



How to Solve BACK PAIN In Your Organization

*and transform your people into
healthy, pain-free and engaged
teammates*



Contents

Introduction	3
Myths of Back Pain	4
The ROI of Back Pain	7
Actual Causes of Back Pain	6
Pyramid of Physical Freedom	8
Finding Your Solution	9
4 Steps to Take	10
About Movement Rx	11



Welcome!

**How to Solve Back Pain in
Your Organization**



by Per Larson
CEO | Movement Rx

Spoiler alert: While this article DOES suggest several ways to solve Back Pain in your organization, even more than that it's about defending your business. The people your organization relies on are increasingly unhealthy as a population, with higher long term health risks than [previous generations](#). Health claims meta-data at many of the companies we work with show back pain and mental health as 2 of the top issues among their employees, with both trending upwards in frequency and cost.

The data we collect during our organizational well-being engagements supports this. In looking at the last 2 years of our assessment data we have found that **44%** of employees are at significant risk for back pain, **69%** fail a basic functional movement screen, and **16%** are in an emotional energy crisis. Not just emotionally unhealthy, but in CRISIS.

Those aren't separate health issues, by the way. They're absolutely connected. They're also eminently fixable. These factors are likely present in your organization as a (mostly) unseen drag on culture, productivity, creativity, innovation, and eventually the profitability of the business.

With that in mind, let's talk about solving low back pain, shall we?



Some Myths of Back Pain

I'm married. I find that at the beginning of any conversation with my wife, it's helpful to quickly uncover the assumptions we both carry on the topic at hand. It's purely for self-preservation. This way I get to know where the land mines might be before jumping on one with both feet.

What does this have to do with back pain? There's SO MUCH misinformation about causes and solutions for back pain, I find it's helpful to be clear on basic assumptions before continuing on.

To that end, take the 2 minute survey below (no need for contact info – just see where your assumptions lie).

<https://movementrx.typeform.com/to/IMqxoC>

According to the American Academy of Pain Management, fully 80% of Western adults will have back pain in their life. Recent data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) suggest that 28 million US adults have chronic back pain at any one time. This does NOT include acute pain, by the way.

Let's put back pain into perspective compared to other health issues. These numbers are for the United States adult population, with the data source in parentheses:

- **Back Pain:** 28.1 million (National Academies of Science)
- **Diabetes:** 25.8 million (American Diabetes Association)
- **Neck & Shoulder Pain:** 24.1 million (National Academies of Science)
- **Knee Pain:** 19.5 million (National Academies of Science)
- **Coronary Heart Disease:** 16.3 million (American Heart Association)
- **Cancer:** 11.9 million (American Cancer Society)
- **Stroke:** 7 million (American Heart Association)



The ROI of Back Pain

Back Pain is a HUGE market and economic engine

Way back in 2011, Forbes magazine estimated that the back surgery market in the US was **\$40 billion**. Research into back surgeries shows an average price of over **\$100,000** for a fusion surgery, with nearly 55% of that cost due to expensive medical implants.

The companies that produce medication, medical devices, and operate surgical centers have a strong interest in maximizing the number of patients they see. Billions of marketing dollars are spent promoting pills, medical devices, and by extension, procedures.

To provide a simple illustration, a quick review of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission filings of public medical device companies show significant marketing budgets. For example, Zimmer Biomet, which specializes in joint replacement and spine devices, spends nearly **40% of revenues on marketing**.

Those dollars inform doctors and other health professionals, and therefore impact suggested courses of action. **Why is this relevant to you?**

Our patient meta data suggest that fully **96%** of back pain cases are completely avoidable, and are solved and avoided through movement health. **Not surgical procedures. Not pills. Not rest.**

I may be preaching to the choir, but there are many people in your organization that need convincing.

Why?

The economics of movement health are not sexy. There's no multi-billion dollar effort to influence doctors to believe that training someone to move well can solve nearly all back issues. Avoiding surgery and prescriptions does nothing for healthcare titans' shareholder returns.

Movement health also does not fall into a single medical silo. It blends behavioral health, emotional energy, physical therapy, chiropractic care, human performance, and pain management. This makes it difficult to research, meaning it doesn't get university or grant dollars like promising new pharmacological compounds or device technologies.



What does this all mean? There's an enormous opportunity to help people like this gentleman for the people who serve on the front lines of healthcare.

Coaches, trainers, physios, and chiros...and **EMPLOYERS**.

Actual Causes of Back Pain

Let's talk about the actual causes of back pain.

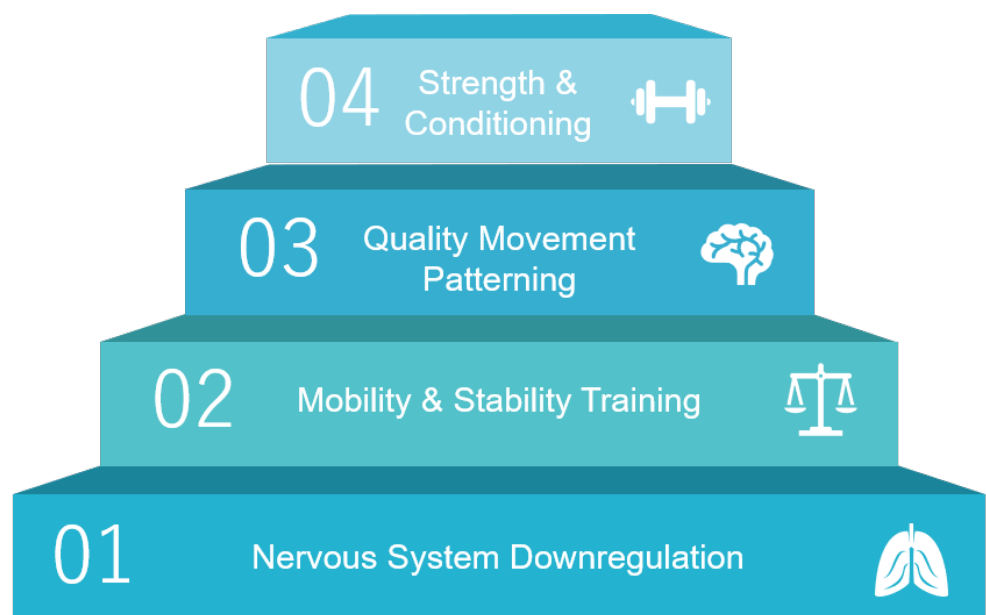
When considering the back pain you can influence in your organization, let's disregard the 4% of cases due to accidents or trauma, and focus on that **fat 96%**. The most common back pain diagnosis we see in the physical therapy referrals we receive from doctors is M54.5. This is also known as 'non-specific back pain' in plain English, meaning the immediate cause is not clear.

In roughly 10% of all back pain cases a cause is thought to be identified – a bulging disc, for example. For the remaining 90% (or 86% of total cases), it's a big shrug of the shoulders and prescription for pain meds and/or a suggestion to stop the activities where the person feels that pain.

That's totally useless counsel and unwittingly encourages future bouts of back pain.

The reality is that for the majority of cases we have a **STRONG** understanding of why back pain occurs.

In our experience there are 4 keys to understanding why back pain might appear, each building on the previous key. These same keys provide guidance on how to solve these cases, which in turn informs how to structure a program at your organization. At Movement Rx we call this system of keys the **Pyramid of Physical Freedom**.



PYRAMID OF PHYSICAL FREEDOM

by **MOVEMENT Rx**

We call it a pyramid for a reason. The lower the layer, the more important it is to a successful build. It's not built as a block or a cylinder because the layers aren't equal.

Let's start with an overview.

The Pyramid of Physical Freedom

The Base (Tier 1)

Overall health and musculoskeletal health begins with the base. In simple terms, the central nervous system needs to be under control to have any chance at being pain free. Since modern humans are generally in neuro-endocrine hyper-drive (re: always available messaging, caffeine, sugar, sleep deprivation, financial or relationship stress), we approach this through downregulation of the nervous system.

Tier 2

Next in importance is the optimal functioning of the body's tissues and joints. We call this mobility and stability, and at Movement Rx we determine this through a proprietary set of movement assessments that identify limitations across each joint area. These assessment scores allow us to customize mobility and stability training.

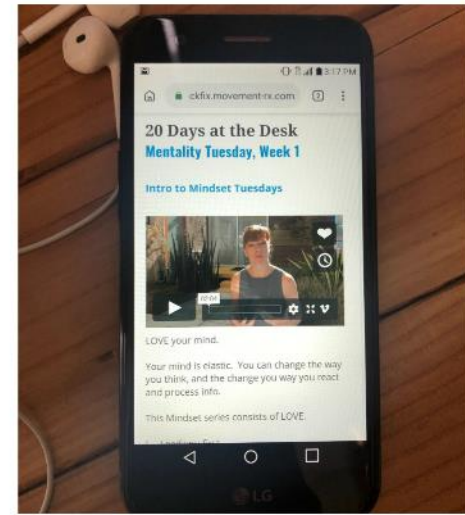
Tier 3

With movement limitations identified, quality movement patterning is programmed to help layer on healthy joints and tissues to build trust between the brain and body. NOTE: This is not about ergonomics or how to lift something on the factory floor. This is about re-learning HOW to recruit specific musculature and control movements.

Tier 4

The final step is to build strength in those patterns and the conditioning to keep those patterns over time – the apex of the pyramid. The folks at the frontline of health – trainers, physios, chiro – typically tackle a tier or two. We find that most coaches and trainers start and stop in Tier 4 – Strength and Conditioning. Some may dabble in Tier 2 (mobility/stability) and Tier 3 (movement patterning). On the healthcare side, most physios and chiro work in Tier 2 but are mediocre in Tier 3 and terrible in Tier 4. Some acupuncturists and massage therapists provide some benefit in Tier 1 (down regulation). Hardly anyone systematically builds an employee's pyramid of physical freedom.

To dig deeper into the Pyramid, read the longer version of this [article on Linked In.](#)



Finding your Solution

Moving up the Pyramid

If you have a challenge or fitness focused wellness program, you help employees get stronger, leaner, more in shape. If you have a healthcare focused wellness program, ideally you are getting employees out of immediate pain or teaching healthy habits.

But without a systematic approach to the 4 Tiers of the Pyramid, you're not providing employees with everything you can and should.

So how do you rebuild employees' systems, eliminate lower back pain, reduce stress and get them to the top of the Physical Freedom Pyramid?

It's not just about sitting too much, i.e. short hip flexors and weak glutes.

It's not just about poor movement patterns.

It's not just about immobility or instability in the above and below joints.

It's not just about chronic tension and endocrine overdrive.

It IS about all of the above and a ton more.

If you can crack the code to getting employees the top of the pyramid – regardless of age or interest – chances are you will drastically improve your employees' physical and emotional/mental health. **Talk about employee satisfaction!!**

So how do you crack the code? How do you become the go-to employer known for long term health in your communities?

4 Steps to Take

- 1.** Let's start with the obvious. **Commit** to solving back pain in your organization. Back pain is an indication of several poor health habits. **Chronic back pain is a 'gateway condition' that can increase the risk for downstream health issues that arise due to inactivity and chronic stress.** The steps required to solve back pain will also reduce the risk of a variety of other health issues. Solving back pain is also a great 'hook' for optimizing participation in a program.
- 2.** Get people moving and **moving WELL.** This step includes assessments, a program to follow, and an engaging accountability tool. There are a variety of combinations of those 3 that are possible. The programming you provide to employees should seamlessly integrate breath, balance, behavior, corrective exercises, strength, power, and conditioning. The programming should progress in a way that the employee is building quality movement patterns while working on the weaknesses uncovered in their assessments.
- 3.** Find ways to **reconnect employees' brains and bodies.** Because most of the physical positions of back pain sufferers are inactive, tissues shut off much of the day. When it comes time to use them, re-establishing that neural connection between brain and tissue is difficult. This is because neural pathways can become dormant or otherwise guarded. Restoring the activity of these neural pathways takes guided work. We've found the most effective restorative combination includes down regulation and well-cued slow strength progressions.
- 4.** Train your wellness team. Thankfully there's no need to put the entire team through continuing education. Just start with a single expert as a go-to resource to help the rest of your organization. We have a list of suggestions for training, including our own.



Do you Buy or do you Build this solution?

Learn about how we can help on the next page.

We Help Optimize Your Investment in Your People by Transforming them into Healthy, Pain-Free and Engaged Teammates.

Let us educate, inspire, and improve the health of your team for you.



Eliminate Joint Pain in Team Members. Back, knee, and shoulder pain are endemic to the workplace and are the precursors to chronic and expensive health issues in your employee base.



Reduce Stress & Associated Inflammation. Integrating movement and mindset principles is crucial in reducing stress and its associated inflammation. This inflammation is a key inhibitor to emotional and physical resiliency.



Reduce the Drag of Chronic Health Issues. Chronic health issues erode morale, productivity, and profitability. The combo of being sedentary + digitally connected is reducing your ROI in people – the most important asset of your organization.

Go to your.movement-rx.com/workplace-well-being
email per.larson@movement-rx.com
or call 877-854-1343 x3 to learn more.