. Myotherapists call this the activities of daily living, which are a strong focus of our work. Our purpose is to instill corrective care to counterbalance any repetitive strain potential for future or repeated injury prone vulnerabilities.

We use a range of different tools including Trigger Point Foam Rollers to encourage our clients to use effective techniques to gain the most out of their personal goals for either maintenance or recovery. Laying on or self massaging with the use of a trigger point foam roller is a fantastic way of recovering from debilitating pain. Rolling is great for muscle overuse in sports and endurance activities or simple pain, tension and stiffness.

Allowing the spine and muscles to reverse themselves into a balanced and corrected alignment, using a foam roller can fast track posture correction where treatment alone would not compete.

We encourage our clients to take an active role in their muscular maintenance so as to not only *“make our job easier”* but to ensure more of a longer term balance that can be incorporated to prevent ongoing and persistent pain symptoms.

Sitting for too long and sitting wrong, is also an associated stress factor in many people’s lives that we are seeing. Encouraging our clients to change their habits even slightly is often the *“difference maker”* that leads to the most dramatic improvements.

Here are a few simple steps to speed up re-alignment of the body to help balance the muscular system for wellness and pain management.

**1) *Standing up and stretching out the iliopsoas*** muscles (main hip flexor) during the working day can be an incredibly effective way to reduce this muscle shortening. As a result of this common symptom, there is an enormous amount of pressure placed in the lumbar spine and lower back area, causing an anterior pelvic tilt.

**2) *Open up the chest as you walk through doorways.*** Take the opportunity when you change rooms to release the pressure and stress in the chest area, which is shortened throughout the day while you are using computers and mobile devices or working in general.

**3) *Restore Neck Length*** by frequently taking time out to gently let go, breathe deep and guide the ear to the shoulder for at least a minute each side. Built up neck tension can bring headaches that can easily be prevented by remembering that if we take time out for ourselves, we become more efficient in every area of our lives. Reducing stress on ourselves increases productivity and maintaining good posture is key to this.

Upper back pain can be reversed by aligning the upper body for postural balance. Here are a few simple things you can do yourself at home using things you might have around the house. Using a rolled up towel and a ball, you can lengthen the muscles of the chest and soften the upper back muscles to bring the shoulders back and take pressure off the spine.

Using the doorway stretch mentioned above, you can reverse poor posture from rounding shoulders, to open the pectoral area. This is a great stretch to help release any tension in the chest to take stress off the shoulders, causing any upper back pain.

From the common “*text neck*” and wry neck to other incredibly increasing lifestyle induced pain symptoms, we have found many of our clients come to us not knowing how to reverse such triggers beyond just treatment alone.

The secret to empowering these clients long term, has often been in the self care education we provide, applicable to the unique individual and what is causing their pain.

Our clients tend to inform us that the ultimate “*difference maker*” is the *knowing what to do*, how to take care of their own body and why the pain originally developed.

Persistent, recurring pain such as migraines, headaches and neck pain is largely triggered by activities of daily living which a thorough assessment will uncover. Reversing such habits and correcting the posture to reduce and alleviate this pain is our focus at Advanced Myotherapy. We believe this is exactly why people are referred to us for such pain.

Read below to find out what just a few of our clients have experienced from Myotherapy for migraines...

*“After over a decade of pain and countless practitioners I finally found Matt at Advanced Myotherapy. In 3 sessions I have learnt so much about what is causing my problems, have been given so many techniques for managing my back problem and my monthly migraine for the first time was only a mild headache and that was only after 3 sessions! I am looking forward to the future which Matt tells me will be migraine and back pain free. Thank you Advanced Myotherapy Angels!!!”*

*- Kimberley Kifun*

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*“Matthew at Advanced myotherapy helped me become migraine free! I was having several migraines a month and had to take strong painkillers, leave work abruptly and shut myself in the dark for 24hrs. Matthew found an issue with my neck which was causing the problem. He also taught me to self manage and I now know how to recognise symptoms and care for my health much better! Thanks Advanced Myotherapy! :)”*

*- Elle Martin*

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*“I have been going to Advanced Myotherapy for 8 years and with all of my chronic neck issues, related to the work I do on computers, I understand what causes it to worsen and how to reduce the pain naturally without using drugs. Understanding it has made the world of difference as when it flairs up, I know not only what to do but also where to go.”*

*- Sean Ryan*

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The mentality of just simply pushing through the pain is so strongly embedded in our western culture. Women are encouraged to return to the work force soon after birth. In tribal days and ancient cultures that even still exist, women retreat in times of menses, and the expectation of ignoring the body's natural cycles and messages is nonexistent.

The “do do do” push through mentality allows for enormous external growth... but on the other hand, extreme exhaustion and depletion. What this does is rapidly increase the rate of aging and stress in general. Adrenal fatigue is just one of the many symptoms of people really ignoring the warning signs!

You may want to “*get things done*” and have a million things on your plate, but ultimately you need to think about what the cost will be of ignoring the need to slow down and listen to your body. What’s important is: mastering the art of planning, prioritising and delegating or outsourcing anything and everything you can, in order to have the time leftover to love yourself.

To do something each day that makes you happy is far from selfish. It’s inspirational for others to see how it’s done and learn it for themselves. To be an example especially for our children is so vital, for what sort of life would you want your children to live? There are so many reasons we need to be looking after ourselves, and children are a great one! Keep in mind your future self years from now. It’s easy to forget. So terribly easy to forget. But in 10 years from now, how do you want to feel? Just keep that in your mind. How hard are you going to make it for yourself to have the quality of life you want to enjoy?

Slowing down when you feel your body tense, breathing deep when you feel your chest stiffen, moving around when you feel your blood pooling, getting up when you feel your brain fog...are all simple yet effective ways you can influence your body in a way that enhances your quality of life, not just now but in the long term.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### *Managing Pain*

From lifestyle induced pain, to injury trauma and diagnosis such as scoliosis, we see so many complaints stem from an imbalance created from either an underactive or an overactive routine of habits in people's daily lives. You may be wondering why we advocate you manage such pain naturally? The truth is, our view is that long term dependence on drugs not only wears the system down, but fill it with toxins and fail to deal with the actual problem most of the time. We love the joy that clients have when reporting to us they are no longer recommended surgery for their injuries.

We have witnessed many people overcome pain conditions naturally without having to resort to drugs or surgery, simply through self care. Not only has this saved people a great deal of time in recovery and bed rest in some cases, but money on the drugs and surgery which can be quite costly. A little change goes a long way and we have many people who we know are living proof of that. Don't underestimate the power of one simple change at a time.

David, one of our incredibly popular therapists has his own experience overcoming debilitating pain conditions including Fibromyalgia and Scoliosis. He, like numerous clients of ours and myself included, has been able to move beyond Scoliosis quite literally. Its stories like this that we celebrate at Advanced Myotherapy as they are incredibly inspirational for so many others. The beauty is, we can say from experience that lifestyle has a huge impact on our ability to overcome pain. This is the exact reason this

book is titled *Moving Beyond Pain!* Scoliosis is a great example of how people can become empowered to rise above painful musculoskeletal conditions through a corrective and natural approach.

## **Myotherapy for Scoliosis**

Living with Scoliosis (a laterally bent spine) is often known to create anything from mild to significant pain and limitation. The two types of scoliosis are functional (resulting from muscular or limb imbalance) and structural scoliosis (often genetically linked or originating from birth defects).

Myotherapy (muscle)-therapy, works wonders for functional scoliosis especially, given that it originates from muscle imbalances, being the area Myotherapy specialises in.

*Common symptoms of scoliosis can include:*

- Uneven shoulders
- One prominent shoulder blade
- An uneven waist
- One hip higher than the other

If the condition progresses, the spine may rotate and cause pressure of the nerves which will ultimately lead to weakness, numbness and or pain in the lower extremities giving rise to difficulty in walking.

Functional scoliosis can most often be treated and managed naturally by modalities such as Myotherapy. Myotherapy works with the body's innate healing capacity to restore physical balance and alignment, perfect to help with the pain of Scoliosis.

Myotherapists often work with scoliosis sufferers in finding the underlying cause of imbalances contributing to the development of the condition. Conducting thorough physical assessments of the spine and its supporting muscles, to form a posture analysis and corrective care plan, Myotherapists work to restore the natural shape of the spine.

With a treatment program designed to realign the spine by treating muscular imbalances, long term management and recovery is aimed at preventing further development and worsening of the condition.

At Advanced Myotherapy, our therapists are fully qualified and trained in dealing with such musculoskeletal imbalances that cause scoliosis. We offer self care education to improve and correct posture for greater wellbeing, strength and flexibility to promote holistic health and recovery.

Treating conditions such as scoliosis is something we love, as helping people recover from debilitating conditions is why we are here. Our main focus is reducing pain while treating its root causes, not just the symptoms alone. This is what we understand makes the difference between short term relief and long term recovery. We love David's story of changing his lifestyle with a total career transformation, coming from software engineering, moving into a

Natural Health career with Holistic studies in Yoga, Ayurvedic lifestyle, Remedial Massage and then Myotherapy.

It's truly admirable to see someone so moved and inspired, to transform their own lives and develop a passion for helping others do the same. To live in a way that manages pain naturally is obviously a result of a better lifestyle. To live with balance and well being is the ultimate pathway to achieving this goal and therefore a benefit in itself. Leading a higher quality of life with a greater level of physical balance, alignment and harmony is the result of choosing a natural path. David is a wonderful example of this, having turned his life around from being in constant chronic pain, to living with Yoga and Myotherapy in order to maintain a healthy pain free life.

We may not always be able to control when and where pain will present itself, but *we can* learn healthy *responses* to pain. This aspect of natural pain management is all about being empowered and taking control of what we in fact have the power to do in our own lives to create balance. We know that birth is, as one example, is a time in which we have only a certain amount of control over the intensity that floods the body in waves (contractions) during labour.

It is in learning how to ride those waves that we can get through it faster, or more at ease. I personally found myself chanting "*I surrender*" during transition, totally organically and unplanned. Not being at a hospital was a blessing for me, as I know I would have been "*on the clock*". They would have needed that bed to be available for the next woman. The push for medical intervention to speed things up would have had incredibly unnecessary downfalls. In the end, I got there, without painkillers or unnecessary intervention. It is

in knowing how to birth naturally at home, the way I wanted, that I was able to move around and do as I pleased (over the 3 days) without any restrictions, rules, limitations or *"policies"*.

Pain free living is about freedom. Freedom to move the way you want, when you want and freedom from imposed ideals. Dogmas and rigid ways of living instilled and deeply engrained in our western culture do not serve us in regards to our health. The rate of disease, cancer, mental illness and suicides (even murder) should tell us that! Something is clearly not working.

The first and most important aspect of longevity is to maintain muscle length. Stretching to keep flexibility is so important for training recovery and preparation. Warming up and cooling down are essential in training and workouts, so remember to give yourself sufficient time to do both each time you train. The reason I begin writing with the assumption that you do train, in some way, is because it is ideal that you do.

If you don't use it you lose it! Muscles are no exception. Regular exercise is vital for all systems of the body to continue functioning well. If our clients are not taking care of themselves it makes it so much harder to achieve the goal of becoming pain free. This is why we highly encourage people to exercise (sweat) around 5 times a week. It is about maintaining health and mobility.

The second key to longevity is the one we are all too happy to help with! You can get way more out of your training and recover faster with regular Massage or Myotherapy sessions. Our mission is to empower you to maintain mobility and fitness...and body

treatments are a wonderful way to maintain balance so that you can keep up your Self Care!

The 3rd and most important *Key to Success* in training longevity is to sustain your energy and put in what you take out! When your muscles become depleted, you need to replenish your body's salts! Including sufficient sea salt (not iodised, there are other ways to get iodine and iodised salt has aluminium as an anti-caking agent which hardens the arteries)...in your diet also assists your body in absorbing nutrients!

And when you train, you need more of them! So please make sure that you are eating plenty of whole plant foods so that your body is able to keep up with your personal fitness and strength goals! It's all about energy! Who doesn't want more of it! It's what life is made of.

Our number one "*prescription*" to clients' today remains to lengthen the body and open the chest to lift the strain placed on vital organs like the lungs and heart.

The respiratory system is essential to all physical functions, and depends upon the structural alignment of balanced posture and thoracic range of motion. To free the upper body from pain, the chest needs to be free of restriction. This takes the strain off the neck and shoulders.

To reverse tight pectoral muscles from overuse of technology devices, long hours at work stations or activities such as caring from small children, we need to open the chest with slow and sufficient

stretching. This image below demonstrates laying on a rolled towel under the spine to relax the shoulders back and open the chest and is a fantastic example of how to encourage better upper body alignment.



Another vital aspect of maintaining upper body alignment is with sufficient back and shoulder muscle strength and conditioning. Our Strength based class, teaches the importance of working the scapular and rhomboid muscles. In order to maintain alignment for the upper body, retracting the muscles with exercises such as rowing motions with resistance, works wonderfully.

Headaches and migraines can result from too much pressure around the shoulders and a tight chest, so opening this area up can be a crucial element of restoring balance in the upper body. Focusing and bringing the attention to *the breathe* is one of the easiest relaxation tools that we have. Breathing exercises has the benefits of lowering stress levels, reducing pain and balancing blood pressure.

Here are a few tips from Hannah on how to use *the breathe* as a powerful way to restore balance to the body.

*“When experiencing chronic pain, there are a few simple breathing techniques that can radically help balance and free the body of such stagnating conditions.*

*By extending the exhale we can slow the breathing down, therefore slowing down the entire system. **The breathe** is the link between the mind body and spirit so to control this aspect we can control all aspects of the self. Make yourself comfortable and start breathing deeply through the nostrils into the lower lungs. You will feel the belly expand on the inhale then contract on the exhale.*

*Now start counting the length of your natural inward breathes, then match the count of your exhale to this same count. Once comfortable with the counting technique begin to lengthen your exhale for two extra counts. This ensures the lungs are completely empty before inhaling once again, relieving the body of toxins and stagnation. Keep the mind focused on **the breathe** and continue for 3 minutes.*

*Another very useful pain freeing breathing technique is the humming bee breath. This is created with a natural inhale then a gentle hum on the exhale. The vibrations of the sound have a calming effect on the body and particularly the brain. Practice this for 2 minutes.”*

Beyond restriction in the upper body, the lower body suffers a great deal when we allow our innate intelligence to go ignored for too long. Lower back pain is one of the most commonly googled

keywords when associated with Massage and Myotherapy, so we have included here, our advice on treating it at home yourself.

Reversing and preventing recurring lower back pain is about releasing restricted fascia and restoring a full range of motion to the area.

As a method of restoring full physical potential, Myotherapy uses dry needling among other holistic modalities such as traditional cupping treatment, myofascial release, remedial and trigger point therapy as well as PNF stretching and self care education. *Lower back pain* often originates from a common condition called an *anterior (forward) pelvic tilt*. Sitting wrong and for too long is a leading contributing factor causing tight hip flexor (iliopsoas) muscles to shorten and create this pelvic tilt. The goal is to spend at least 10 minutes each day slowly stretching the hips, glutes and lower back.

In our FREE online 8 Week Pain Management program, we share a number of videos in which you will learn how to prevent lower back pain as well as pain in each of the different areas of the body.

If you have suffered or do suffer with Sciatica, avoid squeezing the lower back with spinal flexion postures, like "*cobra*" until fully recovered. Here below we share 6 Stretches for Sciatica to free the lower back, often linked to gluteal and sciatic nerve pain. The reason we absolutely love sharing this information with people is because so many of our clients have transformed their lives with such simple tools! Tommy was one example. Tommy, one of Matthew's first clients from many years ago, broke a vertebra in his back with a

serious sports injury while playing soccer. It completely diminished his quality of life and he tried everything from Doctors to *Chiropractic and Physiotherapy*.

Finally after a series of treatments and teaching Tommy how to take care of his lower back with these stretches below, he was able to live again without the debilitating pain that was previously holding him back. So follow these simple steps towards your own back health and you will thank yourself for it later.

## 6 Stretches to Reverse Sciatica



*Spinal twist & glut release*



*Glut release knee to chest*



*Hamstring & thoracics lengthening*



*Leg & hip lengthen*



*Hip & lumbar spine stretch*



### *Lower back & leg release*

Understanding sciatica is key to helping heal faster and prevent the painful condition returning. With the right knowledge and self-care, Sciatica can be significantly reduced and reversed. Myotherapy and Remedial\_Massage have helped us see many clients recover from this debilitating condition. Sciatica can be experienced as sharp and shooting pain through the glut and down the leg, which alarms many of its sufferers.

### *Sciatica Stems From An Impingement Of The Sciatic Nerve Being Compressed By The Discs Of The Lumbar Spine.*

These discs compress the nerve to create pain, due to restriction from tight fascia surrounding the discs! *That is how simple this condition is*, and unfortunately so many people not knowing this will turn to medication.

The problem with pain medication is...**they do not treat the underlying cause of the pain** as Myotherapy and remedial massage do. There are a number of leading factors that contribute to the onset of sciatica, which are assessed and addressed at our clinic Advanced Myotherapy.

**Here are some simple steps to overcoming Sciatica naturally...**

**1. The first step** in reversing Sciatica is to *release tension from the surrounding area*, being the glutes and lower back. Regular (daily) **corrective stretching**, focusing on the legs (particularly hamstrings) and glutes, is an incredibly effective tool in reducing sciatic nerve pain.

**2. Secondly, simply using a ball to lay on** underneath the affected glut and hip, can help with “trigger point therapy”. Holding position where the pain is for several minutes or until fully released, can bring instant release. The key to getting results with such self treatment at home is in holding both the stretches and the pressure of the (tennis sized) ball under the body for long enough to allow for full release. The trick can be not to release the stretch or remove the ball before this relief comes, so as to avoid “*activating*” the pain further. To avoid this, simply be gentle with yourself enough to be able to hold the position long enough for it to be effective in allowing the tight muscles causing the pain to fully “*let go*”.

**3. Another incredibly effective self care method of treating sciatica is by applying heat** (a wheat bag) to the area. Heat relaxes the tight muscles enough to let them soften to release the affected area, and take the pressure off the discs compressing the sciatic nerve.

4. Along with these few very effective practical steps you can take at home, we use **Myotherapy and Remedial Massage** to manipulate the the surrounding area to allow softening and restoration of a better range of motion for less pain and restriction. This is the key to recovery when it comes to many neuro-musculo-skeletal conditions in the body that Myotherapy specialises in treating.

5. It is essential that you incorporate **lifestyle changes** such as **reducing the length of time you spend sitting**, such as driving or sitting at a desk for work. It can be as simple as breaking the day up with frequent stretching sessions or brief walks. Along with regular treatments to lengthen the restricted fascia around the sciatic nerve, self care is the number one tool in preventing sciatica pain from returning.

6. *Keeping active and fit and maintaining a healthy weight* and general range of motion is the best way, holistically speaking of preventing and correcting Sciatica. Incorporating these 6 simple stretches & steps will ensure you not only recover from this debilitating condition fast, but prevent it from recurring later on.

When it comes to Natural Management, Food is also a great medicine and can be consciously chosen to deal with pain. Introducing anti inflammatory foods to your diet and avoiding inflammatory foods in general. We discuss anti-inflammatory foods in our previous book *Self Care Medicine* and highly encourage you to explore this as one of many healing tools.

In terms of natural pain management, some may say it's far easier and quicker to take a pill than it is to reverse conditions holistically, but our belief is that drug therapy often is far more costly in the long term when you consider the affects it has on the body. Some like to call these "*side effects*".

You may believe that surgery is the best first option, even the safest, but sadly the truth is that many times you will find surgery fails. Often clients report having had multiple surgeries for the same injury, even suffering infections as a result, and having to take months off work and life for recovery.

Just think, how much better those months would be spent focusing on your health and healing naturally.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### *Traditional or Orthodox Approaches*

When it comes to choosing Drugs or Alternatives, we absolutely recommend self care as the number one go to solution for pain. What some may call “*Alternative*” is far too often failed to be acknowledged as “*traditional*” medicine. Traditional and natural medicines consider the role of the individual in the manifestation of their conditions.

Orthodox medicine on the other hand, often takes a prescriptive approach, treating the symptoms alone rather than the root cause. Drug therapy really offers a blanket approach to symptoms whereas natural medicines will take into account the whole person in order to address the roots of problems presenting themselves through symptoms.

We talk a lot about symptoms in our previous book *Self Care Medicine*, as being signs of something deeper. Left untreated, an imbalance in the body will often develop into pain conditions that, with a holistic lifestyle could simply be reversed naturally.

As opposed to being told what to do by an authority figure of medicine, Natural Medicine approaches have the purpose of empowering the individual to take control. What’s beautiful about natural medicine is giving people tools and information as opposed to a feeling of dependence and reliance.

Self Care and self education are central elements of a natural (traditional) approach to healthcare and wellness. This is one of the greatest advantages of a preventative pathway of taking responsibility and being accountable for your body.

There is an ancient knowledge of the natural world that can be seen in traditional medicine. When we go back to the roots, we find an abundance of healing properties in plant medicine, food medicine, nourishing traditions and tribal cultures that honour the needs of the body as an energetic system and spiritual vehicle.

**Just a few wonderful examples of natural medicines include:**

- Chinese Medicine
- Acupuncture
- Ayurveda
- Yoga
- Massage
- Reiki

Living in your values and having the energy and vitality to lead a stress free life is the ultimate goal of all natural medicines. So often a symptom or pain condition will come with a spiritual and emotional trigger. This is the reason why we first need to live a healthy life right from the *heart*. At a soul level, pain begins and manifests in the body in all kinds of ways. *Chinese Medicine* is wonderful at recognising this!

It takes a lot of self exploration to get to the point where we are able to recognise what we are here to do. But without this, we wander aimlessly and unconsciously, devoting our time to someone

else's cause outside of our values and purpose. Finding fulfillment and inner purpose naturally manifests as a healthy body and lifestyle that promotes longevity, preventing the need for drastic medical interventions.

This is by far is the most powerful key in preventing the need for substitution when it comes to outside sources of happiness. Be it from materialistic items, drugs, food highs, cheap thrills, quick fixes, dependant relationships or approval from others, all outside sources of happiness are temporary. Never lasting!

You are your source of joy. To find it, all you need to do is close your eyes, switch off and recognise that connection between all parts of yourself. You are whole and complete. As you are. If you have yourself in check, in this regard... then everything else in your life, especially your health, will fall into place much easier.

The thing about natural traditional approaches to medicine is that it can take some time. This often puts people off. But the problem is that really at the end of the day, there is no quick fix! A quick fix is temporary. A band aid. A cover up. And will not last as a real solution would. A solution where the client, patient or student will change their lives through better habits and choices.

Here in our western culture there is a general mistrust directed towards natural therapies. If you look at Acupuncture for example, there is a lot of research that has been done to prove its effectiveness and sound medical benefits (scientifically).

Yes it can take more energy and responsibility on your part, but at the end of the day, the power is in your hands! To live your life in a way that allows time enough to include things like stretching, meal planning, cooking and exercise is so valuable.

The power of stretching is often greatly underestimated. People can be so unaware of the need to spend sufficient time holding stretches correctly and gently, so as to gain the full potential possible from their routine.

*All stiffness and pain in the muscles is experienced as a result of poor blood flow, circulation and range of motion (mobility),* which is limited due to a lack of movement and tightening of the muscle tissue. Stretching is the most fundamental form of exercise in **keeping the muscles soft, flexible** and also strong in the long term, increasing the flow of energy and blood throughout the body, enhancing vitality, well being and structural integrity.

There are many **simple stretches that can be done to avoid both injuries and pain**, to assist in the **recovery from both acute and chronic injuries**. Keeping the muscles flexible and soft with stretching and movement is a vital key in maintaining health and longevity, preventing **many of the ailments that come with ageing and physical stiffness**.

Keeping the **spine mobile, preventing degeneration, deterioration** and promoting blood flow to areas that many people suffer preventable conditions with, such as the eyes, neck and head is a matter of regular stretching and exercise.

At Advanced Myotherapy we offer Myo-Balance classes for Personal Posture Correction and Pain Management. To find out more about how this training might be able to help you, call us or contact us via the website and we would be happy to chat about your personal condition.

Generally we find that people weaken from the core due to an inactive lifestyle. This is why we now have strength based classes that address underlying weakness that leads to strain on certain areas of the body. Core weakness is commonly associated with lower back pain. Our Myo-Balance classes help to build and maintain core strength and integrity so that such pain can be prevented. Again, "*Moving Beyond Pain*" is literally a title that suggests what we are all about. If you want a pain free life, then you must get the blood flowing!

## **CHAPTER 5**

### *Mind your Muscles*

*“The mind is everything. What you think you become.”*

- Buddha

The power of the mind has the greatest sway of all aspects of our lives. Why we need to be present to this very fact is because the minute we connect with our body mentally, rather than continuously being “elsewhere”, we are here and now and can better “listen” to our body’s messages. This way we can better respond to them. Meditation and giving ourselves the planned and scheduled time out to tune in and feel what our bodies are telling us, saves us so much pain in the long term.

Stop for a moment and breathe now. Feel good for a moment, by choice. How instantly we can transform our physical state with the mind is astounding.

*“It all begins and ends in your mind. What you give power to has power over you.”*

- Leon Brown

The instant you think about something that lies within your values, you are alive with inspiration. You are connected to your energy source, strong and ready to move. This is the power of the mind. To master your body you must first master your mind or it will govern you. So much of the pain we see today is connected to origins of emotional and mental stress. Stress is the biggest killer. So often we see people literally dying from a broken heart. Mothers and

children, husbands and wives, all die, so often within not just months or weeks but days apart from each other. Pain has incredible connections to our perception and mental health.

If we fail to acknowledge the mirror of the mind over the experience of pain, we miss an incredible opportunity to find its roots and heal its pattern from a very energetic point of view. Look at children for example. Small children often look to adults for guidance around the normal perception of pain. When a little child injures themselves, they look immediately to the parent to see how bad it is. This then transfers to the child, imprinting the experience on the child through their mind, the severity of their pain levels and reaction. It's mind-blowing!

To spend time in meditation, switch off all phones. It's best to turn them off completely rather than just let them ring on silent or vibrating and able to distract us. The important thing is to remember that it does not matter. Anything and everything will wait! You will need a comfortable place to sit and relax. Switch off as many distractions as you can.

Set aside time for this as often as you can, blocking time out just for you, alone. Begin to deepen the breath and close the eyes. From here you can begin to scan your body slowly. Bring your attention to each area of the body one at a time, spending time there wherever you are, to experience any sensation you find there.

In this place you can bring your mind and attention back into your body, free of distractions. This is a rare time out. Time out from doing. This is a time to just be. Feel.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Self Care Mastery*

Our earlier book *Self Care Medicine* was born from our passion and commitment to the mission of helping people live free of pain. It is through self care that we have seen so many of our clients transform their lives and reach another level of wellbeing. The level required to live a better quality of life than their previous pain permitted them to. Just now we came across some beautiful feedback from a client shared on instagram...*"I had a phenomenal emotionally unblocking session with Uros and highly recommend a visit. I've seen a lot of Myotherapists and Uros is the best - combining physical aches release with emotional."* This kind of feedback feeds our souls!

It is in watching such dramatic changes that we have been so inspired to keep going, building the momentum in our mission to reach greater and greater spheres of impact through our work, our educational approach, our programs and our books.

We have seen people recovery from chronic and acute pain conditions and injuries for which they have been recommended surgery, all with the power of self care. This is why we felt it essential to include a chapter on it here in our new book *Moving Beyond Pain*. It is essential to take control and responsibility when it comes to our own lives and the condition of our health.

Self care mastery is absolutely the most direct pathway there, to reach this goal. We wholeheartedly believe that our approach, having such a strong focus on self care education is one of the reasons

we have been able to enjoy the growing success that we do today at our clinic.

We find that everything flows from within when people start taking care of themselves, centring themselves. Rather than caving to the pressure of external demands that are outside of our true needs, we can honour ourselves and achieve a better quality of life as a result. Maintaining our health is the only way we can really ensure we enjoy life and get the most out of it, by loving ourselves well.

It is from this self love that we are more able to allow and lead others in how to love us as well. To know your own value and worth you don't need to wait until your energy is low and body ailing. The purpose of self care is to carry you through the hard times, when they come, building energy, vitality and strength.

It is the self understanding that we gain from turning our gaze inward and taking care of ourselves, that makes the biggest impact on our lives as a whole. Rippling outwards, our self love flows over from the full cup that it is into all areas of our lives.

Self Care is essential for Pain Management. It's important first to understand pain and how simple it can be to manage it in order to live a better quality of life, pain free. Heat for example is a really simple tool you can use to warm up and soften muscles, which is a fantastic natural pain killer.

Pain in general is a "cold" type of condition where stagnation persists. This is something that Myotherapy works wonders for,

reducing stiff muscles, restoring blood flow, movement and increased range of motion to the working muscles.

Often the first therapy we incorporate into our clinic treatments is “heat”. Quite simply heat allows the muscles to relax and helps to restore the natural length of the muscle, while taking pressure off the affected joints at the muscle’s origin and insertion. Wheat bags are one of the most effective ways of using heat therapy, allowing the weight of the heat to sit resting in the tight area, while literally “melting” the pain away. We know in labour while a woman is giving birth, heat is an incredibly well known tool in pain reduction.

One of our lovely clients Stephanie, reported that the midwives present at her birth, were really impressed with the wheat bags she was using (from our clinic) relaxing her during labour. So as you can imagine, if heat has this kind of power... then it’s certainly something we recommend as a Myotherapy clinic, to many of our clients as a way of management and preventing pain! *Our spine length, locally (& lovingly) made lavender and wheat bags can be purchased from our online store.*

Please remember also, though you may already have a wheat bag, they do need replacing every so many uses, as wheat eventually needs refreshing after so many “cooks”. The best way to increase the longevity of your wheat bag is to ensure you have a small cup of water in with the bag while heating it up. This way, you will be able to use it for a lot longer.

We offer Myo-Balance classes which are either rehab based or Yoga based for more of a Maintenance and prevention tool. These classes are designed to help people discover the simple, fast and effective corrective exercises that bring your body back into alignment. Our individually focused classes are designed to balance your muscular system for holistic longevity and wellbeing. The small class sizes ensure that you don't get lost in a crowded class. Our therapists, teachers and trainers facilitate classes to empower clients to reach greater mobility and faster rates of injury recovery.

Offering focused spinal alignment incorporating stretching and Yoga therapy along with strength and conditioning training, the purpose of our classes are to empower you to move beyond your pain and gain greater mobility and increased range of motion for a better quality of life. Our mission is to help you learn how to manage pain naturally yourself with specific exercises to work with your individual needs.

Myo Balance classes are about managing pain naturally. *Here we share 6 Steps to Reverse Posture Related Pain.* We find that with most pain being muscular, posture is so vital in helping maintain a pain free state.

As a Myotherapy Clinic people seek our help when pain develops from postural dysfunction and injury. Here are *6 simple* and practical steps we frequently recommend clients routinely use to gain the most from their body and prevent the ongoing need for medical intervention and drugs for pain.

### ***1. Sleep on your back***

Side and stomach sleepers suffer with more pain from their dominant positions leading to rounding (internally rotating) shoulders and neck tension. Sleeping on the back (aside from during pregnancy) is the best way to prevent poor sleep posture and pain down the track.

### ***2. Balance daily activities***

Using technology devices like phones and computers and working in various trades, can often lead to overuse of particular muscle groups. Myotherapists work with people in educating them around how to correct and reverse posture related pain through self care.

Using a foam roller or tightly rolled towel under the spine while lying down relaxing at the end of the day is a great way to open the shoulders, chest and heart centre, to bring the shoulders back into alignment.

### ***3. Strengthen your core***

The very basic action of consciously bringing the stomach up and in, works to develop core integrity. Core strength, supported by strong glutes and a strong pelvic floor, is particularly important during and after pregnancy.

This helps not only prepare for physiological birth, but speeds recovery from pregnancy pressure and softening. Recovering strength in the core is particularly important for mothers to help prevent and reduce any weakness associated lower back pain.

Bringing the spine flat to compress transverse abdominal muscles to engage the stomach, is a fantastic discipline to incorporate into your regular routine for core strengthening exercise.

Including squats to build strong glutes also goes a long way to maintaining a strong pelvic floor to prevent imbalances leading to other postural related problems later.

#### ***4. Stretch slowly and often***

Our advice is simple. Lengthen and strengthen. Keeping the muscles not only strong, but also long and stress free, allows for a better range of motion and mobility long term. This is especially important for those who play sports and train for both strength and endurance.

To prevent learning the hard way with muscle tears, sprains and injuries, the best method of active recovery is to spend sufficient time regularly stretching. Slow stretching is a deeper, gentler way of increasing flexibility and joint mobility essential for long term musculoskeletal health.

#### ***5. Balance your pelvis***

The main hip flexor has a lot to do with the pressure placed on the lower back. Lower back pain often develops as a result of the main hip flexor (iliopsoas) shortening over time when sitting too long, too often or from simple stiffness and fatigue.

Stretching out the quads leading into a deeper hip stretch regularly will go a long way in preventing hip flexor shortening = causing an anterior pelvic tilt, = leading to lower back pain.

## ***6. Use heat to melt muscles***

Unless you suffer from arthritis that is triggered by heat, rather than cold, using heat therapy works magic to melt muscle tension. Helping to restore original muscle length through relaxing the area and restoring blood flow, heat application to a muscle group brings great relief from built up tension and pain.

Incorporating these simple steps can greatly reduce muscular pain (a large percentage of pain is muscular), so until your next visit to a Myotherapist or Physical therapist of your choice, I hope these practical tips are as powerful for you as they have been for many of our clients over the years.

Self Care Mastery is that one thing that so many people put at the bottom of their to *“get to”* list. They let too many *“got to”* chores get in their way rather than delegating such things to others so they can focus on the bigger goals. Let’s face it, the biggest goal is to live well and live long. If we can’t get out of our own way and stop making excuses for not taking care of the little things that make a difference, then we are wasting time. Wasting life really.

The problem with many people is they can’t maintain focus! I say this because Matthew and I have built an undeniably successful business at Advanced Myotherapy and the only reason we have been able to do it is we have great focus! To *“zero in”* on something is to give it great priority and place it above all else. Multitasking is great but it does not lead to results! So many people water down their productivity by trying to do everything, meanwhile getting very little really accomplished to any great level or depth.

This is because they are not focused on “*what matters*”. And what matters more than health? I mean really? If we don’t have our health, what do we have? When you place a high priority on your health, all other areas of life are enhanced. It’s a flow on effect of that “*full cup*”. This is what our clinic is all about. Helping people return to themselves and find balance again. As someone who is reading this book you obviously value your health enough to invest in it. For that reason we would love to help you maintain balance for a healthy life.

As our gift to you for reading this is a complimentary 30 *minutes* at our clinic. In this session you will discover the best ways to regain balance and align yourself to manage pain naturally. I hope you have found some useful tips in this book, so that you can feel a greater sense of confidence to enjoy a healthy, pain free life. It is my intention for you to understand what you can do when you feel yourself off centre, so that you can bring yourself back quickly, without developing chronic conditions of suffering.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### *Myo-Balance for Mobility*

We are passionate about sharing simple, fast and effective corrective exercises that bring your body back into alignment. Balance your muscular system for holistic longevity and wellbeing using what we have shared with you here in this book. Don't get lost in a crowded gym class. If you would like to join our small class for expert lead posture correction myo-balance training, we would like to offer you a free trial, just for reading this far into the book. It's our reward to you for caring about your health so much.

Our therapists and teachers facilitate classes to empower clients to reach greater mobility and faster rates of injury recovery. Our classes offer focused spinal alignment incorporating stretching and Yoga therapy along with strength and conditioning training. The purpose of our classes is to empower you to move beyond your pain and gain greater mobility and increased range of motion for a better quality of life. Learn how to manage pain naturally yourself with specific exercises to work with your individual needs.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### *Why Myotherapy*

Myotherapy is a system of treating muscular dysfunction, injuries and pain. As a system manual form of therapy, Myotherapy offers solutions for musculoskeletal pain and posture correction for pain management. At Advanced Myotherapy, we specialise in difficult to treat, chronic and severe pain conditions and injuries.

**Here a 5 reasons you may need Myotherapy:**

#### *1. You have chronic neck and back pain...*

Spinal restriction placing pressure on the nervous system causes pain. Tight muscles and fascia along the spine (erector spinae) is the leading cause of this pain.

Often people say they visit various therapists for spinal adjustments or manipulations without lasting results. The reason for this is due to the fact that tight muscles are usually the origin of the condition, not always the resulting spinal and neural pressure that comes with pain.

#### *2. You're getting frequent headaches and migraines...*

Addressing the root cause of symptoms, often originating from poor postural habits, we combine treatment with self care education which has a lasting impact. Treating the neck alone without addressing the habitual causes often result in only temporary relief from pain.

### ***3. Old injuries still stop you from being able to do what you used to...***

Injuries from years ago even still today, are stopping you from certain activities you once loved. Myotherapy breaks up scar tissue around trauma areas that haven't yet healed properly, from deep tissue release work to dry needling trigger points to rid you of any residual muscle memory of old injuries.

### ***4. You are noticing your own bad posture and shallow breathing...***

Shallow breathing is a symptom of bad posture resulting from internally rotating shoulders, especially common in side or stomach sleepers and office workers. Noticing your own bad posture is a sign you've left treatment too long. Maintaining muscular balance is essential for spinal health and will prevent a multitude of ailments from herniated discs to even worse - spinal nerve root compression.

So how do you maintain good posture? First of all it's all about moving! You need to be your own priority. Surround yourself with people who value themselves enough to influence and rub off on you. Get involved in groups that value their fitness and health. Have regular body therapies and do resistance training regularly. If you constantly offer no resistance against gravity, it *will* get you down!

### ***5. Your usual shopping centre massages are not working...***

The random rub downs miss all the key points, fail to warm up the muscles and while you generally walk in on the spot, they simply missed all the spots! You even tried pain killers and they only masked the stress, leading you to soldier on and make things worse!

Here we share a couple of our favourite stories from clients about how Myotherapy has helped them overcome chronic pain conditions. The reason we share these is because we know so many people suffer in the same way as both of these wonderful clients. These are two people who simply want to get the most out of life and know that they need their health to do that. These are our ideal type of clients. We have great respect for people who can see the value in looking after themselves on an ongoing basis, and not just when the pain gets them down.

It's all about keeping a balance and learning the keys to self care, rather than just relying on treatment alone as so many dependant people do. Our purpose lies in empowering clients, which you can see from this feedback below, is exactly what happened here.

*"After over a decade of pain and countless practitioners I finally found Matt at Advanced Myotherapy. In 3 sessions I have learnt so much about what is causing my problems, have been given so many techniques for managing my back problem and my monthly migraine for the first time was only a mild headache and that was only after 3 sessions! I am looking forward to the future which Matt tells me will be migraine and back pain free. Thank you Advanced Myotherapy Angels!!!"*

*- Kimberley Kifun*

*"There are many so many opinions as to which of the practices to choose, be it chiro or Osteopathy even bower therapy. My opinion it depends on the practitioners. FEW in each field around Australia, and perhaps the world, have the ability to heal. Not just treat the problem send you on your way, but to find the Source of the problem. To help you to minimize future recurrences by teaching you about your body and its movement. Matt at Advanced Myotherapy is one of these rare practitioners.*

*My job requires a lot of heavy lifting, I surf and skateboard and play golf. So I can be sore and broken on a daily basis and when it's been bad Matt has fixed me every time AND has given me the know how alleviate minor issues or self maintain. I don't go anywhere else now." - Kris Rachmanczuk*

Its feedback like *Kimberley's and Kris'* that reminds us of our purpose each day as we continue to grow Advanced Myotherapy through all of our work. We are inspired by our clients and it gives us great determination to keep evolving in our capacity to reach more and more people in this way.

Myotherapy uses a range of modalities including dry needling, cupping and advanced remedial massage. If you suffer from back or neck pain, a sports injury, arthritis – in fact any joint or muscle problem – Myotherapy can help relieve your pain and get you moving again. Myotherapists are trained to assess the underlying causes of joint, muscle and nerve injuries and provide effective treatment. They use a wide range of drug-free techniques to relieve pain, restore movement and prevent further problems.

### **What to expect in your initial visit:**

- Postural assessment, specific self care education for pain symptoms, injury/ surgery recovery, prevention and drug dependence reduction. Musculoskeletal and nerve health check, muscle therapy for spinal support, nerve function and cellular regeneration. Treatment plan and remedial self care prescription. Implementation of suitable modalities from PNF assisted stretching, dry needling, cupping, myofascial release and trigger point therapy are also part of a Myotherapy treatment.

- **What to bring:** Any x-ray, scan or MRI reports for recent and or current injuries.

**Who we work best with:**

***Our ideal clients***

*Place a high value on physical health*

*Are committed to achieving results*

*Value performance and health*

*Like to exercise regularly*

*Understand investing in health is worth it*

The Advanced Myotherapy approach is simple, fast and effective. At our clinic, we make fitness and physical performance achievable by applying simple, effective strategies of musculoskeletal alignment and mechanical diagnosis and therapy.

Our programs and packages are designed to fast track injury recovery and relieve neck pain, shoulder pain and lower back pain and promote physical mobility. Our mission is to empower people to live pain free and perform at their physical best. Muscle Therapy, including Myotherapy and Massage have been found to promote endless health benefits. Myotherapy and Massage are found to have far reaching health benefits from reducing blood pressure to helping with stress management.

In 2013 The International Journal of Preventive Medicine published a study revealing the incredible *link between massage and blood pressure*. In conjunction with the benefit of reducing blood pressure, the study revealed there was also *a drop in markers of*

*inflammation*, suggesting massage doesn't just help the heart, it has a far more holistic effect.

**Reducing the levels of the stress hormone cortisol**, regular Massage has been found to help **reduce the effects of aging**. A recent research study states that **anxiety sufferers undergoing withdrawal from psychoactive drugs** experienced both significant immediate and sustained reduction in symptoms. By improving the experience of the withdrawal process, providing patients with healthier approaches to managing the way they feel, the study concluded that massage may help retain patients within service areas, improving overall wellbeing. This study was published in the Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine (2010).

**Studies have also shown significant reduction of symptoms in endometriosis / painful menstruation** sufferers, after receiving a series of (massage) treatments. Results showed that the severity of pain and symptoms subsided immediately and lasted up to six weeks. The research concluded that massage therapy can be used to reduce menstrual pain and endometriosis as an inexpensive method of treatment with no reported side effects. Findings showed that there was a significant difference between the intensity of pain before the intervention started and immediately after. This study was published in the Iranian Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Research (2010).

**Research has also showed significant improvements in fatigue and insomnia in massage patients.** Massage has been shown to promote fast recovery in patients who have undergone surgery for a range of conditions, even preventing surgery in countless cases.

We ourselves at Advanced Myotherapy have seen a number of successful recovery cases who have previously been recommended surgery, but thankfully sought a (our) second opinion.

### **Read some of our client feedback below...**

*"I'd like to thank you for the awesome work on my back and legs. 6 months ago I couldn't walk and now I have done the dandenong mountains 1000 steps 2 weeks in a row. You are a lifesaver. I feel so much better and happier with all the pain gone. Keep the good work up. Again thank you"*

**- Nazih Dib**

*"Told I needed surgery for Achilles Tendonitis, I wanted a second opinion. After treatment I became more aware of my own contribution to the condition and have since recovered fully without surgery."*

**- Theo**, TNM Consulting

*"I had doctors telling me I needed surgery, now they are scratching their heads after seeing my follow up scan only months later. NO more herniated disc!"*

**- Grant Smith**, Sound technician

*"I was diagnosed with CTA – carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis and fibromyalgia and was treated by a Physiotherapist for 4 months once a week. You have done more for me in one session than the physio did in that whole time and the tingling is almost gone already."*

**- Malina Larm**

*"Self Care is the key word for 2012...highly advocated by Advanced Myotherapy...thanks for the inspiration Advanced Myotherapy...although I am ageing I get much more out of my body than ever before!"*

**- Cindy James**

*"Thank you for a great treatment today and the follow up plan. It was my first experience of a dry needling treatment today, I can truly recommend this treatment. Feeling more movement already."*

**- Sandra Cleary**

*"I had severe pain in my elbow and lost a lot of strength in my forearm. Now I'm back to work as usual without restriction."*

**- Ramsey Pedro**, Electrician

*"Running a highly demanding corporate organisation with a family at home, I came to Advanced Myotherapy on recommendation, for the severe pain down my leg. I am now free from the debilitating pain I was constantly in. I highly recommend Advanced Myotherapy for anyone seeking better health."*

**- Lazarus**, Skillup Australia

*"Advanced Myotherapy came highly recommended to me for the treatment of my painful feet. I have now been able to maintain an active lifestyle with a more conscious awareness of recovery and self care."*

**- Cindy James**, Interiors That Fit

*"Success in the Melbourne marathon in tough conditions a pb of 5.06 half an hour faster than expected! Legs feel great thanks to training and Advanced Myotherapy!"*

**- Joanne Baxas**

*"Thanks a lot! No matter what persistent pain I have, you make them disappear in an instant! You are a true PAIN MAGICIAN!!!"*

**- Veronika Nemes**

## **CHAPTER 9**

### *Beautiful Birth and Beyond*

Natural birth is a wonderful way to give newborns the best possible start to life. By triggering the immune system in many ways, just in the same way breastfeeding does, undisturbed birth goes a long way to enhancing maternal and infant health.

As a Natural Therapist, Feng Shui Consultant and Astrologer...**BIRTH** became my world when I was pregnant! It was the perfect blend of everything I ever loved, poured into one. The first breathe, the “*birthday*” (Astrology) and Feng Shui for the perfect “*home*” birth. Pregnancy for me...was a time of beautiful transformation as I grew into a completely new person, evolving in even my values and psychological makeup. Not only was I changing hormonally, but everything I had ever loved merged together to become focused completely on the benefits of Home Birth.

For one, I wanted to be in my own environment... the best possible place to feel “*at home*” and comfortable for the beginning of my baby’s life... her first breathe. That beautiful first breathe that would continue to leave an energetic imprint on her for the rest of her life!

After all, we know that the birthing hormones such as oxytocin are stimulated by comfort, love and intimacy that increase when we are in our “*safe space*”. The challenge of a hospital birth is to maintain these birthing hormones in an adrenaline fuelled atmosphere.

It was a 3 day labour I had, but preparing for a natural birth, I got through it with grace (mostly). My birth was absolutely beautiful! You can read the story in the notes of my *Beautiful Birth and Beyond* facebook page.

It's why I love to help others do the same, for the health benefits it has for the infant's brand new immune system, the recovery of the mother and the bonding made strong because of the natural birth hormones, undisturbed by synthetic drug hormones.

I learned SO much in pregnancy which empowered me to be able to labour at home for 3 days with just us 2 (about to become 3). The midwives came when our little girl's head was already out. This is how confident and comfortable I was and we were! We almost forgot to call the midwife! And though we forgot to call Di Diddle, our Doula, we feel it was largely her Birth education and preparation that helped us feel so confident in doing this on our own after all.

This is what I want for others! This knowing that you were made for this! This confidence that you can do this and birth can be beautiful! This is why I designed the Ultimate Birth Preparation Package! This package is literally what I did during my pregnancy! It's not all of it, but it's the core of it, that I want others to experience, in order to have a beautiful birth.

Here below I have decided to include my birth story. This is one of many positive birth stories, that I wish for women to be immersing themselves in during pregnancy. After all, whatever the mind can conceive, it can achieve! I call it "*imagineering*".

## **The Beautiful Home Water Birth of Ella Rose**

Our little Ella Rose began preparing my body for her arrival on Saturday the 19th of July 2014. We had a feeling she was on her way given the preparation dedicated to her gentle entrance. My last birth prep acupuncture appointment was on the Thursday. By Friday night I experienced niggles that told me this little baby was not far away.

From 10 mins apart, waves rolled through my body and began to grip stronger and stronger right through the weekend until finally they were only 1-2 minutes apart early Monday morning. Both Saturday and Sunday nights, I was able to sleep through each contraction between 6 and 7 - occasionally 10 minutes apart, until reaching more consistent closeness at 4am on Monday morning. That's when my waters began to flow between movements. I would walk up and down our stairs for the bathroom which was moving things along further each journey.

I would continue about my day as Matt doted and waited on me, cooking our favourite meals and ensuring I was hydrated with plenty to drink. As the waves of energy became more intense, Matt was there to grip onto. Filling the birth pool at 6am on Monday morning, I was amazed at the instant relief of the beautiful warm water. Matt lay mostly there on the bed beside the pool, as we listened to beautiful music.

It was just us two (3 really). No one knew that my labour had begun. I was now in active labour and planned it this way to avoid any distractions slowing things down. We wanted it to be as calm as

possible. All the while as the waves of intensity swept through my body, I felt gratitude for each one of them bringing me closer to my baby girl. I thought I would use the Lavender oil I so love during labour for pain management, but when the time came... I didn't want anything taking me away from the *powerful feelings* I was experiencing as my baby and I united in our purpose.

I wanted every last drop of sensation to propel this magic forward and bring forth my love. I was held in Matthew's embrace, danced to beautiful music and swayed my baby down through my expanding pelvis... even listening to some romantic Elvis. We figured, rhyming with "pelvis" Elvis would help vibrationally open me up for what was to come. Our baby girl gently and gradually wore down my every barrier, breaking down my every wall as I began to surrender with all my might to the transformation taking place within me.

We lit candles and burnt oils of Clary Sage, Jasmine, Geranium, Rose and Ylang ylang...helping to encourage the flow of unfolding. Each time I would massage magnesium on my belly, blended with evening primrose oil with this essential oil blend, the waves of intensity would flow even more freely. In those times I would drop to the medicine ball and hold onto Matt, sounding out the trembling inside. In between we would both stop every once in awhile to use the base / root chakra crystal bowl... in a ceremony of encouragement to our baby girl.

Monday night came and we managed to wiggle our way out of Matthew's mother's suspecting intuition with message replies that I was well and carrying on as usual in response to questions of

whether or not I was experiencing any "*niggling pains etc*". A couple of close friends messaged, but were not responded to, upon my request. The phone was ignored and things progressed so beautifully. We put on Anna Urbanski's Birth Bliss Guided Relaxation and things picked up well.

My moans returned to the deepest of breaths and it was as if for the first time...I discovered the true power of the breath! Everything transformed within me. Matthew laying on the floor meditating with me, really amplified the power of what was taking place! We were doing this together! I began opening in a whole new way! This was when things were taken to another level. I instinctively (without thinking) took to bed once more, when transition begun and I could no longer talk. Matthew offered me food but I could not move.

The voice final show was on as I slipped into transition and went within...silent between the increasing power of vocal waves that rippled through me as Ella pushed her way down the canal. I felt every bit of it and as much as it took over me, I loved and trusted in the process. Matthew encouraged me to get up, not realising the stage things were at... that my labour had reached its peak...a "*final*" of its own. Matt's mother then became more curious without hearing from us during our favourite show...The Voice...especially during the "*Final*"... of which I obviously saw nothing.

It was happening. Still, we revealed nothing. I for one was unable to speak or move. When Matt encouraged me to "*move to keep things happening and assist the labour along*" I could barely tell him...that nothing "*needed helping*" along...that Ella was certainly

almost here. Just then as he left the room, thinking I was getting lazy in labour...putting on the Voice...turning off my mystical labour sounds...I gave a whopping "Woooooaaaaaaahhhhh" that brought him straight back in. He saw that I had returned to the pool and I found the voice to tell him..."*Ella and I have got this...we're doing it*". So he quickly put the Tony O'connor Awakenings cd back on...as I began to "push" baby Ella down.

For a few minutes...I chanted as Matt joined in..."*I surrender...I let go... I birth*." And just then...I suggested as Ella's head was emerging... that maybe we could now call the midwife. And so he did. And within 30 minutes, Joy had arrived just 15 minutes before Ella's birth and her partner Amy, who arrived just 2 minutes before Ella was here... while her head was already out. This was the most beautiful experience of my life by far!

My baby Ella Rose joined us with little noises and not evens a cry. But to hear her voice was something so dear that we had been longing to hear. Her touch so soft and her gaze so piercing. I would do it all again. There are no words for the love that has flooded our lives with this beautiful baby girl! We are so blessed and grateful to have had the birth we dreamed of and prepared for.

To be able to bring our baby into the world in the comfort of our own home and for Ella to take her first breathe in her own room was something truly amazing! I can only hope more women see this as a possibility for themselves. As with enough self care, preparation and planning... I have found that birth can be the most magical experience of our lives.

Ella Rose was born at 10:13pm on Monday the 21st of July at 7 pounds and 50 cm long. She is the most beautiful thing we have ever laid our eyes on. It was in this moment that not only a child was born, but a mother, a father and a family. This was a moment in which I learned that true power of the body. To create. To transcend, transform and change our lives. It is from this discovery that I now have such a deep appreciation and respect for the ability that the body has to dictate our quality of life. To impact our life, to represent our choices and change according to them. This is where my passion for empowering women to birth well was born.

## **The 9 Keys to Birth Preparation**

I made chapter 9 the Birth chapter of this book as I felt it appropriate and easy to remember. Here in this chapter I share the 9 key elements of preparing for a natural empowering birth experience. The purpose of having a natural birth has little to do with being a heroine! People seem to have that idea, but for those who choose it, you can bet that the reason behind it mostly has to do with the health of their baby.

So here are the 9 key elements of a beautiful birth that I have come to learn. The first and most important in my eyes... is the birth PLAN! You don't just wing it and go with the flow if you truly want a natural birth. This just doesn't work! If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. This applies to birth as much as any other area of life.

## *The 1st Key: The Birth Plan*

My passion for Pregnancy Care and Birth preparation came from my own experience, leading up to the Beautiful Empowered Home Water Birth of my little girl. It's simple really. Having gone through pregnancy and natural birth myself, I love empowering other mothers to do the same. And there are many reasons for it. It's not about bragging rights; I don't know where that silly idea came from. However the highly medicalised birthing "*industry*" might have something to do with it.

Natural birth is about giving a baby the best possible start to life and leaving the best imprint or impression about the nature of life, through the baby's first experience of it. It's about supporting the immune system naturally, giving the bay a stronger respiratory and immune system, entering the world through the birth canal, that squeezes the lungs and triggers the immune response to the microbiome in the mother's vagina.

Natural birth is also importantly about the hormonal bonding process without the disruption that drugs cause, putting all of this at risk, often causing preventable issues, where a little preparation goes a long way. This is my passion. My mission in this space, lies in helping women and families realise their potential to birth naturally without the need or desire for drugs. To share that it's important to know the reasons why we actually are far better off birthing naturally and without drugs in most cases.

Planning is the best way to ensure success in all areas of life and birth is no exception. I can say this with certainty because I for

one have had a great deal of success in my life. I consider the fact that I overcame considerable adversity growing up, to be an enormous success, not only in overcoming the great deal of trauma, but also in achieving all that I have, growing a successful, multi-award winning business, helping thousands of people and authoring a number of books by age 31.

So I trust that when I say preparation leads to success, this will have some credibility, given the fact that I have applied this principle in not only my own birth, but many other areas of my life.

I had 3 days of labour! It's the longest labour I personally have heard of that resulted in a natural birth. This is why I encourage you to use the tools that I share in order to give birth naturally, as without preparing for it, your chances are much lower of doing so. After all the percentage of natural home birth is less than 2%. Why I encourage you to explore home birth, is because people are waiting for hospital beds!

Just ask how many births take place in any one hospital, and how many maternity beds there are and then do the maths! They want you to hurry up and get out! Bottom line! They will use drugs to get that done! It's the sad truth in the majority of cases where the mother is not empowered with the informed choices about how she wants her birth to be.

If you give birth at home, you can have all of the medical professionals you need right there present with you, only in the comfort of your own home with a back up emergency hospital

transfer plan. You will not be monitored and on the clock as you would be in hospital.

There are many benefits of home birth that I will go into, but firstly and most importantly, it is for the comfort of the birthing mother that supports the hormones of birth, rather than stifling them as so often happens in the adrenaline promoting environment of a hospital.

There are so many things to consider in the birth planning stages. Just have a look for birth plan templates and you will be amazed at the amount of information some of them have in them. In my eyes, it's best to be clear and informed well before the birthday arrives.

Birth plan templates are everywhere! Check out what people are putting up on pinterest for a start. It's a great visual, especially if you are like me and a very visually oriented person.

Just think, there are reasons women prefer darkness, intimacy and the absence of strangers (including students) present at their birth! Privacy fosters the oxytocin hormone VITAL in propelling birth forward! It's ALL about your comfort! So please communicate this to your care providers in a prepared birth plan that you bring to your birth.

*"If more providers and educators knew the truth about birth physiology, we could make a huge difference for mothers. What is important is to keep her well supported for the purpose of the appropriate chemistry, to keep her well hydrated and nourished for muscle strength, and to believe in her. We*

*should be supporting her so that her physiology and that of her baby are unhindered, so they can finish what they started.*

*We should not be measuring, poking, or interpreting her labor. THIS CHANGE in teaching about labor could make such a difference for women who are imagining what is happening in their bodies during labor. How much more strength might they have if they have an accurate picture?"*

**- Carla Hartley**

Why I feel Birth Preparation is important is because to prepare for anything increases our success rate in whatever area of life it may be! So many parents spend more time researching the pram they want to buy or the baby car seat they are going to buy than they do the birthing options they have and the care providers they “choose”.

So many women sadly don't even realise they have the “choice” in care providers, rather end up following a system that they first come into contact with, getting the luck of the draw, not seeking any of their own self education in this important time in their lives, merely hoping the hospital will provide it all.

This is why I am sharing this with you. To empower you with all of the resources that empowered me to have both an amazing pregnancy and birth! So, I hope to enlighten you on your journey in birth planning so that you may be empowered in giving your child the best start possible in life.

In the meantime, please follow my Beautiful Birth page on facebook [www.facebook.com/beautifulbirthandbeyond](http://www.facebook.com/beautifulbirthandbeyond) and join my

my Balance Beyond Baby group so that you may begin preparing for all those little things you may not have thought of yet.. that at least can be on your radar to help you prepare for early motherhood.

I look forward to welcoming you there!

### *The 2nd Key: Knowing Your Options*

Its standard hospital procedure to immediately take baby away from its mother to clean, weighs measure and vaccinate it. This does not need to happen immediately! Consider researching the Hep B vaccination which is a disease that you literally only contract through sharing needles or sexual intercourse. Babies do neither. There is a lot of research against it, so again, please... do your own. You research prams and cots, why would you not research something as important as this?

The babies vernix that it is born covered in is extremely nourishing and protective and should be left on as long as possible and bathing delayed for a good week. Please read further into why rather than taking my word for it. Do not bath baby until you are home. It just does not need to happen at hospital. Weighing a measuring can happen much later than the first hour of essential hormonal bonding!

### *Wait for the Weight...BOND first!*

Knowing your options when it comes to birth especially in care provider's place of birth and policies of hospitals is essential in preparing for an empowering birth experience.

*I recommend reading Birth with Confidence by renowned Birth attendant (Doula) educator Rhea Dempsey.*

This gave me an incredible boot up the bum when it came to learning where I wanted to give birth and why.

You also want to start thinking about ultrasounds as being another intervention that may not be needed. Dr Sarah Buckley explains why beautifully in her book Gentle Birth Gentle Mothering, which I highly recommend. I cried while reading it... yes I was pregnant and hormonal BUT she explains pregnancy and fetal development SO beautifully!

Here are a couple of links below that may also help you think about some of the things you may not even be aware that you might need to be thinking about:)

<http://birthwellbirthright.com/4d-ultrasounds-not-told/>  
<https://www.bellybelly.com.au/birth/small-pelvis-big-baby-cpd/>  
Empowering Birth - <https://www.facebook.com/KatBirthGoddess>

*The 3rd Key: Preventing Breech Position*

I learned a lot about encouraging optimal baby position during pregnancy with Nina Isabella, a local Birth Yoga specialist who taught my pre-natal Yoga classes. I also swam almost daily during a large part of my pregnancy... after the 1st trimester, when I was mostly couch bound, dizzy and sea sick.

Just think, gravity pulls the heaviest part of the body downward in the water... therefore you want to encourage baby's spine outward and head downward, ideally to prevent breech position. This means, leaning forward and being on your hands and knees or fitball often in pregnancy. Swimming is an ideal exercise for this reason, mostly being in a leaning position while taking the pressure off all the joints while being able to get cardio in and move those limbs around.

### *The 4th Key: Birth Education*

I found Di Diddle's private Birth Education amazing in my pregnancy. Rhea Dempsey presents one of the nights and explains the power of labour in a stunning way that really has you thinking about your perception of pain during labour, in helping you give birth naturally.

Doing Nina Isabella's workshop with my partner also really helped work through some practical ways we could encourage labour progression for birth.

I also used Anna Urbanski's Birth Bliss CD set in mediating for birth both specifically for pregnancy and labour. I found it SO useful in propelling my labour forward, changing things from screaming to breathing instantly! Matthew was literally laying there with me, meditating with me as we listened to the guided birth relaxation CD. It was beautiful!

## *The 5th Key: Knowing the Cascade of Interventions*

Often, one thing leads to another in the way of medical interventions during labour and birth. I know how the story goes as since giving birth myself, I hear so many birth stories. Sadly, many of them are quite disempowering. But I listen with silence and can often detect a degree of medical triggering for the snowball effect of interventions. I feel this excerpt below captures the cascade quite well.

*“Many things in life have unintended consequences: they may or may not have the effect that we want, and sometimes they have unplanned and possibly unwanted effects.*

*Many maternity care interventions have unintended effects during labor and birth. Often these effects are new problems that are "solved" with further intervention, which may in turn create even more problems. This idea that using one intervention can lead to the need for more interventions is called a "cascade of intervention."*

*The maternity practices that can lead to a cascade of intervention include:*

- *Using various medications to induce labor.*
- *Artificially breaking the membranes surrounding the baby and releasing amniotic fluid before or during labor.*
- *Using synthetic oxytocin medicine (“Pitocin”) to make labor move faster.*
- *Giving medications for pain relief.*
- *Laboring in bed versus being upright and moving about.*

*In many instances, these practices cause problems because they disrupt the normal physiology of pregnancy, labor and birth by:*

- *Interfering with hormones that move labor and birth along.*
- *Creating opportunities for infection.*
- *Having undesirable effects on your baby.*
- *Making it harder for you to push your baby out.*

*When these effects happen, women may feel that their bodies have failed them, not realizing that the things that went wrong could have actually been triggered by maternity practices themselves.”*

**Source:**

<http://www.childbirthconnection.org/maternity-care/cascade-of-intervention>

Almost every intervention has some potential to cause harm. You should use care in deciding whether to have an intervention. We encourage you to accept only those interventions that are more likely to offer benefit than harm. In weighing possible benefits and harms, it is important to rely on the best available evidence about potential effects, and to consider how you feel about the possible outcomes. It is also important to learn about other options that may be available. You will find a lot of this information in the Giving Birth section of the Childbirth Connection website.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to predict in advance exactly what may happen during your labor and delivery, or how a given intervention may affect you or your baby. The best way to limit a cascade of intervention is to become informed, get all of your questions answered, and put plans in place in advance that will help avoid potentially harmful interventions.

## Tips for avoiding unnecessary interventions:

- Choose a support team and care providers that have low rates of using common interventions.
- Become familiar with the best available research about interventions that are most likely to trigger a cascade of intervention, including induction of labor, epidural analgesia and other pain medications and cesarean section.
- Have an honest conversation with your care provider about why you need any recommended interventions. It's ideal to have this conversation well before you may need the intervention so you can express your wishes and discuss plans.
- Talk to your care provider about "*watching and waiting*" (doing nothing and waiting for labor to move along or for issues to resolve on their own) or using simpler, less invasive alternatives.
- Learn about the benefits of continuous labor support and consider engaging a doula to help you achieve your objectives.
- Clearly communicate your wishes to your care providers, and get the support of your spouse, partner, doula or other supports to reinforce your wishes throughout labor and delivery.
- Know that you have the right to accept or refuse procedures, drugs, tests and treatments.

## *The 6th Key: Lotus Birth and Delaying Cord Clamping*

Before writing the business plan and designing the floor plan for Advanced Myotherapy, I was not only a Natural Therapist, but also a Nanny. During that time I took care of children from as young as 6 months. It was in this time that I studied Mothercraft at the International College of Spiritual Midwifery. It was quite a few years later that the Founder came into the clinic and left a copy of her incredible book "*Lotus Birth*". I had not yet become a mother but when I did fall pregnant, this book made a huge impact on my outlook on birth!

I encourage you to get your hands on a copy of *Lotus Birth*, as I could not do the book justice in the short space I have working with you over your pregnancy if you are a client of mine preparing for your birth. *Lotus Birth* is by Shivam Rachana, from the International College of Spiritual Midwifery.

For a little more on *Lotus Birth*, I have included a link here which is of an article which I feel is a great introduction to it.

<http://birthwithoutfearblog.com/2013/02/15/cord-clamping-give-me-all-my-blood/>

The iron rich oxygenated blood in the placenta and cord after birth belong to your baby! Delay cord clamping or don't cut the cord at all! *Lotus birth* is where you dress the placenta in a cloth bag containing salt and herbs (lavender is popular) and change these daily until the cord naturally breaks off just as the stump would.

In the book *“Lotus Birth”* Rachana Shivam discusses this topic at length, and really helps you see the incredible benefits of this practice. If you are interested in reading a whole pile of beautiful Birth stories, then this book delivers!

### *The 7th Key: Your Birth Support Circle*

Consider seriously who you want at your birth. Often mothers and mother-in-laws increase the likelihood of opting for pain medication during birth, simply due to the sympathy dynamic that they present with.

With any hint of concern, a woman in labour will more than likely weaken to the idea of opting for drugs in birth. Rhea Dempsey is one of the absolute best women to speak with about this. I cannot recommend her book *“Birth with Confidence”* enough. Your birth support circle is incredibly important!

I had a lovely student attending my home midwife checkups as one example. I chose however not to have her attend my birth. I did this was because I know how the body responds to the less familiar (hormonally) in birth. Again, I feel Rhea Dempsey articulates this very well, which is why I mention her again here. I encourage you to get yourself a copy of her book, right now so you don't forget! You only birth each baby once! It's worth the read believe me.

## *The 8th Key: Building and maintaining pelvic stability*

Building and maintaining pelvic stability during pregnancy is important. It is the weight of the baby growing in the womb that places increasing pressure on the pelvic floor and many women are diagnosed with pelvic instability during pregnancy for this reason.

Strengthening the gluteal muscles with squats is particularly beneficial in pregnancy and after birth for recovery (after 6 weeks), to help support the pelvic floor muscles strength. I hear of so many new mothers suffering from post natal incontinence and pelvic instability and it's not a pleasant thought. I have deliberately and consciously worked to rebuild and maintain pelvic stability since birth, and can highly recommend learning this skill as a way of preventing such unwanted issues, especially as we grow older and more prone to weakening.

Training in both group classes and private one on one Strength based Myo-Balance has given me an incredible reference point from which I can see the difference and impact that exercise rehab can make in this area. I cannot recommend strength based training enough, especially as someone who has been a Yogi for a long time; practicing mostly Yin and Hatha Yoga... strength training has given me great balance. Being a mother now, the recovery I have been able to see in even just a short amount of time since beginning training with, is fantastic. Why wait to feel strong again? Happy mum = happy family right? I know this is certainly the case in my family.

## *The 9th Key: Birth kit - Hydration and Recovery*

Rather than a drip, you have the option of bringing your own hydration to the hospital or even better at home if you can in a low risk pregnancy and birth.

*Padsicles* (frozen aloe vera calendula and chamomile soaked pads) are also a great way you can prepare your home freezer to help speed up the recovery rate of the perineum if any burning sensation occurs after birth, which is also less likely with the right preparation. Warm compresses with apricot kernel oil on a washer during labour, particularly in the crowning stage, can help significantly in reducing the chances of tearing.

Having your hospital bag ready a few weeks before due month can really help you feel prepared. Ensure you don't forget any icey-poles (hydrolite were my choice) and drinks like coconut water or prepared juices like beetroot, carrot, celery and alfalfa juice to help rebuild the blood and chi after birth and during labour.

I hope these few little pointers have helped you get your head around having your baby naturally. After 3 days of natural labour and a home birth without painkillers I can safely say that preparation leads to success, especially in birth.

Please also take a look at my website [www.leahjade.com.au](http://www.leahjade.com.au) for more information on what I provide to Pregnant Women in the space of Natural Therapies and support. I have a Birth Preparation Package which is what I used myself in preparation for birth, which is why I call it the Ultimate Birth Preparation Package. I have not

included all of the books that I devoured during my pregnancy, but this package has all of the Key elements of a great Birth Preparation plan. I highly recommend incorporating this in your Pregnancy care, as it's such a challenging time in many ways.

Here is the link to the page which you will find more information on it :

<http://www.leahs blessings.com/birth-preparation/>

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

### **Leah Jade**

Leah Jade is a Natural Therapist and has worked with Matthew Cleary in building *Advanced Myotherapy* from its very beginning. From designing the clinic on *Feng Shui principles* to business planning, development and management, Leah has a passion for helping people *Move Beyond Pain*, in all of its forms.



As the author of *The Sacred Psychology of Healing*, *Self Care Medicine*, *Heal Yourself*, *Sacred Space* and a co-author of another title, *The Book of Inspiration for Women by Women*, she is committed to empowering people to grow, learn, discover and awaken their true innate potential.

Leah has studied *Natural Medicine* extensively and is extremely passionate about living in a way that prevents disease and pain by fostering strength, energy, inner harmony and balance. Her background as an Astrologer also gives her a unique ability to look at the missing elements of people's energetic make up.

As someone who has overcome scoliosis herself using Yoga from an early age and overcome a number of life threatening health conditions herself, Leah instills a great personal insight into why it's

important to value our health and invest in our longevity. Leah now focuses her time on her family with a young toddler, while continuing to grow Advanced Myotherapy with Matthew Cleary. Her role mentoring the team as well as several other Health Business owners brings her great purpose.

Leah is available for speaking engagements and finds incredible fulfillment in sharing knowledge with people around how to reach their full mind-body potential. Leah also speaks on *Natural Home Birth and Overcoming Obstacles such as Grief and Trauma*, as someone with personal experience in both of these areas.

### Matthew Cleary

Matthew entered the field in the year 2000. He has since grown an incredible reputation for his work with even the most complex of pain conditions and injuries. These are his favourite! Over the years he has spent a decade working as a therapist and sports trainer with the historical *AFL Football team, The Brisbane Lions* during their 4 consecutive grand finals and 3-peat premierships.



Matthew has been featured in interviews about his successful career on multiple occasions and has formed a *Myotherapists Support Network*. As a Mentor to his own team, Matthew works to maintain

and raise industry benchmarks and is considered by many as a leader in the field of Myotherapy.

Suffering his own life threatening injuries and traumas over his journey, Matthew has great respect and insight into what it takes to recover from such conditions, and is driven to inspire self responsibility in his clients for their own wellbeing and recovery.

### *Hannah Beggs*

Hannah Beggs is a dedicated *Yogi* who lives and breathes what she teaches. She works with the team at Advanced Myotherapy to help clients achieve a better quality of life through Yoga based Myo-Balance classes. Hannah is a calm presence in the clinic who adds to our beautiful clinic atmosphere. Her gentle approach to teaching is a valuable asset to those who need it most.



We have found great value in having Hannah as part of our team, helping clients attain a higher level of results from our programs and treatment. Hannah is inspired to help people live well and awaken their innate healing potential through Yoga, which complements the mission of the clinic, to empower people to move

beyond pain naturally. Her life is a reflection of what she teaches and she is an inspiration to the team.

She teaches both classes and one on one in order to help our clients to reconnect with their potential for greater alignment in all aspects of their health and wellbeing. If you have got this far and read right through to the end of our book, then we warmly welcome you to trial one of our classes, complimentary in order to see for yourself, the incredible value that Mo-Balance can bring to your life.

### *Jessica Curl*

Jessica Curl came to Australia as an athlete and has competed as a professional soccer player and in Strongman competition. She has been a personal trainer and *Strength and Conditioning Coach* and now focuses on her *Wellness Coaching and Functional Diagnostic Nutrition* practice which she operates within Advanced Myotherapy.



Jessica not only trains the team at Advanced Myotherapy, but runs a number of classes and Bootcamps to help our clients maintain a healthy quality of life and rehabilitate from debilitating injuries and pain. Jessica's personal experience recovering from a ruptured achilles and two resulting surgeries, gives her the insight into what it takes to overcome such adversity and physical challenges.

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To our dear little girl Ella Rose, who makes all of our "*work*" well worth the effort. It's such an honour to be your parents. To the team at Advanced Myotherapy and all who have contributed to our success...We value your help beyond words, as in sharing the truth about the power people have to take charge of their own recovery, is our greatest value. We love your work and cannot thank you enough for your dedication and value in helping us achieve our dreams of helping as many people as possible.

To our friends who help us laugh and not take life so seriously, you are gold! You bring balance to our life and help us celebrate our wins! For this, we love you. To all those who share our journey as practitioners in the natural health industry, power to you. We love the collective energy and valuable contribution you all make in the lives of those who need it most. We wish you all the success in the world, empowering people to live healthy and happy lives.

To all of those involved in the birth of our little girl, through the preparation and planning stages of her birth...your wisdom

echoes through our lives each day and has inspired us to share this to empower others in the same way. We love the work that you do and continue to share it with as many families as we possibly can. Our gratitude for you all is endless.