

## First Aid for Back Pain: Self-Management Eases Pain for Employees and Employers

By Ray Mulry, Ph.D., Clinical and Sport Psychologist

An alarming bolt of pain swept across Andy's lower back, dropping him to his knees. He had experienced pain before, but this was very different. Clinging to the door of his car, he waited for the pain to pass, but it didn't. The sales presentation he had been working on for weeks was minutes away, so he gingerly made his way across the parking lot. After an anguishing presentation, he retreated to his office with unusual haste and began a long, painful day of sitting with his arms stiffly braced on his chair.

Andy's situation is not uncommon—a 2005 report in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* estimated Americans spend \$86 billion a year on treating neck and back pain, probably more than any other ailment. Back pain is often first noticed as ache, soreness, tension and tightness. When a spasm occurs, it can range from moderate to overwhelming pain. Untreated or mistreated, the problem can worsen or persist for months or even years.

What does this mean for you and your organization? As *The National Business Group on Health* put it in April, 2007: "Poor quality back pain treatment is a major concern of U.S. employers. It is the most costly musculoskeletal problem in the United States and second only to the common cold as the reason for physician visits. Back pain is the third most common reason for surgery, and remains a major cause of work disability, with enormous associated costs to employers, insurers and families."

The good news is progress is being made to transform our unnecessary and often costly dependence on healthcare providers and turn toward self-management options that are not only a good first aid for back pain—but often the best. As Newt Gingrich states in his provocative book, *Saving Lives & Saving Money*, "medical culture trains patients to rely on doctors to maintain their health, absolving them of personal responsibility.... Individual self-awareness and self-management is the biggest need in healthcare today."

PureSafety's new online course, *First Aid for Back Pain*, offers a long overdue self-management alternative to traditional back care. Unlike most doctor visits, it's available 24/7, is affordable and delivers immediate results without muscle relaxants, pain killers, or sleeping pills. Most back pain can be successfully self-managed—but employees need to know what to do, so individual education and self-awareness are key.

Back pain can be sudden and intense, but more commonly it surfaces and subsides, with factors such as too little or too much exercise, prolonged sitting, cumulative trauma, stress, muscle tension, and micro tissue tears collectively creating back ache. In all cases, employers with Stay-at-Work and Return-to-Work programs in place can take timely corrective action. *First Aid for Back Pain* starts immediately, counteracting back strain in the Position of Comfort, followed by soothing Deep Rhythmic Breathing, Relaxation Therapy, over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications, ice and later heat. This repetitive process yields cumulative results. Each repetition delivers deep muscle relaxation, enhanced blood flow and oxygen to the injured tissues, joined with a conscious sense of relief. All of this is accomplished without delay or prescription drugs and their often serious side effects. The downloaded MP3 Relaxation Therapy permits employee self-management of future episodes of back pain and other effects of unmanaged stress and tension. Specific guidelines for appropriate medical attention are built into *First Aid for Back Pain* if back pain continues after appropriate applications of self-management methods.

Don't let another day pass where you or your employees suffer with debilitating back pain. Unlike Andy who struggled through his day and aggravated an already serious condition, you can help your employees deal directly with their pain the moment it happens, at work and at home. *First Aid for Back Pain* offers an upstream, de-medicalized alternative and a unique opportunity for employee self-management of personal health.

It is my pleasure to invite you to join our ever expanding, online community of self-managing individuals, trusting our intelligence and learning capabilities as we acquire new and better ways to care for our own good health.

Ray Mulry, Ph.D, is a Clinical and Sport Psychologist, co-author with Orthopedic Surgeon, Arthur White, M.D., of *The Back School*, *The Portable Back School*, *12-Steps To A Pain-Free Back* and author of *Tension Management & Relaxation*, *Freedom From Stress & Back Pain*, *In The Zone*, *Teeing Off With The Masters* and now, *First Aid for Back Pain*.