

## Debilitating Back Pain

### Testimonial: Melissa Rodgers, aged 28 - 2007

Whilst on duty working as a Prison Officer, in July 2000, I fell due to a broken drain cover. My foot became trapped and I twisted and wrenched my back causing injuries to my lumbar spine. I was just 21 and prior to this I had been fit and healthy and had never had any major accidents or injuries and no back pain.

Over the next four years I had consultations with twelve surgeons (general orthopaedic, neurologists and back specialists) both in the UK and Europe, their opinions varied but their general conclusions were, two or three slipped or herniated discs/annular tears in my L3/L4, L4/L5 and L5/S1 areas of my back with protrusions and nerve compression. Due to the time taken to diagnosis my injury (waiting for appointments/MRI scans etc) additional wear and tear, degeneration and dehydration of the discs also occurred. There seemed to be no suggestion of treatment just prescriptions to help symptoms and referrals to see another specialist. I was even informed that what the MRI scans and X-rays showed could not cause the pain and limitations that I was complaining of and I was therefore referred for a psychiatric assessment because it must be in my head!

I was absent from work until I was dismissed in January 2004 deemed unfit to be a Prison Officer due to my back injury, despite several attempts to return to work.

The injury had an impact on all areas of my life, I was in agony twenty-four hours a day, rarely managed to sleep, could not get out of bed without medication and relied on my partner and family to help me with basic daily tasks: washing, dressing, etc. I had so many limitations with walking, standing, bending, lifting, sitting, stair use – I could no longer drive because of the pain, spasms and medication. I could not live alone so had to move out of my home and live between friends and family depending on who was able to help me. I could not work and relied on an income from benefits.

I spent hours on the net looking for 'cures' for back problems. I tried acupuncture, accupressure, magnetic therapy, massage, the Bowen & Alexander techniques, yoga, pilates, herbal medication, hot and cold compresses, supplements (glucosamine and chondroitin etc), a T.E.N.S machine, corsets, physiotherapy, Chinese medicine and I consulted my GP regarding any new ideas in the media. I was on the waiting list for facet joint injections but had been told not to get my hopes up it was just an option that needed to be ruled out – nothing helped and many of the above just caused additional pain and added to my frustration.

I was taking between 25-35 prescribed tablets daily, a mixture of pain killers (eventually I wore a patch to constantly provide this), anti-inflammatory, muscle relaxants, anti-depressants, anti nausea and sleeping tablets - the side effects included vomiting, insomnia, constipation, shaking, lethargy and a constant feeling of being drugged.

In 2005 I decided that my only option was to have surgery to replace three of my discs with artificial discs, performed by a Swedish surgeon at a private clinic. I sought second opinions and I was repeatedly told that this operation had less than a fifty percent chance of success with a very high chance that I would become worse and possibly wheelchair bound. The artificial discs have a 'life' of ten years and I was informed that the operation could only be performed three times on an individual so I was advised to think carefully about the position that I would be in my mid fifties. I didn't care about thirty years away I had no quality to my life, no job, no social life, no independence, no income and no other solutions available. If the operation was a success my life would improve, that was all that was important to me.

However, I was repeatedly being told at each consultation to strengthen my back and stomach muscles so I joined a gym, had a consultation with a personal trainer who was overwhelmed with my limitations and referred me to Steve for further investigation.

Steve has completely transformed my life! Today I take no medication, I am no longer depressed, have little or no pain - occasional 'flare ups' but I can normally identify what I did to cause this, even in the case of a flare up Steve puts me right within twenty-four hours!

During the past two years I have worked on many areas of my health with Steve focusing on nutrition, exercise and lifestyle, looking at my health and the condition of my whole body and not just my injury.

Initially he carried out physical assessments identifying the areas that needed to be addressed. He initially provided me with a program of corrective stretches and exercises and also referred me out to an osteopathic practice for manipulative therapy to help re-align my body, especially my sacro-iliac joint that he recognised as being misaligned. He also introduced me to a rehabilitation exercise program consisting of stretches and gentle exercises with the use of exercise balls, cables, stretchy bands and weights and after each session I could feel more relief.

Steve has explained the importance of eating a high quality organic diet to aid healing and for general well being.

He has educated me on the importance of regular sleeping patterns and the impact of environmental factors which were placing additional stresses on the body. I have had

tests to identify the levels of heavy metals in my body. As a result I have now had all of my mercury fillings removed.

With each area Steve has assessed me, provided an informative explanation and a logical, simple solution - something that was missing at each stage of the conventional paths which I had been following for over four years.

During the early assessments we also looked at the toxicity of my body as a whole and a way to reduce the medication. I felt that if my body was in a toxic state I no longer wanted to keep adding more tablets. I decided to try to stop taking my prescribed medication. Even with the medication I was still in agony daily so I felt to continue with it was pointless and damaging. I had become very addicted to the medication and Steve taught me techniques to overcome addictions and with this information I have not only stopped all medication I have also stopped smoking! Whereas before I was in pain even with medication I am now out of pain without medication after Steve's training.

I don't even want to imagine where I would be without Steve! Today, I sit and type pain free, this year I stopped my disability registration and the financial benefits that I received, I am seeking employment, I drive a car, I meet friends and socialise. In terms of exercise I train regularly at my local gym following the stretches and programs written by Steve. He has taught me the importance of regular, gentle exercise and about the bodies need for energising exercises through tai chi and 'zone exercises'.

We are now working on the levels of parasite, candida and fungus in my body, hormonal imbalances and food intolerances. I understand that all of the changes are long-term lifestyle changes, to heal the damage done by years of medication. My goal is to not only heal my body but to then maintain optimum well being and weight through all that I have learnt and continue to learn from Steve.

I have regular consultations with Steve and he also advises/supports me by email and over the telephone. I believe that I will continue to work with him for some time because I still have so much more that I could improve. Steve is the only person that has made any difference to the situation that I was in. Not just a difference but a life changing impact, Steve alone has given my life back to me - not the life that I had before my injury but a healthier, happier and more energised existence. I believe that everybody needs a 'Steve' in their life; even if they have no major injury he can improve their general wellbeing.

His overwhelming knowledge, experience and complete belief in all that he practices and teaches is so reassuring that even the most unusual dietary requirements and exercises he has suggested I have just taken in my stride because he is the only one that has made me who I am today and everything he suggests, works! It amazes me

that Steve is not content with the training and skills he has, he wants to expand his training to other areas and I believe that this will only add to his ability to achieve life changing results.

I will never be able to thank Steve enough, because of him I feel energised, revitalised, rested in a way I never imagined and above all happy and very positive about my future. In the early stages he not only gave me hope but in a very short space of time he achieved results. I only hope that he and others with similar qualifications and knowledge gain more recognition and can continue to alter the perception of how to treat and heal an injured and overloaded body.