A different approach to pain

Are you in pain? Do you feel like you have tried everything and the pain is still there? Did you know that our nervous system remembers trauma from injury? We walk around unaware of bracing patterns everyday. It's that bracing and gripping feeling when you are getting out of bed in the morning, the clenching when getting out of the chair because your back hurts, or the cautiousness when using your arms because your shoulder hurts. The body remembers and your mind creates a story of the pain and the worst outcome possible. Then your pain becomes a habit, ruling your daily routine. This impacts your self-care, work life, and home life.

So where does this cycle of pain and stress begin? Trauma accumulates in our body as early as the birth process and can be caused by events like falling off a bicycle as a child, landing on your tailbone after a fall, from surgeries, whiplash from a car accident or even emotional traumas. Repetitive trauma can result from how we sleep, sit, exercise, sitting in front of a computer, doing a lot of driving or perhaps a job that requires heavy lifting. Think about what effect these postures have on your muscles every day. Your body molds into that shape. Muscles shorten, become imbalanced, which pushes bones together and creates joint pain, back pain and neck pain. The body is connected from head to toe by a fascial web, interwoven throughout muscles, bones, veins, arteries, nerves and organs. A traumatizing event can create myofascial restrictions producing up to 2000 pounds per square inch of pressure within your body.

Unfortunately, conventional treatments for pain don't always get to the root cause of your pain. This would include treatments like pharmaceuticals, physical therapy, psychological counseling and even acupuncture. However, an innovative treatment called Myofascial Release Treatment (MFR) addresses the mind/body connection to chronic pain, releasing the pressure to pain sensitive structures. In a relaxing environment, a sustained pressure is applied to the patient as they are guided to mentally feel inside their own body. This encourages the nervous system to relax and release the subconscious bracing patterns that guard and protect us, keeping us in pain. Releasing these restrictions reduces pressure. The painful feeling of the straightjacket is removed. The patient is then given treatment tools to perform at home to help free up the fascial restrictions that are caused by poor posture throughout the day.

Imagine a pelvis that is out of alignment from sitting with poor posture at the computer each day. This may cause the spine to twist and rotate, creating pressure and pain, headaches, neck pain, shoulder pain or back pain. An MFR therapist discusses the unique circumstances that led to your pain (i.e. from a previous fall or from emotional trauma) and through sustained pressure is able to release restrictions in your fascia and muscles. This can help to straighten out the spine, provide more stability to the pelvis and help reduce the severity of your pain. Typical MFR treatments last about one hour to 90 minutes and any type of painful syndrome can be addressed with this technique.

We have all had unique life experiences that create a roadmap of tight, restricted areas in the body. Common culprits are the abdominal muscles that connect the spine and ribs to the pelvis, pulling the body forward, hunching over. Since the web of fascia connects the entire body, a pull in the front of the body affects the backside of the body. Back pain is treated through releasing restrictions in the front part of the body. That is a different approach than traditional therapies.

*Phaedra Antico, OTU/L, is a licensed occupational therapist who specializes in pain management using myofascial release and cranioSacral techniques. She currently practices in Ahwatawkee. Contact her at (808) 412-8009 or www.myofascialreleasephoenix.com.