

# Dr. Sarno Saved Me!

Category: My Aching Back

written by Paul Gwozdz | December 5, 2019

Back in the 1980s, I was not a family physician but an engineering manager who had been experiencing occasional back pain for several years. Then one summer I overdid it windsurfing, and for the next two and a half months I was bent over in sheer, excruciating pain that I now recognize was a muscle spasm that would not remit.

I was going to the chiropractor every three days, which helped minimally. I then went to an orthopedic surgeon who ordered an MRI, which showed two herniated discs. He told me that the herniated discs were causing my pain, that I needed to stop doing high-impact aerobics, that I needed to stop windsurfing, and that there was nothing that could be done for me – and then he pushed me out the door. I left his office devastated. I felt sure I was destined to sit in front of a TV on disability and pain medication.

Instead, I went to the county library that night and checked out every book on back pain. One of them was Dr. John Sarno's first book, *Mind over Back Pain*, in which not only did Dr. Sarno describe my pain but described me – a perfectionist, a goodist (someone who needs to do good for others), and someone who'd had a strict upbringing and was unhappy (I had an abusive boss and hated my job). I went to see Dr. Sarno at NYU for an initial appointment, followed by a two-hour lecture; he taught me that it's a myth that herniated discs cause back pain, and instead that my unconscious brain (I wasn't doing it deliberately) was creating the pain as a distraction to protect me from thinking about the things in my life I didn't want to face.

I did mental homework for the next two months, acknowledging the true causes of my back pain, and the pain went away and stayed away for the next 14 years, during which time I had the courage to quit my job and enter medical school in my forties. Upon completion of my residency, I went back to Dr. Sarno for further training. Over the past 18 years, I have seen about 1,000 chronic pain patients from across the U.S. and even overseas and have taught them all how they, too, can use Dr. Sarno's techniques to eliminate their chronic pain.

*Paul Gwozdz  
Somerset, New Jersey*