

THE
STRESS TENSION OVERLOAD
HANDBOOK

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1 THIS BOOK

This short book will explain what Stress Tension Overload is and how you can cure it. It will explain how a whole range of different conditions are simply different versions of the same condition, Stress Tension Overload. Those conditions include the below and can all be cured by following the directions in this short book.

- Migraine
- Post Concussion Syndrome (PCS)
- Whiplash
- Tinnitus
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (TMJ)/TMD
- Chronic Pain Syndrome
- Myofascial Pain Syndrome
- And many more....

The book will explain what is the underlying cause of all these diagnoses, how and why it has developed, and how you can cure yourself with a combination of self-applied trigger point massage, meditation, breathing exercises, sleep re-learning and other tools.

2 FREE COACHING

I offer free coaching to people with Stress Tension Overload if you will help me show the world that millions of people suffering daily can be cured. To receive my help for free, all I am asking is that you allow me to share your story when you are cured and no longer have any symptoms. Check out my website: www.curalistic.com or write me on info@curalistic.com.

3 WHAT ARE TRIGGER POINTS?

Trigger points were originally discovered by the two doctors, Janet Travel and David Simons in the 1960s. Janet Travel was a personal physician for the American president John F. Kennedy. Since then many books have been written about trigger points. If you are curious about all the details of the physiology of trigger points, I suggest you buy a book on the topic or do a Google or YouTube search for trigger points.

Trigger points are small knots/strings in the muscles that are either sore when pressed and/or radiate pain to other parts of the body when pressed. The trigger point itself is a collection of microscopic cramps in the individual muscle fibers and the purpose of the

massage is to make these tiny cramps release. Typically you will also see that waste and toxins build up around the trigger point because the trigger point makes the muscle fibers so tight that these toxins cannot be flushed away.

Trigger points typically occur as a result of years of unhealthy use of muscles for example due to stress or bad posture. Almost all people have trigger points but it is far from everyone who are bothered by them. The reason is that trigger points can exist in two states: *active* and *inactive*.

If they are inactive they *only* hurt and send out pain if you press them and you will not be bothered by them in your everyday life. But if they are active, they send out pain *all the time*.

A trigger point can switch from inactive to active due to a physical trauma (car accident, fall, etc.) or from another physically or mentally stressful period (illness, death of a loved one, etc.), Even something as innocent as a really bad coughing attack can activate a trigger point and once activated they tend to activate other trigger points near them and even create entirely new ones. This is how a simple weak headache can spread and create a whole range of symptoms.

4 WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a special kind of defense mechanism the body can use when it is threatened. In humans this threat can be social (giving a speech) but fundamentally stress was developed to handle more serious threats, such as for example a threat from a tiger. In the most basic form, there are fundamentally 2 ways to defend yourself against a tiger that would like to eat you:

- 1) Fight (destroy the threat), or
- 2) Flight (removing yourself from the threat, for example by running away)

Whatever your choice, it is an advantage if your muscles have plenty of energy to run or fight with. The most important kinds of energy for the muscles are oxygen and calories. Under normal circumstances, the muscles of the body receive only a small part of the energy available in the body. The brain for example consumes about 20% of the oxygen

you breathe and 25% of the calories you consume! The immune system, the lymphatic system, the digestive system, the body's cell repair system, the organs and all the other parts of the body also consume their share of this energy. But when a tiger is about to eat you it does not make sense for the body to waste energy on the immune system, lymphatic system, the repair system, digestive system, organs and so on. When a tiger is 50 meters away from you, you need to spend all of the available energy on either running or fighting, and that means taking the energy away from all the systems of the body and put all of it into the muscles. The muscles then become super tense and strong and you are ready to fight or flight. Once you have escaped the tiger you can again start to relax and spend your energy on your immune system, on repairing cells, on digesting food, removing toxins from your body, and so on. So really, this stress response is an amazing invention of the body to dealing with dangers – but it is also obvious that if you use this stress response all the time, your muscles will always be tense and the rest of the body simply starts to fall apart.

So, when you are chronically stressed your muscles are never really allowed to relax and recover and as a result become harder and harder and form trigger points. It also means that the rest of the body suffers. The digestive system stops working properly, the immune system cannot fight diseases, the hormonal system begins to collapse and the body stops maintaining itself which typically shows itself as a long range of illnesses. If you have one or several other deceases in addition to your STO symptoms, then this may very well be the reason.

But don't worry – you can fix this if you want to and your body can repair most of the damage you have sustained living a stressful life.

5 YOUR THOUGHTS AND STRESS

At this point you might think, "Well, I couldn't possibly be stressed. I'm never about to be eaten by a tiger, I'm not busy with work or studies and never give speeches to a big audience. I do yoga, and do not rush around doing all kinds of things, but take my time preparing my food, eat slowly and so on. How could I possibly be stressed?"

Stress does not always come from your surroundings and the things you do or don't do. Sure, if you are giving a speech, you might get stressed, but it is not the activity of

speaking that is stressful for your body – you do that all the time. It is your thoughts (and feelings) about what could happen if you say something stupid or wrong in front of all those people. So, for humans, stress is almost always a reaction to your thoughts. This also explains why your stress level could be very high although you are spending all your time on your sofa. If your thoughts stress you, then resting on the sofa is by no means a guarantee to get rid of your stress. In fact “relaxing” on the sofa could stress you or de-stress you depending on what thoughts this activity leads to – it’s all about the thoughts and feelings and not about what you are doing in the moment. In fact, if you are sick and worried about your future, then you could easily be more stressed than someone who works 14 hours a day but is enjoying it.

So, let us look at some of the most common things that could be the source of your stress. What all of these have in common is that they generate thoughts that you either try to fight or run away from.

Your situation

Obviously, being sick, worrying about the future, being in chronic pain and maybe sleeping poorly can make you stressed. But this kind of stress is good in the sense that when you start feeling better from following this program, your stress will go down.

Your personality

Maybe your stress comes because you are a sensitive person, a perfectionist or a people pleaser. Maybe you are a classic introvert in a world of extroverts. If you are a sensitive person, then maybe you should spend more time alone or with just a few good friends instead of going to parties with 50 new people. If you are a perfectionist, then maybe you need to work on accepting your own and other people’s imperfections. If you are a people pleaser, then maybe you need to realize you don’t owe anybody anything and that you should not change yourself to make anyone like you more – be who you are with all of your perfect imperfections.

People with this kind of stress typically try to fight with their inner tiger, you try to solve problems so that they can go away, you try to force yourself and other people to change to fit your ideas of how things should be. And if things do not change the way you want them to you fight even harder. This kind of stress is reduced by working with your ability to accept things as they are. Stop fighting the tiger and your stress will go away. This is not always something you can do on your own but might need a therapist to help you.

Traumas

Maybe your stress comes from a trauma. Maybe you were bullied in your childhood, sexually exploited, witnessed a horrible accident or maybe one or your parents died when you most needed them. Although these traumas might have happened a long time ago, they still hurt so much if they resurface, that you will do anything to push them away. You run from your inner tiger, but no matter how far you run, the tiger is always 10 meters behind you. This is tremendously stressful. You need to stop, turn around and look at the tiger (your thoughts), and allow them to be there. But don't do it all at once. Move towards the tiger in small steps so that in the end you can stroke it on its head. In other words, you need a therapist who can help you be together with the event. You don't have to like the event but you have to be able to spend time with it without running.

Fighting and running

Many thoughts can be combination of fighting and running – you are running away from the tiger while hitting it. In either case, you must identify what makes you stressed and work with it. Not only will this start curing your physical body because your stress goes away so that your body can start repairing itself again. You will also be “reborn” into a world of happiness where you are no longer running and fighting all the time, a world that you can fully enjoy without fear and stress.

6 WHAT IS STRESS TENSION OVERLOAD?

Stress Tension Overload (STO) is a state the body can get stuck in where trigger points create pain and other symptoms, which then leads to worry and stress. That stress creates more trigger points and pain, which creates even more stress, which creates even more trigger points and pain, and so on – a classic vicious circle. In some people, the stress is very strong, and in other people it is primarily a matter of muscular tension and just a little bit of stress.

All people with STO have been building inactive trigger points throughout their lives mainly because of stress (mental or environmental). Before the symptoms started appearing, these trigger points were inactive and therefore did not send out symptoms. But they were just waiting for a dramatic event (accident, stressful period, etc.) to

switch from inactive to active. Most people experience the STO starting with some kind of stressful event, such as a fall, an accident, or the death of a loved one. This pushes the trigger points over the edge and they turn from inactive to active. Other people are not able to point to one specific event and might have experienced the first tiny symptom coming seemingly out of nowhere.

When trigger points become active, they begin to send pain and symptoms into the body. Most people will receive a diagnosis such as Post Concussive Syndrome (PCS), Whiplash Associated Disorder (WAD), Fibromyalgia, Migraine, TMJ, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and a whole range of other similar diagnoses. Probably as many as 40-60 different diagnoses are simply different faces of STO.

Many people find that they get even more stressed by their new situation - partly because of the pain and symptoms, but also because of the concerns that these pains cause and because you no longer have the energy to perform even the most basic daily tasks. Many people therefore become even more stressed by this condition, which give rise to even more muscular tension, which turns into more trigger points, more pain, more symptoms, bad sleep, even more stress and so on. On top of this you will start breathing with your chest putting tremendous strain on your neck muscles, your lack of sleep will turn you into a living zombie, making you even more tired and stressed - a classic vicious circle is now full blown. The good thing about a vicious circle is that it can be turned into a positive one if you reverse it.

7 DO YOU HAVE STRESS TENSION OVERLOAD?

Before considering whether your symptoms are due to Stress Tension Overload, I would first like to remind you that if they are, it is good news. Why? Because STO is completely curable. If your condition is just, Stress Tension Overload, then you can get 100% well with the right effort. If you have many of the symptoms that characterize STO, if your muscles are sore and painful when pressed, if you are or have a history with stress then with 99% certainly you have Stress Tension Overload.

If you are still not convinced that your symptoms come from active trigger points, then try the following:

- 1) Apply pressure to some of your trigger points and see if you can feel how this increases your symptoms – press hard if needed. Does pressing the top of trapezius send pain up to your head? Does pressing your Sternocleidomastoid send a strange sensation into the front of your face, forehead, teeth or jaw? If you feel a connection between pressing your trigger points and symptoms, then you have just proven something very important to yourself: The connection between your muscles and symptoms.
- 2) If this does not convince you, try this experiment: For the next hour, press as hard as you can on all of your painful muscles and see what happens with your symptoms. Most likely you do not actually want to perform this experiment because you already know that this will make your symptoms flare up horribly. Again this confirms the connection between your symptoms and your muscles.

In addition, consider your level of stress. Have you had a traumatic life? Have you been in a traumatic accident? Were you bullied as a child? Are you a sensitive person? Do you have low self-esteem? Do you suffer from other psychological challenges such as OCD or anxiety? Are you a “people-pleaser”? Are you a perfectionist? Are you an over-achiever? If yes, then these can all contribute to a diagnosis of Stress Tension Overload.

Finally, consider if you have a selection of the symptoms below.

8 SYMPTOMS

People with STO may have all kinds of different strange symptoms. Below are some of the more usual ones and you might have many of them or just a few. You might also have a handful of other symptoms that are not on the list but still come from your STO condition. The symptoms below are simply the most common ones.

Pains:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| - Back of the head | - Jaw |
| - Forehead | - Eyes |
| - Temples | - Hands |
| - Top of the head | - Arms |
| - Neck | - Fingers |
| - Teeth | - Hands |

- Upper Back
- Lower Back

- Shoulders
- Sinus

Various “mysterious” symptoms:

- Tinnitus
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to sounds
- Watery eyes
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Tiredness
- Vertigo
- Visual disturbances
- Irritation in eyes and nose
- Tingling numbness in the hands and fingers
- “Brain fog” / Living in jelly
- Dislocated/Clicking Jaw
- Inability to concentrate
- Stressed
- Memory issues

9 EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENT SYMPTOMS

At this point in time, you might think, *“Ok, I can accept, that trigger points can create pain other places – I can feel the pain when I press them. But how on earth can they make me tired, sensitive to light, give me tinnitus and make me unable to concentrate? Surely, there must be something else wrong with me as well, right?”*

Obviously, people with STO have a whole range of other symptoms, but lets focus on some of the less obvious ones:

Tiredness.

When trigger points are sending out a very low level of pain, this pain feels more like a sort of dullness or heaviness. This sensation is almost indistinguishable from true tiredness. In a healthy body, the way the body communicates to the person that it is tired is by creating a kind of heaviness in all of your muscles. Your legs, arms, head and eyes feel heavy and you experience this as tiredness. So real tiredness really is a physical sensation of heaviness in your body. The problem is, that trigger points send out a kind of dull heaviness that feels almost exactly like tiredness. This is why you think you are tired, but might have experienced that even if you get the best, deepest full night sleep,

you still feel tired. This fake tiredness can be experienced in all of the body but most experience it primarily in the head.

Light sensitivity.

Have you ever had a grain of sand in your eye? Did you notice how the eye instantly became very sensitive to light? When the body thinks there is something in the eye, it instantly gets very sensitive to light. When trigger points in the SCM or in the Trapezius sends pain into the eye, the body misinterprets this information as if something is in the eye. It reacts with light sensitivity and often also with excessive tearing trying to rinse the eye from the impurity. Of course, since there is nothing in the eye, the light sensitivity and tearing just continues.

TMJ, Tinnitus, Dizziness, Sound Sensitivity, and Nausea

Trigger points can send pain to other muscles and create “satellite trigger points” in those muscles. A classic example is when the Trapezius sends pain into the jaw muscles, creating trigger points in the masseter muscle making your bite uneven or your jaw click. But trigger points can also send pain into the inner ear and disturb the tiny muscles and sensitive mechanics of the inner ear. Not only can this show as tinnitus, and a sensitivity to sounds, but as your balance center sits in the inner ear this also explains balance disturbances, dizziness and nausea.

Inability to concentrate and remember

Have you ever been hung over? And have you ever tried studying being hung over? Or have you ever tried to study or having to concentrate on work while having the flu? Having widespread trigger points can often feel just like being hung over or having the flu, so is it any wonder you cannot concentrate? Remove the symptoms and your concentration and ability to remember will come back.

10 TREATMENT OF TRIGGERPOINTS

Quick Guide:

- 1) 1 minute of static pressure.
- 2) Pain level of 7-8.
- 3) 8-12 times a day.

When searching for trigger points, you are looking for spots in your muscles that hurt when pressed and might even radiate/refer pain to other places nearby when pressed (Referred pain = you press one place, but feel the pain or tension somewhere else). Some trigger points just hurt, and do not radiate/refer pain. Many trigger points are also harder than the surrounding tissue and can feel either like a string or a knot.

Pressing on the trigger point

There are several different ways to treat trigger points, but we will focus on self applied massage. You can massage the trigger points in several different ways, but the easiest method is to hold a static pressure on the trigger point for approx. 1 minute. When pressing the trigger point, you should get to a level of pain of about 7-8 on a pain scale going from 0 to 10.

Get on top of the trigger point

Once you've found the trigger point and start pressing, the trigger point can pop away. It can feel just like trying to pierce a pea with a fork – the pea just keeps popping away. If this happens, it's important to get back on top of the trigger point again. Even if the trigger point pops away 100 times, you must keep trying to catch it and press right on top of it, otherwise the massage will not have much effect. So, balancing on top of the trigger point is more important than a lot of pressure. Once you have caught the trigger point and are right on top of it, then you can slowly start to increase the pressure trying to keep it between your fingers or right under the knot of the Backnobber (A Backnobber is the tool we used to massage where the hands are not able to.). In the beginning, don't be too concerned if you can catch it – most important is that you continue. After some practice it will be easier to catch it.

Treat it many times a day

A trigger point should ideally receive this treatment 8-12 times a day, even sometimes as much as 20 times a day. This is the reason why the massage needs to happen many times a day rather than just one long session. This is also the reason why no massage therapist can help you with trigger point massage (although they will happily take your money and tell you it will work).

Starting out with trigger point massage

When you are just starting out with trigger point massage, on the first day you should be careful not to press too hard. If you press too hard, your symptoms might flare up. If you

imagine a scale of pain going from 0 – 10, then your pressure on the trigger point should only generate a pain of 2 on the first day. For some people this is no more pressure than what would break a very ripe grape. If your symptoms have not flared up after the first day of massage, then you can increase the pressure to a pain level of 3 on the second day. Continue working your way up to a pain level of 7 over the next 6 days. If your symptoms flare up, then go easier on the massage and maybe even take a break from the massage until your symptoms have gone down to normal.

Once you have completed the first week, for the rest of the duration of the program the level of pain should be around 7-8. The purpose with the massage is to continue massaging a trigger point for many months until they are completely gone.

Hidden trigger points

Some times trigger points can be hidden away inside a big muscle, so if you find muscle knots that do not seem hurt initially, don't give up to easily. Give it an extra hard squeeze to figure out if it's hiding trigger points. It is unlikely that a hard muscle does not contain a bunch of trigger points at the center, so don't give up too soon. You might also feel that as the massage is progressing, new trigger points keep popping up. This is normal and are simply old trigger points that you just did not notice before.

Don't stretch your muscles

Trigger points get agitated by stretching exercises, so don't stretch your muscles. Stretching your muscles is good if your muscles have become too short and to increase their flexibility, but you should *not* do stretching exercises to remove trigger points.

11 BREATHING

Breathing should be done with the stomach and not the chest. Proper breathing is important for two reasons.

1) Spare your neck muscles

Firstly, when breathing with the chest instead of your stomach you will put tremendous strain on the neck muscles as they try to pull up the ribcage. And those muscles are exactly the muscles that are creating 90 % of the symptoms for people with STO: The Sternocleidomastoid, the Trapezeus, the Levator Scapular and the Scalenes. You take

15.000-20.000 breaths a day and if you are breathing with your chest, then every single one of these breaths is having a negative impact on exactly those muscles that we are trying to relax.

2) Chest breathing and stress

Secondly, there is a strange connection between the way you breathe and stress. If you breathe with your chest you are communicating to the body that there is a danger and if you breathe with your stomach you are telling your body that there is no danger. So In other words, you can actively influence the level of stress simply by breathing either with your chest or your stomach (Breath => Stress level).

But this connection goes the other way as well, from stress to breath (Stress level => Breath). If you feel relaxed you will notice that you automatically start to breathe with your stomach. For example when you are sitting in front of the TV in the evening after along day at work, about to fall a sleep, you will notice that your stomach starts moving up and down.

So, since the effect goes both ways it is easy to get stuck in a vicious circle of stress and chest breathing: You breathe with your chest, which makes body stressed, which tells your body to breath even more with the chest, which makes you even more stressed, etc. In the worst case, this leads to hyperventilation and panic attacks, but in a mild version, this “just” makes you chronically stressed.

The good thing is, that it is relatively easy to reverse this simply by forcing yourself to breathe with your stomach. You can kick start a positive feedback loop just by forcing yourself to breathe with your stomach.

Are you breathing with your chest?

You know, you are breathing with your stomach if your stomach moves up and down and your chest barely moves – this is most easily observed if you sit down. So this is the goal we are going for, but it might be easier said than done if you have been breathing with your chest your entire life. Pulling your stomach in and breathing with your chest is very normal if you are self-aware about your stomach sticking out – fortunately, it is possible to both breathe with your stomach and have a flat stomach at the same time. But maybe in the beginning your ambition should be to only breathe correctly with your stomach when you are sitting down, when you feel it is less obvious how it looks.

The inhalation is not an inhalation

To practice breathing with your stomach, rather than taking an inhalation, you should push out your stomach and try to make it look like the stomach of a fully pregnant woman. The area you should try to push out is that below your belly button. If you do so, the rest of your stomach will follow. Focus on pushing out the stomach instead of taking an inhalation, and let your lungs inhale the air they want to. Do NOT try to inhale – push out your stomach instead! If you try to inhale, you will probably just make an inhalation using your chest as you've always done, so the key is pushing out your stomach as much as you can instead and then letting the inhalation happen by itself, as a side effect.

The exhalation is not an exhalation

The exhalation also is not an exhalation, rather it is a “letting go” of your entire body. When letting go correctly, the exhalation takes about one second and can be heard as a sigh from the nose or mouth. In fact if you are breathing correctly, you will sound like someone breathing heavily and relaxed right before they fall asleep in front of the TV. So after you have pushed out your stomach and filled it with air, you let go of all tension in your body and allow the air inside of you to release as quickly as it wants to. Do *not* try to control your exhalation and do *not* try to push it out quicker than it wants to. This will release all the air in a single puff and it does not matter much if the air leaves through the mouth or the nose. The letting go, is a letting go of all tension in your body at once. In fact, if you are standing up and letting go correctly your body would collapse on the floor. So practicing letting go should be done either lying down on your side with your legs pulled up, laying on your back with your legs pulled up or sitting in a chair or sofa in a position where you can allow yourself to let go of all control of your body without falling off.

If exhaling like this by giving up control of your body feels overwhelming on a full inhalation, then practice of smaller in-breaths. Just take a small inhalation of air and practice letting go on this. Maybe just inhale the amount of air that could fit inside a tennis ball, and try to let go of that.

Breathing like this is the body's normal relaxation breath. It will feel good, de-stress you and relieve your neck muscles from the task of pulling your rib cage up 20.000 times per day (a completely unreasonable task for your small neck muscles).

This way of breathing, and especially the letting go, can be emotionally difficult to some people. If you are a control freak, then letting go of the control of your body can be

enormously uncomfortable – who knows what could happen when you let go of the control of your body, right? Some people have emotions sitting right below the surface and if you are not controlling your breath, then these emotions can surface in an instance. If this is the case and you feel the need to cry, then do it. These emotions that you are holding down by controlling your breath are central to why you are sick. If you need help from a therapist, then find one where you can get a good cry. There needs not be a reason for the crying other than the body's need to cry. Cry until there is no longer a need to cry, but don't try to force the cry – trying to push yourself into negativity so that you can cry will not do you any good.

12 HOW TO SLEEP LIKE A BABY

How do you sleep like a baby? This is the most important question for many with STO. In order to sleep well, one must first understand what the problem is. For 99% of all of those I help, there are basically 2 problems:

- 1) Most people experience being very nervous about going to sleep. You so desperately want to have a good night's sleep that when it becomes time to go to bed you have become more stressed than you would from going to a job interview or exam. And when you're that stressed and desperate to sleep it's no wonder you cannot sleep!
- 2) The second reason most people cannot sleep is more tricky. The mild pain that trigger points sends out feels exactly like tiredness. Therefore, as an STO patient, it's very difficult to really know whether the tiredness you feel is real tiredness or just the trigger points. Many end up going to bed before they are actually truly tired.

Most people with chronic insomnia need to go through a sleep program typically lasting between 1 to 3 weeks. During this program you need to commit to a handful of *sleep rules* which, if you follow them, will make you start sleeping well again.

12.1 Let's get the facts straight.

Do you have a sleep problem?

You have a sleep problem if you are not able to fall asleep and/or wake up in the middle of the night not being able to fall asleep again. You do NOT have a sleep problem if your only symptom is that you feel tired in the morning! As long as you have active trigger points you will feel tired in the morning no matter how well you have slept because trigger points generate a feeling that is identical to tiredness. If that is your situation, you can skip this section of the book and focus on getting the trigger points to release.

You MUST be tired tomorrow

Contrary to what you might think, during the sleep program you should *not* get enough sleep. You HAVE to get less sleep than what you feel you need. The reason is that constantly lagging sleep will make it easier for your body to fall asleep the following evening. So during the sleep program it is important that you get out of bed every morning even if are in the middle of the deepest most needed sleep. You must NOT become fully rested! If you do not respect this rule and sleep for 9 hours when you should have only slept for 7, then you will have sabotaged your chances of falling a sleep the next evening. So be sure *not* to get enough sleep!

If for example you need 8 hours to feel rested you could set your alarm clock to 7 am. in the morning and then go to bed 7 hours before at 12 in the night. Also, be sure to set your alarm clock so that you get up every morning at the same time – do NOT sleep in, but get out of bed no matter how exhausted you are.

Once you again sleep consistently good you can increase the 7 hours of sleep to 8 or whatever the amount of hours you actually need. If your normal need is 7 hours, then you should only sleep 6 during the sleep program.

Your bed is for sleeping

It is important that your brain associates your bed with sleep. The more time you spend in your bed WITHOUT sleeping, the more your brain connects your bed with activities other than sleeping. For example, if you are working in your bed, your brain will associate your bed with working and problem solving, and that is not good! Therefore, you should ONLY be in your bed when you are either sleeping or falling asleep.

All people wake up 4-6 times each night

All people wake up 4-6 times during the night when they have completed a sleep cycle. In other words NO-ONE sleeps 8 hours straight although they think they do. When

people wake up in the night, they simply are not awake long enough for it to register in their long term memory which is why they think they sleep 8 hours straight. Many people with sleep problems automatically think that something is wrong when they wake up during the night and instantly think “*Oh no, now I’m awake, oh no, oh no, oh no!!!*” But this reaction is entirely wrong – waking up during the night is normal. So stop getting all worked up at night when you wake up. Go pee if you need to, and then go back to bed and wait for your body to take you through another sleep cycle. You will wake up 90 minutes later after completing another sleep cycle, but maybe you will not remember it in the morning because this time you fell asleep quickly again.

Trigger points make you tired

Many people desperately chase the amazing feeling of getting up in the morning feeling refreshed and fully rested. But you should NOT expect to feel rested in the morning no matter how well you have slept as long as you still have active trigger points. Therefore you might as well throw that goal out of the window. Even if you have had the deepest most perfect, relaxing deep sleep for 9 hours straight, you will still wake up and feel tired. The trigger points will make sure of that. If you expect that a good night’s sleep will make you feel rested, you are setting yourself up for defeat. This fact actually has a hidden benefit: As you will always feel tired tomorrow no matter how good/bad you sleep, you’ll get less desperate for a good nights sleep as it doesn’t make a difference. If you sleep poorly, you will feel tired tomorrow and if you sleep perfectly, you will still feel tired tomorrow.

You don’t need 8 hours of sleep

Many people think they will die instantly the moment they don’t get 8 hours of sleep. That is very wrong. In fact the body has been shown to be able to live off of just a couple of hours of light sleep every night. Many healthy people only get 6 hours per night or even 5 hours per night and function just fine. You also might think that when you are having a bad night’s sleep, you are practically awake all the time, but that is not the case. In fact dozing off for just a moment counts as sleep even if it is a very light sleep.

12.2 Before going to bed

Be tired

The first rule is that you must be tired before going to bed. But as we have just learned, it is often impossible to feel if you are actually really tired or if the tiredness you feel comes from the trigger points. Therefore, in order to be absolutely certain you are truly tired, be sure to spend 1 hour less in bed than what you normally would. For example, if your normal need is 8 hours of sleep, then spend 7 hours, or even 6 in the beginning if your insomnia is bad and has been going on for years.

You must be de-stressed before going to bed

Virtually all the sleep rules are within your control, but being stressed is not something you cannot actively control. In fact, the irony is that the more you try to control your stress and thoughts, the more stressed you will get. So how do you de-stress if you cannot control your stress? The secret is really to have your thoughts go somewhere else and to think of something other than your concerns for not being able to sleep. My best and simple advice is to watch a nature documentary with whales or the like for half an hour before going to bed. Don't watch it in your bed or even in your bedroom and don't have the level of light on your screen turned up too high. But what if you're still stressed when it's time to go to bed? Then you just wait longer before going to bed. While being on this sleep program, we are going for good sleep experiences, not a lot of sleep. Therefore, it is much more important that you have some good experiences falling asleep rather than sleeping for many hours. If you only get 3 hours of sleep, but fall into a deep sleep the moment your head hits the pillow, then that is a good sleep experience and just what we want. You will begin to see yourself as someone who can fall asleep just fine and you will begin to see your bed as a place of heaven instead of a place of hell. So, good experiences falling asleep is much more important than many hours in bed.

While preparing to go to bed, for example while watching the documentary, be sure to make the relaxation breathing exercise as explained in the paragraph "Breathing".

12.3 In the bed

So, what should happen once you lie down in bed?

Earplugs and room temperature

Wear earplugs to remove sounds from the surroundings and create your own little bubble. You might remove the earplugs in your sleep but that's fine. Also be sure your bedroom is not too warm as the body needs to drop a few degrees to sleep comfortably.

Read a book

To continue to force your thoughts away from the worrying about not being able to sleep, read a book in bed. A book that's exciting enough for you to be drawn into it, but not so exciting that you get too worked up about it. If you find it hard to read because of your symptoms, you can read a cartoon, like Donald Duck. When you start reading the book, 90% of your thoughts will still be worrying about whether you can sleep or not. But that's normal - just return to the book's story as often as you can. It's fine to read the same page again and again. Lie on your back and keep the book up in front of you. Eventually you will get drowsy and once you've dropped the book 3 times, it's time to lie down to sleep. But at this point many people make the mistake of trying to use the sleepiness they got from reading the book to propel themselves into sleep. You might even be afraid to open your eyes to put away the book and turn off the light because you feel you need to "use" this tiredness from reading the book to propel you into real sleep. But this is wrong. Instead it's fine to just orientate yourself in the room and realize that now you will lie down properly and wait for your body to take control of the sleeping process.

12.4 Lie down do sleep.

Your body must fall you asleep.

You've dropped the book 3 times and now it is time to turn off the lights and lie down to sleep. This is the most important part of the sleep program – all the other advice pale in comparison to this. The rule is:

It is not your responsibility to fall yourself to sleep. This is your body's responsibility. Your responsibility is to enjoy.

Read that again now and think about it! This is what most people struggle the most with. We humans are so used to taking control of the problems we have in life so it only makes sense that we try to take control of our problem of not being able to fall asleep. But actively trying to fall asleep is only going to make it worse because it stresses your body. Instead you have to give up this control, let it go and hand it over to your body.

This can be difficult. Imagine a woman who started a small shop 10 years ago and now 10 years later has finally employed her first employee. For this shop owner it can be very difficult to let go of the control and hand it part of the responsibility to her new employee. It's the same with falling asleep. You HAVE to give this job to your body as you cannot do it yourself. Only your body can fall you in and out of sleep.

But if you give this job to your body, then what can you expect of it? Well, first, you can not expect the body to fall you asleep the moment your head hits the pillow. It will usually take about 15-20 minutes for this to happen. You can also not expect your body to fall you asleep in one go. Usually, the body will fall you in and out of sleep several times during those 15-20 minutes. It might fall you a bit to sleep, only to wake you up 30 seconds later. And you might think *"Oh, did I just fall asleep? I'm awake now! Did I miss my chance?"*. This falling you in and out of sleep is completely normal and under normal circumstances will happen 5-10 times during those 15-20 minutes it takes to fall properly asleep. Eventually the body will take you all the way down through a sleep cycle only to wake you up 90 minutes later when the sleep cycle is over. But it is important that you allow your body to control this – DO NOT TAKE CONTROL of trying to fall a sleep!

You must enjoy

But what then should *you* do while your body falls you in and out of sleep? Your most important job is to enjoy! ENJOY, ENJOY, ENJOY! Whenever you realize that you are not sleeping, start enjoying the feeling of lying in your bed. Find the best feeling in your body and enjoy it. Shift positions often and notice the pleasant sensation in your body. Stick you feet out under the blanket and feel the cold air, or pull them back in under your blanket and enjoy the warmth and safety of this. Put a big pillow under or between your legs if it feels good, or get a big cuddle pillow to wrap your arms around. You should even have a little bit of resistance to falling asleep and almost actively try to work against your body's tendency to fall you asleep. Resist in a loving way almost saying to your body with a smile *"No, dear body, I don't want to sleep yet, because I want to lie here and enjoy for a little longer."*

Your second job is to do the relaxation breath as described earlier: Expand your stomach without any movement in your chest and let go all at once to achieve an instant fast relaxing exhalation. Notice how if you let go of all control during the exhalation you might feel a tingling sensation of pleasure in your body. Enjoy this sensation.

This frame of mind is probably very different than what you are used to and that is why in the beginning you will have a tendency to fall back into your old ways of thinking, trying to take control of falling asleep. But every night, and even every time your body takes you out of sleep is another opportunity for you to practice this new mindset. Just keep practicing and this will eventually become your default way of thinking: *Your* job is to enjoy (and breathe the relaxation breath) and your body's job is to fall you in and out of sleep.

You might want to see if you can reach to 15 minutes before your body finally falls you into sleep. You can also try to count 50 relaxation breaths, remembering to enjoy every time you exhale.

During the night, the body will wake you up 4-6 times. Every time this happens, do NOT try to fall a sleep. Instead start enjoying the bed and the pleasant feelings in your body and continue with the relaxation breath. It is fine to lie like that in your bed for 5-10 minutes, even with open eyes and just enjoy and breathe. Your body will fall you asleep again when it is ready.

12.5 If you cannot sleep.

Sleeping while you are stressed feels very uncomfortable. Your pulse is up, your heart is pounding, you might be sweating and physically feel the stress. And every time you fall asleep, you seem to wake up 1 minute later in a big shock.

This is stress sleep, and once you are in it, it is difficult to get out of. The only way you can really get out of stress sleep is to wake up properly, get out of bed, maybe go get a snack in your kitchen and sit in your living room for maybe 30-45 minutes, maybe watching a nature documentary. Then, once you've shaken this stress off of you, you try to go back into bed and read your book. Once you lay down start to enjoy, breathe the relaxation breath and leave the job of falling asleep to your body.

Even if you have not gone into stress sleep, if your body has not fallen you asleep after laying in bed for 20 minutes, then you are simply not tired enough and should get out of bed for 1 hour. Remember, 3-4 hours of good, deep sleep is much better than 7 hours of superficial sleep while you are re-learning how to sleep.

12.6 The purpose of the sleep program.

The purpose of the sleep program is to turn your negative association with your bed into a positive one. Instead of thinking of your bed as a place where hell takes place, after the sleep program you should think of your bed as a place where heaven is.

In the morning, if you are getting out of bed before you are fully rested, you will spend the entire next day longing for your bed. The more sleep deprived you are the easier it will be to fall a sleep the next day.

This is why it is so important that you are tired in the morning when you get up. If you have a good nights sleep and sleep until you are no longer tired, you have made a mistake. You should have gone to bed later the prior night so that you are sure to be tired in the morning and the following night.

If you have a good nights sleep because you followed the program, most people think *“Oh, great, now I can sleep and tonight I don’t have to be bothered with all that talk about enjoying and letting my body fall me in and out of sleep.”* But most likely, you will fall into your old ways of thinking, get stressed and try to take control of your falling asleep. Stick to the program even if you start seeing improvements!

If you have a particularly bad night of sleep you might also think that since you missed a lot of sleep you should be sure to get to bed even earlier the following night. This is sleep suicide! Do not go to bed earlier even if you barely slept the previous night! Stick to the plan, for example sleeping from 12 pm – 7 am.

13 MEDITATION

Many people who have never tried to meditate (or have come across a bad meditation instructor) mistakenly think that meditation is about sitting quietly with your legs crossed thinking about nothing while you go into some kind of trance visiting the spirits of your sub-consciousness. This is wrong. Meditation is the practice of focusing on a simple thing or thought and then when the mind drifts away, which it always does, you return to whatever you had decided to focus on.

The moment you start the meditation by focusing on your breath for example, your mind will start running away with you. Maybe the expansion of your stomach reminds you of a ball and you think about the football match you watched last night. Then you think about the nice green grass the players were running on and how you miss the green fields of your childhood home and in a few seconds your thoughts have been taking far away from your breath. This is normal, and when you return your attention to your breath, this constitutes one successful mediation cycle. Meditation is not about only focusing on your breath - that is impossible. It is about returning your attention to your breath when your mind has drifted away from it. If you've ever tried to lift weights to get stronger, you will know that you are not supposed to simply hold the weight. You must move it up and down. It's the same with meditation. Focus on the breath, thoughts drift away, return the focus to the breath, thoughts drift away again, return the focus to the breath, and so on...

My general recommendation is that you should meditate 5-10 minutes before every massage session and your meditation focus point should be the relaxation breath (explained above). This will help with your general happiness, relieve your stress and make it easier for you to take control of your thoughts instead of being a slave to your thoughts. This is especially important if you sometimes end up in negative thought spirals.

(This is not a full introduction/explanation to meditation, so either we talk about this in more depth or you do a bit of research yourself).

14 IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM

In the following 3 paragraphs you can read about how the program roughly has 3 phases:

- 1) The first phase, where you have to get used to the program.
- 2) The second phase, which is the main phase and ends when you no longer have any pain.
- 3) The third phase where you focus on getting your energy and concentration back.

But what muscles should you massage? And for how long? And what about breathing and meditation? How many hours should you dedicate to the program? The short answer to all of this is *‘That depends on your situation’*. If you are a chest breather, then exercising stomach breathing is important. If you are not a chest breather, then this is not so important. If you are very stressed, then meditation and therapy could be important. If, for example, your stress comes from untreated childhood traumas then working with those traumas is important. If you’ve had a perfect childhood, but your stress comes from your perfectionism, then that is what you should work on. If your mind seems to race in all directions with 200 miles per hour, then meditation is important. If the only thing that stresses you is your daily pains, then there might not be any reason for your to “work with yourself”. Instead, focusing on reducing the pain with lots of massage might be all you need to do.

If your Sternocleidomastoid is very tense, then this needs to be massaged, but if it is soft as butter and you can apply pressure with your full strength anywhere in it, then there is no need to spend time massaging that.

If you are working full time and have a limited amount of time available to do the massage then your situation is different than if you are home all day not being busy with anything else.

Because each person’s situation is different, I would advice you to contact me so that I can help you put a program together. As you know, my help is free as long as you will allow me to tell your story once you have healed. Contact: info@curalistic.com.

I do have a few tips though:

1. You should try to do 3-4 separate sessions of massage per day.
2. Each session should last between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours.
3. Instead of massaging the Sternocleidomastoid during the massage session, try to massage it throughout the day when ever your hands are not busy doing something else. Set 5 alarms on your phone to continuously remind you to do this, but massage it all the time – not only when you get a reminder from your phone.
4. Start each massage session with a 5-10 min. meditation where you use the relaxation breath as your meditation focus point.

Although your program should be customized for you, here are 3 examples of how you could put together a program:

- 1) You might be still able to work full time and therefore do not have time to sit down to do the massage. In addition your Sternocleidomastoid is hard as stone and hurts horribly. In this case you could choose not to have any sit-down massage sessions a day, but instead massage the Sternocleidomastoid continuously throughout the day whenever your hands are free.
- 2) You are not working anymore, spend all your time on your sofa and your motivation is out of this world. In this case, your day could be one long massage/meditation/breathing session only interrupted by resting, eating and going to the bathroom. Essentially, you spend all your awake time on the sofa doing different aspects of the program. (Remember the massage can be done while watching Netflix, listening to an audiobook or the like).
- 3) You are home sick but you need other activities to keep your motivation up. In this case, you could commit to three or maybe four 1-hour sessions per day.

So, the questions you should ask yourself before putting together the program are:

- 1) Can you remember to massage the Sternocleidomastoid throughout the day? Can you remember to do it, if you set 6 daily alarms to help you remember this?
- 2) How many hours can you realistically dedicate to massage considering both the number of hours you have available, but also your motivation?
- 3) What muscles are most important for your healing?
- 4) Can your stress be managed with meditation, or do you need to see a therapist to “detox” from the negative thoughts and emotions you are carrying around?

15 THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PROGRAM

The first phase is the first 1-2 weeks of the program. The purpose of this is to get you started with the massage trying to avoid your symptoms flaring up from too much and too intensive massage. It is, however, not a big problem if your symptoms flare up, but if you get a bad start, you might think: *"Wasn't this massage supposed to help me? If it's making me feel bad, then why should I continue?"*. (If your symptoms flare up, you just take a break for a couple of days until the symptoms are back to normal). But in a sense, a flare up from massage is a good thing. Why? Because if you get a flare up from the massage, you will have proved to yourself that your symptoms are intimately connected with your muscles.

But a flare up is uncomfortable, so we want to avoid it and we avoid this by not pressing too hard on the trigger points in the beginning. Imagine a scale of pain going from 0 – 10. When you do the massage on the first day, you should not press any harder than 2 – in fact, you should barely feel the massage. If your symptoms do not flare up, then on the second day you can increase the pressure so you get to a 3, next day to a 4 and so on, working your way up to a pain level of 7-8. If the symptoms do flare up, you just take a break with the massage for 2-4 days until the symptoms are back to normal and then you start again.

16 THE SECOND PHASE OF THE PROGRAM

One day off.

This middle phase is the longest of the three and typically takes between 2 – 4 months. In this phase, you massage 6 out of 7 days in the week. Therefore you must choose 1 day where you want to skip the massage. This is partly to give your body a break but also to make it easier for you to keep your motivation. It is just a bit easier to stay motivated if you have one day off every week to look forward to.

1 Month at a time.

You need to only commit to doing the program for one month at a time. You pick a date in one month and that will be your goal. When you reach this date, you take a break of a minimum of 4 days (maybe more) and then when you are ready again, you commit to another 1 month. Once you have been doing the program for a month and had 4 days without massage that is a good time to get an accurate measure of your symptoms doing a symptom list with me. You cannot “trust” your symptoms while you are doing the program, as your symptoms can flare up slightly from the massage. So, only commit to the program for 1 month at a time and then a minimum of 4 days without massage. Then you gather your thoughts and you go for another month. It does not have to be exactly 1 month – see what works best for your motivation – maybe committing to 2 or 3 weeks at a times is better for you.

Increase the pressure.

As you move further into the program, your limit for how hard and long you have to press on the trigger points will increase. In the beginning, your trigger points can not take more than a very light pressure for 45 seconds, but as you move through the

program you should increase both the amount and duration of the pressure (your hands will get stronger as you are doing the massage). In fact when you are nearing the end you may need to hold the pressure for up to 10 minutes on a trigger point, pressing as hard as it is physically possible for you.

Your flare up limit (tolerance) will increase.

But how do you know if you are pressing hard/long enough? You should always stay on or slightly above your flare up limit. Your flare up limit is the amount of massage your trigger points can take before your symptoms start to flare up. Your flare up limit will increase through the program, and so must the intensity of your massage. If you never feel a little bit flared up from the massage, you are not massaging hard/long enough and you need to increase the intensity.

It is important to be aware of this, as many people grow to comfortable with the massage once they have gotten into a routine. But this routine must be challenged all the time with more and more intense massage.

Initially, it's easy to find sore trigger points, but gradually you'll spend more and more time looking for them and less time massaging. It also becomes increasingly more important that you press straight onto the trigger point and don't allow the trigger points to slide away under your pressure.

The symptoms fluctuate

For most people, this phase will be a rollercoaster of symptoms going up and down. One day you will wake up and all your symptoms will seem to be gone, you will get excited but then the next day your symptoms have flared up again and you might feel devastated. But as long as you still have trigger points, you cannot expect your symptoms to be gone for good. So don't get too attached to the good days, but use them to remind yourself that maybe tomorrow your symptoms will be bad again, but that's OK. Eventually, when all your trigger points are gone, so will your symptoms - for good!

Don't rush yourself through the program.

Understandably, people just want to get better as soon as possible. But if you try to push yourself (especially with negative self talk such as "*You can't even stick to the program, you loser*") then it is just going to stress you and make things worse. It is important, that

you find your “Zen” during the massage, get to enjoy the massage and accept it as part of your life for the moment.

17 THE THIRD PHASE OF THE PROGRAM

You are entering this phase, when you do not really have any more pains and all that seems to be left is tiredness and an inability to concentrate. This phase will take 1-3 months to complete.

Completing this phase can be a challenge for a number of reasons.

You might think you are cured

Firstly, in this phase, you might actually think you have been cured from your STO and that your tiredness and inability to concentrate is due to other things such as poor sleep, malnutrition or a brain injury you think you’ve convinced in an accident. Or maybe you think you are just a tired person and one with a bad ability to concentrate.

You can now enjoy activities

Secondly, you might now feel good enough to enjoy all the activities you were not able to before and therefore you would much rather be out doing all kinds of things instead of sitting home doing the program.

Press hard and long

Thirdly, you might have grown accustomed to pressing on your trigger points with a particular amount of pressure and therefore are no longer pressing hard enough to get any real benefit from the massage. When you started the program you had to be very careful not to press too hard and this carefulness may still sit in your body even without you knowing it. Therefore it is very important that you try to challenge yourself and basically go crazy on your trigger points – your symptoms MUST flare up a little bit once in a while, because that is the only way to truly know you are pressing hard enough. It MUST hurt a lot when you do the massage, but hurt in a good way!! In this phase, you typically have just a few trigger points left and you now have to increase the intensity of the massage. I sometimes say, that now is the time to launch the full blown atomic bomb attack on the last couple of trigger points. This means massaging a single trigger point as much as 10 minutes in a session 8 times a day with all of the force your body can

produce. You **MUST** go absolutely crazy on the trigger point, to get to a pain level of 7-8. After every massage, it would be great if you feel a bit of symptom flare up, even feel like someone has been beating your muscles. You might also want to visit the biggest, strongest massage therapist in town and challenge him to find any sore spots using all of his strength. It is also a very positive sign if you feel tired from the massage and even need to sleep more.

In this phase, the massage should also be slightly different. The main idea is still static pressure, but a static pressure with a little bit of movement. Apply a very strong static pressure on the trigger point, but combine this very hard static pressure with slow movements back and forth across the trigger point, moving just 1-2 mm. from one edge of the trigger point to the other edge and back. These tiny movements makes it easier to flush out the last toxins from the trigger points so they can relax.

18 MOTIVATION

But, how do you maintain the motivation to keep up with the program? In the short run, it's a bad idea to focus on whether your symptoms get better. They will not get better in the short run and any improvements you seem to experience from day to day are most likely just fluctuations of your symptoms, not a permanent improvement. Symptoms fluctuate up and down and may even worsen temporarily during the massage if you press too hard. Therefore, in the short run it is a very bad idea to only look at whether the symptoms develop in a positive direction.

But what can you focus on instead? You need to focus on improving yourself in those areas that ultimately give you the symptoms. Focus on whether your muscles become softer, focus on whether you are less stressed, focus on whether your mental health is improved, focus on whether your breathing improves, focus on sleeping well again and focus on whether you are actually sticking to the program. It's a bit like starting a new restaurant: When you start a new restaurant, you will not earn any money the first day because first you need to build and prepare the restaurant. You need a place, a kitchen some nice chairs and tables and so on. So if you focus on whether you are making money even before you have your kitchen set up, you will conclude that this is not working and you will stop. You have to believe that once you have a nice kitchen, some nice recipes,

some nice chairs and tables, then your restaurant will attract customers and eventually make money in the future. So in the beginning, measure your progress on whether you find some nice recipes, some nice chairs and tables, a nice location, etc. – don't focus on whether you are making money yet. It is exactly the same with the massage. Understand, what is giving your these symptoms and then start working on and improve those different areas. So, focus instead on making your muscles relaxed, clean, smooth and healthy with the massage, focus on reducing your stress, improve your breathing, etc.. Let those be your goals and your symptoms will follow.

Milestones

While you are doing the massage program, your focus should not be on getting 100% cured – sure, that is the end-goal, but it should not be the focus. Instead, focus on the first milestone: a 25% improvement in your symptoms. I hope you can agree, that 25% percent improvement would be great in its own right, don't you agree?. Then, once you've reached that 25% improvement, you stop the program with no plans of when to start again, so that you can spend some time appreciating that you've reached your first goal. You then enjoy a period with no program (maybe a week or maybe 3 months depending on what suits you) and when you feel ready, you start again. But this time you are going for the second milestone: the 50% improvement mark. Then you take another long break and commit to going for the third mile stone: the 75% improvement mark. You take another break and finally you go the fourth milestone and end goal of 100% improvement. To measure your progress we use a symptoms list. A symptom list is a long list of some 50 different symptoms and you have to put a grade between 0-10 next to each of these. You will then get a total symptom score and when this score has dropped 25% you have reached your first goal.

The massage is your daily spa

Do you ever feel guilty that you ought to be doing something else? Do you ever feel like you are wasting your time? Well, you no longer have to feel like that because from now on, doing the massage will be your escape from these feelings. Doing the massage is

THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITY IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW!

And as long as you are doing this, you can feel good! You can have a clear conscience. What is more important than getting your health back? Do it for yourself and do it for the ones who worry about you.

If the massage is something you want to get over with quickly, then this will impact your motivation negatively. You must try to make the massage something you look forward to. This is your daily spa, the time of the day where you are spoiling yourself with a nice massage, a cup of tea, a good series on Netflix or an exciting audio book. Remember to do the relaxation breath during the massage and reach a level of pain from the massage that feel good. Light a candle, feel your body, relax and enjoy this time of the day where everything is about YOU, a time you can enjoy knowing that right now you are doing the thing that is of the highest priority and importance in your life! This is NOT a waste of time! This is your time, the time when you can do absolutely nothing except, massage, relax and be good to yourself. It's the time of day, where no one can demand anything from you, and where you can demand nothing of yourself other than treating yourself good. If you do not look forward to the massage in this way, but as a chore you need to get over with, then you need more sugar in your tea, an extra biscuit or a new audio book and remind yourself that YOU are the most important person in YOUR life and that you need to get well! If you see the massage as a period of time where you are wasting your life, then you are WRONG!!

You have to be able to say to yourself: *“Actually, I am OK spending 3 hours a day on the program for a year to get my health back. Sure, it would be nicer if I did not have to, but it's a fair trade to get my health back.”*

Make a calendar

Another way of motivate yourself can be to make a calendar with 3-4 small squares next to each day where you can put a check mark every time you have treated yourself to a “massage spa”. This is very motivating as checking off boxes feels really good – it feels like you are getting something done when you tick off boxes.

19 THREE REASONS YOU WILL NOT GET WELL

In my experience, there are mainly 3 reasons why people do not get well:

You are not doing the massage.

Either you are not doing the massage at all, or you are doing it wrong. It's difficult to do the massage wrong, but if for example you are not balancing right on top of the trigger points but rather rolling off of it and applying the pressure next to it, then that is one reason you are not progressing as quickly as you could. If you are not pressing hard enough is another reason.

You are stressed and not willing to work with your stress.

Stress can come from your surroundings and the situation you are in, but those people who do not get well are typically those with a lot of mental stress, stress that started long before the symptoms showed up. Sadly it is often those people who need it the most who are the least willing to work with themselves and their thoughts. This is not strange – working with yourself can be a very uncomfortable journey, so it is no wonder that those who hurt the most are the ones most likely to push away those parts of their thoughts. But this is the journey you *have* to take if you want to get well. If you do not acknowledge this then your destructive mind patterns will remain and so will the bodily stress they create. And when stress remains, so do the trigger points and your symptoms. If you are willing to work with your negative thoughts and mental stress, then not only can you expect a pain free future, but also a much happier life. There are none of the mental issues you are struggling with that cannot be worked through if you want to.

How do you know if you need to work with yourself? Ask yourself this question: Are you comfortable talking about everything about yourself, your life, all of your thoughts and all your experiences? Or do some of these hurt a lot when they surface? Are there thoughts that make you very sad, so sad that you do not want to deal with them or talk about them? Do you feel like you are hiding things from people around you and from yourself? Then those are probably the root cause of your stress, the foundation for your STO. You need someone to talk to about this. You need a therapist.

You have psychological resistance to getting well.

This third reason why people do not get well might come as a surprise, but it is one reason that should be taken very seriously. The human mind does NOT like change, even if the change is for the better and if you have been sick for a while this illness could very easily have become part of your identity. If you have met new friends because of your illness, if your family and old friends have become used to treating you as a sick person, if you are dependent on welfare from the government because of your illness, if you've

come to define yourself as sick person, all of this could have become part of the way you interact with the world and see yourself. You might even unconsciously ask yourself, *"If I am no longer sick, then who am I?"*, just like people facing divorce might think, *"If I am no longer John's wife, then who am I?"*.

My personal estimate is, that more than half of people who have been sick for a couple of years have some sort of conscious or unconscious resistance to getting well. If this applies to you, you might feel ashamed about it, but it is totally normal! If you feel like this, then it is important that you admit it to yourself and are OK with it. It is also important that you talk to someone about it and try to address the reasons why you have resistance to getting well. A common reason why people have resistance to getting well is that they can no longer use their illness as an excuse for not participating in social events. Or you might be afraid, that if you will be have to get a job that you cannot perform because you are ill (yes, your logic could be broken!). These are all absolutely normal issues and should be talked about. Don't waste your life being sick if you don't have to! Talk to a therapist. Nobody is judging you.

20 ARE PEOPLE WITH STO CRAZY?

People with STO, whether the diagnoses is Whiplash, Post Concussive Syndrome, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, TMJ, Fibromyalgia or something else have to battle a tremendous amount of skepticism from their surroundings, and a significant number of doctors seem to believe that these people are either hypochondriacs, attention seekers or simply plain crazy, essentially making up their illness. My experience is, that people with STO have had a rougher life, are more sensitive, are perfectionists, but they certainly are not crazy! In fact although the mind plays a part in the stress that creates the trigger points, it is my conviction that anybody can end up with STO no matter how "normal" your mind is.

In addition, for a doctor who does not understand what is wrong with his patient, it is very easy to just dismiss the individual as simply a bit crazy. *"Case closed, next please"*.

21 PILLS – PROS AND CONS

Pills should mainly be used as a tool – NOT as a solution. If your stress is grounded in anxiety about your situation, then anxiety reducing medication can be used for a period of time during the program until your symptoms have improved, you feel better and the source of your anxiety is gone. If you are stuck in too much pain, then you can use medication to reduce your pain while doing the program and then once your pain has reduced to a tolerable level, you can start reducing the use of this medication.

Therefore, pills and medication can often be used as tools, but should rarely be part of a permanent solution.