

Pain Free System Offers Breakthrough Approaches for Chronic Pain, Repetitive Motion Injuries

by Richard H. Rossiter

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All Richard H. Rossiter wanted to be as a child was a star hockey player or a pilot. Those two dreams, it turns out, eventually led him down an entirely different path - one that has given thousands of people relief from chronic and everyday pain.

Rossiter, who played high school hockey in Minnesota and in the early 1970s became a U.S. Army helicopter pilot, is developer and creator of the Rossiter PainFree System, a series of proprietary, two-person stretching techniques now used in offices and factories throughout the U.S. to prevent and alleviate the pain of common injuries and pain - carpal tunnel syndrome, low back pain, knee/foot/ankle pain, trigger finger, shoulder and neck pain and more.

The Rossiter PainFree System specifically targets the body's system of connective tissue. The stretches elongate and restore connective tissue so that common symptoms - tightness, numbness, pain, burning, stiffness, tingling and limited mobility - are easily relieved and prevented. The stretches are based on four principles that lie at the heart of the Rossiter System - food (restoring the body's ability to nourish itself), communication (loosening connective tissue so that nerves/blood vessels are no longer pinched and internal communication is not hindered), movement (freeing tight tissue so that bodies can move freely again) and space (restoring to the body a natural amount of internal "space").

Rossiter suffered minor shoulder injuries as a high school hockey player and more severe shoulder injuries when his helicopter was shot down during the Vietnam War. In the mid 1970s and early 1980s, he worked as a commercial helicopter pilot in Alaska. There, the physical strain of flying and controlling a helicopter aggravated the shoulder injuries and

sent him on a search for non-drug, non-surgical approaches to pain relief.

He finally found relief in Rolfing, and in 1985, he became a certified Rolfer at the Rolf Institute in Boulder, Colo. In private practice, though, he became aware that many clients were seeking help and relief far too late in the course of their pain, and he began adapting his knowledge of connective tissue and anatomy to attack pain problems earlier through active, targeted stretching.

The result is The Rossiter PainFree System, a series of proprietary stretches performed by two people - one, a Coach or facilitator, and the second a PIC or Person in Charge of their own pain. In a typical Rossiter workout, the PIC lies on the floor while the Coach stands overhead, using his/her foot to apply weight at strategic spots on the PIC's body while the PIC performs a series of stretches that elongate and restore the natural function and "space" of the body's entire network of connective tissue. The Rossiter System is different than standard self-help stretches or yoga. Teaming two people adds power and strength to the stretches, and the PIC is an active participant - someone who becomes proficient at identifying, locating and eliminating his/her own pain by purposeful stretching.

In some cases, problems like carpal tunnel syndrome or low back pain can be alleviated in as little as 20-30 minutes. In workplaces where the Rossiter System is used preventively and routinely (e.g., Nissan, Sauder Woodworking, Quebecor/World Color, Brown Printing, Bunn-O-Matic and others), workers who begin to experience work-related symptoms (numbness, tingling, pain, tightness, stiffness) undergo a Rossiter workout and return to work immediately -

usually symptom-free.

"The beauty of this approach is that people themselves become aware of and responsible for restoring and healing their own bodies," says Rossiter, 50, who recently relocated Rossiter & Associates Inc. from Little Rock, Ark., to Cincinnati, Ohio. He is author of "Overcoming Repetitive Motion Injuries the Rossiter Way," published in June 1999 by New Harbinger Publications.

"In factories and offices, workers see the immediate results of their work and they take pride in this program. Managers and human resources departments love our program because it has a 12-year record of reducing medical costs, slashing workers' compensation costs and improving employee productivity and morale - all without outside meddling from doctors or lawyers."

Not convinced?

Here's a simple technique that can quickly relieve the pain, tightness and throbbing of menstrual cramps. This is one of the easiest techniques to learn. Remember, this involves two people -- the Person in Charge is the person who's suffering from cramps, and the Coach is the person who's there to help ease the pain away. (If a male therapist is working with a female client, be sensitive to charges of sexual harassment. At home or in a professional setting, where privacy is more assured and rules of ethics are in place, the PIC can loosen or unzip clothing on the abdomen so the Coach can get a better grip on the tissue).

The PIC lies on the floor on her back with the knees bent upward. The Coach sits or kneels facing the PIC, on the same side of the body as the PIC's menstrual pain. As soon as possible into the technique, the PIC should lower the knees and flatten the legs on the floor, because doing so increases the effectiveness of the technique.

The Coach asks the PIC to gently palpitate and squeeze her abdomen with both hands to find the most tender spot or the area of most menstrual pain. Once the PIC has identified the spot, the Coach positions her hand like a claw -- as if turning a combination lock -- and grasps the tissue with her fingertips, gently twisting and holding it in place. This is called a "torque." It doesn't matter which way you turn, just twist whichever direction is easiest for you. As in all Rossiter techniques, movement is done s-l-o-w-l-y and deliberately. Hold the torque for 30-60 seconds. Grasp the tissue gently the first time, and then go in deeper on following

torques. The PIC will feel a slight increase of pain at the tender spot as soon as you grasp it, but the pain will begin dissolving quickly. As you get better at this, you can feel the tissue move and loosen with your fingertips.

Repeat the torque several times, each time asking the PIC to feel the abdomen and again locate the most tender spot. As you ease pain in one area, the PIC will be able to find tender spots elsewhere. As one crampy area dissipates, another may pop up. Repeat the process until the cramps are gone. Once you get proficient at this, the entire process should take no more than five minutes.

You can increase the power of this technique, once the two of you have done it several times, by asking the PIC to "lock" her feet -- push out with the heels and pull the toes toward the head while the Coach torques the tissue. The locking position further elongates the connective tissue to produce even greater pain relief in the area of the cramps. Make sure the PIC keeps breathing throughout the techniques and unlocks after each one to relax.

With the same kind of simplicity and approach to connective tissue, the Rossiter techniques can relieve pain elsewhere in the body.

Future Plans

Rossiter's goal is to make the program available in many settings - schools, health-care practices, sports programs, individual homes. His program can be installed through on-site training, week-long seminars or online at www.rossiter.com, a Web site that includes the necessary theory, information and practical steps for learning the stretches. The site includes instruction, level-by-level testing, database tracking, streaming videos and online help.

"So many people get caught in the medical system's trap of drugs, splints, shots and surgery - none of which have been proven to be effective and many of which have serious side effects," says Rossiter. "My goal is to give people the skills and knowledge they need to work as a team to get out of pain, whenever and wherever they need it."

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