

Tension Myositis Syndrome

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Dr John Sarno of New York University Hospital has a theory that a great deal of back pain is the result of a psychosomatic process called tension myositis syndrome where the brain generates physical pain to divert attention from emotional distress. Here is an example from my practice.

An elderly lady came to see me to find out if I could help her with the pain in her back. The pain had started four years earlier after a fall when taking her pet dog to the vets to be put down. She was convinced arthritis must have set in and when she came to see me she was absolutely certain that a spinal fusion was the only thing for her. She was exasperated that her doctor was refusing this.

In hypnosis we returned to an episode 59 years earlier. She was a young wife. Her husband was away in the forces. She had just given birth to her first child but it had been malformed and still-born. Her mother was telling her that it was for the best that it was dead, and that she should be pleased about that. In hypnosis she said all the things she really needed to say to all concerned and she addressed the child's spirit. After her heart was finally cleared of all the feelings she had repressed for so long she got up from the couch. There was no more pain. She was surprised and elated.

What had happened here was that the loss of the little dog had activated the memory of the still-born child and then the TMS had set in to help keep it buried. Revealing to her waking consciousness the original traumatic event and the feelings involved in it, and helping her to process all that removed the need for the TMS and so it disappeared taking the back pain with it.

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