

Preface

Physician, heal thyself

Luke 4:23

Until I was 47, I was generally healthy and considered myself to be quite athletic. I would jog two to three miles a couple of times a week; every other day I went to the gym, worked out with weights, and would finish with a swim and the sauna. I played tennis, skied, and hiked on vacations. My diet was what is considered healthy, I was not a smoker, and I didn't carry around any extra weight. This was the first period of my life.

At 47, I began experiencing an uncomfortable sensation in the balls of my feet whenever I walked. What was first a sensation grew more acute, and soon gradually transformed into pain at every step. A similarly painful sensation was developing in my wrists and fingers, which I couldn't flex without steadily increasing pain. I shared these new concerns with my doctor during my annual check-up, but on that day, like on a few lucky days, I had no pain in any of my joints, so I spoke in a lighthearted tone, smiling ashamedly, as if revealing guilt. Soon enough the pain returned, and after blood tests, X-rays, 2 weeks of Tylenol every 4 hours, and a list of medications of ascending strength and side effects, the first period of my life closed, and the second began.

Besides analgesics, the list of remedies considered and tried was long: physical therapy, acupuncture, massages, long swims, hypnosis, even mud therapy. Every 6 months, in the fall and in spring, I had to take several shots of Voltaren (diclofenac) to control the pain.

One day in yoga class, when all poses were painful as usual, I experienced a pleasant sensation while doing one of the exercises. It is the one where you lie on your back with both legs lifted at 90°, and then slowly swing them to the floor, alternating on each side. The sensation, as I said, was pleasant, and I would have stayed in the pose longer, were it not for the instructor's command to move to the next pose. At the end of the session, I took account of my body's signals. My body had resisted all but one position by sending signals of discouragement in the form of pain. The only sensation of pleasure I received, then, must have been a signal of encouragement. And if encouragement, then the body wanted me to do something.

¹Pitkin M (1993) Floating skeleton concept to explain causes of injuries in spine and success of any therapeutic procedure. In: Proceedings of the XIV International Conference on ISB, 1993, Paris, France, pp 1052–1053

But what? I think I've found it. I remembered a paper I had presented in 1993 at the Congress of the International Society of Biomechanics in Paris,¹ in which a possible answer lay hidden. In this book I've recorded my thoughts on why and how our bodies encourage and discourage us, and on how, by listening attentively to their signals, we can heal ourselves. Now, in the third period of my life, I am healing myself.

September 2010
Boston, MA, USA

Mark. R. Pitkin



<http://www.springer.com/978-3-642-17176-5>

Biomechanics for Life

Introduction to Sanomechanics

Pitkin, M.R.

2011, XV, 132 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-642-17176-5