



# Let's Start Right Now

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I am an orthopedic spine surgeon who performed complex spine surgery for over 30 years. Much of my practice was addressing problems created by multiple spine surgeries. Often the first one should never have been done. During my career, I developed chronic pain with 17 different symptoms. I had no idea what was going on. What happened? In 10 minutes, I went from being a fearless spine surgeon to having panic attack and I could not pull out of it for over 13 years.

You will hear my story in detail as you travel with me on the DOC journey. However, I would like you to begin this journey **right now**.

The essence of the problem is your body's neurochemical reaction to threat because of the profound changes in your stress hormones and inflammatory markers. The solution lies in learning the tools to create sense of safety. However, it is only by implementing these strategies will you experience a shift in your mood and pain. Over the last few years of my practice I would talk to my patients and ask them to take a deep breath and just begin the process and learn about it later. Why wait? So, I asked them to do the following beginning that evening:

- Begin the expressive writing. It is the one mandatory step to start. People can improve without doing it, but I have rarely seen people go pain free without engaging in this exercise. It has been documented in over a thousand research papers to be effective in creating significant shifts in multiples symptoms.
- Start the active meditation. This involves placing your attention on a physical sensation for five to ten seconds. You are switching sensory input and calming down your nervous system. I like it because it takes no extra time. We used to do it during surgery with a marked improvement in technical performance.
- Sleep. An important step is getting adequate sleep. Lack of sleep has been shown to cause chronic pain. With a focused effort usually requiring a multi-pronged approach, restful sleep can be achieved within 4-6 weeks. I would not hesitate to use medications for a few months. Not sleeping is not an option. You can't even think straight.
- Never discuss your pain or medical situation with anyone except your medical providers. This will initially make no sense to you. However, the solution for chronic pain lies in rewiring your brain around your memorized pain circuits. This is possible because your brain is changing every second (neuroplasticity), and it will develop and evolve wherever you place your attention. It is a powerful step and takes a while to switch over. It is as important a foundational step as the expressive writing.

The final step in getting started is to embrace your skepticism. Why should this DOC process work? You have been bounced around, promised relief time and time again, undergone failed interventions, and your pain is worse than ever. There is not any reason to think that this is going to work. I agree.

However, I have watched well over 1500 patients break free from chronic pain and not only regain their life but thrive at a level they had never experienced at any point in their lives. It happened by them learning and **using** the sequence that evolved from my experience out of pain and also discovering what was effective with my patients.

What is not helpful is "believing in the DOC process" or in David Hanscom. It is not about positive thinking or using affirmations. You will eventually learn that this approach is a disaster. It is also not about knowing enough about pain and it will resolve. Knowledge is not power in this scenario. Pain is an experience and you must **learn and practice** strategies to create a different experience.

What the DOC process is about is connected and engaged thinking. You are rightfully angry, frustrated, and trapped. It is the starting point. It is only by knowing where you are at can you change direction. One successful patient made the comment that all you need to begin is a, “suspension of disbelief.”

You don't even have to trust me. You don't know me. I will tell you that every recommended treatment that has been well-documented by deep medical research. The problem, and why I finally quit my surgical practice, is that mainstream medicine is ignoring the data.

### **The starting point**

The DOC process begins with awareness and hope. There is a lot of hope in hearing of other's successes. I am now convinced you can stimulate your brain to rewire around almost any pain source. I just got another taste of this when a patient who I never treated resolved his pain largely through the DOC approach. He is now 66, had been in pain for 20 years. He lost his marriage and business. He ended up on high-dose narcotics and tried to commit suicide. During this period, he had undergone 27 surgeries. He has not only been free from pain for over four years, he states that he has not felt this good since he was 30 years old.

Please acknowledge your disbelief, embrace it, start with using the tools and you'll learn as you go. Helping patients emerge from the Abyss of chronic pain has been the most rewarding phase of my career. I am also continually inspired by the resiliency of the human spirit. I am honored to be a part of your journey.