

Active Release Therapy: The Answer to my Problems

In January 2002, I developed a nasty case of tennis elbow after a busy weekend of skiing and playing shinny hockey (a sport I had never played in my life, but why not now?). After about three weekends during which I could hardly lift my coffee cup, let alone do any chores around the house and forget about strength training in my aerobics classes, I decided that it was time to seek help. I went for physiotherapy, massage, and I asked my own chiropractor to have a go at it. After about a month and a half with no reprieve (massage afforded relief for about twenty four hours), a friend recommended that I give Dr. Rodwin a try.

Dr. Rodwin was very thorough in her assessment of my injury and suggested Active Release Therapy (ART). Though I had heard of ART before, I didn't really know much about it. She discussed the treatment with me and provided literature to inform me about what to expect. She encouraged me to continue seeing my chiropractor and to keep him informed about the treatments I was receiving from her. Essentially, active release is a method of breaking down scar tissue in the muscle by exerting pressure on the muscle while lengthening it. Apparently, my arm and shoulder muscles were quite tight and there was plenty of scar tissue there, which probably led to the stress on the ligaments at the elbow. It made sense to me as it was similar to how the other practitioners had explained it.

Initially, I found the treatments somewhat uncomfortable, and I did experience some tenderness afterward, but Dr. Rodwin was always careful not to give me more than I could tolerate. BUT, the good news was that within weeks of beginning the treatments, my elbow pain started to go away. Before I knew it my coffee cup was not a painful lift, household chores were not a problem, and I began to resume strength training in my fitness classes.

This new freedom of movement in my arms and shoulders was really impressive so I asked Dr. Rodwin to treat my lower body as well. For several years, though I am quite physically active, I have suffered from muscle pain and muscle spasms that were actually extraordinary for a person at my fitness level. I had complained to my doctors many times about it, but to no avail. My potassium levels were normal and no one could figure it out (I wondered if anyone really cared, as I did continue with my active lifestyle in spite of the

discomfort and pain). It was becoming impossible to stretch many of my muscles because of tightness and/or cramping. The result of not being able to stretch made the muscles even tighter which was causing more pain in my back and other joints as well. I would experience unusual stiffness and soreness after even light workouts. I was afraid that I had some serious illness.

The ART treatments in the lower body again were somewhat uncomfortable at the beginning and this time I did experience bruising which Dr. Rodwin had mentioned was a possibility. She was always accommodating when the bruises were too sore for a treatment. BUT, the payoff was huge!

As I have gradually resumed my activities and have some into my summer sports, I feel as though I have been given a new body! I had not had a good run in five years: my left leg had ached every step of the way to the point of my foot dropping and causing me to trip. The pain and footdrop have disappeared! I actually look forward to my runs now, where I was about to give running up completely. I can get out of bed in the morning almost pain free! I can do a fitness class without pain, cramps and stiffness in my muscles. I can stretch! I can ride my bike, power walk, and play tennis without the incredible and frustrating fatigue in my muscles. I had almost given up some of these activities because they weren't fun anymore. Now, I'm back and feeling great! Dr. Rodwin has encouraged me to return to these activities at a sensible pace, giving me ideas about how to reintegrate myself back into them safely and easily. I am thrilled! This was just what I needed!

I am still receiving treatments twice weekly, but at some point I will move to a maintenance program, and trust me, I will not miss one appointment. It has made all the difference for me.

As well, I would be remiss if I did not mention the wonderful staff at Back to health! I am always greeted with a smile and a first name welcome. They are organized and efficient, pleasant and helpful. It is refreshing to attend an office that is so well organized. I am in and out in no time and that is definitely appreciated!