

So You Think You Have PPD...

Have you struggled with chronic pain or another medically unexplained symptom for a long period of time? Have you tried everything else to alleviate your pain, but nothing worked? Have you had doctors tell you they 'just can't find anything wrong?'

Then you may have a psychophysiologic disorder (PPD). PPD is a condition that causes real physical symptoms that are not due to pathological or structural abnormalities and are not explained by diagnostic tests. In PPD, symptoms are caused by psychological stress. Luckily you can overcome these conditions through education and psychotherapy.



Rule Out Physical Causes

Important: See a doctor so you can rule out any serious medical conditions and gain confidence that this is the right approach for you. This brochure is for informational purposes only and cannot provide medical advice or determine if this approach is safe for you. Therefore it is imperative that you ask your doctor if taking this approach will have any adverse effects on your health. Once cleared by your doctor, you can go about your recovery with confidence. There is list of skilled PPD doctors at www.tmswiki.org/ppd/Find_a_TMS_Doctor_or_Therapist.

What to do Next

Learn the Basics of PPD

Knowledge is the Penicillin of PPD. Simply gaining an understanding of the role one's unconscious plays in the creation of chronic pain is sometimes enough for people to recover. There are several PPD-related books, including *Unlearn Your Pain* and *They Can't Find Anything Wrong*. You can also learn more by watching the 20/20 segment with John Sarno, MD.

Have any questions about PPD? Check out the Peer Network's Q&A with an Expert program at http://www.tmswiki.org/ppd/Q%26A_with_an_Expert

Read Success Stories

Reading how other people became pain free can help you not only accept the diagnosis, but also give you guidance throughout your treatment. Success stories can help you identify what factors may be contributing to your symptoms, as well as give you confidence that you can also become pain free. You can read hundreds of success stories at www.tmswiki.org.

Accept the PPD Diagnosis

To recover from PPD, you must overcome your belief that your symptoms have a structural cause. Failure to fully accept the PPD diagnosis will keep you focused on your symptoms and will hamper your recovery. By accepting you have PPD and not a structural issue, you are taking away the power the symptom has over you. Acceptance allows you to switch your focus from the physical to the psychological. In so doing, you overcome fear and doubt.

Introduce Physical Activity

In *Healing Back Pain*, Dr. Sarno writes, *Perhaps the most important (but most difficult) thing that patients must do is to resume all physical activity, including the most vigorous.* It may seem counterintuitive to be active when you are in pain. However, physical activity can build up your confidence in the approach and in yourself.

With your physician's approval, feel free to gradually introduce physical activity. Try to start out by simply walking around the block

Connect with Other PPD Peers

It's helpful to know there are people just like you who have your same symptoms and have had their lives changed by discovering PPD. Connecting with others is a great way to learn more about PPD and pick up some tips and suggestions. Check out the PPD forum at www.tmswiki.org/forum and our weekly chat room at www.tmswiki.org/chat.

Do the Structured Educational Program

The PTPN developed a six-week program comprised of daily activities for people to do during their recovery. The program was written entirely by peers and contains tips, techniques, and suggestions that they found helpful during their recoveries.

"Reading my first Dr. Sarno book made sense to me, but it wasn't until I started doing the SEP that I started having a noticeable reduction of symptoms."

- JanAtheCPA

Think Psychologically, not Physically

When your symptoms flare up—which they will—look for psychological causes rather than physical ones. Working with a therapist or talking with PPD Peers can help with this.

You don't necessarily need to cure whatever psychological stresses that may be creating the pain in order to heal. Sometimes just understanding that there is a psychological cause is enough. However, you may also find that doing the psychological work is worth doing for its own good. That choice is completely up to you.

Be Patient

Some people have read Dr. Sarno's *Healing Back Pain* and were cured overnight; these people are in the minority. Other people say that six weeks is the magic milestone, and many people do see an improvement in that time. For a lot of people, though, the recovery process can take months, even years. But don't despair; the good news is that you can recover completely.

The goal of anyone starting out is to gain outcome independence, where you change your idea of success from what your level of pain is to how little you care about your pain.

Free Resources

- Online Encyclopedia of PPD/TMS: www.tmswiki.org
- Online Discussion Forum: www.tmswiki.org/forum
- Online Chat Room: www.tmswiki.org/chat
- The Healthy Mind: www.thehealthymind.com
- Unlearn Your Pain: www.unlearnyourpain.com (especially videos and blog)
- Stress Illness: www.stressillness.com (especially the blog)
- PPDA: www.ppdassociation.org

About the PPD/TMS Peer Network

The PTPN is a peer-led, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization comprised of individuals who have used the PPD approach to overcome chronic pain. The PTPN sponsors the largest encyclopedia of PPD information, www.tmswiki.org, and offers all of our programs 100% free.

Our mission is to simply promote PPD awareness and support individuals who are struggling with chronic pain. All members of both our Executive Council and Board of Directors have had PPD at some point in their lives. We know firsthand what life is like with PPD. We believe that no one deserves to be in chronic pain, and want to share the approach that helped us become pain free without drugs, surgery, or exercise.

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