

Help is at Hand

By Tamara Mitchell



Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), one of the Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTD), can become a frustrating and depressing experience. The warning signs (e.g., aching, tingling, fatigue, chronic tension, burning, and loss of motion) develop slowly and are easy to ignore. We try really hard to get people to take care of their bodies, heed these mild warnings, and act in a proactive way to prevent further injury. But if you push on, you may feel a pain that becomes chronic and impossible to ignore, you may start dropping things, or you may be feeling numbness or tingling that can be very disturbing. Dealing with daily pain and the limitations it imposes on your life will often wear down even the most cheerful of people. You may feel that you have tried everything and still you are still in pain. In this article we discuss local and online resources available to assist you in your quest for a pain-free life. There is a lot you can do to reduce the pain and the sooner you do, the sooner you will be able to get back to a normal life.

Get help.

- It is a good idea to consult with an ergonomist to analyze your workplace or source of your issues. If you don't work for a company that has access to an ergonomist, one way to locate one is by searching LinkedIn for "ergonomics consultant" and click on the People tab. You can add a filter for location with the Location tab and typing in your city. <https://www.linkedin.com>
- Refer to our web page on Self Care: <http://working-well.org/Website/ctd.html>
- Read our article on Self Help: <http://working-well.org/articles/pdf/SelfCare.pdf>
- Read our article on how to deal with chronic pain: <http://working-well.org/articles/pdf/Pain.pdf>
- If you have done these things and still have signs of RSI, we advise you to see a professional practitioner who is experienced in helping people with soft tissue trauma. We have created a list of practitioners specializing in CTD that offers contact information of practitioners who effectively treat RSI. We do not recommend consulting with general practitioners or family doctors that do not have specific training in rehabilitation of soft tissue disorders. If you do not live in the Bay Area, please read about the type of practitioner who can help you on our practitioner's web page and locate an appropriate one within your health care network. http://working-well.org/Website/ctd_resources.html
- Please consider therapeutic massage to aid healing, improve circulation to overworked body tissues, and relax tense muscles. We offer referrals to good

massage therapists in the San Francisco Bay Area or check with your chiropractor for a referral. http://working-well.org/Website/ctd_resources.html

Take control of your own health.

Practitioners facilitate the treatment of CTD, but in all successful cases, individuals take responsibility for learning about their condition, identify the triggers in their daily routine that are contributing to their pain or discomfort, and modify their activities.

- We direct you to our Online Resources webpage which has links to many websites with information about RSI: http://working-well.org/Website/online_resources.html
- Our Books webpage has several excellent resources we encourage *everyone* to read: <http://working-well.org/Website/pbooks.html>

YOU are your best resource. Since there is no cure for CTD, you are the only one who can manage your future health condition.

- RSI Support Groups. You do not have to deal with your RSI alone. We have a webpage with information about workshops, classes and RSI support groups in the Bay Area: <http://working-well.org/Website/groups.html>. If you live outside the Bay Area, do an online search to see if there are and RSI support groups in your area. These monthly meetings, attended by practitioners and CTD sufferers, were established to help you learn more about CTD prevention and recovery. Unfortunately, many of these groups have dissolved, but you can start one up with these guidelines: http://www.tifaq.org/articles/starting_rsi_group-apr99-judy_doane.html.
- Spinefulness offers workshops in Palo Alto that are designed to help you learn how to sit, walk and move so that your spine, neck and head are positioned correctly: <http://www.spinefulness.com>
- Stanford Center for Integrative Medicine has classes on mindfulness meditation, forgiveness, positive psychology, loving yourself, and dealing with loss. All of these things have direct effects on your health and it's important to deal with the mental issues that may be bothering you: <https://stanfordhealthcare.org/medical-clinics/integrative-medicine-center.html>.

Dealing with stress and depression.

When you lose the ability to go about your daily life, your career or job, your hobbies, or sports, even playing with your children, it is a huge blow to your lifestyle and often your very identity. Your ambitions and goals may be put on hold, your income may be threatened, and people and pets that rely on you may have to find someone else to help them while you heal. It is no secret that dealing with RSI is stressful and can lead to depression. It is important to seek help if you have trouble adjusting to the reality of your reduced physical capabilities. The healing process for soft tissues usually takes several months, much longer than a broken bone. During the healing process, it is important not to re-injure the same body parts, so protecting yourself from further strain is important. A feeling of hopelessness may take over, but it is important to stay motivated, focused on the future, and on what you can still do.

If you are experiencing depression due to pain or other stressful life situations, do not hesitate to contact your employer's assistance program, or if you do not work for an employer, contact your county offices or a mental health counselor. You shouldn't try to deal with these stresses or depression on your own. Professionals can help you work toward solutions and resolutions.

Please don't work and play in discomfort! It takes time to learn about and resolve a problem, but if you don't take the time, you will be creating a long-term handicap that will limit your future activities.

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This article and all of our articles are intended for your information and education. We are not experts in the diagnosis and treatment of specific medical or mental problems. When dealing with a severe problem, please consult your healthcare or mental health professional and research the alternatives available for your particular diagnosis prior to embarking on a treatment plan. You are ultimately responsible for your health and treatment!