10 WAYS

To Self-Treat Your

NECK PAIN AND STIFFNESS

Without Painkillers & Injections

ABOUT GRAIG

Graig Gubello is San Diego's leading Physical Therapist who helps active adults reclaim the activities in life they love with their family and friends free of pain. On demand in your own home/office without undue medications, injections or surgery.

He founded Gubello Physical Therapy because he understands why people in pain seek help. It is not the pain itself that drives a person to reach out for assistance, it's loss of the ability to perform an activity they love, especially with others.

Graig has spent years studying the journey people go through when experiencing pain that leads them to seek help. It usually includes multiple health care practitioners, several diagnoses and a lot of negative and scary descriptions of the problem.

Graig has worked with individuals who have not been given the time for their story to be heard. They have been labelled with outdated diagnoses and told what they cannot do. Graig knows that people are more complex than their anatomy or scans. He takes the time to listen to the patient/client, develop an alliance and sees the whole person to coach them through the healing process. Graig aims to help patient's achieve their goals as timely as possible in a graded fashion, using positive messages and the tried and true treatments of education, exercise/movement and lifestyle change.

As a mobile Physical Therapy business Graig provides cost effective, high value, low risk, proven treatments on demand in the setting of your choice.
While in graduated school Graig experienced what it's like to experience persistent shoulder pain for approximately 1 year during a challenging time in his life. In his childhood and young adulthood he valued playing sports, including football, baseball and hockey. Now, he prefers to stay active outdoors running, hiking, climbing and camping. It became his passion to help as many active adults keep performing the sports and outdoor activities they love while avoiding persistent pain.

He graduated with B.A. in Liberal Arts (Movement Science/Psychology/Sociology) from Westfield University, then completed his Doctorate of Physical Therapy degree from the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences.

He is certified from Stanford University in "Empowered Relief" treating by Beth Darnall, PHD.

TIP #1 LEARN ABOUT PAIN

Pain is complex and weird. Learning about pain can help reframe your understanding of the pain experience, allow for less fear and help you get on the path to recovery. Once you are able to shift your mindset to a hopeful outlook it is possible to feel empowered to take back control. A Physical Therapist is uniquely skilled to educate you about pain and coach you through the process of returning to meaningful activities. What activities are important to you?

TIP #2 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND GRADED EXPOSURE

General exercise has a long list of health benefits supported by evidence. Breathing and oxygen are important for our heart/lung, nerve, bone and mental health. It can be challenging to get started but some exercise is better than none at all. Exercise does not need to be structured, pick something you enjoy and get started. Choose an activity that you want or need to do more of and go. Figure out how much you can comfortably do now, then plan out some daily progressions. This is graded exposure, gradually increasing an activity by doing a little bit more, but not too much more, everyday.

TIP #3 STRESS AND MEDITATION

Stress is not inherently bad. However, If you are having trouble coping with chronic stress then the stress response can promote sensitivity, increasing your chance of having pain. Chemicals associated with stress can directly activate danger messenger nerves. Various chemicals can influence electrical activity in nerves by opening or closing ion channels specific to that chemical. Chemical response to threat is a major contributor to pain. Meditation or deep breathing is one strategy to deal with stress.

Find a comfortable position where you will not be interrupted. Focus on inhaling slowly through your nose while you imagine filling your belly with air. Exhale through your mouth with your lips pursed as slowly as possible. Repeat for several minutes daily. A Physical Therapist can help you learn to relax tense muscles during deep breathing activities which frequently accompanies painful conditions. Meditation apps can be very helpful!

TIP #4 SLEEP HYGIENE EDUCATION

The national sleep foundation recommends adults sleep between 7-9 hours a day. Sleep helps us heal and helps us recover. Sleep deprivation has been like to increased rates of pain, obesity, risk for cancer and other health related disorders

- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.
- Use your bed for only sleep and sexual activity to help train your brain that if you are in your bed, you should be sleeping.
- Leave bed if unable to fall asleep within 20 minutes and return when sleepy.
- Moderate to vigorous exercise at least 2-3 hours before bedtime improves your sleep at night.
- Avoid caffeinated foods and drinks at least 4 hours before bedtime.
- Refrain from drinking alcohol or smoking at least 3 to 4 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid daytime napping so that you are tired at night and can fall asleep easily.
- Stop using light emitting electronics (ie, television, computer, smartphone) at least 30 minutes before bedtime as the blue light that is emitted can disrupt sleep by suppressing melatonin production.
- Avoid eating a large meal or spicy food 2-3 hours before going to bed.

TIP #5 NUTRITION AND HYDRATION

Nutritional information received via the internet and word of mouth can be conflicting and confusing. Consider consulting with a Dietician. Ask your Physician or Physical Therapist if you'd like referral options in your area.

A poor diet is another factor that can contribute to the sensitivity of your nervous system and pain. Dietitians recommend eating whole foods and mostly plants. Eat at least two servings of fresh fruit and three servings of fresh vegetables each day. Avoid fast food, processed foot and sugary (candy, pastry, soda,). Maintain sufficient fluid intake to stay hydrated. If your urine is dark yellow in color or has a strong odor, you may need to increase your water consumption.

TIP #6 MUSIC

"One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain." - Bob Marley

There is emerging evidence on the pain-relieving effects of listening to music. It can be calming, inspiring and give us hope. Listen to your favorite music, especially from before your current troubles started. Listening to music is one way to change the context around pain. Go see live music in your community with friends.

TIP #7 NATURE, VITAMIN D

Science is starting to validate the idea of “green exercise” and “forest bathing.” Most people prefer being active outdoors over indoors. One possible reason may be the feeling of traveling to a destination is more rewarding than a gym setting and permits more work. Being active outdoors can promote relaxation, decrease stress, immune system changes, better sleep and faster healing times.

Vitamin D via light and sunshine is vital for human survival. Several studies have shown a link between Vitamin D deficiency and persistent pain. Experts recommend exposing your skin to at least 15 minutes per day twice a week to increase Vitamin D levels.

TIP #8 HUMOR

Humor can help boost the immune system. Watch a stand up comedy show or comedy film, visit with a funny friend, tell a joke.

TIP #9 PLAY

Try to be creative in some sort of movement. Play facilitates learning and neuroplasticity which can begin to help the brain find ways to solve old problems. Explore new movements that are fun for you as opposed to rigid rules with a coach. Moving in this manner will help you focus your attention on what you are doing and away from unhelpful thoughts to allow the body to adapt.

TIP #10 SOCIAL INTERACTION

Social interaction can help your internal drug cabinet in your brain release happy hormones and decrease stress. When you have feeling up for it try to get out of the house and meet up with friends, go for a walk by the ocean or on a trail, go to an art fair or farmer's market. Doing something fun can help distract from persistent pain and promote joy/happiness, putting you back in control.

BONUS

The fastest way to take care of your neck pain is by going to see a physical therapist. A physical therapist can listen to your story and take a look at your neck and shoulders and find out why you are having pain and stiffness.

Then a physical therapist can come up with a plan to relax your aching muscles, loosen your stiff joints, and strengthen your body so you can get back to the activities you love.

If you combine all these tips form this special guide with a visit to a hands-on physical therapist, then you will see a dramatic drop in your neck pain and stiffness.

The following is adapted from: Blanpied PR, Gross AR, Elliott JM, et al. Neck Pain: Revision 2017. J Orthop Sports Phys Ther. 2017;47(7):A1-A83. doi:10.2519/jospt.2017.0302

What should patients with neck pain expect from physical therapy? Nine years ago, in 2008, physical therapists published the first neck pain clinical practice guidelines. These guidelines have been updated and are now available in the July 2017 issue of the JOSPT. As before, these guidelines make recommendations based on best practices from scientific research for evaluation, diagnosis, and nonsurgical treatment of neck pain. To update these guidelines, physical therapists teamed with the International Collaboration on Neck Pain to identify leading practices. These revised guidelines provide direction to clinicians as they screen, evaluate, diagnose, and make treatment- based classifications of neck pain. They also outline the best nonsurgical treatment options based on the published literature. At the end of the day, the best care is a combination of the leading science, the clinical expertise of your health care provider, and your input as the patient. These guidelines help inform the first step in this process.

The clinicians and researchers who authored these guideline updates reviewed research published from 2007 to 2016. They screened 4000 articles and closely examined 748 of them. They focused on finding the best existing evidence for manual therapy, exercise, education, and other treatment options to help decrease neck pain and improve function. They looked at these treatment options based on whether the patient had (A) neck pain with limited motion, (B) neck pain associated with whiplash from a motor vehicle collision, (C) headaches related to neck pain, and (D) neck and nerve-related pain into the arm (also known as radicular pain).

Overall, exercise and manual therapy are suggested for many types of neck pain. For those whose pain only permits limited neck motion, the guidelines advocate thoracic manipulation, range-of-motion exercises, and upper back/arm strengthening. If the pain becomes persistent, a more comprehensive approach may be considered. For those with motor vehicle collision–related neck pain, education and early return to normal, non-painful activities that the patient performed before the crash are found to aid recovery.

The guidelines' authors also propose manual therapy and exercises to help control pain and improve function. For those with headaches from neck pain, the guidelines suggest manual therapy with neck mobility and upper back strengthening exercises. Finally, for those with neck pain that radiates into the arm, neck traction, stretching and strengthening exercises, and manual therapy may all be helpful.

TYPES OF NECK PAIN. The research highlights that most patients with neck pain fall into 1 of 4 groups: (A) neck pain with limited motion, (B) neck pain associated with whiplash, (C) headaches related to neck pain, and (D) neck and nerve-related pain into the arm (also known as radicular pain). The good news is that the evidence supports the use of exercise, manual therapy, and other techniques to help decrease your pain and increase your function.

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New Insights

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Practical Advice

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TAKE HOME MESSAGE:

Are you finding yourself afraid to move because of fear for your neck? You are NOT alone.

Most people deal with neck pain or discomfort during their lifetime. The problem is that most of them allow the problem to get worse before looking for a solution.

We hope this information has given your some ideas of how to ease your neck pain and avoid making it worse.

If you are currently dealing with neck pain, whether it is new or something nagging, we are more than happy to provide you with a FREE phone consultation.

It only requires a few minutes for us to get an idea of what might be causing your neck pain, and it doesn't require and bookings or appointments. Request a FREE PHONE CONSULTATION by going to our website: GUBELLOPT.COM

Ultimately, there is so much we can do to help ease neck pain. Getting hands-on care from a physical therapist is the quickest way to address your neck problems. We at Gubello Physical Therapy are passionate about helping people alleviate neck pain so they can enjoy life to the utmost.

HEALTH ADVICE DISCLAIMER:

This guide is intended for instruction and informational purposes only. The authors are not responsible for any harm or injury that may result. Significant injury risk is possible if you do not follow due diligence and seek suitable professional advice about your injury. No guarantees of specific results are expressly made or implied in this report.