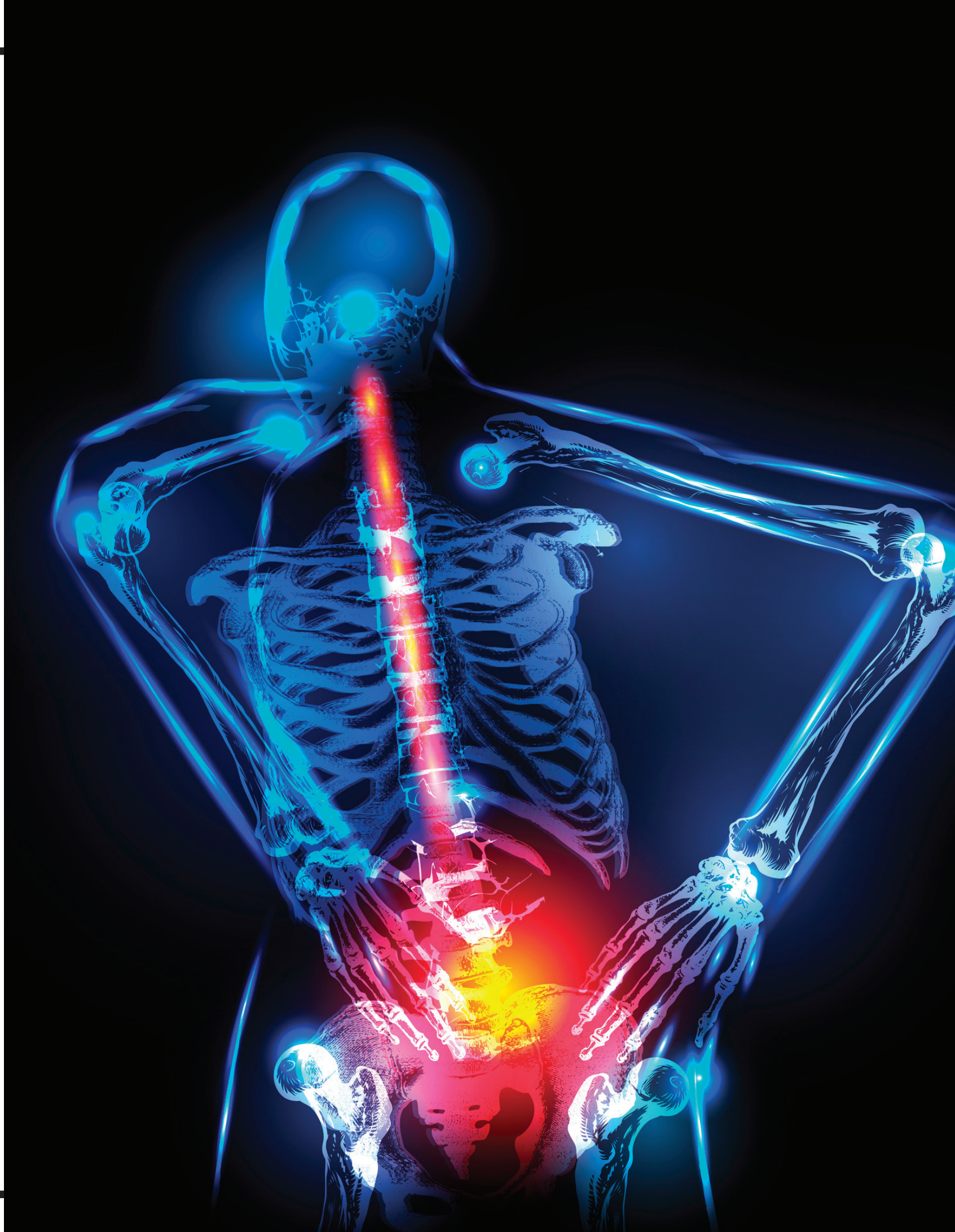


# “MY BACK IS KILLING ME!”

## UNDERSTANDING THE SARNO METHOD

Dr. John E. Sarno was an orthopedist and surgeon at the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine in New York City. For many years he treated patients suffering from back pain with medications, physical therapy and surgery, until it dawned on him: He hadn't succeeded at alleviating his patients' pain. That led him on an odyssey to explore deeply the emotional roots of pain. He went on to successfully treat thousands of patients, including hundreds in the *frum* community, by teaching them to heal their underlying emotional pain. He authored four best-selling books on healing from pain through the mind-body connection (see Excerpts). Dr. Sarno passed away on June 22, 2017, a day short of 94 years old.





## A SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO BACK PAIN

N'SHEI CHABAD NEWSLETTER INTERVIEWS  
RABBI SHLOMA MAJESKI

I suffered from back pain for many years. I came to a point that the pain was so debilitating that I couldn't go to work. A five-minute walk took me 45 minutes. Everyone I met along the way gave me different suggestions—cortisone shots, acupuncture, physical therapy. The first time I heard of Dr. Sarno's method was about 12 years ago, when someone gave me one of his books, *Mind Over Back Pain*. When I saw the cover I didn't even open it up. I said that's ridiculous, this is real pain, this is not in my head. Based on my MRIs the doctors said my situation was very severe and I needed surgery. But we know that surgery for back pain is one of the least successful surgeries.

Since then many people told me about how they were helped by the Sarno method. One of the first was actually my son, who told me that he had a roommate who was helped by it. Finally I was ready to try it.

**Thank you very much for taking out the time to speak with us. I'm sure people often ask you about Sarno, like we did. What do you tell them?**

The Sarno method works like nothing else—there is no medicine, no treatment, no physical therapy, nothing but a thought process that helps to correct the situation. When it works it's close to miraculous. You find out that there's nothing wrong with your body, and that's the starting point for the treatment to work.

A traditional doctor would laugh at this approach. They would say it's ridiculous. They'll look at an MRI that shows a herniated disc and say of course that's the cause of your pain. Yet there are many people with herniated

discs who have no pain at all. The cause of back pain is misunderstood. The Sarno method is simply education—to understand how the body and brain work, and when you finally learn this, the pain stops.

### Why is his method so controversial?

Many people find Dr. Sarno's method difficult to accept because it does not involve any tangible, physical treatment. It's all mind-based. Dr. Sarno says that only 10% of people who hear about his method agree to try it, because most people cannot relate to the concept that physical pain can have a psychological cause. He wouldn't even see a patient unless he knew they were a *keili* for this method. In fact, one person who told me about Sarno said that he was rejected as a patient himself but went on to be healed by the Sarno method through reading his books and meeting with others who taught him about it.

The first step is to read Dr. Sarno's books. The one I read was *Healing Back Pain*. He also has a video explaining his method, which is very clear. [One of his videos is available for viewing on [nsheichabadnewsletter.com](http://nsheichabadnewsletter.com) home page. -Ed.] You also may need ongoing coaching.

The reason for the coaching is because even after you've accepted the premise that the physical pain is due to repressed emotional pain, the pain does not go away immediately. You can become discouraged and give up, thinking that the method doesn't work. You need to work with someone who understands what you're going through and has been through the pain themselves, who can encourage you to keep going.

Before you use this method you first need to rule out any physical cause of the pain—a broken bone, infection, tumor, etc. If you've already been to many doctors and nobody can find a source of your pain, then most likely you have TMS and Dr. Sarno's method will work for you. [Dr. Sarno defines TMS as tension-myositis (or tension-myoneural) syndrome, a benign though



*Rabbi Shloma Majeski, Dean of Machon L'Yahadus, a well-known school for baalos teshuvah in Crown Heights, is a beloved mashpia and the author of two highly acclaimed books, The Chassidic Approach to Joy and A Tzaddik and His Students, as well as a lecture series entitled "The Basic Principles of Chabad Chassidic Philosophy" and "The Chassidic Heritage Series."*

The Rebbe discouraged people from delving into the past and wallowing in painful thoughts. The treatment for TMS is not to analyze your past but simply to make yourself aware of the painful feelings that you may have been suppressing.

painful physiologic aberration of soft tissue, caused by an emotional process.]

**Dr. Sarno says that psychosomatic illnesses can spread like epidemics. What is meant by that?**

Over the past few decades there has been a huge increase in the number of people suffering from severe back pain. It does not make sense to say that the back is just inherently weak, because why weren't people suffering this way for thousands of years? It also doesn't make sense that an elite athlete suddenly develops a weak back one day. It's not a virus or bacteria that can spread by contact. So how do we understand the epidemic of back pain?

When the brain is trying to distract a person from emotional pain, it looks for a physical place in the body to use as a camouflage, so that the person should think it is a structural problem, and not realize that the brain is trying to distract them.

The brain chooses a place that already has a weakness or abnormality, to fool you into thinking that the structural abnormality is the real cause of the pain. This explains why ulcers are going out of style and back pain is in style. As Dr. Sarno writes in *Healing Back Pain*, "There has been a decline in the incidence of peptic ulcer in the United States over the past 20 to 30 years. ... Since everyone, doctors and laymen alike, have come to realize

that ulcers really meant tension, they no longer served the purpose of hiding tension, so fewer people developed them."

**What is causing the pain in TMS?**

Many people think that stress causes pain directly, through tensing up the muscles. The process is not so direct. Blood flow is controlled by the autonomous nervous system, which also controls breathing, heart rate, digestion, etc. When the brain is trying to suppress emotional pain, it instead induces physical pain through constricting the blood vessels that supply a certain part of the body. This mild oxygen deprivation is what causes the pain.

**Why would the brain cause physical pain?**

The brain is trying to protect us. Every person has repressed emotional pain—not necessarily huge traumas, just the accumulated aggravations and *tzaros* that all of us experience through life, what we call *agmas nefesh*. It can have to do with childhood experiences, family, tension at work, etc. —just a normal part of the human condition. Dr. Sarno describes feelings as a reservoir. When these feelings threaten to overflow, the brain thinks that if they surface I won't be able to function. So the brain wants to prevent me from thinking about these emotions. Its strategy is to send me physical pain to distract me and prevent me from thinking of the emotions.

**Do we need to go delving deep into our past to find the source of pain?**

The Rebbe discouraged people from delving into the past and wallowing in painful thoughts. The treatment for TMS is not to analyze your past but simply to make yourself aware of the painful feelings that you may have been suppressing. When the pain no longer serves a purpose, it will stop.

The brain is causing you to feel pain in your shoulder, your back, your legs, so you don't think about the emotional pain. Just by making yourself aware of this, you are telling your brain, *yes, I know about that pain, you're not hiding anything from me*. You don't have to think deeply about it, just make yourself aware of the things that are bothering you emotionally that your brain may be trying to distract from. You can write down your sources of pain and then throw away the paper.

**Does the pain go away right away?**

It's different for everyone. I heard from one person

who had shoulder pain; after one lecture from Dr. Sarno the shoulder pain was gone. Another person started reading one of the books and by the time he got to page 40 he was pain-free. But everyone will have a different experience depending on how long-standing the pain is and how deeply the emotional pain is buried. For me it was a subtler process. I became aware of my progress because of the amount of pain medication I was taking. Before I started the process I was on very heavy doses of painkillers. As I progressed I cut the dose in half, then a quarter, then stopped the strong pain medication and switched to Tylenol. Eventually I was on no medication at all.

### **Does the Sarno method work for everyone?**

After ruling out a physical cause for their symptoms, it can work for those ready and willing to give it a chance.

## **GROWING UP**

THESE COMMENTS WERE CULLED FROM AN INTERVIEW MRS. SIMA KARP GAVE TO THE N'SHEI CHABAD NEWSLETTER.

Growing up happens in stages. Part of the growing up process is understanding yourself and your connection to the world and the people around you. To function in a healthy way, we have to understand that pill popping isn't a mature way to handle life. I had that epiphany in my mid-20s, and it's an ongoing process throughout life. Dr. John Sarno taught me that.

We have to make that connection constantly. Otherwise the pain just travels. My back got better, I got an ulcer. My ulcer got better, I got TMJ. Nobody stays fixed forever. Human beings feel pain. But where does it take us? Depression? Do we stop functioning? Just accept suffering?

It all began when I gave birth to my first child. For the first month all was well. I moved in with my mother and she took very good care of me. Then, a month after childbirth, she moved me back into my own home. I had no postpartum depression, no issues. I felt very good. I had a happy marriage, a healthy baby, *baruch Hashem*. The first night home with our baby I woke up with horrible back pain. I was terrified. I called Dr. Rosen, who told me to call my gynecologist. I called my gynecologist, who said the pain was too high up to be childbirth-related; maybe it's a kidney stone.

Thus began my odyssey of going from doctor to doctor looking for solutions and relief.

The orthopedist told me that one leg was longer than the other, which was causing the pain. Another doctor told me the pain was due to my uterus being retroverted and leaning on my back. A third said I had a torn ligament following childbirth. A neurologist gave me all the tests and said it's a nerve issue. The discs in my back collapsed and were pushing on the nerves, he said. He gave his dire prediction that soon I'd lose control of my legs and entire lower body. That's how injured I was, according to him.

These were top doctors. All diagnosed me based on their own area of expertise.

And I said to all of them, "It can't be; this doesn't add up." I was only in my early 20s. I was not about to accept a life-long, debilitating diagnosis. Some of them also warned me that delivering babies naturally would be dangerous for me and that I had to consider the prospect of C-sections only.

Finally, a friend in Montreal sent me a book by Dr. John Sarno. She said, "You're not ready now, but when you're ready, read this book." She knew I wasn't ready because she knew my personality.

I, too, can now see when someone is not ready. I wasn't going to buy into "repressed emotions" at that point. It was indeed months until I read the book, months of doctor visits and pain. Finally, I got to the point of trying to help myself and I read the book.

When I finished reading it I called Dr. Sarno's office to make an appointment and he got on the phone. This was in the late 1980s. He asked, "Did you read the book?" I said yes.

He said, "Why do you want to come to see me?"

I said, "No doctor helped me. I want to come to you."

He said, "I have a long line of people who understand my book. I don't want someone unsure who is there only to check it out like any other doctor. It's a waste of my time and theirs. I will only see patients who have already understood and accepted the premise."

I paid the fee of \$500 and marched into his office with Laibel, my husband. Dr. Sarno asked me, "What brings you here?"

I said, "I have terrible back aches."

He said, "Tell me about yourself."

I did.

He turned to my husband and said, "Telling someone like this, 'Just relax, it's gonna be okay' is like me telling you, 'Today you're a pilot. Now go and fly this plane.'"

Dr. Sarno understood me right away. My husband was





Dr. Sarno pointed out that genetically people have weak spots in their bodies. For some families it's their stomach. They get irritable bowel syndrome. Others get migraines, some get back pain, some get allergies.

under tremendous stress too at the time but managed his life without getting backaches. He's just not a Type A as I am. Dr. Sarno never told me, "Stop being a Type A," which doesn't work. What he taught me was awareness. He made it okay to tap into things that may be not comfortable. For example, it didn't take me long to realize that this

pain began a month after childbirth, the day I moved out of my parents' house.

Being pregnant made me feel, for the first time, not in control – I was pregnant and would have to give birth, ready or not; this was going to happen regardless of whatever I would do or say.

When I gave birth to my oldest and came home with our bundle, the responsibility and newness of it made me literally unable to move. I was frozen with fear that something would happen to him, that I would fail at this

new role.

I was a coddled youngest child and had never really faced life on my own. Now suddenly I was carrying real responsibility and it paralyzed me.

Dr. Sarno pointed out that genetically people have weak spots in their bodies. For some families it's their stomach. They get irritable bowel syndrome. Others get migraines, some get back pain, some get allergies. When you're under stress, you will feel it first in your weakest point. Dr. Sarno said to me, "Mrs. Karp, constitutionally, your mind is very strong." For me, my inner turmoil didn't express itself as a mental health problem. Instead, it manifested as back pain.

The stories we repeat to ourselves in our heads all the time can hurt us. Dr. Sarno made me completely open and aware of what was going on inside me, a process which tends to be subconscious. Some digging down is needed, and not everyone is ready and willing to undertake it. Some people don't want to delve. They choose to take medication over dealing with deep-rooted issues. They can function and even be successful, but they have a lot of pain; they function through the pain, both physical and psychological.

When someone calls me to find out about the Sarno method of dealing with pain, in our first conversation I

can tell if the person is a *keili* for this or not. Some cannot or will not, then I back off immediately. Why waste time?

Dr. Sarno was a back doctor, a surgeon, and was humble and intelligent enough to realize that after all his years of training he was still unsuccessful at alleviating his patients' pain. He became a heretic to his own profession and then he began to heal people. Thank G-d we have his videos and his books.

Nobody is born open to this message; you have to become open to it.

**T**he first thing people need when they're in terrible pain is to have hope. They need to believe there will be an end to this. When you're on your hands and knees nursing a baby because you can't walk, stand or sit, you need to have hope that there is a way out. You need to hear from other people who went through it. You need a full medical exam to rule out other things—to make sure there is no tumor, infection, broken bone, foreign object, etc. Once you've ruled out a physical problem, your symptoms are your body's way of telling you that you need to work through your emotions. There is no need to suffer.

This process gave me life. I learned to manage under many different circumstances. People think of mind-body methods as a last resort. Pharmaceutical pain relief should be the last resort. This should be the first resort.

We live in a very advanced, fast-paced society. We are surrounded by many pressures and stressors. Each of us has our own struggles in life and our own journey to get where we need to be. If you are in pain, I urge you to explore all options to alleviate your pain, and I wish you much success in finding the right path and right *shliach* to get relief.

## WHAT DR. SARNO TAUGHT ME

DOVID MESHCHANINOV, MS, PCCI

Growing up, I was healthy and athletic and appreciated that my body felt and functioned as it should. I was in for a surprise when I experienced two small injuries that simply refused to heal. The journey of healing



those injuries opened my eyes to a deeper, richer, and more nuanced world. A world that lies in the reality of the mind-body connection and the effects of our emotions, thoughts, and mental states on our bodies.

When I was 20 years old, I felt stuck in almost all areas of my life. I was finished with yeshiva and feeling lost, with no goals that seemed workable or appealing. Furthermore, the community that I grew up in and loved now felt stifling and depressing. With all these stressors in the background, while stretching my shoulder I lightly pulled my rotator cuff. A few weeks later, while doing some other exercise, I injured my ankle as well. With a painful shoulder and aching ankle I couldn't exercise much. Almost all movement made me aware that these injuries weren't healing despite the passage of time.

Over the next few months I did everything I could to try to understand and fix my injuries. I did physical therapy, massage, ultrasound therapy, X-rays, and MRI's, to no avail. Finally, at the suggestion of a close friend and doctor, I read Dr. John Sarno's book, *The Mind-Body Prescription: Healing the Body, Healing the Pain*. As I read the book, I literally saw myself described on each page and the book's message resonated deeply with me. That very night I went for a light jog, keeping Dr. Sarno's ideas in mind and ignoring the thought that I was just aggravating my ankle further. By the next day over 85 percent of my symptoms and pain were gone, and within a few weeks any remaining pain disappeared. The basic message of Dr. Sarno is that we need to deepen our understanding of the function and cause of chronic pain. When faced with chronic back pain or a chronic syndrome like fibromyalgia, one assumes that there must be a structural or biological issue going on and a medical doctor would be able to help resolve it. However, in truth, often the cause is mental and emotional stress and suppressed anger and hurt that haven't been sufficiently addressed. Dr. Sarno explains that when this happens, *the psyche and unconscious create physical pain as a distraction from the more problematic mental and emotional states that the person may be experiencing, suppressing or denying.*

When we become aware of the mind-body connection,

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at first it can be frustrating. Why would our bodies turn against us? However, as we look further we can see a deep and overwhelming beauty. We can get in our own way, but our bodies and our unconscious are constantly striving to help us become our best selves, our most aware and conscious selves, and deal with our emotions in the most authentic way.

Becoming more deeply aware of the mind-body connection opened up for me my calling. I realized what true emotional healing can offer. After getting a Masters in Counseling Psychology I went on to specialize in working with trauma and the mind-body connection through the Somatic Experiencing Institute. The psychology field has come to understand that when working with trauma, it isn't enough just to intellectually process what happened. The body and nervous system hold on to the memory of traumatic experiences, and need to be worked with to let go of those experiences. I also got trained in Craniosacral Therapy, an amazing and gentle mind-body technique. Craniosacral Therapy helps people to balance their nervous system, become more mindful and grounded, and deeply process their emotions and feelings.

Overall, through my process I became aware of the interconnectedness within each of us. We like to believe that when we have physical pain a medical doctor has the solution, and if we went through a traumatic experience talk therapy has the cure. However, in truth a much more subtle and skilled approach is needed: an approach that works with the full interconnectedness and complexity of who we each are.

## YOU'VE GOT TO FEEL TO HEAL: TAKING DR. SARNO TO THE NEXT LEVEL

MIRIAM RACQUEL FELDMAN

As a Somatic healer with mind-body health training, I have worked with many clients who have found relief from physical ailments via emotional processing work. Dr. John Sarno revolutionized the medical field through his principle that suppression of emotions often cause pain in the body. He took the

unorthodox path of working through emotional blocks as an opening to physical relief. In time, his ideas have spread and there has been a blossoming of methods expanding this approach, which many have found life-changing.

To better understand how this happens, it's important to explain what emotions are. Emotions are "energy in motion." That tightening in your gut, that tension in your jaw—those are the manifestations of emotional energy in your body. When you notice these physical sensations, realize that your body is sending you a message. It is trying to make you aware of a pattern of thinking that needs to be shifted. That headache could be a result of the hurt you're suppressing from a friend's criticism; that neck pain could be a result of the anger over a difficult situation at work; that back pain could be a result of the pressure you're putting on yourself with an overwhelming to-do list.

This does not mean that you never need to go to a doctor or take medicine. Hashem is the true source of our healing and determines the best path for our recovery. Our healing can come from a doctor, a pill, or a chiropractic adjustment. However, in my practice and my own experience, I've come to learn that without delving into the underlying emotional work, our relief is often short lived. Mind-body pain brought on by emotional distress will hop around, as a headache today and plantar fasciitis tomorrow.

I often see clients who suffer from recurring headaches, backaches or bladder issues. Through coaching, we discover the situation that prompted the physical ailment and the underlying emotional response. Oftentimes the client has certain "limiting" beliefs about situations and people that cause distress. As we unravel those along with the accompanying emotions, we can shift the energy to a more insightful place, resulting in physical relief. We get the helpful message the emotion is trying to share with us, resulting in clarity.

This type of mind-body processing also works well with children. My son once awoke crying in pain from a stiff neck. We assessed the situation to make sure we didn't have an emergency on our hands and I gave him an Ibuprofen for some pain relief. I then asked him if



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anything had happened recently to make him angry or sad.

“Mom, this is about my neck, not my feelings,” he responded with exasperation.

I explained the reason behind my “silly” question. “Oftentimes our bodies are giving us a message when there is pain. There are some emotions that need to be addressed. Perhaps something is bothering you in one of your relationships or maybe you’re worried about something?”

And with that opening, he shared that his friends had played roughly in our backyard and though he had kept telling them to calm down, they had ignored him. One had even made a hole in the basketball net and my son was worried that I would be upset. He also complained that they didn’t listen to him when he wanted them to go home. He rationalized that it wouldn’t be nice to ask them to leave. Bingo! He rested and we processed the emotions coming up. We talked about boundary setting, and with wisdom and lessons learned, he was good to go in two days.

Hashem gives us many modalities of healing and maintaining our health. Dr. Sarno’s philosophy, along with other techniques for emotional processing, helps us achieve wellness in our thought patterns, relationships and ever-busy lives.

## RUPTURED DISCS DON’T CAUSE BACK PAIN

Twenty years ago, a Rebbetzin (who wishes to remain anonymous) began to experience excruciating back pain. An MRI showed a ruptured disc, and two doctors concurred that this was causing the pain; they wanted to operate immediately, without even giving her a chance to go home. The Rebbetzin was seen by Dr. John E. Sarno who examined her and concluded that her back pain had nothing to do with her ruptured disc. Her problem, he said, was her subconscious. According to Dr. Sarno, she had a case of TMS, tension myositis syndrome. The Rebbetzin attended Dr. Sarno’s classes; her husband (who also wishes to remain anonymous) accompanied her and learned the protocol. She never had the surgery and is now pain-free. Eventually her husband began to teach Sarno’s method at lectures that he gives as a public service, at no charge.

N’SHEI CHABAD NEWSLETTER STAFF SUMMARIZES A LECTURE (WITH REPORTING BY DEVORAH LEAH MOVSIKOV AND JEANIE SILVER).

The basis of Dr. Sarno’s method is that your symptoms of pain or weakness and the doctor’s report have no connection. The doctor’s report of a ruptured disc, a slipped disc, etc., might be true, but it is not the cause of your symptoms. The cause is inside your brain.

When you become very, very aggravated, the subconscious comes to a point that it wants a vacation from the *agmas nefesh*. So it causes you to feel pain in your back, or your head, or your stomach. And then you start thinking about the pain. And that’s exactly what the subconscious wants. It takes the focus off the aggravation.

Let’s say a person has back pain. It’s shooting down to his foot. He goes to the doctor, takes an MRI—and you should go to the doctor and take the MRI, to check if it’s a physical problem, such as a broken bone or a growth, *chas v’shalom*. The MRI shows either a slipped disc or a ruptured disc. There are 14 bones in the spine known as vertebrae, which extend from the neck down to the back. The neck itself is flexible, so that we can turn our head. Between each set of vertebrae there is a soft disc filled with fluid, meant to absorb shock and hold the vertebrae together. If the disc is out of place, the doctor says that it’s probably pressing on a nerve, so they recommend cutting it away surgically. According to Dr. Sarno, the disc doesn’t press on the nerve and in any case, the pain isn’t coming from the spinal nerves. Whether you do the surgery or not, there will be no change.

This is the disagreement of all the doctors vs. Dr. Sarno. All the doctors say that the ruptured disc is really pressing on the nerve. And Dr. Sarno says, there’s no such thing. There is nothing physically wrong. The pain exists only to divert attention from the psychological to the physical. Once you have pain, you stop thinking about what is really troubling you.

In 1991, when my wife went to Dr. Sarno for her ruptured disc, he had on his desk a magazine with an article about some hockey players in California—75% of them have ruptured discs, and none of them feel pain. They’re all



(L) Jeanie Silver  
(R) Devorah  
Leah Movsikov

happy. My wife's ruptured disc from 20 years ago is still there—but *baruch Hashem*, there is no pain. Because she went to Dr. Sarno and learned how to understand and deal with her pain.

The cure for TMS is twofold. Assuming you've been to a doctor and ruled out a fracture, tumor or infection as the cause of the pain, here are the two steps.

First, identify what's bothering you and go somewhere private and talk it out or write it out. Don't keep it bottled up inside. Go where there's no cell phone and you have some privacy, and go over the story from A-Z and find the real issue. Speak it out, write it down, let the emotions out.

Second, throughout the day say the following reminders:

*"Physically there is nothing wrong with me. I am as healthy and*

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First, identify what's bothering you and go somewhere private and talk it out or write it out. Don't keep it bottled up inside. Go where there's no cell phone and you have some privacy, and go over the story from A-Z and find the real issue. Speak it out, write it down, let the emotions out.



L-R: Dr. Paul Gwozdz, Dr. Sarno and Dr. Margaret Chan in April of 2012. Dr. Chan, a psychotherapist, trained under Dr. Arlene Feinblatt who was the primary psychologist for Dr. John Sarno, treating TMS, since 1973. Dr. Chan now works with Dr. Gwozdz who helps patients cope with chronic pain following Dr. Sarno's techniques.

*as strong as anyone my age, baruch Hashem. If I exert myself, nothing will happen. My problem is [here you put in what your agmas nefesh is] and because of this, my subconscious wants to divert my attention from the psychological to the physical. But I will not allow it to control my life. I will lead my daily life."*

Under no circumstances are you to do anything to treat the condition, as this sends a message to the subconscious that you are buying into its ruse to distract you from your emotional pain. No needles, no physical therapy, no exercises, no manipulations or any modality to treat the symptoms. Pain medication is allowed because you are actually in pain. But do not use anti-inflammatories because there is no inflammation in the body.

*Pirkei Avos* says there are several things in the world that cause *agmas nefesh*: *kinah* (jealousy), *ta'avah* (desire) and *kavod* (honor). All of our problems are a combination of one or more of these things. *Kinah* is such an ugly *middah* that we're ashamed to admit to it. There's a saying; "[Pain] doesn't depend on what you eat, but on what eats you." Sometimes you are *mekaneh* someone so much that you hate him.

I once was waiting at a bus stop and a man asked me, "Did you hear the news? Someone won 50 thousand dollars." I asked him, "Nu, so what's the problem? Was it your next-door neighbor?" We don't mind if a Yid out West wins it, just not our neighbor! If you allow yourself to have *kinah*, you will find plenty of problems. A person can have everything he needs in life, but then he starts

looking at the other person's house, or car, or job, and all of a sudden finds all sorts of things to be upset about.

When the mind is looking to distract itself from emotional pain, it doesn't only cause back pain. It can cause any type of illness—stomach problems, allergies, skin problems, headaches.

One person had massive skin eruptions for years, and then he was injured in a car accident. His skin became as smooth as a baby's until he recovered and began thinking about what had been bothering him before the accident. Then he developed skin eruptions again.

Another young man with a wife and child had been in bed with mono for almost two years. He didn't even go to *daven*. He recovered using Dr. Sarno's method.

If you suffer from migraine headaches, sit down and talk to your subconscious for ten minutes. Tell your subconscious that no matter what, you are going to function and you are going to go on with your life. Then get involved in whatever activity you do. You can still take medicine if you get a migraine. Just understand, if you do get a migraine, what your *agmas nefesh* is. Don't ask your family members what your *agmas nefesh* is. You have to know for yourself. Figure out your source of emotional pain and take care of that, and the physical pain will go away by itself.

Please note: Not everyone can become better just through reading Dr. Sarno's books and doing the recommended exercises. Sometimes psychotherapy is necessary to be cured of TMS.

➡ *N'shei Chabad Newsletter* thanks Rabbi Motty Gurary, director of Bnos Menachem girls' school in Crown Heights, for his support and for providing much vital information on the Sarno method. To see Rabbi Gurary speaking on this topic please view a six-minute video at [nsheichabadnewsletter.com](http://nsheichabadnewsletter.com).

We are deeply grateful to Mrs. Sima Karp for her generous support, gentle guidance and clarity (with some humor thrown in) throughout the process of writing "the Sarno supplement." Sima, you gave of yourself, and we couldn't have done it without you.

-The Editors



## BOOKS BY DR. JOHN E. SARNO:

### ***Mind Over Back Pain***

(Berkley Trade)

### ***Healing Back Pain: The Mind-body Connection***

(Grand Central Publishing)

### ***The Mind-body Prescription: Healing the Body, Healing the Pain***

(Warner Books)

### ***The Divided Mind: The Epidemic of Mind-body Disorders***

(Harper)

## SELECTED EXCERPTS

...Defenses against repressed emotions work by diverting one's attention to something other than the emotions that are being kept hidden by the subconscious... To be successful it must occupy one's attention, and it works even better if you are totally preoccupied or obsessed by whatever it is. That is why physical defenses are so good: They have the ability to really grab one's attention, particularly if they are painful, frightening and disabling. This is exactly what happens in TMS.

*(Healing Back Pain)*

Doctors prefer to treat physical disorders; they feel insecure when confronted with patients who have

emotional symptoms...

Medical insurance will pay for the most elaborate diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, but most policies exclude or sharply limit payment for psychotherapy. Little wonder that the mind develops strategies to avoid the experience and appearance of emotional difficulty. Unconsciously, we would rather have physical pain than acknowledge any kind of emotional turmoil.

*(Healing Back Pain)*

To understand the phenomenon of avoidance in TMS one must constantly bear in mind how radically the unconscious mind differs from its conscious counterpart. The unconscious is terrified by the rage and reacts to avoid it by keeping it repressed and employing physical symptoms to aid in that repression. One of Freud's biographers, Peter Gay, likened the unconscious to a maximum-security prison where all the desperate criminals, the undesirables and unacceptables, are incarcerated under heavy lock and key. In other words, they are repressed. If these feelings are already repressed, you may ask, what is the need for a distraction? The prison analogy is particularly apt; the repressed feelings, like desperadoes, will try to escape. Despite the force of repression, powerful emotions like rage will strive

to rise to consciousness. I call it the "drive to consciousness."

*(The Mind-body Prescription: Healing the Body, Healing the Pain)*

The ego is aware of dangerous goings-on in the unconscious and that these feelings are striving to come to consciousness, so it takes steps, sometimes quite dramatic steps to be sure, to see that the danger and emotional pain remain contained. ... my experience with TMS has convinced me that the purpose of this repression is to protect the individual, to prevent the painful, dangerous feelings from coming to consciousness and causing even greater distress. ...Put another way, painful or otherwise distressing psychosomatic symptoms are designed for self-preservation, not self-flagellation. ...These symptoms were actually created by the brain to serve a psychologically protective, benevolent purpose. ...In my view, the repressed feelings are painful and dangerous rather than bad, and the drive to repress them is motivated by the need to protect the total individual. The psychosomatic symptoms—whether pain, discomfort, depression, or whatever—are activated solely to reinforce repression and protect the person from mental pain or discomfort...

*(The Divided Mind)*

**Almost all the common pain disorders that have afflicted millions through the years are psychosomatic. That assertion will, of course, be vehemently disputed by almost everyone in medicine and psychiatry today.**

*(The Divided Mind)*

**Instead of dealing with this messy reality, contemporary medical science has simply discarded the entire concept of mind-body medicine. It would rather deal with mechanical, measurable, chemical realities than the abstruse phenomena of psychology. It does not want to know that emotions drive the chemical and physical manifestations they have identified, and it has the dangerous idea that treating the chemistry will correct the disorder. Such treatment may indeed modify the symptoms, but that is not the same thing as curing the underlying disorder.** *(The Divided Mind)*

**One of the most intriguing aspects of ... psychosomatic disorders is that they tend to spread through the population in epidemic fashion, almost as if they were bacteriological in nature, which they are not. Edward Shorter, a medical historian, concluded from his study of the medical literature that the incidence of a psychogenic disorder grows to epidemic**

**proportions when the disorder is in vogue. Strange as it may seem, people with an unconscious psychological need for symptoms tend to develop a disorder that is well known, like back pain, hay fever, or eczema. This is not a conscious decision.** *(The Divided Mind)*

**I am a great believer in TMS, having seen a great many cases of chronic back pain disappear as if by magic when people fall in love or otherwise make radical changes in their emotional or mental life.** (Dr. Andrew Weil in his book, *Natural Health, Natural Medicine*, quoted in *The Divided Mind*)

**My previous attitude of neglect and ignorance of the importance of social history is certainly typical of the vast majority of conventional doctors. I had never learned how to take a good social history. Like most doctors, I usually skipped over this vitally important source of information. Previously, if I attempted to get a social history at all it was perfunctory and superficial. It covered only items like smoking history, family health problems, and exercise patterns. Inadequate social history taking must be considered a primary reason that most doctors do not appreciate the true psychological factors that**

**cause chronic pain. Dr. Sarno ... explained to his own patients that there are three sources for unpleasant emotions in the unconscious: childhood anger, emotional pain, and sadness; personality traits such as perfectionism and goodism; and the realities of life. He explained the mechanics of daily study as part of the treatment. People get better by developing a conscious awareness of the sources of unconscious rage and emotional pain.**

(James R. Rochelle, MD, quoted in *The Divided Mind*)

**Dr. Sarno and I have helped patients from the orthodox Jewish communities of New York City. I have worked mainly with rabbinical students. They are energetic and enthusiastic about [the source of their pain being] TMS and often are referred to me by senior rabbis in their communities. They relate easily to the notion that their chronic neck/back pain is a reaction to their extreme perfectionism and not the long hours studying at a desk.** (Ira Rashbaum, MD, quoted in *The Divided Mind*)

**There are many things that can cause back pain. Some examples include infection, cancer, and a fracture from thinning bone. Emotions are another cause.** (Andrea Leonard-Segal, MD, quoted in *The Divided Mind*)