

## A CASE STUDY

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### PATIENT

**Profile:** Forty-five year-old housewife  
**Condition:** Chronic pain, fibromyalgia, arthritis, reflex sympathetic dystrophy,  
chronic cervical encroachment, and panic disorder

All people must solve the crises that befall them in their own ways. Our paths are not known to us from the outset and when life reveals itself, we each use the tools available to us to navigate its course.

A car accident left this patient, a wife and mother of six, for two years to deal with constant, intense neck and shoulder pain and to a lesser extent arm and hand pain every day. Her structural problems restricted activity. Her mind could do little but focus on the pain. Neither physical therapy nor other medical interventions made a mark on the pain this woman had to sustain each day.

Additionally, she could no longer take her prescribed pain medication; her body could not tolerate it. And frequently she could not be in a car without a flooding anxiety about her accident. Two passions in her life helped her bear the pain, but not reduce it – her spirituality and the writing that she loved to do.

Her medical doctor suggested that the patient try the pain and stress reduction treatment program so she could learn new ways to manage her pain. With characteristic discipline, she set out to master the new skills that would change the course of her future days.

One entry in a journal she kept during this time provides an insight that's important for every person embarking on a pain or stress reduction course to learn. She writes, "This is the only time I have alone (to practice) before getting kids up, etc. It's not an ideal time, but I need to learn how to handle less than ideal circumstances."

The patient started the program in mid-January and by February, her journal entries reflect that she was beginning to understand how to reduce her pain: "I didn't seem to relax as deeply today, but it was good and there was stillness...I'm not as stiff and I'm alert, sort of happy."

A week later, after she had learned another new technique, her journal entry goes farther: "Even when I was aware of my body (during practice) there was no pain. Normally I feel at least stiffness even in relaxation. I like this combination of techniques. I feel relaxed, happy, energetic."

"As we learn these techniques, we simply sit and invite the relaxation response to tiptoe in as we calm our body and gently soothe the everyday turmoil in our mind," she writes in one of her longer entries. "...This refreshes and renews the strained muscles, the frazzled nerves, the emotions left weary by life struggle. The mind becomes more focused, alert, intuitive and resilient. This is very good."

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