



# John Gifford, LMT, CBPM, BCTMB

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## When Relief is a Major Symptom

When you see waves on the ocean is it the water or the space between the swells of water that is most important? Actually, for there to be waves you need both the presence of water and the absence of water. A key question that is often neglected by health professionals when interviewing a person with chronic pain is, "Can you tell me about periods when you don't hurt?" When I ask patients this type of question I usually receive a look of surprise. Sometimes I get a verbal response such as, "I am seeking treatment for the relief of my symptoms. Why are we spending time talking about periods when I don't have pain?" I agree that a great deal can be learned by knowing the onset of symptoms, location of pain, structural anomalies (abnormalities), and past injuries, and I believe it's prudent to ask about those things as well. At the same time, finding out when someone does not hurt can prove very beneficial.



*"Carol's major pain contribution was revealed not when she had the most pain, but at a time when she felt the best."*  
-John C. Gifford, CBPM, NCTMB  
Owner, Motionwise®

keep functioning. The myotherapy and massage I used with her was of significant help. She was able to go four months without injections and was grateful to feel relief from a treatment that did not involve medication. However, at the end of each session I still had to leave time to affix three large transdermal patches of medication to her skin, and although her pain relief from my work was the most helpful treatment she had tried, she needed to return frequently.

"How was your vacation?" I asked during one session. "Great!" she replied "I had almost no pain, and I was quite active." This was mostly a coincidence to her, and a key piece of information for me. Carol's major pain contribution was revealed not when she had the most pain, but at a time when she felt the best. I began to inform (maybe lecture) her of how the state of our mind can create "issues in our tissues."

Carol left her job. She no longer wears pain patches. Carol's muscle tenderness has been reduced by ninety percent. What was her occupation? Administrative assistant at one of the country's busiest pain clinics. Sometimes, nothing reveals everything. Till next time,

Enter Carol, a professional woman working in a high stress job. For years Carol had been receiving injections and taking large doses of prescription medications. By the time she came to me she had been receiving trigger point injections every six weeks just to



John Gifford has performed over 40,000 sessions as an approved provider of sports massage and a unique style of bodywork called Bonnie Prudden Myotherapy® and Exercise Therapy®. His mission as a clinician, lecturer, consultant, and author is to empower people to lead more active, successful, and fulfilling lives through the reduction and prevention of their muscular pain and tension.