

OMEGA

Rhinebeck, New York

Dear Omega Participant:

The Workshop

The intent of this workshop is to provide an environment that will enable you to begin a process that will cause your nervous system to shift out of pain (physical or mental) pathways to an enjoyable life. There has been a consistent response to this process and often participants will experience a shift during the week. Over the following six to twelve months there is a high probability that you can experience a dramatic improvement in the quality of your life.

Introduction to the faculty

I am an orthopedic spine surgeon who is practicing complex spine surgery in Seattle, WA. I not only survived a severe burnout and chronic pain, I am thriving and grateful to be able to share my journey with you.

My wife, Babs Yohai is a performing artist experienced in tap dance and Mask Theater. She will be working with rhythm and movement exercises. She has been a major supporting influence through my ordeal with pain. Her role in connecting with bodily sensations is a critical part of the healing experience.

Fred Luskin, PhD. is a professor of psychology out of Stanford University. He has made major contributions to his field in the area of forgiveness. He recently received a lifetime achievement award for his work. Forgiveness is the "Continental Divide" of chronic pain. His role in the five-day seminar is pivotal.

Preparation

The strategies are based on my book, *Back in Control: A Spine Surgeon's Roadmap Out of Chronic Pain* and Fred Luskin's book, *Forgive for Good*. Please read these books prior to this seminar. That will provide a common language and allow us to focus on implementation.

Additionally, please begin the negative writing exercises described on my website, www.back-in-control.com. The one common denominator of essentially every patient of mine that has experienced significant healing is a strong commitment to this exercise. It is the foundation of the project and is something you will be doing indefinitely.

The more you can learn about the stages outlined on my website the better. Dr. Luskin also has some excellent suggestions in his book, *Forgive for Good*.

Just reading our books and attending the seminar is not going to solve your pain. The process is only effective with active engagement.

The Format

The seminar is based on three concepts:

- The DOCC project is a framework that helps you understand pain and your relationship to it.
- All aspects of pain are addressed simultaneously
- You must take control of your care and situation

Awakening the Best in the Human Spirit

The end result is that you will be able to re-connect with the best part of who you are and move through the pain pathways into a rich and full life.

You will be in groups of eight throughout the week. You will be randomly assigned to a group for the week. You will also be assigned a “buddy”. Exercises will be done in groups of two, four, or eight.

Each day there will be two leaders per table that will rotate. The 5th day will be a random assignment.

The Schedule

Be prepared to engage. You will be eating lunch with your group and discussing the morning topics. Dinner will be with your buddy.

About a third of the course will be lecture. Most of it will be focused on learning somatic tools and implementing strategies that you can take home. There will be a lot of physical activity but none of it strenuous. Some work will be on mindfulness.

Overview of Course

Monday – Learning the basics of pain – physical and mental

Tuesday – “Judgment Day” – recognizing and processing anger

Wednesday – From reactive to creative

Thursday – Practical applications and rebuilding relationships

Friday – Taking it home

Evening Activities

The evening activities will be from 7:30 to 9:30 pm. They are as follows:

Monday – Watching the movie *Cinema Paradiso*.

Tuesday – TBD

Wednesday – Evening of sharing – you will be given the opportunity to bring some part of your life to share with your small group of 8.

Thursday – Open question and answer session with the faculty.

All the evening activities except Thursday are required. It is not only your commitment to you but also to the group.

Target Audience

Essentially anyone. The workshop will benefit anyone who is experiencing a chronic disease that is compromising his or her quality of life. Chronic pain can manifest in many other forms such as spastic bladder, irritable bowel, skin rashes, burning sensations throughout the body, fibromyalgia, tinnitus, and others. When the nervous system is over-reactive and out of balance it can create or magnify almost any physical symptom anywhere in your body.

Additionally it appears that physical and mental pain are not that separate. Anxiety, depression, obsessive thought patterns, eating issues amongst others also will respond to these principles.

I have personally experienced 16 of the 33 what are called Mind Body Syndrome (MBS) symptoms. They have been gone for years (unless I quit utilizing these principles).

If you are not experiencing significant chronic pain just use the word, "stress". It is a great set of concepts for processing stress. Stress in life is not the problem. It is your reaction to it.

Health care providers are encouraged to attend, as the best way to relate to your patients is to first have gone through the same journey.

Who Should Not Attend

Too Painful

If your pain is severe enough that you cannot endure full days, please do not sign up for this course. You are not ready for it. Most people are able to experience a significant reduction in pain following the steps outlined on my website, www.back-in-control.com.

Not Sleeping

Sleep is the number one variable that must be addressed in treating chronic pain. As per my book I ask every patient to discuss sleep with their primary-care physician, as you cannot sleep without meds if you are in chronic pain. Please address this before the seminar and you should be sleeping at least six hours per night. You can still attend but it would be a more productive week with sleep.

Unwilling to Contribute

You are being asked to fully participate. Your support to your group and buddy is important. The final phase of the DOCC project is giving back and you will be doing that all week. We are also asking you to be on time to the various activities.

Not Open to Change

The biggest and only real obstacle to success with this process is unwillingness to engage. In chronic pain there is a lot of anger and frustration. We will show you methods to process it. However, if you are not open to new ideas and experiences please don't sign up for this course. Be honest with yourself regarding your willingness to undergo a true change. You can and will be able to "rewire your brain to alleviate pain."

A consistent measure of your openness to change is your willingness to begin the negative writing. It is not difficult but many people simply do not want to do it. If you cannot cross that barrier your benefit from this workshop will be limited. <http://www.drDavidHans.com/5-stages/stage-1-address-anxiety/stage-1-second-step/>

Ground Rules

You cannot discuss your pain or medical care with the faculty or **ANY OTHER PARTICIPANT**. If you begin to discuss it then each participant will be instructed to ask you to change the subject. One of the paradoxes of the MBS is that you cannot "fix it". The harder you try to fix yourself the stronger your neurological circuits will become. We are focusing on learning methods to shift your nervous system into a more powerful and enjoyable place. Discussing your medical problems is counter-productive.

- If you are persistent in discussing your medical condition I will personally ask you to leave the course.

You will be asked to not bring any electronic devices into the seminar from 9:00 am until after dinner at 6:00 pm. This request also includes the evening activities from 7:30 to 9:30.

Dress is very casual. Comfort is key. It is best to wear athletic shoes for the daily activities.

Please Bring:

1) Vision board exercise

- Three to five magazines that have a lot of pictures.
 - We will be creating vision boards during the sessions throughout the week.

2) Sharing you – Wednesday evening

- Each person will have 10 minutes to share whatever you wish. Suggestions include:
 - Poems
 - Stories
 - Pictures
 - Music
 - Art
- You will be sharing with your group. It can also include a performance, poetry reading, unusual skill, etc.

3) Reconnecting with the Best Part of Who You Are

- A few songs on a digital device that connect to the most enjoyable part of your life
- Any small symbols or memoirs of that era
 - A photograph, souvenir, letter, etc.
 - Four pictures of yourself
 - Baby < one year
 - Elementary school
 - High school or college
 - Within the last year
- This is an exercise that you will do with your buddy one evening at dinner. The goal is to bring the best part of your life back to your consciousness.

This seminar is a lively and interactive experience. One of the most powerful tools to cause your nervous system shift is play. While in chronic pain you tend to lose your sense of humor. We are looking forward to meeting you and sharing our experiences with you. We will be learning as much from you as you will from us.

Warm Regards,

David Hanscom
Babs Yohai
Fred Luskin