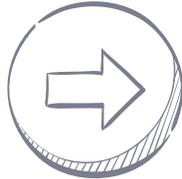


NORTHWEST SPINE AND PAIN MEDICINE

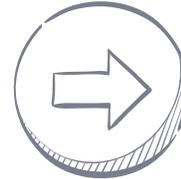
IN THIS ISSUE CONSIDER COMPASSION AND AWARENESS. EXPLORE NATURAL RELIEF OPTIONS.



STRETCHING'S PLACE IN YOUR HEALTHCARE PLAN AND ROUTINE



SELF-COMPASSION AND AWARENESS DURING COVID-19



FINDING SUPPLEMENTS FOR YOUR DAILY REGIMEN

PHYSICAL THERAPY >

STRETCHING & YOUR BODY'S RESPONSE

BY DAVID SPRINGER, PT

Stretching is a vital part of any exercise regimen. Targeted stretching for areas of impairment is essential in helping restore a healthy, functioning body. However, we often become complacent with the idea of stretching. Given the array of opinions and recommendations it can be difficult to know where to begin or what is best suited to your body's needs. Research provides us with some encouraging news that will help motivate you to stay the course! You may not be able to grow new cartilage or reverse deterioration of joints and discs, but you can impact muscles surrounding these tissues. Muscles not only help us with functional mobility, but support the alignment and integrity of our skeletal system, optimizing function of joints and discs.



Studies over recent decades have taken a close look at the duration of stretch and subsequent benefit. Essentially seeking to answer the question we hear so often from patients: "How long do I have to do this to get benefit?" Most of the studies determined that stretching more than 30 seconds does not yield any greater benefit than 60, 90, or 120 second durations - that's good news! One study in particular concluded that between two protocols of stretching, one for 10 second durations, and another for 30 second durations, there was only negligible gain in the 30 second study group.*

Most individuals can hold a firm, efficient stretch for at least 10 seconds. We can make an impact on our muscles this quickly. The reality is that many patients with chronic pain struggle to hold static stretch positions for longer durations, e.g. 30 - 60 seconds. Expectations for patients to do so, personally and in physical therapy, will likely result in patients not stretching at all or performing a stretch for 30 - 60 seconds, but not achieving appropriate intensity to make gains.

What matters most in the studies referenced is the cumulative time of stretching, not duration. You can stretch a muscle for 10 seconds for six repetitions (60 - 90 seconds of your day) and research revealed that within three weeks you will have significant gains in that muscle. Stretching will likely be included in any home exercise program your physical therapist establishes at Northwest Spine and Pain Medicine. **Be encouraged in the fact**

that in 10 - 15 minutes you can perform a comprehensive routine aimed at helping you to be your best functioning self!

***[Daniel Cipriani, Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research](#)**

DEVELOPING SELF-COMPASSION AND MINDFULNESS

BY PATRICIA FERNANDEZ, CHIEF OF PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT, PSYD

In last month's newsletter, we asked: "[how can we access a sense of safety in these troubling times?](#)" We examined heightened danger and threat cues, exploring how to scan for cues of safety in our context, connections, and choices. While connection is still limited for many of us, there are options and resources when we continue to suffer and feel alone.

During your exploration did you find yourself met with absence or even a critical voice? Before we jump into "feeling safe" we often need our pain and suffering acknowledged. Consider your experiences when you may have shared a difficult situation with a friend or loved one but were met with "focus on the bright side," or "you shouldn't feel that way." Maybe you were even met with "you brought this on yourself." We are made to seek human connection, even in suffering. This connection we seek is called *resonance*.

In *resonance*, bodies experience a burst of oxytocin, dubbed the "love chemical," when we receive compassionate tones, postures, or touch. Our "mirror neurons," or networks, that offer reflection of self-compassion when we are met with compassion from another further capitalizes on this response. **Think back to a time when someone asked you and meant, "how are you really doing?"** and elicited an emotional response from you. Once we experience *resonance*, pain can change, transform, or shift in a significant way. Sometimes all we need is simply being cared for.

Unfortunately, many do not have access to this type of compassion from others. How can we offer ourselves compassion when our environment still leaves us wanting or suffering? Self-compassion can play a big role in this instance. **Let's define self-compassion with Dr. Kristin Neff:**

First, to have compassion for others you must notice they are suffering. Second, compassion involves feeling moved by another's suffering so that your heart responds to their pain. The word compassion can be defined as to "suffer with." When this occurs you feel warmth, caring, and the desire to help the suffering person. Having compassion also means that you offer understanding and kindness to others when they fail or make mistakes. Finally, when you feel compassion for another it means that you realize suffering, failure, and imperfection are part of the shared human experience. Self-compassion involves acting the same way you would feel and demonstrate compassion for another, but instead toward yourself. Instead of ignoring your pain with a "stiff upper lip" mentality, stop and tell yourself, "this is really difficult right now." Ask yourself how you can provide comfort and care through self-compassion in these moments.

Use this month to explore the first basic practice of self-compassion:

Self-Compassion Breaks. The first component to these breaks is mindfulness.* To regulate emotions we first need to be aware, or mindful, of our experience. Mindfulness helps disentangle to distinguish what is bothering us. The second component, common humanity, is an antidote to the loneliness we often experience now with social distancing. When we can recall we're not alone our environment has the capacity to become much more bearable. The third component of self-compassion, self-kindness, is a remedy for fear. Kindness regulates fear through connection, similar to our experiences with dear friends.

Resources



[For guided meditation practices and self-compassion breaks, here is a six-minute practice led by Dr. Kristin Neff.](#)

[For further guided meditation and self-compassion break work, here is a 12-minute practice led by Dr. Chris Germer.](#)

*Other resources for mindfulness practices include applications such as: CALM, Headspace, and Insight Timer. Click on the icons below for more information on download services and application offerings.

ADMINISTRATIVE

THE INTEGRATED APOTHECARY

The Integrated Pain Science Center is also home to The Integrated Apothecary. In past newsletters we have featured new products for joint health and immune support. Our Apothecary carries a variety of products, from CBD tinctures, topical salves, and gummies, to supplements many of you are used to seeing and ingesting daily already as part of your routine, like Cod Liver Oil. From arthritic joints to nerve pain, we can help you find a supplement regimen that works for you - relieving pain and improving function. Find the right products for you to sustain your health and wellness with brands like CBDistillery, Standard Process, and Rare Planet Health.

Discover