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# THE BOOK ON **BACK PAIN**

PROVEN TREATMENTS FOR  
IMMEDIATE AND PERMANENT  
**CHRONIC BACK PAIN RELIEF**



Using EFT Tapping,  
Hypnotherapy, Lower Back  
Exercises and Back Stretches

#1 BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
**TOM BARBER**

# Praise for *The Book on Back Pain*

As a physician, I have over the years been keenly aware of the woeful inadequacy in the treatment of back pain. The psychotherapeutic approach to this vast problem has been much neglected and to this end Tom Barber's book represents a major breakthrough and "sea change" in approach. Over the years, Tom has used his abundant therapeutic skills to the benefit of so many patients. This work is a culmination of his endeavour, one that will I am sure give great relief to the legions of back pain sufferers.

*Dr Osmond Jones, Medical Doctor – London*

Tom Barber writes as he speaks, with clarity and sensitivity; connecting theory and practice in language that can be easily understood not just by professionals, but also the lay person. He explains the workings of the mind, and the connection between the mind and body, with pertinent personal and professional anecdotes and experiences, using analogies, metaphors and suggestions. He teaches the reader techniques for relief of pain by using various holistic and systemic strategies, such as Mindfulness, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, including TOTE, Self-Hypnosis and the Emotional Freedom Technique.

I have been a sufferer of neck and back pain for many years, and I have found Tom's *The Book on Back Pain* amazing. Following the techniques and strategies he teaches stage by stage, I am now better armed with new knowledge and confidence that the process really and truly works! Thank you, Tom.

*Latha Kanthaswamy, Nurse and Therapist – London*

Tom provides an empowering, practical and easily accessible guide for you to take charge, regain responsibility for your health and well-being, and gain freedom from your pain.

*Alex Weitzel, VAI IIIHHT IHBC CG, Sports and Holistic Practitioner – Essex*

I really think this is a great book. Throughout my long experience as a professional masseur, I would say that a large percentage of my clients have an emotional issue underlying their back pain. A great many of them see chiropractors, osteopaths and physiotherapists, but I feel that Tom's great techniques would really help people with back problems, caused by specific injuries. I will definitely recommend these to my clients.

*Floyd Matthews, ITEC IPTI, Remedial Masseur – London*

This is an invaluable book aimed at helping people suffering with chronic back pain, which often plays a huge limiting part in people's lives. Tom Barber has distilled his vast knowledge of integrative therapy into ten easy chapters in *The Book on Back Pain*. He is a master when it comes to putting information in simple and yet effective ways. This book is engaging, easy to read and comprehend, and clearly enables the reader to understand and unravel this massive problem.

As a doctor, I have seen people struggling with the impact of chronic back pain who describe it feeling like a big black cloud, hindering them in moving forward with full efficiency. This well written book will definitely help in empowering people to take the control back. I am glad that this book is available, as it has huge potential to make a

positive difference to individuals through its unique approach. Well recommended!

*Dr Amit Kumar, Medical Doctor – Kent*

# **THE BOOK ON BACK PAIN**

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE  
TO PERMANENT RELIEF™

**TOM BARBER, M.A., D.Hp.**

The Book on Back Pain: The Ultimate Guide to Permanent Relief™

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## *Acknowledgements*

Writing this book for me has been an absolute joy. To convey the methods and techniques in this book to as many people as possible that need to know about the power of the mind, is an exciting prospect. Yet I couldn't have done this alone. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Raymond Aaron and his incredibly powerful author programme. The desire to write this book was made infinitely easier with Raymond's meticulously detailed advice. An intrinsic part of the success of this project has been due to my "book architect" Lori Murphy, whose support has continually kept me on my toes and spurred me on. This steadfast support of course would not amount to anything unless the project got completed, and so I owe a tremendous thank you to Sandra Westland for her first editing of the book and the input of her therapeutic ideas and suggestions, which enormously improved and enhanced the book. Sandra's support is always truly inspirational. My thanks go to Osmond Jones, Latha Kanthaswamy, Alex Weitzel, Floyd Matthews, and Amit Kumar, for their support and advice in reviewing the book. I would like to thank John Harten for his sublime editing skills. I knew from our first correspondence that I was in good hands. I would also like to thank Tony Loton for his technical expertise, and patience, in the formatting of the book. My thanks also go to Marie Littlewort for her inspirational artistic skill in designing the book cover.

Finally, and I think most importantly, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my past and current students for their unwavering belief in the methods I teach, and their embracement and advancement of them. Without them, this project would not have been possible.

This book is dedicated to my dear Mum,  
Patricia June Barber,  
who sadly passed away this year, 2013.  
I will miss her more than I even yet know,  
but am also deeply thankful that she is now at peace,  
and no longer in pain.

*For you, Mum.*



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# *Foreword*

*The Book on Back Pain: The Ultimate Guide to Permanent Relief* by Tom Barber is intended to help you gain something that you have been longing for ... relief from your back pain and control of your life.

By learning how powerful your mind is and embracing its awesome possibilities and potential, you really can change your life for the better and gain freedom from your pain. Tom's vast knowledge and experience is superbly captured in this book as he takes you through a comprehensively structured programme. He explores the mind-body connection and then teaches you techniques that succinctly show you how to harmonize and maximize your mind-body potential for the ultimate relief you deserve.

This book will guide you to find out just how much power and control you can take for yourself in your pain relief and will make an unquestionable difference in how you feel every day from the moment you read the first chapter.

In this book:

You will learn just how you work and what impacts your experience of pain. Your beliefs, values, and personal history are all inextricably linked and in need of unravelling.

You will discover the power of your mind as you create for yourself the ultimate inner focus and the essential state of mental and physical relaxation needed for pain relief that will make the difference.

You will connect with a variety of tried and tested techniques that have never been put together before in this way. It builds into a powerful programme of self-care that you can control, grow and master for the rest of your life.

You will become adept at finding a way that suits you in your quest for the ultimate relief of back pain and truly make it a reality.

You owe it to yourself to give this unique programme the chance to make a difference to your life and to help you with your ultimate pain relief. Why not become one of the many people who have completed this programme with Tom and who have reaped the benefits of using such powerful methods in this way too?

*Raymond Aaron*

*New York Times* Bestselling Author

# *Chapter 1*

## *Introduction*

### *Getting Ready for the Ultimate Relief*

It was a typical Sunday morning in my kitchen, and I was getting ready to head off to play rugby. It was my passion, and still is, although the years have crept up on me and I'm no twenty year old anymore, as I was then. I'd eaten my breakfast, changed into my sports kit and was about to head off when I sneezed and was swiftly introduced to agony! My introduction to back pain was as simple as that, and I'll never forget it. As I sneezed, I felt something in my lower back go "pop." In fact, I'm sure I heard it! I froze, as something deep inside me told me not to move, that something was wrong. I started to move around *very* slowly and with each step the searing pain in my back grew worse, and then the throbbing started and I knew then what back pain was all about. I knew something was wrong but didn't know what. Every position I tried to put myself into was pure agony, except that one position that everybody I've spoken with about back pain knows intimately: the foetal position. I started to move down onto all fours and it felt like someone was stamping on my back. The pain continued to sear throughout me as I slowly scrunched my whole body up into the only position my instinct told me to move to and ... relief. I stayed there for a while.

Now - being only twenty years of age - I still had that sense of invincibility about me, and I decided in my wisdom that it was only a temporary pain and would actually wear off after a while and so I could just simply carry on step-by-step, so I made my way to my car. As I drove to the rugby club, the pain caused sweat to pour off me, but still I thought

## The Book on Back Pain

it would only last a while and, like all good rugby players chosen for the second or third-tier team, when I reached the club I self-medicated with a pint of real ale. It probably wasn't the best of ideas.

After applying copious amounts of heat spray and sinking another swift half-pint of ale, I stumbled onto the rugby field with my fellow teammates and the game began. Now, what I haven't mentioned is that my position in the rugby team was that of a hooker! As the first scrum down descended upon me, I put myself in the middle of the scrum pack with two six-foot guys, each weighing 210 lbs., either side of me, eager to obliterate all eight men in front of them. The referee blew his whistle and they pushed, and pushed, and pushed, and I screamed and screamed and screamed. Now I really knew something was wrong! As I left the field I decided that I probably needed to rest. Not even able to drive home, I called someone to come and get me, went home and for the rest of the day just sat, and stood, and walked around. Nothing seemed to get rid of the pain. So, knowing this was now serious, I phoned an emergency chiropractor who agreed to see me the very same day.

When I arrived at his office and told him of my morning story, he just looked at me and shook his head. He then positioned me on his examination couch and began to manipulate my back, crunching me this way and the other. It was agony. He gave me some very helpful advice by telling me that my hips weren't formed correctly, that actually I had the hips of a woman, which were made for giving birth. I wasn't quite sure *how* that was helpful, but it's stayed with me.

Over the next few weeks I underwent a series of treatments and manipulations carried out on my back and gradually



## **Introduction**

the pain subsided. It was in fact much better off from the very first treatment, even though the chiropractor told me that it might initially be more painful.

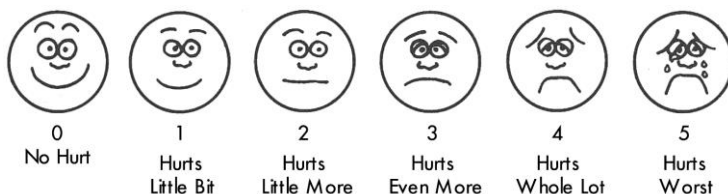
My experience over the following few years felt rather strange. In moments of stress, anxiety, worry and fear, just the ordinary usual ups and downs in the story of life, I began to experience a re-emergence of lower back pain. Indeed, when I became stressed or anxious or worried, it was like revisiting that very same day on the rugby pitch; that very same searing pain all came flooding back, and this I found rather confusing.

I hear this kind of story every day when working with people with back pain. In the Ultimate Relief pain workshops I run, I hear so many of these different accounts that show a distinct correlation between the pain people feel in their body and their emotional and psychological state. That's what this book is about: dealing with the connection between the pain you feel in your back and the emotional and psychological aspect of that pain. As you begin to take control of your back with your mind, your mind will become stronger, and as your mind gets stronger, your back responds. We will in effect be creating in these chapters a new way of living - new neural pathways. A new kind of mind-body connection that your back is crying out for. So let's start in the now, because as you move through this book chapter by chapter we want to see your back improving. That's the aim. The Ultimate Relief is our goal, but we will only be sure of the changes that are happening when we can measure them.

### **The 0 to 10 of Pain Measurement – How Intense Is It?**

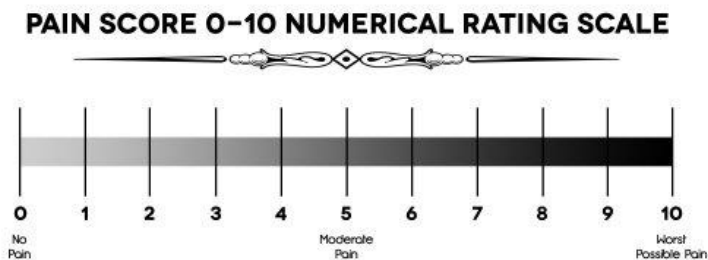
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So, to start, I want you to rate your experience of your back pain. There are many ways of doing this. You can use the Wong-Baker FACES™ Pain Rating Scale (2001) below:



*Figure 1:1 Wong-Baker FACES™ Pain Rating Scale*

Or you can use a simple numerical scale, such as the one below, to rate the intensity of the pain. You choose what fits for you.



*Figure 1:2 0-10 Numerical Pain Intensity Scale*

The main thing is that you have a way of gauging where your back pain is now on the intensity scale, and thus what will have changed and how much less you experience that pain as we move through this book.

So, to rate it now, complete the following sentence:

“Presently my intensity rating of pain is \_\_\_\_\_.”

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We're going to revisit this at the end of each chapter, so you'll see the progress you're making.

### Can Your Mind Really Overcome Pain?

This is a question that I am asked all the time in my work. Yet what seems plain is that our mind is overcoming pain a lot of the time. Think about situations in sport, where during a game a player sustains an injury yet keeps playing, sometimes mostly unaware that they have injured themselves.

I've personally run the London marathon, twice, in 2010 and 2012. I know how the body can switch off pain. During the marathon, I suffered from cramp, runners stitch, incredibly sore toes and discovered and felt muscles I didn't realise I had. Yet there is something amazing that the body does during times like this, where pain can be seemingly "overridden." What impacts this, however, are four different factors that contribute to your experience of pain.

### The 4 Factors of Pain

These are:

1. *Your emotional connections to pain*

The pain in your back travels along two pathways from the source of your pain in your back, to your brain. One of these is the sensory pathway, which transmits the physical sensation, and the other is the emotional pathway, which goes from the pain source to the amygdala and the anterior cingulate cortex. These are the areas of the brain that process emotion. In my experience, pain from illness, disease and chronic conditions include an anxiety and depression which

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is inseparable from the physical sensations of pain. Your emotions are part of your experience of pain and the perpetual cycle.

In my work as a psychotherapist I see many clients suffering from back pain, and the vast majority suffer from feelings of anxiety and depression. The cycle of pain *is* a depressing one. The more pain you feel, the gloomier you become. The more down you feel; the more pain you experience. It's a vicious, relentless cycle which perpetuates until it's broken, or maybe you are. This miserable situation is what brought me to writing this book. The first step often is to recognise this vicious cycle. Then using the methods you will learn in the following chapters, we can go about addressing what's happening in both your body *and* mind.

### 2. *Your past experiences of pain*

Your current experience of pain can be affected by earlier life experiences of pain felt long ago. How you were reacted to within your family in times of pain, and also different cultural styles, affect how you respond to pain in adult life and your attitude to potential pain experiences. Only the other day, one of my young grandchildren fell off his pushbike while we were out in the back yard. He fell, looked up and around, and only when his eyes met mine, which were filled with worry, did he start crying. Children often look to their parents for cues on how to react when they fall or hurt themselves. Often, the more serious the injury the more distressed the parent, and the louder the child then cries.

In some families though, pain is seen in a different way. Expectations of being strong and tough, means that a child might grow up more resilient to pain, and this follows them

## Introduction

through into adult life. Pain, then, is a subjective experience. What the very word pain elicits is a quite personal matter. It stands to reason that your past experiences of pain not only affect your current experience of pain, but what you expect pain to feel like in the future.

### 3. *Your characteristics*

People with low motivation or poor self-esteem can often perceive a pain stimulus as more severe. They seem to have a lower pain threshold and, as they are already under strain and feeling anxiety, they feel any additional stress distinctly. Somebody who is adventurous, optimistic and confident will certainly experience pain differently to somebody who is anxious, pessimistic and introspective.

### 4. *Your perceptions of what pain means*

Finally, what pain means has an impact on how you experience it. A paper cut, for example, hasn't the same meaning as a deep gash near an artery. Even though we know how painful a paper cut can be, it just doesn't signify the same level of seriousness, and hence the pain is not felt as severely. Some people view pain as something in need of attending to, while others seem to live with pain in a much more unconcerned way. Each of them *experience* the pain, but have different ideas as to what pain means.

Take some time now to look at these four dynamics. Where do you think you have been influenced in the past in these areas? How are they impacting your experience of pain? Use the table below to record your thoughts.

## The Book on Back Pain

<b>The 4 factors of pain</b>	Where do they come from?	How do they impact me?
<i>1. Your emotional connections to pain</i>		
<i>2. Your past experiences of pain</i>		
<i>3. Your characteristics</i>		
<i>4. Your perceptions of what pain means</i>		

### What Is Pain?

Simply put, pain is a physical sensation that causes bodily suffering and distress. It is also an emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage. As we will see later on in the book, emotional pain, such as sadness, anger, or fear, can be stored away in the body and is just as real as the pain felt from a physical injury. Pain protects us and motivates us to withdraw from potentially damaging situations, to protect a damaged body part while it heals, and to avoid those and similar situations in the future, whether they be physical or emotional.

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Pain can be incredibly useful! Acute pain is often unexpected, such as that experienced in an accident. It's often intense and short-lived, but can also lead to anxiety and fear of further pain or injury. I recall a training session when I was playing rugby. We were practicing what we called "set plays," replicating what we would do in particular situations during match time. I can recall distinctly the moment where I chased the ball, stepped down to grab hold of it and then - bang - a fellow team member tackled me - hard - as he was supposed to. Unfortunately for me, it was an icy January night in the UK, and the ground was solid. As I was twisted around, my whole body turned, but the studs of my rugby boot remained firmly in the ground, keeping my foot heading in one direction and the remainder of my body facing the other. It was the first time I can remember as a grown man, screaming like a baby! The sound of my ligaments snapping was only equalled by the collective grimacing sounds of my teammates. They each knew that sound was a year out of the game. This was *acute* pain, and the recovery included much anxiety and fear as I slowly regained the ability to walk and eventually run. Generally though, when this kind of injury heals, the pain goes away.

Chronic pain, however, is more likely the kind of pain you're experiencing if you're reading this book. You may not have had an injury to your back as serious as the one I've just described of my ankle, but over time, the pain has slowly gotten worse, almost creeping up on you, until it gets to the point where you can take no more or simply cannot live with it. Chronic pain has often been around for a while, and various treatments aren't working or working little at best. It's this kind of chronic pain that this book is designed for. I'm going to show you how you can become the "boss" of your back again.

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### The Dual Carriageway of Pain - The Gate Control Theory

Melzack and Wall introduced their “gate control” theory of pain in the 1965 *Science* article "Pain Mechanisms: A New Theory," which describes how the transmission of pain signals could be intercepted in the dorsal horn within the spine, the area that consists of the sensory fibres responsible for regulating and modulating the incoming impulses of pain, so that a “gate” could be closed and the signal of pain could be switched off.

Nerves from all over your body run to the spinal cord, which is the first main meeting point for the nervous system. In the spinal cord, you can imagine a series of gates through which messages about pain arrive from all over your body. These gates can sometimes be much more open than at other times. This is important because it is through these gates that messages from your body pass towards your brain. If the gates are more open, then more pain messages pass through to the brain and you are likely to experience a high level of pain. If the gates are more closed, then fewer messages get through and you are likely to experience less pain.

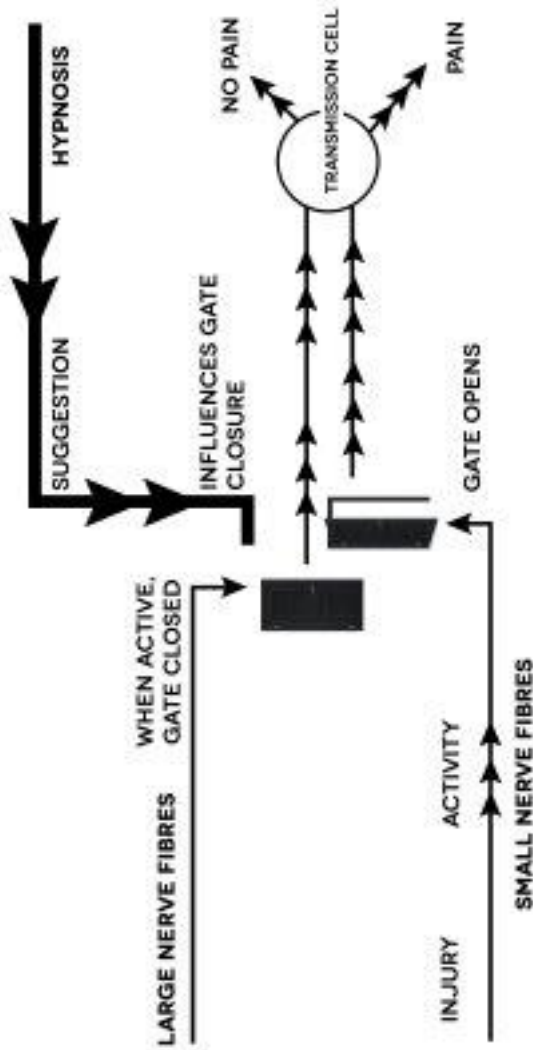
Ordinarily, through our bodily experiences, our large nerve fibres are delivering messages of our sensations through the dorsal horn in the spinal cord, synapsing onto the transmission cells, which then make their way up the spinothalamic tract to the brain. So, ordinarily, the gate is closed and no pain is experienced. What happens during an injury, however, is that our smaller nerve fibres pass impulses through the gate, opening it and allowing the pain signal to move to the transmission cells, which then passes pain to be registered in the brain.



## Introduction

The diagram below (*figure 1:3*) indicates how the use of hypnotic suggestion can directly influence the closing of the gate, so that the messages of pain can't get through.

*Figure 1:3 Melzack and Wall's Gate Control Theory of Pain*



## **The Book on Back Pain**

Imagine for a moment now the electrical impulses carrying the messages of pain from your back, making their way through your spine and through the dorsal horn of your spine, at which point they come across this gating mechanism. Imagine now *slamming* the gate shut, so as the message hits the gate it's stopped in its tracks, and the electrical impulses just disperse and fade away. This simple visualisation helps you imagine this process taking place, but using it whilst in the state of hypnosis connects your powerful inner mind to actually making these changes happen.

### **Bonus Number 1 - The Power of Hypnosis**

In Chapter 6 you will be learning how to use self-hypnosis, and exactly how to influence these messages to take control of your back pain. But I don't want you to wait that long! So, here for you now is my special Bonus Number One! So you can start learning about hypnosis and how it can help you make powerful changes, alongside this book I am giving you my Free eBook on Hypnosis and NLP. To download your copy now, simply go to [www.TomBarberMedia.com](http://www.TomBarberMedia.com).

In the next chapter you are going to learn how to shift your mind into the correct state for change to take place, but the more you find out about *how* your mind and you operate, the more control you can take over you, your life and your back pain. Enjoy learning!

### **How to Use This Book**

A lot of books you may have read invite you to dip in and out of each chapter and find what works for you. This isn't one of them. In writing this book I have taken each of the

## **Introduction**

methods you are about to learn and put them in an organised sequential order. There is a logical and practical reason for this. If you were to start reading Chapter 6 now, it likely wouldn't make sense, as each of the chapters builds on the previous chapters' learning. Each chapter will address your back pain in a different way, and they have been organised through many years of teaching these methods, and finding the order in which they work best.

I'm going to hazard a guess that the first ever time you rode on two wheels that it wasn't on a Harley Davidson. We start with what we can manage and build upwards. This book is the same. We are going to start with what your mind can manage and build up to the ultimate relief. So, take each chapter step by step, and only when you've completed each chapter, move on to the next one.



## *Chapter 2*

### *Step 1: Pain and Mindfulness*

#### *From Pain to Peace ... Can It Happen?*

#### **Why Get Mindful?**

The first thing here is to explain what “mindfulness” means. The idea is certainly not a new one. According to the teachings of the Buddha (circa 500 BCE), mindfulness is considered to be one of the seven factors on the path to enlightenment. So what is it? Well, plainly speaking, mindfulness is a state of purposeful being in which one can pay attention to the reality of one’s experience.

Consider how often you try to get through your day and turn your attention away from the pain in your back. As hard as you try, it still niggles away, doesn’t it? There may be times where you become distracted by something that grabs your attention; a surprise telephone call from an old friend, a funny joke that makes you cry with laughter, an emergency you need to deal with, but, hovering around in the background, the pain remains, wearing you down. Well, imagine if you were to spend a specific period of your day focussing on nothing but your back pain. How would that feel to you right now? It may well sound counterintuitive at first. “Why would I want to focus entirely on my back pain when I’m trying to get rid of it?”, you may ask.

The answer is in taking control. Becoming mindful of what you are experiencing in your back is the first step to taking control of your body, using both your mind and body and

## **The Book on Back Pain**

the power of focussed attention. As Alexander Wynne, in *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation* (2007), wrote, “A key innovative teaching of the Buddha was that meditative stabilisation must be combined with liberating discernment.” (p. 73), and this is what leads to the healing power of wisdom.

Psychology has embraced the use of mindfulness in recent years (Germer et al., 2005; Siegel, 2007; Shapiro and Carlson, 2009), and it has been noted to be effective in treating anxiety and depression, which is pertinent to the back pain sufferer. Focussing on emotion in particular, Fisher (2012) writes about mindfulness as a way of managing anger, which can be useful, as prolonged pain can become incredibly frustrating and has led many of the people I’ve worked with to feelings of anger and resentment. A study by Zautra et al. (2010) showed a decrease in the experience of pain when using mindful breathing exercises, as well as a decrease in these kinds of negative emotion. Cramer et al. (2012) write about mindfulness in the treatment of lower back pain in particular, and the prolific author Jon Kabat-Zinn also offers his highly acclaimed *Mindfulness for Pain Relief: Guided Practices for Reclaiming Your Body and Your Life* (2010).

The practice of mindfulness then, is an accepted and useful tool in the fields of psychology and psychotherapy, and offers much to help people slow down and take control of the pain they are experiencing.

### **Taking Control of Your Physical Presence**

Many of the techniques you will learn in the following chapters begin from a place of mindfulness, and so this is a good place to start. Until now you may have tried varying different types of medication, or been given numerous

## **Step 1: Pain and Mindfulness**

exercise and stretching regimes to help relieve your back pain, and, if you are unlucky enough to have suffered from back pain for many years, may well have simply been told to “lay still on a flat surface for as long as you can each day.” The treatment of back pain is certainly different now however, with movement the key to recovery. Indeed the famous author on back pain, John Sarno, advocated movement as a critical need in his bestselling book *Healing Back Pain: The Mind-Body Connection* (1991). But what about guiding your attention *into* the pain to ease it?

### **New Positions - Holding Yourself in a New Way**

We are now going to use five different exercises to get you accustomed to mindfulness. Each one is different but all have the same purpose - to attune you to focussing on the reality of your experience of your back pain. Make sure you have around ten minutes of quiet time to spare and that you are somewhere where you'll be undisturbed. There's no rush. We spend a vast amount of time in this hectic life rushing around. Life is busy, and these exercises will be invaluable in helping you to slow down and become mindful. There's no success or failure with each technique, as what you experience will change over time. It often takes a long time simply to get to a short moment of mindful clarity, so it's helpful to make this part of your overall strategy in gaining the ultimate relief. All mindfulness techniques start here, so get as good as you can at each exercise before you move on to the next one.

#### **Exercise 1: 60-Second Mindfulness**

This is a simple mindfulness exercise which you can do anytime throughout the day. It helps to have some time on your own, but it only takes sixty seconds, so you should be

## **The Book on Back Pain**

able to do it anywhere and at any time. When you're settled and ready, check your clock or watch and make a note of the time. Then, for the next sixty seconds, your sole task is to focus all your attention on your breathing. It may seem like a long time, but that is all you have to do for sixty seconds. You don't have to close your eyes; just concentrate on your breathing to the exclusion of everything else. With each breath in, notice your stomach and chest rising, and with each breath out, notice them lowering.

You might notice your mind wandering off, which is normal when you first start. You might need to build it up from twenty seconds to thirty, forty and then eventually sixty seconds. Sixty seconds, however, is your goal. Once you have achieved that then you can make it longer, but start with just one minute as your target.

### **Exercise 2: Conscious Focussed Observation**

When you've achieved one full minute of mindful attention, then we can build up your mindful "connection." In this exercise I want you to first find yourself somewhere quiet and again make sure you'll be undisturbed. Then pick up an object that you have lying around. Any object will do. It doesn't matter, as it's simply going to be a point of focus for you. Hold your chosen object in both of your hands and let your attention be fully absorbed by your object. Examine it, allowing your observations to move around it in different directions. You may find thoughts about it wandering into your mind, but there's no need to do anything with them. You don't have to assess your object, or think about it, or make sense of anything about it. Just observe your object for what it is and stay with your object as completely as you can. Let it become the central point of your world at this moment in time.



## Step 1: Pain and Mindfulness

The goal is to experience a feeling of being in the now and present in your experiencing of life. When you become present in your life and can really be in the moment, then you stop your past experiences of pain, and your future expectations of pain taking over, leaving you present solely in the *now*. This conscious focussed observation brings the *present* wholly into your reality.

### Exercise 3: Mindfulness Triggers

“Triggers” occur in all sorts of situations. Pavlov’s dogs are a very well known example of how they can be used. Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) conducted an experiment where he trained dogs to salivate on command. He presented dogs with a ringing bell followed by food. After repeating the same process a few times, the dogs, upon hearing a bell ring, would salivate, anticipating food, whether it appeared or not. The conditioned stimulus - the bell - created a conditioned response within the dogs, with them salivating at the prospect of being fed.

In this exercise we are going to use the same idea. You are going to train yourself to respond in a certain way whenever a certain trigger or cue occurs. Think now about a common trigger that happens from day to day. Let’s take the telephone ringing. Your goal is that whenever you hear this sound, you focus on becoming mindful - of an object, or something more innate, like your breathing. Your breathing works well, as it’s something you cannot escape. You are always breathing, hopefully! So, when the telephone rings, your task is to train yourself to mindfully shift your attention to your breathing, and specifically *each* breath in and *each* breath out.

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Another common experience is looking in the mirror. Most of us do this every day, so it's a common experience that we can use to become mindful. When you look in the mirror, shift your attention to your breathing. You can look at yourself whilst you do it or close your eyes, whatever suits you. What other common life experience triggers can you think of? What do you do each day as a matter of course? What are the most repetitive experiences you have each day?

List five of them below now.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

From now on, in each of these situations, remember to shift into a mindful state of being. This mindfulness triggers exercise is an excellent way of moving you out the pain of the past and your expectations of future pain, and snapping you into the now, where you can think more clearly and really embrace the techniques you are about to learn, in a way that fits for you.

### **Exercise 4: Mindful Listening**

"I just need some peace and quiet." Do you recall having said this before? Most of us crave for some peace at some point or another. Just some quiet time to sit and slow down, yet this isn't always easy. How many times have you stopped to have a break, just to rest and take some time out, where you then begin to think about all the things you

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could, or should, be doing! Sometimes it's like the noise from outside, and even our inner noise, just doesn't stop.

In training yourself to *use* these sounds to take you into a mindful state of awareness, you turn them from being a distraction, into a useful way of calming your mind and then taking control. How many sounds around you are you aware of right now? You might be sitting in your living room, on the train, in your lunch break at work, or in your favourite place. Wherever you are, you will likely be experiencing a variety of different sounds from your external surroundings; people chatting, the sound of a radio, traffic driving past, or a clock ticking. Most of these sounds fade into the background, while we focus on whatever we are doing at the time; what's most at the fore of our attention. One of the best ways of putting this into context I have found is through my studies in Gestalt psychology, which talks about "figure and ground." The most well-known visual example of figure-ground perception is the Rubin vase two dimensional image, that Danish psychologist and phenomenologist Edgar Rubin (1886 - 1951) presented:



*Figure 2:1 Rubin's Vase*

Through this visual image we can see a distinction between two pictures. On one hand we have a picture of a vase, and on the other the picture of two faces looking at each other.

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Can you see them both? Which image then is figure, and which is ground? Well, this changes as you focus on one of the pictures in particular. As you become aware now of the figure of the vase, the faces become ground, and when you bring the faces forward in your perception, the vase becomes ground. As you look at the image above, swap between them and see how this works.

Let's think about how you switch from your fore experience to your ground experience in relation to what you're *physically* aware of. I'm going to assume you are sitting down, or perhaps even lying down reading at the moment. So ... are you aware of the chair or bed beneath you? Well, you are now! Were you before I mentioned the chair or bed? Likely not! We moved you in focussing your attention onto the chair, or bed, so that it became the *fore* of your experiencing, which was previously the *ground*.

This happens because we cut out parts of our sensory experiences. It's impossible to be aware of all of our experiences at any one time, and really not very useful anyway. Imagine if from moment to moment you had to keep checking the chair was still beneath you every time you were sitting down! Nothing would ever get done, would it? Thankfully, we have the ability to shut parts of our reality out.

Let's get back to your "inner noise". Think about how many thoughts you have moving through your mind at any one time. We tend to work on the same premise with our thoughts as the fore-ground principle. Think about your thoughts right now. You're reading these words; you're concentrating on what I'm saying, and maybe you're questioning how *you* experience all of this - and what else is there? What am I having for my evening meal? Did I lock

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the front door? Or did I pay that bill, or take my pain medication? It's busy in there, isn't it?

So, this is one of the most important techniques I use with clients and students of the Ultimate Relief programme, as it helps you take charge of your inner noise through mindful listening. Not just what you are hearing from your external world, but what you are listening to from inside you too.

### *Listening Mindfully*

You've taken sixty seconds to attune to your experiencing, practiced being mindfully focussed on a specific object, and also become aware of the triggers that will help you *become* mindful. Now you are going to listen mindfully. Let's put a time scale to it. For the next two minutes you're going to mindfully listen, to one sound in particular.

Take a few seconds now to notice one sound around you. It may be the sound of a clock ticking, or the birds outside, or a certain sound that is happening. It needs to be a sound that's going to remain constant for a while. Even the most disturbing of sounds can help us become mindful. I remember one from many years ago at the beginning of my career, sitting in my then office with a client. We were doing a session of hypnotherapy, where I was guiding them through a visualisation. I needed quiet! My client needed quiet! In the grounds of where I was working there was a small farm, and within that farm were two peacocks. I called them Sid and Cyril. Why? Because every afternoon around 4pm they would fly up onto my therapy room roof and start squealing what sounded like, "Sid ... Cyril!" You could hear them from two streets away!

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Life is like that: fire engines, police sirens, telephones, builders. Noise is everywhere. So I decided to use this sound mindfully ... and said to my client ... “and as you hear the sound of Sid and Cyril squealing, just focus on that, and focus on nothing else, just the sound of them communicating.” My client drifted deeply into a wonderful state of relaxation simply because I didn’t try to exclude the *reality* of their auditory experience, but instead got them to mindfully focus on it. It’s a strange experience, really focussing on the sounds around us. We spend so much time trying to block things out that we miss the benefits of listening ... mindfully.

So, whatever is happening around you right now, I want you to become mindful of the time and take two minutes to practice mindful listening. Whatever you become aware of, let it be your anchor. That’s your sound. That’s what you are going to focus on. It doesn’t matter what it is; just let whatever grabs your attention be your focus. Now, stay with it for a whole two minutes. Let yourself be with your sound for a whole two minutes. Push away from your mind all else to the exclusion of that sound. Let it just be “you and here and now.” I wonder if you are beginning to notice an inner stillness, a sense of peace and quiet, as many of my workshop participant’s describe.

### Exercise 5: Mindful Breathing

Becoming mindful is a step further than being conscious of your back pain. It’s a real focussed attention on what makes your back pain what it is. Maurice Merleau Ponty (1908-1961), the French philosopher, once said, “We are first and foremost a body in the world.” As an existentialist, he explored and wrote extensively about the body being an intrinsic aspect of our existence in the world. To be mindful

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of what you are experiencing not only helps you to focus your innate power to heal your back pain, it also brings your mind and body and existence together as one entity. This makes separating your back pain from you as a “person” futile. Mindful breathing powerfully focuses your mind on your back, and guides you through breathing relief into it in a structured and easy way, which you can do anywhere, anytime.

First take a breath in through your nose with your mouth closed. If you can't do this for any reason, then breathe through your mouth. It'll work just as well. Hold it for the count of four in your mind and then exhale. Make the breaths in and the breaths out the same in length. Breathe in to the count of five. Hold your breath for the count of four. Now breathe out to the count of five. Good. Now we have a breathing pattern established.

Now this time, when you breathe in, I want you to breathe in so that your stomach rises, to the count of five. Hold it for the count of four and then exhale to the count of five. Do this three times.

Now we come to the part where this exercise works so well with the relief of pain. This time, as you breathe in, in the same way you breathed into your stomach, I want you to imagine breathing into the pain in your back to the count of five, as though you are literally filling that whole area with oxygen. Then hold it for the count of four and exhale to the count of five. As you do this again, imagine that, as you fill the area in your back with oxygen, when you breathe out you begin to breathe out the pain that was there. Imagine each breath out takes more and more of the pain away. This is a great technique to practice daily, and I know a lot of my clients really enjoy it as its taking control in a powerful way

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through the natural process of breathing. Embrace your back pain, empower your very existence in this world as a unique human being, and experience the ultimate relief through the power of you.

### **Time to Rate It!**

So, now you've practiced mindfulness, it's time to see how this has impacted your intensity level from Chapter 1. Become aware of your back now and rate it.

"Presently my intensity rating of pain is \_\_\_\_\_."

Keep practicing being mindful and begin to explore other ways of getting yourself into this powerful state for change, as this will help with what you will learn in the following chapters.

### **Bonus Gift Number 2!**

I wanted you to get really accustomed to being mindful in this chapter, but now I am going to give you your second Bonus Gift to make becoming mindful even easier – My "Eliminate Stress Hypnotically" MP3 download is one of my most popular recordings and I'm giving it to you now. Simply go to [www.TomBarberMedia.com](http://www.TomBarberMedia.com) and you will be able to download your copy absolutely free!



*Chapter 3*  
*Step 2: Your Ultimate Outcome*  
*A Pain Free Life*

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