

## Relief from Chronic Pain Overview

### The Workshop

This workshop will provide a safe environment that will allow you to begin your healing. It will allow your nervous system to shift out of your mental or physical pain pathways.

### The faculty

David Hanscom, MD practices complex orthopedic spine surgery in Seattle, WA. He not only survived a severe burnout and chronic pain, but is thriving and grateful to be able to share his journey with you.

Babs Yohai is a performing artist experienced in tap dance and Mask Theater. She will be working with rhythm and movement exercises. Her role in connecting the DOCC principles with bodily sensations is a critical part of the healing experience.

Jasmine Yohai-Rifkin, MS is an expressive arts therapist who has been instrumental in running the somatic aspect of the workshop.

### Preparation

The strategies are based on my book, *Back in Control: A Surgeon's Roadmap Out of Chronic Pain. Forgive for Good* by Dr. Fred Luskin is also a key book. Please read these books prior to this seminar.

Begin the expressive writing exercises described on my website, [www.backincontrol.com](http://www.backincontrol.com). It is described in Stage 1: Step 2. The one common denominator of essentially every patient of mine that has experienced significant healing is a strong commitment to this exercise. It is the foundation of the project and is something you will be doing indefinitely.

The workshop is based on the premise that you have already started the DOC process and that we will be able to deepen your understanding of it.

### The Format

The seminar is based on three concepts:

- The DOC project is a framework that helps you understand chronic pain and your relationship to it.
- All aspects of pain are addressed simultaneously.
- You must take control of your care and situation in order to solve your pain.

The end result is that you will be able to re-connect with the best part of who you are and move through the pain pathways into a rich and full life.

## **The Schedule**

Be prepared to engage. You will be assigned to a small group of five or six people. You will be eating lunch with your small group with several topics to discuss. There will be discussion topics for each meal. Members of the same family will be placed into separate groups.

About a third of the course will be lecture. The rest will be shared group activities such as rhythm, drawing, writing, music, meditation, etc. The goal will be to teach you tools you can take with you. There will be a lot of physical activity but it is not strenuous.

## **Overview of Course**

Friday evening – Laying the foundation and learning about the neurological basis of chronic pain

Saturday morning – Letting go – Focus is on forgiveness

Saturday afternoon – Family issues and Play

Saturday evening – Sharing part of you

- Story
- Poem
- Hobby
- Favorite song
- Talent
- Anything

5 – 10 min person in the large group

Sunday morning – Play and practical tools to take with you

## **Target Audience**

Anyone who is experiencing mental or physical pain or a chronic disease that is compromising his or her quality of life. Chronic pain can manifest in many other forms such as spastic bladder, irritable bowel, skin rashes, burning sensations throughout the body, fibromyalgia, tinnitus, and others. When the nervous system is

over-reactive and out of balance it can create or magnify almost any physical symptom in your body. Additionally, physical and mental pains are processed in close proximity in the brain. Anxiety, depression, obsessive thought patterns, eating issues are other symptoms that also will respond to these principles.

If you are not experiencing significant chronic pain just use the word, “stress”. It is a great set of concepts for processing stress. Stress in life is not the problem. It is your reaction to it.

Health care providers are encouraged to attend, as the best way to relate to your patients is to first have gone through the same journey.

### **Who Should Not Attend**

#### Too Painful

If your pain is severe enough that you cannot endure full days, please do not sign up for this course. You are not ready for it. Most people are able to experience a significant reduction in pain following the steps outlined on my website, [www.backincontrol.com](http://www.backincontrol.com).

#### Not Sleeping

Sleep is the number one variable that must be addressed in treating chronic pain. As per my book I ask every patient to discuss sleep with their primary-care physician, as you often cannot sleep without meds if you are in pain. Please address this before the seminar and you should be sleeping at least six hours per night. You can still attend but it would be a more productive week with sleep.

#### Unwilling to Contribute

You are being asked to fully participate and contribute. Your support to your group is important. Giving back is part of healing and you will be doing that all weekend. We are also asking you to be on time to the various activities, as we have a tight schedule.

#### Not Open to Change

The biggest obstacle to success with this process is unwillingness to engage. In chronic pain there is a lot of anger and frustration. We will show you methods to process it. However, if you are not open to new ideas and experiences please don't sign up for this course. It is not fair to the rest of the participants. Be honest with yourself regarding your willingness to undergo a true change. You can and will be able to “rewire your brain”.

A consistent measure of your openness to change is your willingness to begin the expressive writing. It is not difficult but many people simply do not want to do it. If you cannot cross that barrier your benefit from this workshop will be limited. Here is a link that describes this exercise: <http://www.backincontrolcw.com/the-4-stages/stage-1-laying-the-foundation/begin-expressive-writing/>

## Ground Rules

1) You cannot discuss your pain or medical care with the faculty or **ANY OTHER PARTICIPANT**. If you begin to discuss it then each participant will be instructed to ask you to change the subject. We are focusing on learning methods to shift your nervous system into a more powerful and enjoyable place. Discussing your medical problems is counter-productive.

- If you are persistent in discussing your medical condition, I will personally ask you to leave the course.

2) You will be asked to not bring any electronic devices into the seminar. This request also includes the evening activity. You can catch up during the breaks.

3) No complaining to the other participants about anything. If you have a concern, please discuss it directly with one of the teachers.

4) Dress is casual. Comfort is key. It is best to wear athletic shoes for the daily activities.

## Please bring materials for the following activities:

- 1) Reconnecting with the Best Part of Who You Are
  - The intent of this exercise is to recall times of your life that were truly enjoyable and share them.
  - Bring symbols or memoirs such as:
    - A photograph, souvenir, letter, etc.
    - Songs on a digital device
    - Pictures of yourself
      - Baby < one year
      - Elementary school
      - High school or college
      - Within the last year
  - This is the exercise you will do on your own just before the Saturday afternoon session.

**Summary:**

While in chronic pain you tend to lose your sense of humor and also become isolated from your friends and even your family. This seminar is a lively and interactive experience, which is part of the healing. We are looking forward to meeting and sharing the experience with you. We will be learning as much from you as you will be from us.

Warm Regards,

David Hanscom

Babs Yohai

Jasmine Yohai-Rifkin