

## Keep a Journal...Help Your Back?

by John C. Gifford, CBPM, NCTMB - Owner, Motionwise®

I had a client who worked as a physician describe her symptoms of chronic neck and shoulder pain and the muscle tension she experiences in performing surgical procedures. The story she was telling herself about her pain was that all of her symptoms were caused by her occupation. "Well," I said, "performing surgeries may play a part in your symptoms, but we also both know there is only one organ that can maintain muscular tension in the absence of pathology." She looked at me inquisitively and asked, "What organ are you speaking of?" "Why, the brain of course," I replied. She became very quiet and stared at me. "What are you thinking?" I asked. "Two things," she said. "One, I am not comfortable with what you just told me, and two, you are exactly right!"

Researchers at North Dakota State University gave pens to 112 patients with asthma and crippling rheumatoid arthritis and asked some of them to write about the most stressful experiences of their lives. The remaining patients were told to write about non-meaningful subjects. Four months later, the scientists were amazed to discover dramatic improvements in those who expressed powerful emotions. The sufferers

who wrote about neutral topics reported fewer gains.

Scientists speculate that repressing painful emotions raises the levels of stress chemicals in our bloodstream. These chemicals, in turn, suppress the body's disease-fighting immune system.

I was talking with my mother about this subject recently and she said she had read an article stating that repressed emotions are like leftovers: if you don't throw them out, you'll keep heating them up! I'm also reminded of the old saying, "What we resist, persists."

Check out [www.journaltherapy.com](http://www.journaltherapy.com) or *Journal to the Self*, by Kathleen Adams, M.A. You could also experiment right now with the following exercise I suggest to my clients: For seven days, set a timer for five minutes and write down any feelings you either don't want to admit exist within you or that you would not want anyone to know you are feeling. Did you notice any physical changes or common themes?

So, take a pen and paper and call me in the morning. Next time you're sick don't be surprised if your doctor pulls out his or her pen and pad...and hands it to you! Till next time,

*John*

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Photo by Darlene Cech

John Gifford has performed over 30,000 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.

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