



New Possibilities for Fibromyalgia

By Angela Williams Duea

Sharon Johnson, a patient who suffered for years with fibromyalgia, had trouble finding a treatment that would ease the constant pain of her illness. A registered nurse who worked in outpatient surgery, she was diagnosed with fibromyalgia in August of 1990. Her muscles constantly ached, as if she had over exercised or was suffering from the flu. For years, she and her internal medicine physician tried all the treatments that Western medicine could offer. Finally, the physician asked her if she was willing to try alternatives.

She was slightly skeptical because she'd tried chiropractics in the past and hadn't received much relief. But finally she told him, "I am willing to try anything to try and get rid of this pain. I can't go on like this." After several acupuncture sessions, the pain had not lessened. "I want you to try the *Trager Approach*," her acupuncturist said.

During Sharon's first visit, she was surprised to note that while she didn't feel any pain during her session, she also didn't feel much at all. The practitioner inquired about her clenched fist. Once she noticed the clenched fist and released it, she felt a sense of relaxation in her arm and hand. She realized her entire body was locked in a closed-fist pattern of tension. How would it feel to release all of her muscles?

After several sessions, the *Trager* work helped her experience relaxation in her entire body. The *Trager* sessions have brought her pain level from a daily 6 or 7 to a 2 or 3. Before her *Trager* appointments began, she thought she was soon to be permanently disabled. Now, 17 years later, she is working 40 and sometimes 46 hours

a week! She says, "I can't believe that I am physically able to do what I am able to do. I credit it to *Trager*—all of it."

She has learned to pay more attention to her body's signals. She says, "When I catch myself at work hunching over a computer or I feel my muscles, I say "I am tight." I stop and take a deep breath and kind of let them go. I have learned through *Trager* how to do that. It is fantastic!"

As a *Trager* client with fibromyalgia, Sharon still has limitations on her sessions. While in a *Trager* session, the practitioner must work more slowly with her than with usual clients, because she tends to stiffen up even with free, easy movements. Sharon also practices *Mentastics*®, the ongoing mental/physical movements that complement the *Trager* sessions.

After getting involved with *Trager*, Sharon also learned that she was gluten intolerant. Her allergist recommended removing all wheat and gluten foods from her diet to release her body from the histamines of an allergic reaction. This is another lifestyle change that has improved her fibromyalgia symptoms.

Sharon says, "A *Trager* session feels like relief. Warm and fuzzy. I just feel that the muscles of my body have let go and there is that peace, that relief, almost that same feeling that you get just before you drop off to sleep at night. It is like when you are just so comfortable that everything is OK."

After four sessions, she asked, "How do I learn to do this? If this can help me this much, it can help others." She attended conferences to learn the techniques, and encouraged her husband to learn the techniques as well. They are a great support

to each other, providing healing and release when the other is in need of it.

After working as a full time nurse, Sharon offers services as a *Trager* practitioner on a part-time basis. She finds, though, that giving *Trager* sessions also provides her with relief from tension and pain in her own body. She credits the unique process of relaxing her own body in order to read what is happening in her client's body with part of the healing she feels. By helping another to slip into free, easy movements, she eases her own body into a similar state.

With several fibromyalgia clients of her own, Sharon recognizes the special needs of that group. She's eager to learn more about how *Trager* can help these sufferers, as well as others with chronic pain, to regain pain-free use of their bodies. One of the challenges is the small amount of movement that the clients can tolerate. Though the effects are still long-lasting, the practitioner must make progress slowly. Sharon cautions her clients to tell her immediately if

something hurts or feels achy. And she urges clients that practice *Mentastics* to take special note of what their bodies are signaling. At any sign of fatigue or pain, they should stop for some time and try again later in the day. Even a few minutes of *Mentastics* a day can be helpful, and Sharon encourages people to practice them wherever they are – sitting at a desk, walking down the hall, or in an elevator.

Teaching people how to pay attention to their bodies and know what to do based on their signals is the goal of Sharon's practice. She believes strongly in offering people an alternative to the stressed, tensed muscles that we suffer from in modern life. What would it be like if people had less tension? What would be possible?

Learn More About The *Trager* Approach

Regaining near pain-free use of your body is not impossible!

Find out more about the Trager® Approach at www.tragerus.org (or at 440-834-0308).

Angela Williams Duea is a freelance creative writer who is passionate about helping businesses and non-profit organizations share information about their work. More information about her company, Pearl Writing Services, can be found at www.pearlwriting.com.