



Rest Stop #4: Anger / Forgiveness

This aspect of the journey is by far and away the most critical leg. Unless you can dig in, learn and implement this phase, you will remain stuck. You may have experienced some improvement, maybe even dramatic, but the deep healing can't and doesn't happen without connecting with and releasing your links to your deepest wounds. Outcomes can border on catastrophic if you consider yourself a forgiving person without feeling the pain. Suppressing anger can and will make you physically sick.

When suffering from chronic pain, you have lost control of almost every aspect of your life without a clear direction of how to solve it. Anger and pain (mental or physical) are closely linked in your nervous system and they feed off of each other. Working through this leg has had the most impact on my patients' level of pain and quality of life. It is impossible to move forward without releasing yourself from the past.

Letting go of your legitimate anger is the “Continental Divide” of chronic pain. If you feel you are not angry in the presence of unrelenting pain you are just not connected to it—most of us hate feeling angry and we despise being in pain. Here is a review of what you have just learned. This leg and rest stop represents a starting point that introduces a lifetime of learning and practice.



Understand the Impact of Anger on Your Life

Abraham Maslow was a renowned psychologist who focused on normal human behavior as the basis for his theories. He developed a “hierarchy of needs” with air, food, water, and sleep at the foundation. What he didn't list as a basic need was, “Not being in pain.”

Acknowledge Your Anger Disguises

Disguising victimhood is a most “highly developed skills for many, if not most of us. Remaining aware of this tendency is a daily practice.

Understand the Victim Role – It is Universal

There is a genealogy of anger/frustration.

- Circumstance over which you have lost control
- Blame
- Feeling like a victim
- Frustration/Anger

Many people, especially me, are not aware when they fall into the victim role. We don't like the word or the implications. It is *universal* and it is important to understand your style of dropping into it. What you are not aware of can and will control you.

Choose Not to Remain a Victim

This is a distinctly unique aspect of your journey. The victim role feels so powerful, at no point will you want to give it up. It is a core survival reaction that will never disappear, nor should it. You simply have to make ongoing daily choices to give it up.

Forgive

Forgiveness is a learned skill that gives you an opportunity to change your life, including minimizing or ridding yourself of pain. Remaining upset, regardless of the reason, keeps your body full of stress hormones and inflammatory proteins with significant mental and physical consequences. You must let go in order to move forward. You also must forgive the person or situation who inflicted your deepest wounds. This is the reason I refer to forgiveness as the "Continental Divide" of chronic pain. You can either forgive or you choose to not. You have chosen one of two completely opposite directions. You want your life back? Take it.