



# Let's Start Right Now

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I am an orthopedic spine surgeon who performed complex spine surgery for over 30 years. Much of my practice was addressing problems created by multiple spine surgeries. Often the first one that led to so many downstream problems should never have been done. Eventually, through my own 15-year ordeal with chronic pain, I figured out ways to break out of it that I began to successfully share with my patients. You will learn many new concepts as you proceed, but I would invite you to begin this journey **right now**.



## Threat vs. safety

The essence of the problem is your body's reaction to sustained stress because it responds with profound elevations of stress hormones and inflammatory markers. The result is many different disruptive mental and physical symptoms.

The solution lies in learning the tools to create sense of safety, which normalizes your body's chemistry. By implementing these strategies you'll experience a shift in your mood and pain. So, I would ask my patients to begin using some basic foundational strategies right away and learn the reasons why later. Why wait? I would ask them to begin that evening with the following that will be presented in the first leg of this Journey.

## Let's begin

- Begin expressive writing. It is the one mandatory step to start. People can improve without doing it, but I have rarely seen people go pain free without engaging in this exercise. It has been documented in over a thousand research papers to be effective in creating significant shifts in multiples symptoms.
- Start active meditation. This involves placing your attention on a physical sensation for five to ten seconds. You are switching sensory input and calming down your nervous system. I like it because it takes no extra time. We used to do it during surgery with a marked improvement in technical performance.
- Adequate sleep is a critical early focus. Lack of sleep has been shown to cause chronic pain. With a multi-pronged approach, restful sleep can usually be achieved within 4-6 weeks. Medications may be needed for a few months.

- Never discuss your pain or medical situation with anyone except your medical providers. The solution for chronic pain lies in rewiring your brain around your memorized pain circuits. This is possible because your brain is changing every second (neuroplasticity), and it will develop and evolve wherever you place your attention.

### **Why should this work?**

The final step in getting started is to embrace your skepticism. Why should this DOC process work? You have been bounced around, promised relief time and time again, undergone failed interventions, and your pain is worse than ever. There is not any reason to think that this is going to work. I agree.



What is not helpful is “believing in the DOC Journey”, David Hanscom, using positive thinking, or affirmations. It is about connecting with your current reality, which is unpleasant enough for you to sign up for this Journey. You are rightfully angry, frustrated, and trapped. It is the starting point. Feeling and knowing where you are, allows you to learn the strategies that allow you change direction. One successful patient commented that all you need is a, “suspension of disbelief.”

Every recommended treatment in this program has been well-documented by decades of deep medical research. My approach for most of my career was to implement what is already known. I have watched well over 1500 patients break free from chronic pain and not only regain their life but thrive at a level they had never experienced at any point in their lives. It happened by them learning and **using** this DOC Journey sequence that evolved from my experience out of pain and also discovering what was effective with my patients.

### **Anything is possible**

The DOC Journey begins with awareness and hope. There is a lot of hope in hearing of other’s successes. I am now convinced you can stimulate your brain to rewire around almost any pain regardless of the source.

I just got another taste of this when a patient who I never treated resolved his pain largely through the DOC Journey approach. He is now 66 and had been in pain for over 20 years. He lost his marriage and business. He ended up on high-dose narcotics and attempted suicide. During this period, he had undergone 27 surgeries.

He has not only been free from pain for over four years, he states that he has not felt this good since he was 30 years old. Historically, I would never have thought that this was possible in light of the severity of his trauma.

Please acknowledge your disbelief, embrace it, start with using these basic tools; and you'll learn as you go. Helping patients emerge from the Abyss of chronic pain has been the most rewarding phase of my career. I am continually inspired by the resiliency of the human spirit and I am honored to be a part of your journey.