

The Highly Sensitive Brain and Chronic Pain

A Biofield Balancing Primer for the HSP



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The Highly Sensitive Brain & Chronic Pain

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Dr. Templin

The Highly Sensitive Person & Pain



If you or a loved one have been struggling with chronic pain, anxiety, or illness you may be surprised to learn that your brain is the likely common source of all of these problems. And the good news is that you can learn to reprogram your brain for relief and enhanced well-being.

Over 50 million Americans suffer from chronic pain alone. When we add anxiety and other forms of chronic illness the number easily exceeds 100 million. These staggering numbers suggest that something is missing in our understanding of chronic pain and illness.

There's a highly sensitive segment of our population who are more likely to experience stress-induced pain and illness. Fortunately, because of this group's sensitivity, they will also respond more favorably to the self-regulation practices that are most effective for resolving these conditions.

Most people think of nutrition as a viable alternative to healing when more conventional methods have proven inadequate. Enhanced nutrition is a great complement to healing, but an even more fundamental (and overlooked) choice is to balance the brain, emotions, and nervous system that are ultimately responsible for system-wide healing and overall well-being.

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This approach is akin to what you'd do at home when your toaster stops working. Before fiddling with the toaster's inner workings check the circuit breakers. Restoring electrical integrity first is good for your brain, organs and your appliances.

What's overlooked in the mainstream approach to pain and chronic illness is that the brain and the autonomic nervous system (ANS) are controlling most chronic conditions. This explains why so many treatments that focus on the body and symptoms, and not the brain, often produce less than favorable results.

How Your Highly Sensitive Brain Creates Pain

Human beings, like you and me, are complex. We're more complex than mainstream medicine takes into account. We're more than a biochemical machine that's reflected in lab reports. We're more than a collection of body parts with a head and mind stuck on top.

Don't get me wrong. There's a time when high-tech medicine is an obvious first choice. In acute life or death situations, high-tech and pharmaceutical-based medicine is the first choice. You want those medical experts and their technology to keep you alive.

However, when it comes to chronic issues, like pain, anxiety, and illness the high-tech medical approach does not take into account the rich complexity of human life that isn't so easily measured

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We're a living amalgam of interconnected qualities. We're mind, emotions, dreams, beliefs and a physical body all woven into an inextricable whole. All aspects influence all other aspects. In *Molecules Of Emotion*, Dr. Candace Pert wrote that your body is your subconscious mind.

Modern neuroscience, like Neurocardiology, Polyvagal Theory, Epigenetics, Neuroplasticity, and Brain Imaging Studies is shedding new light on the cause of most chronic illness including chronic pain, anxiety, depression, and a growing list of stress-induced illnesses.

We've learned that most chronic pain, anxiety, and illness are programmed into brain circuitry by stressful emotions, even dating back to childhood. These brain-based conditions are called MindBody Syndromes or more technically, Psychophysiological Disorders (PPD). These conditions comprise the bulk of chronic human suffering.

It's the Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) who is more vulnerable to these stress-induced conditions because of the heightened sensitivity of their brain and nervous system. Dr. Templin focuses on the HSP community because they are much more likely to appreciate the connection between mind, emotions, and the body. Because of this enhanced awareness they're also much more likely to practice and benefit from self-regulation practices.

Functional MRI (fMRI) studies have shown that the same brain circuitry that's responsible for emotional pain can generate physical pain as well. You may ask, 'how does the brain decide whether we'll feel emotional pain or physical pain?'

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Our ability to feel our feelings, which includes emotional discomfort, is the key ingredient to avoiding the experience of chronic physical pain and other stress-induced maladies. It's a fairly reliable bet that to the degree you can feel and most importantly, process emotional energy and experience, that much chronic physical pain is avoided.

Said another way, the avoidance of emotional pain creates more pain, whether it's emotional or physical.

John Sarno, M.D. was a professor of rehabilitative medicine at New York University. He discovered that most chronic neck and back pain was emotional in nature.

To sum up Dr. Sarno's discovery, emotions that our subconscious perceives as too threatening, based on early life conditioning, trigger a protective response from the nervous system. The protective response serves as a distraction from too vulnerable emotions, and is often experienced as chronic pain, but can be any form of mental, emotional, or physical distress.

His research and clinical experience ultimately demonstrated that most spinal abnormalities like changes in discs and arthritis were akin to gray hair. They were a normal sign of aging and only a factor in the creation of pain in 3-5% of cases. The vast majority of chronic pain was due to stress-induced muscle tension, stress chemistry, and related brain circuitry.

Because of these discoveries, he didn't refer most patients who were in chronic pain to the NYU Rehabilitation Clinic. In place of the expected physical treatment, he prescribed mental and emotional strategies to resolve the stress-induced pain with great success.

The stress-induced changes in the brain and autonomic nervous system that are responsible for most chronic suffering can be reprogrammed with the proper knowledge and guidance.

More About the Highly Sensitive Person & Pain

Around 15-20% of human beings have highly sensitive nervous systems that make them more vulnerable to stress-induced pain and illness.

I'm aware of the growing research around highly sensitive people. I'm also personally aware of the physical and emotional challenges this misunderstood minority faces because I'm highly sensitive myself.

This increase in sensitivity means that you experience life more deeply. Your brain processes more sensory information leading you to feel more deeply and intensely than the remaining 80% of the population.

Your increased emotional sensitivity can lead to over stimulation and to stress-induced brain circuitry that's responsible for much chronic pain and many other chronic conditions.

Conventional medicine treats the symptoms but ignores the neurological roots of these stress-induced maladies. Fortunately, this neurological circuitry can be reset with knowledge and self-awareness skills.

The purpose of the **Biofield Balancing Program** is to give the Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) the information, self-regulation skills, and the hope and confidence they need for healing.

Here are some of the personality traits that are often experienced by the Highly Sensitive Person (HSP):

- * Overly caring for others, often at your own expense
- * Overly sensitive to your own emotions, the emotions of others, and especially sensitive to criticism
- * A tendency towards perfectionism and being too self-critical
- * A tendency to be overstimulated or overwhelmed and needing more down time
- * You've been called too sensitive and felt like you didn't fit in with family or other groups

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How Your Brain Resolves Pain

The first step is learning to activate the your body's innate self-healing wisdom. This wisdom is part of your original equipment. However, this wisdom is often overlooked or ignored because it's in the body and is accessed by feeling feelings, rather than by thinking.

It turns out that learning how to feel feelings and sensations is the specific inner experience (called interoception) that organizes your brain, nervous system, and biochemistry to support system-wide healing. Without this inner capacity for feeling (connecting with feelings in a meaningful way) we suffer.

We suffer because our system becomes disorganized and this inner chaos produces the symptoms of chronic pain, anxiety, and illness. The ability to feel feelings in a way that allows them to become balanced and supportive is the key to your body's very own self-healing biofeedback system. **We call this inner capacity for restoring balance 'self-regulation'.**

The big challenge here is that we live, were raised, and programmed by families and a culture that prize and reward living in the head. This cuts us off from the healing wisdom of the body.

Thinking is easy and automatic, if not robotic, while feelings can be unfamiliar, scary and messy. Navigating the realm of feelings or emotional energy needs to be learned. Feelings can cause us to go numb and feel little or nothing, or overwhelm us if we haven't learned how to stay afloat in their midst.

We can learn to trust the process of being carried forward by the energy of feelings like we can be carried by the currents of a stream. This is the aim of self-regulation practices.

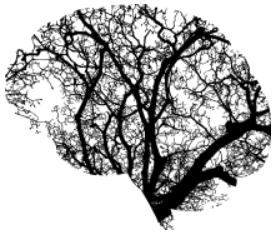
Activating the Healing Wisdom of Your Body

You can learn how to activate the healing wisdom of your body. With practice, you can learn the self-regulation skills that allow you to safely integrate the experience of emotional energy.

This supports you not only in resolving pain, anxiety, and many forms of stress-induced illness, but is also supportive in terms of optimal functioning. Self-regulation skills enhance cognitive abilities, athletic performance and reaction time, creative potential, and mood stabilization.

And perhaps the most rewarding benefit of self-regulation training, beyond the relief of pain and symptoms, is that it allows us to be more meaningfully connected to ourselves and to others. Enhanced relationships and improved interpersonal communication are a proven benefit of self-regulation practice.

A Biofield Balancing Program for the Highly Sensitive Person



I discuss a number of highly effective self-regulation strategies in this self-help toolkit for restoring order to your brain and autonomic nervous system (ANS). Your ANS is responsible for your overall health and well-being. This introductory toolkit is a sampling of self-regulation practices from the Biofield Balancing Program for the Highly Sensitive Person.

The stress of life and all the emotional energy that's churned up in its wake is what blocks the ANS from keeping us healthy and peaceful. The mindbody perceives the emotional wake as threatening and prepares us to defend ourselves, rather than heal ourselves. We can't defend and heal simultaneously.

This stress-induced imbalance of the ANS is the primary source of chronic conditions like pain, anxiety, and illness. The key to resolving these issues is self-regulation.

My collection of self-regulation skills is called Biofield Balancing for the Highly Sensitive Person. This program is influenced in part by the HeartMath Institute's research, Energy Medicine principles, and Somatic Psychology.

In a nutshell, these self-regulation skills give us the potential to balance our subtle energies, heart and brain communication, vagus nerve function, and to heal ourselves of chronic conditions while supporting our overall health and well-being. Here's an overview of the practices.

- Heart Focused Breathing
- Energy Awareness
- Somatic Focusing
- DIY Laser Acupuncture
- Expressive Writing

Heart Focused Breathing



Heart Focused Breathing comes from the HeartMath Institute in Boulder Creek, California. This breathing and presencing technique is the foundation of my Biofield Balancing Program. It's simple and powerful. All of the other self-regulation components of the program build upon this foundational technique.

First, a brief word or two about the HeartMath research. Neuroscientists at the Institute have been accumulating data over the last thirty years showing that the heart is more than a pump and that it's the key to balancing the brain, nervous system, and self-healing.

Here are some informational tidbits. The heart is fifty times more powerful electrically and five thousand times more powerful magnetically than your brain. The heart has its own brain consisting of over forty thousand neurites (the equivalent of brain cells) that is capable of experience and memory that's independent of the brain in your head. More information is flowing to the brain from the heart, than the other way around, thanks to the afferent fibers of the vagus nerve.

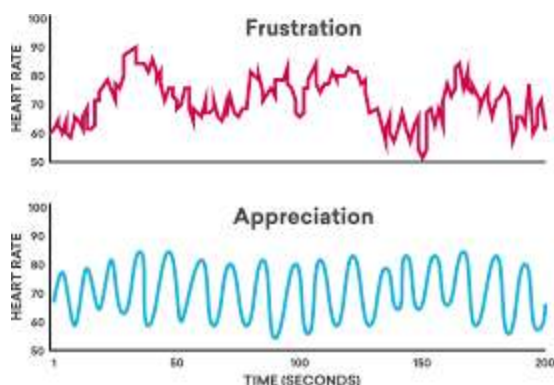
Maybe you've read of the documented case of a heart transplant recipient who develops a craving for beer and chicken nuggets, only to discover that the donor of the heart craved the same. This is just one of many examples of how the heart influences the brain and our consciousness.

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Here are some documented benefits of learning how to access the healing power of the heart through Heart Focused Breathing.

- You can immediately lower stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline.
- You can raise the anti-aging hormone DHEA.
- You can raise the hormone oxytocin that's responsible for interpersonal bonding.
- You can improve your heart rate variability for across the board healing.
- You can enhance emotional stability.
- You can increase cognitive and intuitive performance.

Below is a graph that's representative of the Heart Rate Variability software that I use in my office with every patient. You can see on the top tracing that the nervous system is in a chaotic pattern. This pattern reflects emotional imbalance and a nervous system that promotes pain, inflammation, anxiety, and any other stress-induced illness. This chaotic pattern reflects an imbalanced autonomic nervous system (ANS). This image is very commonly seen in individuals with decades of unresolved stressful emotions.



The bottom tracing reflects more regenerative emotions, like appreciation, and an ANS balance that supports healing, repair, and the benefits reported in the bulleted list above. This pattern is really ideal. Most individuals will see a significant change within a minute of practicing Heart Focused Breathing, and with practice, over time they will come closer to the perfect tracing you see in the bottom graph.

The Heart Focused Breathing Instructions

The instructions are quite simple. However, old mental and emotional patterns have a tendency to complicate the matter. This process is about connecting with the body rather than ‘thinking’ about the body. Too much thinking or effort will only get in the way and reinforce patterns that keep us locked into our heads that further perpetuate our physical or emotional symptoms.

Here are the instructions for Heart Focused Breathing:

Sit upright and close your eyes. Bring awareness to the center of your chest or heart and imagine (effortlessly) that your breath is flowing right into the front of your heart and right out the front of your heart. You’re breathing slower than you usually would. Ideally, you’d be breathing in for a count of five and then out for a count of five.

The breath is very quiet and gentle. No huffing or puffing is required. As you breathe slower you may find that your breath is also deeper.

You may notice physical sensations like a heartbeat, or pressure, or tension, as well as emotional qualities like peace, joy, or even anxiety. Whatever you feel is fine. Just focus on the slow and deeper breathing coming into and from your heart.

Don’t underestimate the power of this simple process. This is the foundational technique for making a profound neurological shift that over time will change your brain, ANS balance, and your health.

Heart Focused Breathing is only the first step, although a powerful one, in learning how to reconnect with the healing wisdom of your mind, body, and spirit.

Energy Awareness



Energy Awareness allows us to become aware of ourselves and our environment in a way that readily balances the brain and nervous system for better physiological balance. Learning to experience energy connects us not only to ourselves but to others and the environment as well.

The experience of energy is not an esoteric skill that's only available to yogic adepts or gifted healers. The simple truth is that all of us experience energy on a regular basis. Whether we consider energy from the acupuncture meridians or the chakras from the yoga tradition, we experience energy as sensations and feelings.

When we drop down out of our heads and acknowledge sensations and feelings in our body we're connecting with fields of energy. These fields are often ignored or overlooked because we're so programmed to experience ourselves mentally through thoughts.

However, if I choose to experience my right hand as a three-dimensional space that's occupied by tissues, cells, molecules and atoms my brainwaves begin to change within seconds. This is documented in neurofeedback research. The more that I notice my body this way, as fields of energy that can be experienced as sensations and feelings, a synchronized alpha wave takes shape across my cerebral cortex.

This brain wave synchronization leads ultimately to better left/right brain hemisphere balance, improved ANS functioning with enhanced vagal tone, along with the inhibition of the neural circuitry that fuels pain, anxiety, and illness.

You can learn more about Energy Awareness in the Biofield Balancing Program.

Somatic Focusing



Somatic Focusing is a subtle, yet powerful refinement of how we use attention. We learn that bodily felt feelings and sensations are gateways to insight and self-healing. Feelings connect us to deeper veins of authentic experience and guidance if we invite and allow them to do so. HSP's are ideally suited to this subtle sensing skill.

Researched initially at the University of Chicago in the 1960s this process offers us specific guidance for turning sensations and troubling feelings into solutions for pain, anxiety, and chronic illness. The other side of the coin is that Somatic Focusing frees up creative energy and our authentic voice.

When I think about Somatic Focusing I'm reminded of the words of the renowned mythologist Joseph Campbell. Decades ago during an extended interview with Bill Moyers on PBS, Campbell was asked where stories come from.

Bill Moyers mentioned that various ancient cultures, often separated by thousands of miles of ocean, often shared the same stories. He asked where the stories come from. Campbell answered that the stories come from the energies in the human body that run the organs.

The feelings, sensations, and energy that we learn to pay attention to via self-regulation processes is the energy that Joseph Campbell was referencing. Somatic Focusing is a refinement of awareness that invites the energy to communicate symbolically, through words, pictures, and other feelings. This balancing flow of energy and symbols supports body, mind, and spirit.

You can learn more about Somatic Focusing in the Biofield Balancing Program.

DIY Laser Acupuncture



Do-It-Yourself Laser Acupuncture allows you to benefit from the healing power of the acupuncture meridian system by using a safe, affordable laser in your own home. Research using fMRI shows that acupuncture point stimulation with needles or laser activates specific brain regions in support of healing your mind and body.

Laser acupuncture works well for adults, children, and pets. The gentle stimulation of acupoints with laser light has a two-fold benefit.

First, the traditional benefit. The laser stimulation of acupoints balances the acupuncture meridians that are in charge of our physical health and emotional well-being. The meridian system is akin to an electrical system that has the capacity to reset itself with a little help, by means of laser stimulation, from us.

Secondly, the laser stimulation of acupuncture points triggers a cascade of biochemistry that helps to resolve pain and anxiety.

One of the mechanisms for understanding the healing benefits of acupoint stimulation is its influence on balancing the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and vagus nerve function. This aspect of our nervous system either supports or inhibits system wide balance and healing. With the addition of self-regulation skills, like Heart Focused Breathing and others, and laser acupuncture, you can learn to restore physical and emotional resiliency.

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When we think of acupuncture points we often think of points that are located all over the body, involving the head, torso, and the extremities. There are also over one hundred acupuncture points on the ear alone that serve as a direct link to the vagus nerve.

Learning to treat your own ear is easy as well as a great introduction to DIY Laser Acupuncture.

The ear can be treated alone or in conjunction with body points. In South Florida, where I started practicing acupuncture, ear or auricular acupuncture was an important part of Miami-Dade County's drug court program. Auricular acupuncture was proven to reduce recidivism rates and ease withdrawal symptoms in the participants. This program ultimately helped individuals recover and reclaim their lives while saving the county a lot of money.

You can learn more about Laser Acupuncture in the Biofield Balancing Program.

Expressive Writing



Expressive Writing is a well researched and highly effective self-help method for balancing the suppressed emotional energies that disrupt our neurological balance, physical health and emotional well-being.

Many individuals learn to enjoy writing as an effective and economical way to discharge troubling emotions in the pursuit of less pain and more ease and calm. Expressive Writing was one of the primary tools used by John Sarno, M.D., who was mentioned earlier, in his treatment of Tension Myositis Syndrome, or stress-induced pain.

James Pennebaker, Ph.D. began research on expressive writing in 1983 which began to show the connection between the expression of emotions and the resolution of physical pain and other stress-induced symptoms. He continues working in this field of endeavor today.

The basic concept is that the holding in, ignoring, or avoidance of emotional feelings creates an internal pressure that's ultimately experienced as pain or physical symptoms. As discussed earlier in this guide, it's the experience of bodily sensations, feelings, and emotions that allows emotional energy to integrate rather than being expressed physically. With this understanding of mind and body dynamics, expressive writing becomes a powerful healing resource.

You can learn more about Expressive Writing in the Biofield Balancing Program.

Putting It All Together – Daily Practice



As with all self-regulation practices the benefit is dose-dependent. The more you practice the more you reprogram your brain, nervous system, and your health.

The self-regulation components that I've described can be used in whatever combination and whatever frequency that serves you best. In general, more consistent self-regulation practice produces quicker and more consistent results.

1. Heart Focused Breathing

Activating Your Body's Self-Healing Wisdom

Heart Focused Breathing is the foundational skill for self-regulation training. It activates the right hemisphere, limbic brain, and heart brain complex that's crucial for the resolution of pain and for self-healing. There are more HeartMath techniques but they all build upon Heart Focused Breathing.

One Twenty Minute Session Daily and a number of Brief 'Checking In' Sessions of ten seconds to two minutes are ideal for transforming your brain and resolving anxiety and pain.

The Heart Focused Breathing process is powerful by itself. However, as experience and sensitivity grows it can lead to even more profound healing when it serves as a starting point for the '**Somatic Focusing**' and '**Energy Awareness**' processes.

2. Expressive Writing

Eliminating Pain with a Pen

Get into the habit of writing daily, or every few days, even if only for a few minutes. Expressing emotions through writing helps to clear the mind, balance the autonomic nervous system, and inhibits the pain circuitry.

DIY Laser Acupuncture

Using Laser Acupuncture for Energetic, Emotional, & Neurological Balance

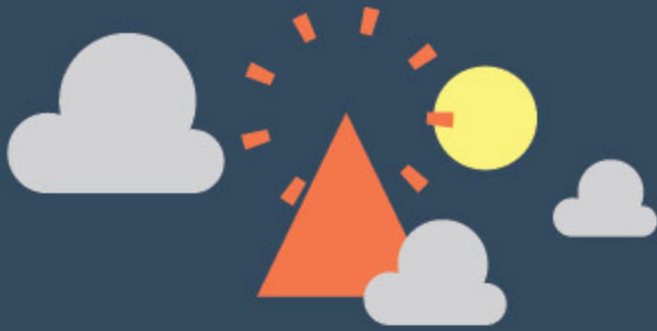
DIY Laser Acupuncture can be used at intervals throughout the day for maintaining or restoring energetic and neurological balance.

Thanks For Reading!

If you've found this information interesting or helpful I'm pleased.

If you'd like to learn more and experience one on one guided self-regulation sessions online ... and experience the full Biofield Balancing Program ... or participate in online courses feel free to contact me at drtemplin@stevetemplin.com





About Dr. Templin

Steven Templin, DOM is a Doctor of Oriental Medicine, Acupuncture Physician, and Certified HeartMath Practitioner with thirty-five years of clinical experience treating a wide variety of chronic pain, illness, and anxiety.

Biofield Balancing For the Highly Sensitive Person is his amalgam of self-regulation skills for restoring order to the neural and energetic pathways responsible for most chronic pain, anxiety, and illness.

His primary focus is on resolving the stress-induced changes in the brain, nervous system, and subtle energy systems that are responsible for most chronic issues.

He offers self-regulation coaching and courses online.

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