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# Health & Wellness

MAGAZINE

Charlotte/South Sarasota Edition - Monthly

January 2026

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## VALVE POWER

How Your Heart Stays in Rhythm

## NATURAL WEIGHT LOSS FOR THE NEW YEAR

A Root-Cause Approach

## HOW TO MAKE-AND KEEP-A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION TO QUIT TOBACCO.

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Thyroid Disease Can Go Undetected  
Without Yearly Exam by PCP

## EXERCISE SAFETY BEGINS AT THE FEET

A Podiatric Perspective

## NAVIGATING NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Mental Health and Substance  
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**Health & Wellness** MAGAZINE

Healthy new year

**2026**

As we welcome 2026, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude to our incredible readers. Your commitment to living healthier, more vibrant lives inspires everything we do.

Thank you for making us Florida's most trusted source for health and wellness information. Here's to another year of better health, wellness, and vitality together!

Wishing you and your loved ones a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year!

— The Health & Wellness Magazine Team

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## CONTACT US

OWNER / ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE  
Cristan Grensing  
[cristan@gwhizmarketing.com](mailto:cristan@gwhizmarketing.com)

OWNER / CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
Sonny Grensing  
[sonnygensing@yahoo.com](mailto:sonnygensing@yahoo.com)



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# How to make—and keep—a New Year's resolution to quit tobacco.

It is no secret that most New Year's resolutions tend to fail before they even have a chance to "get off the ground". However, something about the "clean slate" that a new year brings inspires every one of us to try anyway. We think about all the positive changes we want to make in our lives, to get off to a great start, but get sidetracked by the busy-ness and pressures of life and lose focus. Despite our failures, we vow to ourselves that we will "do better next year". The failure that many of us experience is often the result of failing to make a sustainable plan. Benjamin Franklin said it best when he said: "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!"

If you're planning to start off this new year tobacco-free, set yourself up for success by creating a plan, learning what it takes to quit and knowing what to expect from the process.<sup>3</sup>

When it comes to quitting and staying quit, you must have a plan.<sup>1</sup> Having a personalized plan will not only keep you on track, but it will also help get you through the challenging moments that will inevitably come your way. Here are six simple steps to create your quit plan that will set you up for success.<sup>4</sup>

## Step One: Mark your calendar.

With New Year's coming up, now is a perfect time to quit tobacco for good. Start 2024 off on the right foot by cutting out the #1 preventable cause of death and disease in the United States: tobacco use.<sup>1</sup> Set your quit date, but also tell your friends and family your plans to quit and explain how they can help you. Quitting tobacco is easier when people in your life support you.<sup>4</sup>

## Step Two: Calculate your savings.

Did you know a pack-a-day smoker can save over \$2,200 a year from quitting?<sup>4</sup> Cutting out tobacco use is an excellent way to build your savings back up now that the holidays are behind you. To see how much you can save, visit [TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/cost](https://TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/cost) to view a smoking cost calculator.

## Step Three: Think about your reasons for quitting.

Whether your main reason for quitting is related to health, money, family, job, or social stigma, you are making the right decision for your health and the health of those around you by quitting tobacco use. Knowing your reasons for why you want to quit can keep you motivated and on track, especially in the difficult moments.<sup>4</sup>

## References:

- 1 Tools to Quit: Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Cessation Program Participant Toolkit, Area Health Education Centers. 2018.
- 2 <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/10-reasons-why-new-years-resolutions-fail.html>
- 3 <https://www.verywellmind.com/tips-to-quit-smoking-for-new-years-2824378>
- 4 <https://smokefree.gov/build-your-quit-plan>



## Step Four: Know your triggers.

Think about what things make you more likely to use tobacco, then develop strategies to keep you in control of those triggers.

## Step Five: Fight your cravings.

When you get an urge to use tobacco, changing what you are doing or your physical location can make it easier to get your mind off of tobacco until the craving passes.

## Step Six: Set yourself up for success.

Choose strategies and tools to help you quit. Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center (GSAHEC), as part of the Tobacco Free Florida AHEC Cessation Program — offers Group Quit, free tobacco cessation classes that are available to help someone quit all forms of tobacco. These group cessation classes, now held virtually, provide information about the effects of tobacco use, the benefits of quitting, and will assist you with developing your own customized quit plan. Free nicotine replacement therapy in the form of patches, gum or lozenges (*if medically appropriate and while supplies last*) are provided with the class. Attendees will also receive a participant workbook, quit kit materials, and follow up support from a trained tobacco treatment specialist.

Contact us today at 866-534-7909 or visit [www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/groupquitcalendar](https://TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/groupquitcalendar) to schedule a class or learn more about the program!



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# Valve Power: How Your Heart Stays in Rhythm

**Y**our heart valves do important work. They allow blood to move between the four chambers of your heart — and ultimately pump oxygen-rich blood throughout your body. As they open and close, they serve as entry and exit points for the four chambers of your heart, including two at the top (left and right atria) and two at the bottom (left and right ventricles).

"Valves are strong, thin flaps of tissue. Think of them as doors with hinges. To function correctly, each valve must be formed properly, remain flexible, open fully and close all the way," says AdventHealth cardiothoracic surgeon Dr. Michael DeFrain.



Dr. Michael DeFrain

## Function of the Four Heart Valves

1. The tricuspid valve allows blood to pump from the right atrium to the right ventricle.
2. The pulmonary valve allows blood to flow from the right ventricle through the pulmonary artery, where it picks up oxygen in the lungs.
3. The mitral valve separates the heart's left atrium and left ventricle, opening to allow blood to flow from the left atrium to the left ventricle. It also prevents blood from leaking back into the left ventricle.
4. The aortic valve allows blood flow from the left ventricle to the aorta, which is your body's largest blood vessel. This oxygenized blood is carried throughout your body. The aortic valve also prevents blood from flowing backward into your left ventricle.



## Problems with Heart Valves

Heart valve problems could be genetic or congenital; for example, a valve could be missing at birth. Problems can also result from the normal process of aging, infection or other underlying health conditions.

Most diseased heart valves are on the left side, but problems can develop with any valve. The main types of heart problems include:

- **Prolapse** is caused when cusps don't fit and close properly between each heartbeat
- **Regurgitation** happens when a valve doesn't close properly, allowing blood to flow backward
- **Stenosis** causes valve tissue to become thick, stiff or fused together, restricting blood flow

## Symptoms and When to Get Care

"A heart murmur often is the first sign of a heart valve problem. While some people with heart valve conditions never have symptoms, most valve problems get worse over time. That means you're more likely to get symptoms later in life," says Dr. DeFrain.

Signs of a heart valve problem may include:

- Chest pain
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Fatigue
- Racing or fluttering heart
- Shortness of breath
- Swelling in your belly, legs, ankles or feet

Be sure to see a doctor for these symptoms, or if you have signs of an infection such as body aches and fever. Developing an infection in your heart can be serious, so don't wait to seek treatment.

## Preventing Heart Valve Problems from Getting Worse

If you or someone in your family has an issue with a heart valve, take these steps to improve your heart health.

- Don't smoke
- Eat a heart-healthy diet
- Keep your body's important numbers, like blood pressure, in check
- See your primary care doctor regularly
- Tell each of your doctors, including your dentist, about your valve issue
- Follow your physician's recommendations for periodic echocardiograms to track valve function and how well your heart pumps (ejection fraction), since age-related changes can be silent

## We're Here to Help Keep Your Heart Healthy

Heart valve conditions can lead to other, more serious health conditions like life-threatening arrhythmias or heart failure. So, it's crucial to talk with your doctor right away if you experience symptoms.

"Minimally invasive treatments — including surgical heart valve replacement — are available for several heart valve conditions, and advancements are being made every day in cardiac care," says Dr. DeFrain.

If you need to see a heart doctor, the experts at AdventHealth Port Charlotte are here to help. Visit [AdventHealthPortCharlotte.com](http://AdventHealthPortCharlotte.com) or call: 941-766-5095 to schedule an appointment with Dr. DeFrain.

# EXERCISE SAFETY BEGINS AT THE FEET: A PODIATRIC PERSPECTIVE

By Sahiba Singh, DPM, AACFAS

**A**s a podiatrist at the Family Foot & Leg Center here in Port Charlotte, I often see neighbors who are eager to embrace our active Florida lifestyle. Whether it's morning walks along the Harbor, pickleball matches at the local courts, or training for a community 5K, exercise is the cornerstone of our health. It bolsters cardiovascular wellness, strengthens our muscles, and keeps us mentally sharp.

However, I frequently see patients whose fitness journeys have been sidelined by injuries that were entirely preventable. Many assume these aches come from "getting older," but the root cause is often a lack of attention to the body's foundation. In podiatry, we view the body as a kinetic chain; if the base is unstable, the entire structure is at risk.

## The Engineering Marvel of Your Feet

To understand exercise safety, we must first appreciate the complexity of the foot. Each foot is a structural masterpiece composed of 26 bones, 33 joints, and a network of over 100 muscles, tendons, and ligaments. When you walk or run on our Southwest Florida pavement, your feet absorb and redistribute forces equal to two to three times your body weight with every single step.

When biomechanical abnormalities are present—such as **excessive pronation** (flat feet), **cavus structure** (high arches), or limited ankle flexibility—the feet cannot absorb this shock correctly. Instead, those stresses are transmitted upward. This is why a patient may visit me for chronic knee or lower back pain, only for us to discover that the issue actually begins with a collapsed arch right here in Port Charlotte.

## Choosing the Right Tools: Footwear Matters

One of the most common questions I receive at Family Foot & Leg Center is, "Dr. Singh, does it really matter what shoes I wear?" The answer is a resounding yes.

Appropriate footwear is your first line of defense. Athletic shoes are not "one size fits all." They are engineered for specific activities:



- **Running shoes** provide heel-to-toe cushioning for linear movement.
- **Walking shoes** focus on arch support and a flexible forefoot.
- **Cross-trainers** offer lateral stability for sports like tennis or pickleball.

Furthermore, shoes have a shelf life. Once the midsole integrity degrades, the shock absorption vanishes, increasing your risk for soft tissue injuries and stress fractures. I recommend replacing athletic shoes every 300 to 500 miles—or roughly every six months for daily walkers.

## The Danger of "Too Much, Too Soon"

In our local practice, we see a spike in injuries during the "snowbird" season or when New Year's resolutions kick in. These injuries—such as **Plantar Fasciitis**, **Achilles Tendinopathy**, and **Metatarsal Stress Fractures**—usually stem from a sudden increase in training intensity or duration.

Bones and tendons require time to adapt to new demands. If you go from a sedentary lifestyle to walking five miles a day, your tissues may suffer micro-trauma without enough time to repair. I always advocate for the **10% Rule**: never increase your weekly activity level by more than 10%. This gradual progression allows your "foundation" to strengthen alongside your heart and lungs.

## The Importance of the Warm-Up

Living in the Florida heat, we often feel "warm" the moment we step outside. However, a physical warm-up is still essential. Tightness in the **gastrocnemius-soleus complex** (the calf muscles) is a leading contributor to heel and arch pain. By incorporating dynamic stretching for the Achilles tendon and plantar fascia, you prepare your soft tissues for the load-bearing stress of movement.

## Listen to the "Check Engine" Light

The most important advice I can give the Charlotte County community is this: **Pain is not a normal part of exercise**. If you have persistent or worsening discomfort, it is your body's "check engine" light. Pushing through pain often turns a minor strain into a chronic condition that could require surgery or months of immobilization.

Early intervention at Family Foot & Leg Center allows us to utilize conservative treatments such as:

- **Biomechanical gait assessments** to see how you move.
- **Custom orthotic therapy** to correct structural imbalances.
- **Targeted physical therapy** to strengthen the lower kinetic chain.

## Take the First Step Toward Pain-Free Living

Your mobility is your freedom. Protecting your foot health isn't just about avoiding pain today; it's about ensuring you can stay active, independent, and healthy for decades to come. Don't let foot pain keep you on the sidelines of the beautiful life we enjoy here in Southwest Florida.

Is foot or ankle pain preventing you from reaching your fitness goals? Let's get you back on your feet. Contact me, Dr. Sahiba Singh, at the Family Foot & Leg Center in Port Charlotte today to schedule a comprehensive evaluation.

*Disclaimer: This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.*

Dr. Sahiba Singh is a podiatrist at Family Foot & Leg Center in Port Charlotte, Florida, specializing in complex wound care and deformity reconstruction. She is committed to helping the Charlotte County community remain active and healthy.



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# Navigating New Year's Resolutions:

## Mental Health and Substance Use in Florida's Unique Landscape

The arrival of January brings a surge of motivation for change, particularly in domains of mental health and substance use. National surveys indicate that "improving mental health" and "reducing substance use" consistently rank among the top New Year's resolutions for adults in the United States. In Florida, these goals are shaped by distinctive regional factors: a diverse population, seasonal fluctuations in stressors, and the ready availability of behavioral health resources.

### Florida's Context: Environmental and Social Influences

Florida's climate and culture exert a measurable impact on mental health and substance use patterns. The state's mild winters and abundant outdoor opportunities can facilitate physical activity and social engagement, both protective factors against depression and anxiety. However, Florida also faces elevated rates of substance use disorders, particularly opioid and stimulant misuse, as documented by the Florida Department of Health. Seasonal population shifts, tourism, and stress associated with weather-related events further complicate the landscape, increasing vulnerability for some residents. Additionally, ongoing economic instability may exacerbate anxiety and depressive symptoms.

### Resolution Setting: Evidence-Based Approaches

Research in behavioral psychology underscores that resolutions are most effective when they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). For individuals seeking to improve mental health or reduce substance use, the following strategies are supported by clinical evidence:

- Incremental Goal Setting:** Large, vague resolutions (e.g., "be happier" or "quit drinking") are less likely to succeed than targeted, incremental goals. Examples include scheduling weekly therapy sessions, reducing alcohol intake by a set amount, or practicing mindfulness for ten minutes daily.
- Social Support:** Engagement with peer groups, family, or professional support networks increases accountability and resilience. Floridians may benefit from local support groups, telehealth options, and community wellness programs.



- Self-Monitoring:** Tracking mood, substance use, and triggers via journals or digital apps can enhance self-awareness and facilitate early intervention.

- Relapse Prevention:** Recognizing that setbacks are common, especially in the early months of change, is critical. Developing a relapse prevention plan—including emergency contacts and coping strategies—can mitigate risk and support recovery.

### Mental Health and Substance Use: The Role of Acute Care

Despite best intentions, the New Year can also precipitate crises. The pressure to change, combined with unresolved psychiatric symptoms or withdrawal, may lead to acute episodes requiring immediate intervention. Timely access to inpatient psychiatric stabilization and medical detoxification is a vital safety net for adults in crisis.

Clinical data suggest that timely access to acute care improves outcomes for individuals experiencing severe depression, suicidal ideation, psychosis, or substance withdrawal. Multidisciplinary teams employing evidence-based protocols for rapid assessment, stabilization, and transition to ongoing care reflect best practices in integrated behavioral health.

### Florida-Specific Considerations

Floridians face unique challenges in maintaining mental health and sobriety during the winter months. While the climate may reduce seasonal affective disorder prevalence, the influx of visitors, holiday-related stress, and cultural emphasis on leisure can increase exposure to substance use triggers. Additionally, ongoing economic instability and the stress associated with weather-related events may exacerbate anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Providers should remain vigilant for signs of crisis, particularly among individuals with a history of substance use or co-occurring disorders. Community education, stigma reduction, and proactive outreach are essential components of a comprehensive public health response.

### Conclusion

New Year's resolutions offer a powerful opportunity for growth, but sustainable change requires more than motivation—it demands evidence-based planning, robust support systems, and access to acute care when needed. For residents of Florida, seeking help from licensed mental health professionals, support groups, and crisis intervention services is vital at every stage of recovery. Remember, recovery is a process, not a destination, and help is available.

If you or someone you love is experiencing a mental health crisis, please know that immediate help is available. In moments of overwhelming anxiety, severe depression, addiction, or thoughts of self-harm, you don't have to face this alone. North Port Behavioral Health specializes in urgent psychiatric care and medical detoxification, offering a safe environment and expert support when every second counts. Reach out at (941) 613-5311 or walk in any time, night or day. Your mental well-being matters and hope is here.

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# HEALING AT THE INTERSECTION OF MIND, BODY & ROOT CAUSE:

## A Deep Dive Into Mind Body Medicine of Florida

In the heart of Sarasota sits a wellness center that refuses to treat patients like a series of symptoms, and instead invites them into a journey of transformation. At 2805 Fruitville Road, Suite 250, the team at Mind Body Medicine of Florida stands as a beacon of integrative care—where functional medicine, IV therapy, contrast therapy, yoga, and root-cause detox protocols come together under one roof.



Under the leadership of **Mark Sylvester, MD**—whose own story of illness and recovery led him to challenge the conventional model of medicine—this practice champions a philosophy of whole-person healing. “We don’t just address the symptom; we uncover the cause,” the website declares. For patients grappling with unexplained fatigue, brainfog, hormone imbalances or simply a desire to live more vibrantly, this is a place of possibilities.

### Tailored protocols, not templates

At Mind Body Medicine of Florida, no two journeys look the same. The intake process involves deep dives into labs, lifestyle, environment, trauma, and nutritional status. From there, a bespoke plan might include integrative diagnostics, heavy-metal or biotoxin screening, IV nutrient infusions, cold-plunge/infrared sauna contrast, yoga or mindfulness classes in the Roots Collective, neurofeedback, and much more.



For example, the Vesta Chelation Method—a program founded by Dr. Sylvester himself—targets heavy metal and mold biotoxin burden, spanning the entire US in its online scope. It uses advanced testing (such as hair-mineral analysis and myco-toxin panels) and personalized protocols designed around five “pillars” of cellular healing: detoxification, metabolic support, gut restoration, brain/inflammation reduction and sustainable lifestyle mastery.

On another front, the InfuZen IV Lounge offers infusion therapies for hydration, recovery, nutrient optimization, detox and performance support—all administered in a relaxing environment.

### Philosophy meets practice

What sets this center apart is the seamless integration of mind, body and environment. Dr. Sylvester argues that conventional medicine often stops too soon—focusing on pills and procedures when the upstream causes remain unaddressed. At this clinic, the questions become: Are you exposed to toxins? Is your nervous system in “fight/flight” mode? Are you metabolically stuck? Are you sleeping well? Are your mindset and relationships supportive of your health?

Within a calm, spa-meets-clinic setting, patients might move from a contrast therapy session (infrared sauna followed by cold plunge) to a vitamin infusion lounge to a one-on-one neurofeedback session. The aim: restore resilience, awaken vitality and reconnect patients to the natural healing potential of their own bodies.

### Who comes here – and why it matters

The profile of patients is broad: someone with chronic Lyme or mold exposure seeking root-cause healing; an executive looking for IV support, hormone balance and nervous system reset; an athlete recovering from injury; a wellness-minded person wanting to age with grace. The common thread: a sense that the standard model hasn’t worked, and a desire for deeper answers. The center’s tagline speaks clearly: “We treat the whole person—not just your symptoms.”

### A word of perspective

While the integrative and root-cause model brings hope to many, it is worth noting that some of these therapies (such as chelation for non-acute exposures, or high-dose nutrient IVs) exist in a space where conventional medicine is still evolving. Patients should remain informed partners in their care, understand which parts are evidence-based and which are more pioneering, and always coordinate with their primary physician.

### In summary

If you’ve been searching for a healthcare experience that sees you, not just your lab results, and that weaves together cutting-edge diagnostics, lifestyle transformation, mind-body practices and environmental medicine—then Mind Body Medicine of Florida may be for you. For those ready to stop managing symptoms and start living from a place of rooted, holistic wellness, the path may just begin at 2805 Fruitville Road.



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2805 Fruitville Rd, Suite 250  
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# Transform Your New Year's Resolutions with EmSculpt Neo

By Dr. Michael Jonathan Clark

**A**s the calendar turns to a fresh year, millions of people set ambitious goals to transform their health, fitness, and overall well-being. Yet statistics show that most New Year's resolutions fail within the first few months, particularly those related to body transformation and fitness. This year can be different. Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology offers a revolutionary solution that can help you achieve your body goals without the usual struggle: EmSculpt Neo.

## Why Traditional Fitness Resolutions Fall Short

The path to achieving your ideal physique through traditional means requires unwavering dedication to countless hours at the gym, strict dietary restrictions, and often yields frustratingly slow results. Life's demands—work commitments, family responsibilities, and unexpected challenges—can quickly derail even the most determined individuals. Many people find themselves caught in a cycle of setting goals, experiencing initial motivation, then gradually losing momentum as visible results remain elusive.

This is where EmSculpt Neo changes the game entirely. This FDA-cleared treatment represents a paradigm shift in body contouring, offering results that would typically require months of intensive training and strict dieting, achieved instead through innovative technology.

## What Makes EmSculpt Neo Revolutionary

EmSculpt Neo is the first and only non-invasive body shaping procedure that simultaneously builds muscle and burns fat. Using a groundbreaking combination of radiofrequency heating and high-intensity focused electromagnetic energy (HIFEM), this treatment delivers something truly remarkable: an average of 30% reduction in subcutaneous fat and a 25% increase in muscle volume.

During a single 30-minute session, EmSculpt Neo induces approximately 20,000 supramaximal muscle contractions—something impossible to achieve through voluntary exercise. These intense contractions force your muscles to adapt and grow stronger while the radiofrequency energy heats fat cells to the point of destruction. Your body then naturally eliminates these damaged fat cells over the following weeks.

## Perfect for Your New Year's Transformation

What makes EmSculpt Neo particularly ideal for New Year's resolutions is its ability to target those stubborn areas that resist traditional diet and exercise. Whether you're focused on sculpting defined abs, lifting and toning your buttocks, strengthening your arms, or firming your thighs and calves, EmSculpt Neo can help you achieve visible results.

The treatment is especially beneficial for individuals who are already relatively fit but struggle with stubborn pockets of fat or want to enhance muscle definition. It's also excellent for those who have plateaued in their fitness journey and need an effective boost to reach their goals.

## The Island ENT Wellness Spa Difference

At Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology, your body transformation goals are supported by experienced professionals who understand that true wellness encompasses multiple dimensions of health. The practice combines medical expertise with aesthetic innovation, ensuring you receive safe, effective treatments in a comfortable, welcoming environment.

The team takes a personalized approach to each client, developing customized treatment plans based on your specific goals, body type, and desired outcomes. Most patients benefit from a series of four sessions scheduled over two weeks, though your provider will recommend the optimal treatment protocol for your unique needs.

## What to Expect from Your EmSculpt Neo Journey

One of the most appealing aspects of EmSculpt Neo is its convenience. There's no downtime, no anesthesia, and no recovery period required. You can literally schedule a session during your lunch break and return to work immediately afterward. Many patients describe the sensation as an intensive workout, feeling muscle contractions without the exhaustion.

Results begin appearing approximately two to four weeks after your final session, with continued improvement over the following months as your body builds muscle and eliminates fat cells. Patients report feeling stronger, looking more toned, and experiencing a significant confidence boost.

## Make This Year Different

This New Year, instead of setting yourself up for another cycle of ambitious resolutions followed by disappointment, consider a different approach. EmSculpt Neo at Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology can help you achieve measurable, visible results while complementing your existing healthy lifestyle efforts.

Your transformation doesn't require superhuman willpower or endless hours at the gym. It requires smart, strategic choices that work with your body's natural processes. Contact Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology today to schedule your consultation and discover how EmSculpt Neo can help you achieve the body confidence you've been seeking. This year, make your resolution a reality.

## About Dr. Michael Jonathan Clark

Dr. Clark has surgical skills that encompass much of the head and neck, and really enjoys a challenge. Dr. Clark loves cochlear implants and their ability to replace the function of the inner ear by directly stimulating the auditory nerve. There is just something special about watching the face of someone hear for the first time in a long time. He also performs ossicular chain reconstruction, which repairs the tiny bones in the middle ear. It's pretty amazing, really. He removes thyroids and parotid glands that have gone awry, or tonsils that won't stop getting infected. Dr. Clark offers balloon sinuplasty in office (or in the OR if needed) that is comfortable and heals within a few weeks, giving people a whole new way to breath easy. He also offers in office insertion of ear tubes, which he places with ease. Most importantly, Dr. Clark will explain any procedure he performs in detail and makes the patient feel confident and comfortable. He will also guide you through medical and lifestyle changes that may reduce your need for surgery. He really wants to find the best solutions for you and your family.



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# CANCEL THE SURGERY!

## HAVE THE BODY HEAL THE BODY INSTEAD

by Prof. William J. Cole, Jr., DO  
Double Board-Certified in PM&R Interventions & Regenerative Medicine

### "YOUR LIFE WITHOUT PAIN, DRUGS, OR SURGERY."

DEAR PATIENT, if you're reading this, you're likely tired—tired of "one more pill," "one more injection," or "one more surgery" that never quite gives you your life back. **THIS IS NOT YOUR FAULT.** You've been offered the tools others know. But if all someone holds is a hammer, **EVERYTHING LOOKS LIKE A NAIL.** I'm writing to tell you there's a different path—one that respects your biology and aims at what you want most: **QUALITY OF LIFE**

**(FYI: COMMUNITY GIVE-BACK: SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT TODAY AND RECEIVE A FREE WELLNESS GIFT AT YOUR FIRST VISIT.** Our way of saying, "WELCOME—LET'S GET YOU BACK TO LIFE." (One per patient; details at checkout.)

**WHAT I BELIEVE (AND WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU)**  
**THE MESSAGE:** Your Body Has an AMAZING ABILITY TO HEAL ITSELF!

**THE MISSION:** Provide PRECISION-GUIDED, DRUG-SPARING, SURGERY-AVOIDING proven solutions that TARGET ROOT CAUSES and RESTORE FUNCTION—so you can finally live again.

**THE MOVEMENT:** Across America, Patients are Telling their Doctors, "CANCEL THE SURGERY!" Instead, they choose to **HAVE THE BODY HEAL THE BODY®** with Dr. Cole, and with Great Success!

I trained for surgery for years until the catastrophic car crash that I survived. **I Know Pain** as a patient and doctor. But This Isn't About Me. **THIS IS ABOUT YOU—YOUR PROBLEMS, YOUR PAIN, YOUR FUNCTION, and YOUR FUTURE.** If drugs and surgery don't solve the problems, WHY REPEAT IT?

#### **ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:**

- \* How Many Surgeries Have You Already Had?
- \* How many surgeries are you willing to have before you say NO MORE?

- \* How Many of You Are Still in Pain After These Surgeries?
- \* How Would You Like to Avoid Surgery and Drugs?
- \* Do You Agree That "Nothing Can Heal the Body Better Than the Body"?

#### **Now, ASK THESE QUESTIONS TO YOUR DOCTOR:**

- \* **WHICH DRUG OR SURGERY "HEALS MY BODY BETTER THAN MY OWN BODY?"**
- \* Are You Familiar with REGENERATIVE Stem Cell Therapy Studies That Prove THEY WORK?
- \* Will You Hold My Surgery Until I Consult with Dr. Cole About Alternative Natural Treatments? Excuses, Misuse, And Abuse of Surgery for Patients **"Believe What the Doctor Tells Them..."**

I've met a patient with **21 SPINE SURGERIES**—7 cervical, 3 thoracic, 10 lumbar, 1 sacral—still in agony and being guided to "one more surgery", in Spite of Multiple Failed Surgeries before. Why not pursue a Custom Treatment Plan that is **DESIGNED & TARGETED** to YOU and YOUR NEEDS?

If we can **REGENERATE Our Brain, Joints, Muscles, Tendons, Spine/ Nerves, Lungs, and Systems, WHY NOT REBUILD Our Body? Why Not Use Our God Given Gift of Healing?**

**WHAT MAKES DR. COLE & HIS CREW DIFFERENT?**  
**WE DON'T TREAT PICTURES ON A SCREEN. WE CHAMPION TRANSFORMATIONS.** Here's how:

- \* **DEEP LISTENING & FULL INVESTIGATION:** We take the time to get to know you, your history, your problems, your concerns—including injuries, surgeries, trauma, flares, fears, goals—because Every Decision About Your Health Should Try to Make You Healthier... Not Just Make Money for the Treatment Center.



• **ROOT-CAUSE CLARITY:** HANDS-ON EXAM, TARGETED IMAGING, and APPROPRIATE LABS to identify true pain centers—joints, muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, fascia, and the neuro-immune system.

• **STRAIGHT TALK:** show you **WHAT'S WRONG, WHAT IT MEANS, and YOUR OPTIONS**—so YOU decide with confidence.

• **THE REBUILD YOUR BODY™ (EXCLUSIVE):** Tailored protocols that may feature **ULTRA-PRP™, ADVANCED CELLULAR BIOLOGICS, EXOSOMES, OZONE, ADVANCED IV IMMUNOBOOST, and NEUROLOGIC "REBUILD YOUR BRAIN™"**—are all designed to **DECREASE PAIN & INCREASE FUNCTION** while helping you **AVOID UNNECESSARY DRUGS AND SURGERY.**

• **IMAGE-GUIDED PRECISION:** Ultrasound/fluoroscopy guidance by a BOARD-CERTIFIED INTERVENTIONAL REGENERATIVE SPECIALIST—because PLACEMENT IS PARAMOUNT.

• **RE-TRAIN THE SYSTEM:** Protection periods, smart rehab, neuro-activation, and lifestyle upgrades to **LOCK IN** healing and produce better results and protect your gains.

• **MEASURE WHAT MATTERS:** FUNCTION, FREEDOM, AND JOY—because THAT'S THE POINT.

**BOOK TODAY AND RECEIVE YOUR FREE WELLNESS GIFT AT YOUR FIRST VISIT.** (Simple steps toward a different trajectory brings a Better Future You).

**WHO WE HELP**

- ARTHRITIS & CARTILAGE LOSS (knees, hips, shoulders, ankles, wrists, spine)
- TENDON & LIGAMENT INJURIES (rotator cuff, meniscus, ACL/PCL, plantar fascia)
- NERVE PAIN / RADICULOPATHY and FAILED SURGERY SYNDROME (We Specialize in Spine!)
- NECK, MID-BACK, LOW-BACK PAIN including facet and SI dysfunction (Even Failed Surgery Syndrome)
- POST-CONCUSSIVE / NEURO-INFLAMMATORY (issues affecting focus, sleep, and mood)
- ATHLETES & ACTIVE ADULTS who want to keep moving—without fear (Pickleball Anyone?)

No single therapy is for everyone. THAT'S WHY YOUR TREATMENT PLAN IS TAILORED TO YOU.

**REALITY CHECK (READ THIS TWICE)**

YOU CANNOT "PT AWAY" a torn tendon, advanced cartilage loss, scar tissue, or a compressed nerve. You also can't medicate your way toward Natural Biologic Healing that needs ACTIVATION, STIMULATION, AND DIRECTION TO HEAL. When we find THE ACTUAL SOURCE, we can TREAT WITH PURPOSE.

What is More Important Than "QUALITY OF LIFE" ...? NOTHING!

WALKING WITHOUT FEAR, SLEEPING THROUGH THE NIGHT, TRAVELING AGAIN, WORKING OUT, PICKING UP A GRANDCHILD—CONFIDENTLY! That's why we do this.

**ARE YOU SEEING THE RIGHT DOCTOR?**

(This is an Essential Question in Your Quest for Less Pain and Better Function)

- Did they LISTEN to your history, problem list, mechanism of injury, and the full story?
- Did you get more than a "5-minute visit" with HANDS-ON EXAM of the exact problem areas?
- Did they order the CORRECT LABS/IMAGING for your case, or just the same old tests?
- Did a BOARD-CERTIFIED PHYSICIAN evaluate you (not just an assistant)?
- Were you offered MULTIPLE TREATMENT OPTIONS—including ADVANCED REGENERATION?
- Did they explain RISKS, BENEFITS, AND ALTERNATIVES clearly of Surgery vs Others?
- Do they measure FUNCTION & QUALITY OF LIFE, not just "pain level today, and here's your drugs"?

If not, YOU'RE NOT IN THE RIGHT PRACTICE, as You Deserve Better Care, Consideration, and Quality.

**HOW TO START (COPY THESE)**

Walk in prepared and ask:

- WHICH DRUG OR SURGERY WORKS BETTER THAN GOD GIVEN ABILITY TO HEAL?
- HOW WILL YOU CORRECTLY DIAGNOSE MY UNDERLYING PROBLEMS?
- HOW WILL YOU TARGET THE TRUE PAIN GENERATORS—WITH GUIDANCE?
- PLEASE CANCEL MY ELECTIVE SURGERY WHILE I SEEK A "CLARITY CONSULT" WITH DR. COLE FOR ADVANCED REGENERATIVE OPTIONS.

Bring your prior chart, image reports, lists, labs, and op notes. We'll review what was missed and outline a CLEAR, STEPWISE PLAN to Get You Back in the Game of Life!

**WHAT PATIENTS REPORT**

- LESS PAIN, MORE FUNCTION
- BETTER SLEEP & MOOD
- CONFIDENCE TO LIVE LIFE AND BE ACTIVE—WITHOUT FEAR or PAIN
- REAL-LIFE WINNING STRATEGIES: walk, work out, fish, golf, dance, & play Pickleball again!

No Outcome Is Guaranteed, but SUPERIOR PROCEDURES, PRODUCTS, PRECISION, PATIENT-FIRST CARE ARE GUARANTEED EVERY TIME.

**CLINICS • CONTACT • CONSIDERATION**

- CLARITY • CUSTOM TREATMENTS

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William J. Cole Jr., DO, FAASCP  
Double Board Certified



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**REGULATORY & ETHICS NOTE (PLEASE READ)**

EDUCATIONAL ONLY; NOT MEDICAL ADVICE. Care decisions must occur in a DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP after proper evaluation. Some regenerative therapies are NOT FDA-APPROVED FOR SPECIFIC ORTHOPEDIC INDICATIONS. We practice within STATE & FEDERAL GUIDELINES and disclose RISKS, BENEFITS, AND ALTERNATIVES. INDIVIDUAL RESULTS VARY.

**\*FLORIDA IS A STEM CELL APPROVED STATE: Only for Those Physicians Who Qualify with Strict Regulations and Certifications, such as Dr. Cole, Are Qualified to Perform Stem Cell Procedures.**

(ALL BIOLOGICS ARE ETHICALLY SOURCED IN THE U.S. & PROCESSED IN AN FDA APPROVED LAB WITH STRICT PROTOCOLS IN AN ISO-7 LAB)

**FINAL INVITATION:** Let's Begin Your Journey Toward the Health and Happiness That You Have Always Wanted... We are just a phone call away!

**WE CAN DO BETTER... AMERICANS DESERVE BETTER... YOU DESERVE BETTER.**  
Give Your Body a Chance To Heal... Naturally!

CALL 941-371-7171 TODAY TO SCHEDULE AND RECEIVE YOUR **FREE WELLNESS GIFT** AT YOUR FIRST VISIT. THIS IS YOUR MOMENT TO **TAKE BACK YOUR HEALTH**—AND BEGIN AGAIN.

# KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: THYROID DISEASE CAN GO UNDETECTED WITHOUT YEARLY EXAM BY PCP

By RICK WEBER

**A**n estimated 20 million Americans are affected by thyroid disease. But how many have it and don't know it?

Too many, according to Mark Monzone, Assistant Professor and Clinical Director in the Physician Assistant Program at Florida Gulf Coast University's Marieb College of Health & Human Services. The American Thyroid Association (ATA) has tried to quantify it, saying up to 60% of people with thyroid disease are unaware of their condition.

"I currently work in Urgent Care, and a large population of the patients do not have a Primary Care Provider (PCP) and have not had bloodwork performed in years," Monzone says. "It is these patients that will often go undiagnosed with thyroid function problems, and the importance of routine yearly medical workup by a PCP would be the most important point of awareness needed when it comes to thyroid function."

"This is why it is key to talk to your PCP about all of your symptoms, even those that you think are not important. The general population should understand the importance of checking your thyroid, because often treatment of thyroid disease is simple and can often improve a patient's quality of life."

Undiagnosed thyroid disease could put patients at risk for serious conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis and infertility.

To check your thyroid, your provider will likely touch or palpate your neck to ensure the gland is not enlarged. If any nodules, lumps, masses or an enlarged thyroid are felt, then that patient should get an ultrasound to evaluate the thyroid to determine if there are any concerning findings for possible thyroid cancer.

Typically, the first laboratory test ordered is for the thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH). This hormone, produced by the pituitary gland in your brain, signals an "on/off" mechanism of the thyroid gland. If this is abnormal, further studies may be necessary.

The thyroid gland is located in the anterior neck, directly midline. This gland release hormones that



help to regulate your body in many ways, but most importantly it regulates your metabolism, which determines how your body uses energy. The hormones released by the thyroid can affect your metabolism, heart rate, breathing, body temperature, digestion, mental activity, skin and bone health, fertility and rate of wound healing.

The thyroid gland is sometimes misunderstood because lab values can be misleading to a patient. A high TSH is an indicator of possible hypothyroidism (underactive or low-functioning thyroid) and a low TSH can be an indicator for possible hyperthyroidism (overactive or high-functioning thyroid).

"This confuses some patients, because they typically interpret a lab as 'high' to mean that you have too much or overactive amount—but with TSH, it is interpreted as the opposite," Monzone says.

**Hypothyroidism has the following common symptoms:** weight gain, fatigue, dry skin, depression, mental fog, constipation, feeling cold, hair loss and muscle aches. If the TSH is elevated, then a second blood test—a Free T4—is needed to confirm the level of function for the thyroid. If the thyroid is underactive, then the TSH is elevated and the Free T4 is decreased. Hypothyroidism is treated with synthetic thyroid hormone, levothyroxine, taken daily.

**Hyperthyroidism has the following common symptoms:** weight loss, palpitations/rapid heart rate, anxiety, tremors, feeling hot, diarrhea/frequent bowel movements, and sometimes bulging eyes.

Labs will show a TSH that is low or decreased, and another thyroid test known as T3 will be high/elevated. Free T4 can often be elevated as well but is less accurate with hyperthyroidism than T3 is.

Hyperthyroidism is treated with a combination of medications, but medical management of hyperthyroidism does not work consistently for many patients. The next two options for treatment:

- **Radioactive iodine.** This destroys thyroid cells, which in turn makes the thyroid inactive. There are side effects that should be discussed with an endocrinologist prior to deciding to undergo this treatment.

- **Surgery (thyroidectomy).** It is the best and most definitive option for treatment, if deemed appropriate for that specific patient based off their other health history.

Eighty percent of thyroid cancer is papillary thyroid carcinoma, which has a near-99% survival rate. The best treatment for thyroid cancer is removal of the thyroid via thyroidectomy.

"There are risks with thyroid surgery, but they are typically very low if the procedure is performed by a surgeon familiar with the surgery who performs them weekly," Monzone says. "As they say, 'The more you do something, the better you get.'

"After a thyroidectomy, you would no longer have a thyroid, so you would have no further thyroid hormones. This essentially would cause you to become very hypothyroid, and to avoid the hypothyroid symptoms and to balance/regulate your body; you would be placed on levothyroxine, which you would take each morning. If taken appropriately, it would replace all thyroid hormones for your body and make it seem like you had a perfectly functioning thyroid."

Thyroid problems are most likely to affect women or anyone over the age of 60. Women are five to eight times more likely than men to have thyroid problems and one woman in eight will develop a thyroid disorder during her lifetime, according to the ATA.

The risk increases for those with a family history of thyroid disorders or those with an autoimmune disease, especially pernicious anemia, Type 1 diabetes, Celiac disease, Addison's disease, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis or Sjogren's disease.

## FGCU

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10501 FGCU Boulevard South  
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# MEMORY CARE, PERSONALIZED FOR YOU

## Parkside's Gender-Specific Approach to Alzheimer's Treatment Sets Area Standard

**P**arkside Assisted Living and Memory Care has established itself as a pioneering force in dementia care by implementing a unique, gender-specific memory care model that stands alone in the area. This innovative approach recognizes that men and women with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia often experience different behavioral patterns, communication styles, and comfort levels, making gender-specific care environments potentially more therapeutic and calming.

### Understanding the Gender-Specific Model

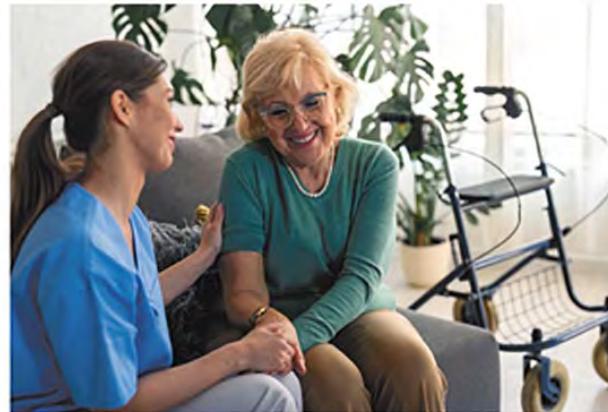
At Parkside's memory care cottage, male residents live on one dedicated floor while female residents occupy another, creating distinct living environments tailored to each gender's specific needs. This separation isn't about discrimination—it's about optimization. Research indicates that individuals with dementia often feel more comfortable and exhibit fewer behavioral challenges when surrounded by others who share similar life experiences and communication patterns.

The male-focused floor features activities and décor that resonate with traditional masculine interests and experiences. Common areas might showcase sports memorabilia, workshop-style activity spaces, and programming centered around topics like automobiles, military service, or professional trades. Meanwhile, the female-focused floor incorporates elements that often appeal to women of the residents' generation, such as kitchen-style gathering spaces, garden themes, and activities involving cooking, crafts, or family-centered discussions.

### The Science Behind Gender-Specific Care

Memory care professionals understand that Alzheimer's and Dementia affects men and women differently, both neurologically and behaviorally. Women with dementia often maintain social connections longer and may feel more comfortable in nurturing, relationship-focused environments. Men, particularly those from older generations, may feel more at ease in environments that honor traditional masculine roles and interests.

This gender-specific approach can reduce anxiety, agitation, and confusion that sometimes occur in mixed-gender settings. Often, men may inadvertently intimidate women by entering their apartments uninvited while searching for their own rooms.



When individuals with dementia feel more comfortable in their environment, they often experience improved sleep patterns, better appetite, reduced sundowning behaviors, fewer non-consensual sexual encounters, and enhanced overall quality of life.

### Comprehensive Memory Care Services

Beyond the unique living arrangement, Parkside provides comprehensive memory care services designed to support residents at every stage of their journey. The community employs specially trained care-partners who understand the complexities of dementia care and use evidence-based approaches to provide compassionate, dignified care.

Memory care programming includes cognitive stimulation activities, physical therapy, medication management, and behavioral support. Each Cottage maintains its own dining areas, activity spaces, and outdoor access, ensuring residents can enjoy structured routines while feeling secure in familiar surroundings.

The nursing team receives ongoing education in dementia care best practices, including techniques for managing challenging behaviors, communication strategies for different stages of cognitive decline, and methods for maintaining residents' dignity and independence as long as possible.

### Family-Centered Approach

Parkside recognizes that memory care extends beyond the individual to encompass entire families. The community provides extensive family education and support services, helping loved ones understand the progression of dementia and learn effective communication techniques. Regular family meetings ensure care plans remain aligned with each resident's changing needs and preferences.

### Setting the Standard for Innovation

As the only memory care community in the area to implement this gender-specific memory care model, Parkside demonstrates commitment to innovative, person-centered care. This approach challenges traditional memory care models and shows how communities can adapt their environments to better serve residents' unique needs.

The success of Parkside's model may inspire other communities to consider how gender-specific programming and environments could enhance their own memory care services. By prioritizing resident comfort and implementing evidence-based environmental modifications, Parkside has created a new standard for memory care excellence that puts individual dignity and comfort at the forefront of treatment.

For families seeking memory care options, Parkside's innovative approach represents a thoughtful alternative that recognizes the complex, individual nature of dementia care while providing the specialized support that residents and families deserve during this challenging journey.

To learn more about Parkside Assisted Living and Memory Care's groundbreaking gender-specific memory care program and how it might benefit your loved one, call 941-207-8609 today. Their experienced team is ready to discuss your family's specific needs and provide a personalized tour of their unique facilities.

### Our care is the difference.

Discover our compassionate care, personalized services, and commitment to enhancing the quality of life for seniors in a community you can call home.



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# BREAKING THROUGH CHRONIC PAIN: How Myofascial Release Offers Hope When All Else Fails

By Michael Via, MSPT

**F**or millions of people living with chronic pain, the journey to relief can feel endless. After exhausting traditional medical treatments, surgeries, medications, and conventional therapies, many find themselves trapped in a cycle of temporary fixes that never address the root cause of their suffering. However, there's a therapeutic approach that's offering new hope to those who have tried everything else: Myofascial Release.

## Understanding the Hidden Culprit

Myofascial Release targets the body's fascial system—a continuous web of connective tissue that surrounds and supports every muscle, bone, nerve, and organ in your body. When trauma, inflammation, or surgical procedures damage this system, they create restrictions that can generate crushing pressures of up to 2,000 pounds per square inch on pain-sensitive structures.

The frustrating reality is that these restrictions often remain invisible on standard diagnostic tests like X-rays, MRIs, CT scans, or electromyography studies, leaving patients feeling dismissed and their pain unexplained. This diagnostic blind spot contributes to the stress and frustration experienced by countless individuals who know something is wrong but can't get concrete answers from traditional medical testing.

Think of these fascial restrictions as an internal straightjacket, creating a web of tension that pulls and compresses throughout your body. Restrictions in one area create compensatory patterns that can manifest as pain and dysfunction in seemingly unrelated parts of the body. While traditional medicine focuses on masking pain symptoms with medications, and conventional physical therapy treats only the surface effects, Myofascial Release addresses the underlying structural cause of the problem.

## The Gentle Power of Sustained Pressure

The John F. Barnes' Myofascial Release Approach represents a paradigm shift in pain management that prioritizes safety, gentleness, and lasting effectiveness. This technique involves applying gentle, sustained pressure directly to fascial restrictions without oils, creams, or machinery. The direct skin contact enables therapists to accurately detect fascial restrictions and apply the appropriate amount of pressure needed for release.

The key lies in the "time element"—allowing the viscous properties of fascia to respond to low-load pressure applied slowly and consistently. During treatment, skilled therapists use their hands to detect restrictions and apply sustained pressure for extended periods, sometimes several minutes at a time. This approach leverages the piezoelectric phenomenon, where gentle, prolonged pressure allows the viscoelastic fascia to elongate and release naturally.

Unlike aggressive massage or forceful manipulation techniques, Myofascial Release works with the body's natural healing mechanisms rather than forcing change. Each treatment session is uniquely tailored to the individual, recognizing that every person's fascial restrictions and pain patterns are different.

## Why Traditional Approaches Fall Short

The reason many patients experience only temporary relief with conventional treatments becomes clear when you understand fascial restrictions. Traditional physical therapy, massage, and medical interventions often treat symptoms while leaving the underlying fascial straightjacket intact. It's like trying to fix a house's foundation problems by only painting the walls—the cosmetic improvements are temporary because the structural issue remains.

Myofascial Release takes a whole-body approach, recognizing that restrictions in one area can create compensatory patterns and pain throughout the entire system. This comprehensive perspective explains why patients who have traveled from around the world seeking this treatment often find the lasting relief that eluded them through other methods.

## A Beacon of Hope

The transformative power of Myofascial Release is consistently demonstrated in patient testimonials. Dawn Scheffer, who suffered from TMJ dysfunction, found success with this approach after tirelessly seeking treatment elsewhere without success. Peter Dorsa, himself a physical therapist with nearly three decades of experience who began studying Myofascial Release in 1994, describes the technique as "one of the most effective manual therapy treatments that exists."

These success stories reflect a broader pattern seen in patients who travel from around the world specifically seeking Myofascial Release treatment when traditional medicine, surgery, and conventional therapy have failed to provide lasting relief.

For those who have exhausted other options and feel trapped by chronic pain, Myofascial Release offers something precious: the possibility of authentic healing rather than temporary symptom management. By addressing the fascial system's restrictions at their source, this gentle yet powerful technique can break the cycle of chronic pain and restore the freedom of movement and quality of life that seemed lost forever.

If you're living with chronic pain and feeling hopeless about finding relief, Myofascial Release may be the comprehensive solution you've been searching for.

**Call Now and SAVE \$25 OFF Initial Evaluation!**

## About

**Michael Via, MSPT**, is a licensed Physical Therapist who brings over 29 years of comprehensive physical therapy experience to his practice, including 10 specialized years in pelvic floor rehabilitation. He graduated from the University of Miami in 1994 with his Masters of Science in Physical Therapy (MSPT) degree and has since become expert-level trained in John F. Barnes Myofascial Release, a distinction that reflects his deep commitment to this transformative treatment approach. His extensive training also includes Herman and Wallace pelvic floor assessment and treatment certification, as well as completion of Titleist Performance Institute Level 2 Medical, Level 2 Fitness, and Level 2 Junior Training programs. As the owner of Michael Via Therapy and Training Services since 2012, Mike has built his practice around a passion that drives his daily work: providing clients with the incredible feeling of chronic pain relief, particularly when other treatment avenues have previously failed them, making him a beacon of hope for those who have exhausted traditional therapeutic options.

**MICHAEL VIA**  
**THERAPY AND SERVICES, INC.**  
941-444-7688  
[michaelviatherapy.com](http://michaelviatherapy.com)  
5310 Clark Road, Suite 101  
Sarasota, FL 34233

# Diagnostic Imaging Saves Lives

**M**edical imaging technology has revolutionized health care over the past 30 years, allowing doctors to find disease earlier and improve patient outcomes. Whether you are a young child with cancer or a grandmother who just wants to make sure she's in good health, medical imaging helps you detect and diagnose disease at its earliest, most treatable stages and guides physicians and patients in determining the most appropriate and effective care.

Radiology Associates physicians are board certified radiologists with training in all aspects of diagnostic imaging, including CT, Mammography, MRI, Ultrasound, X-ray, and Nuclear Medicine. Additionally, each has advanced subspecialty training in one or more areas of medical imaging or interventional radiology that we believe provides the basis for providing the highest level of patient care.

Our goal is to provide high quality patient care in a comfortable environment, using the latest imaging and interventional technology and working in close collaboration with referring physicians.

Radiology Associates of Venice and Englewood is pleased to offer the following diagnostic imaging services:

#### **MRI Scan**

Magnetic resonance imaging, commonly known as MRI is a medical test that aids physicians in diagnosis and treating medical conditions. This is a non-invasive and typically painless test.

#### **Breast MRI**

Breast MRI uses Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) to look specifically at the breast. It is a non-invasive procedure that doctors can use to determine what the inside of the breast looks like without having to do surgery or flatten the breast (as in a mammogram).

#### **MRA**

Magnetic Resonance Angiography - Magnetic Resonance Angiography (MRA) uses the same MRI scanner to get its images, however it is a special type of MRI scan that looks at blood vessels and blood flow. MRA can help diagnose aneurysms, and also detect narrowing or blockages of blood vessels. If there is decreased or blocked flow leading to the brain this can be the cause of a stroke. Additionally, it can be an ideal aid to the physician for surgical planning. Some MRA's, as with MRI's, require a contrast medium.

#### **CT Scan**

CT Scan sometimes called CAT scanning is a painless and a non-invasive medical test that helps physicians diagnose and treat medical conditions.

#### **Ultrasound**

A process that uses high-frequency sound waves to produce pictures of the inside of the body. Because ultrasound images are captured in real time, they are able to show blood flowing through the blood vessels, as well as the movement of the body's organs and its structure.

#### **Nuclear Medicine**

Nuclear medicine is a specialized form of radiology. Patients are given a radioactive substance either by mouth or intravenously that collects in specific body organs. Then the gamma camera detects the energy being emitted from that substance and an image can then be captured.

#### **Digital X-Ray & Fluoroscopy**

An X-ray is a painless and quick test for the patient to endure. It involves exposing the part of the body that is being examined to a small dose of ionizing radiation to produce pictures of the inside of the body.

#### **3D Mammography**

3D mammography is a new technology in the fight against breast cancer that allows doctors to examine your breast tissue one layer at a time.

3D mammography uses high-powered computing to convert digital breast images into a stack of very thin layers or "slices" - building what is essentially a "3-dimensional mammogram".

#### **Bone Density DEXA**

Bone density scanning, also called dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DXA) or bone densitometry, is an enhanced form of x-ray technology that is used to measure bone loss.

#### **PET Scan**

Positron emission tomography, also called PET imaging or a PET scan, is a type of nuclear medicine imaging.

RAVE is a radiology practice that has been active for over thirty years. We currently consist of 8 board-certified radiologists, many of whom have postgraduate fellowships with subspecialty training. All of whom have years of full-time experience. Over 130 healthcare professionals are working with

us to provide the best possible radiologic services in Sarasota County. In addition to our personnel, we have some of the best radiologic imaging devices available. Superior visualization helps us make your diagnoses accurate and timely, preventing potentially dangerous delays in initiating your therapy. At RAVE, you can have confidence you're getting top-notch professional assistance in your diagnosis and care.



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# Defeat Gum Disease

There is a silent oral disease affecting more than 80% of adults. Chances are you either have had or are currently battling periodontal (gum) disease. Unfortunately, in many cases, the disease goes undetected until painful symptoms begin occurring. At which time the disease and any adverse conditions have already set in. Because there are no early signs of periodontal disease, it often goes untreated until the physical symptoms surface and by then the concern is treatment not prevention. It is extremely important for everyone to have regular dental check ups at the recommended six month interval. Without these check ups and proper oral care, periodontal disease can silently cause not only oral health problems but can also contribute to other major health concerns.

Periodontal disease, also known as gum disease, is the chronic infection of the soft tissue around the teeth caused by plaque producing bacteria. The gums hold the teeth in place. As the gums become infected, they loosen their hold on the teeth and pockets are formed. These pockets collect debris and cause more infection and bone loss to the tooth. Gum disease is infectious and contagious. It can spread from tooth to tooth in the mouth and from one person's mouth to another through saliva.

As with other diseases, prevention is key to good oral health. It is important for everyone to practice diligent, thorough, and proper oral care by scheduling check ups every six months. At which time, your dentist will be able to detect and treat any signs of periodontal disease before symptoms begin to show and the damage is done. As mentioned earlier, most people do not know they have periodontal disease until they begin suffering from any combination of the following signs:

- Chronic bad breath
- Red or swollen gums
- Bleeding gums especially after tooth brushing
- Tender or sore gums
- Loose or shifting teeth
- Receding gums
- Sensitive teeth



If you have been diagnosed with periodontal disease, there are various treatment plans your dentist may recommend depending on the severity of your case. The most important action is meticulous at home daily oral care. Teeth must be brushed twice or more times each day for at least two minutes and flossed at least once per day. Other treatments include oral rinses, periodontal cleanings, and sometimes surgery.

Traditional periodontal surgery involves cutting and suturing of the gums and recovery time can be long and painful. With the advancement of modern laser technology, there is an alternative. Joseph H. Farag, DMD offers a better alternative for patients battling periodontal disease. Dr. Farag offers patients laser-assisted new attachment procedure (LANAP™) which is a no-cut, no-sew procedure to treat mild to advanced periodontal disease. The advancements in laser surgery techniques, have made treating periodontal faster and less painful. LANAP™ is much less invasive than traditional surgery, allowing patients to return to work the next day if desired.

Even with the benefits of LANAP™ it is obviously best to practice good oral care. The most important preventative measure to avoid the insidious gum disease is to take excellent care of your teeth. Proper cleaning at least twice a day is imperative. The goal is to keep the bacteria that cause the plaque at very low levels.

If your gums are painful, red, or swollen don't ignore the signs; make an appointment today that may save your teeth and gums. Treating periodontal disease sooner is always better than later.

## Benefits of LANAP™

**EASY** - LANAP™ is about as EASY as erasing a blackboard - unlike older techniques, there is no cutting and no suturing of the gums.

**MINIMAL DISCOMFORT** - Both during and post procedure, the patient experiences very minimal discomfort with LANAP™ than with prior standard surgery techniques.

**SHORTER PROCEDURE TIME** - It takes less time to complete LANAP™ than traditional surgery. Typically it takes two 2-hour visits to the office and two follow up visits. Traditional surgery requires four sessions of about one hour each, with subsequent visits for suture removal and additional check-ups.

**LESS GUM LOSS** - LANAP™ minimizes the loss of gum tissue, traditional surgery often involves removing a significant amount of gum tissue. This tissue loss can lead to sensitive teeth since your roots are exposed. Also, if the treatment needs to be performed again in the future, you have not removed the bone and gums during the first LANAP™ treatment. Typically with LANAP™, any gum tissue shrinkage is actually due to reduced swelling of the area that was previously diseased and inflamed.

**SHORT RECOVERY** - Many patients fully recover from LANAP™ within 24 hours. In most cases, patients feel just fine post surgery and daily activities are not interrupted. On the other hand, recovery after traditional surgery can take up to 4 weeks during which patients can experience considerable pain and swelling.

**SAFE** - LANAP™ with the PerioLase is SAFE for patients with health concerns such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure or those taking medications such as Coumadin or Cyclosporine.

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# Hearing Better on the Phone: Technology's Transformative Solutions

By Dr. Noël Crosby, Au.D.

In today's fast-paced digital world, staying connected through phone communication is crucial.

For individuals with hearing challenges, technological advances have revolutionized how we listen and communicate, offering multiple innovative solutions to improve phone conversations.

## Bluetooth: The Wireless Hearing Companion

Bluetooth technology has become a game-changer for phone communication. Modern hearing aids and cochlear implants now come with built-in Bluetooth capabilities, allowing direct audio streaming from smartphones. This means clearer, more direct sound transmission directly into your hearing device, eliminating background noise and improving overall sound quality.

Users can connect their devices seamlessly, adjusting volume and settings directly from their smartphone. Many hearing aids now function like wireless headphones, providing crisp, personalized audio experiences during phone calls, making communication more accessible and comfortable.

## Caption Services: Reading Between the Lines

Caption services have dramatically transformed phone communication for those with hearing difficulties. Services like CapTel and CaptionCall provide real-time text translations of phone conversations, ensuring no word goes unheard.



CapTel phones display captions of everything said during a call, allowing users to read along while listening. CaptionCall offers similar technology, with free captioning phones for qualifying individuals. These services are particularly beneficial for those with moderate to significant hearing loss, providing a comprehensive communication solution.

## Florida Relay: State-Supported Communication Access

For Florida residents, the Florida Relay service offers specialized communication assistance. This state-provided service helps individuals with hearing or speech disabilities communicate effectively by providing various relay options. Trained operators help translate conversations between hearing and non-hearing participants, ensuring everyone can communicate comfortably.

## Innovative Caption Apps: Communication in Your Pocket

Smartphone technology has introduced numerous caption apps like InnoCaption, which uses advanced speech recognition to provide real-time captions. These apps work across multiple devices, offering flexibility and convenience. Users can choose from different captioning styles, making phone conversations more accessible than ever before.

## Choosing Your Solution

When selecting a phone communication solution, consider your specific hearing needs, budget, and technological comfort level. Consult with audiologists, explore different technologies, and don't hesitate to try multiple options to find your perfect communication companion.

Technology continues to break communication barriers, ensuring everyone can stay connected, regardless of hearing challenges.

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Noël Crosby  
Doctor of Audiology



Dr. Pamela Dorn  
Doctor of Audiology

AD



# NATURAL WEIGHT LOSS FOR THE NEW YEAR

## A ROOT-CAUSE APPROACH

By Dr. Angelina Pullen, DAcCHM, LAc, BS, Dipl. OM, LMT

**T**his New Year, millions of people resolve to lose weight and improve their health. While pharmaceutical solutions and GLP-1 medications dominate headlines, a growing number of individuals are discovering lasting success through natural, holistic approaches that address the underlying causes of weight gain rather than simply suppressing symptoms.

**Understanding the Root Causes of Weight Gain**  
Weight management challenges rarely stem from willpower alone. Acupuncture and Functional Medicine practitioners recognize that sustainable weight loss requires identifying and addressing root causes such as hormone imbalances, chronic inflammation, insulin resistance, thyroid dysfunction, stress induced cortisol elevation, and digestive disorders. Unlike conventional approach is that focus solely on calories in versus calories out, natural medicine examines the intricate web of factors affecting metabolism and body composition.

### The Ancient Wisdom of Acupuncture

Acupuncture, practiced for thousands of years in Traditional Chinese Medicine, offers a powerful tool for weight management without medications. This therapeutic approach works by stimulating specific points on the body to regulate appetite, enhance metabolism, reduce stress, and balance hormones naturally. Research suggests that acupuncture can influence leptin and ghrelin—the hormones responsible for hunger and satiety—helping patients feel satisfied with appropriate portions while reducing cravings for unhealthy foods.

Regular acupuncture treatments also address emotional eating by reducing stress and anxiety, two common triggers for overconsumption. By promoting relaxation and improving sleep quality, acupuncture creates the optimal internal environment for healthy weight management. Many patients report decreased appetite, improved digestion, and increased energy levels within just a few sessions.

**Herbal Medicine: Nature's Metabolic Support**  
Herbal Medicine is a natural alternative that can offer metabolic support by addressing various underlying factors that influence metabolism from a root cause perspective. Unlike synthetic pharmaceuticals, herbs work synergistically with a body's natural processes. Chinese herbal formulas are customized to each individual specific imbalances, whether addressing sluggish digestion, water retention, hormone imbalances or metabolic slowdown.



Certain herbs have demonstrated remarkable benefits for weight management. Although natural herbs and supplements have far less side effects than western pharmaceuticals, careful considerations must be monitored for potential interactions with medications and certain health conditions. When prescribed by a qualified Board Certified Herbal Medicine Physician, herbal medicine provides targeted support without the side effects associated with pharmaceutical interventions.

### The Functional Medicine Approach

Functional medicine takes a comprehensive view of weight management by evaluating levels for nutritional deficiencies, gut health, toxin exposure, and metabolic dysfunction. Practitioners utilize advance testing to identify hidden obstacles to weight loss, including food sensitivities, microbiome imbalances, or mitochondrial dysfunction.

This holistic approach often encompasses protocols that focus on anti-inflammatory nutrition, blood sugar stabilization, and gut healing. By restoring optimal digestive function and eliminating inflammatory triggers, the body naturally returns to its healthy weight. Functional medicine also addresses often overlooked factors like an adequate sleep, environmental toxins, and chronic stress that sabotage even the most dedicated weight loss efforts.

### Creating Lasting Transformation

The power of natural approaches lies in their sustainability. Rather than quick fixes that fail when discontinued, acupuncture and functional medicine approaches create lasting physiological changes. Patients develop healthier relationships with food, experience sustained energy throughout the day and achieve weight loss that maintains itself through improved metabolic function itself through improved metabolic function.

This New Year, consider investing in your long-term health through natural medicine. By addressing root causes rather than masking symptoms, you'll discover that sustainable weight management isn't about deprivation or medications—it's about restoring your body's innate balance and allowing optimal health to emerge naturally. The journey toward your healthiest weight begins with understanding and supporting your body's remarkable healing capacity.

### About Dr. Angelina Pullen, DAcCHM, LAc, BS, Dipl. OM, LMT

Dr. Pullen is a board-certified Doctor of Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine dedicated to holistic, patient-centered care. She earned both her Bachelor's Degree in Health Sciences and Master's Degree in Oriental Medicine from the East West College of Natural Medicine, followed by a Doctoral Degree in Acupuncture with a specialization in Chinese Herbal Medicine from the Pacific College of Health and Science.

Licensed by the State of Florida and Nationally Certified through the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM), Dr. Pullen also holds certification in Advanced Acupuncture Point Injection Therapy (APIT) and is a certified Functional Weight Loss Consultant.

With over 26 years of experience in the massage therapy field, Dr. Pullen brings a rich background in holistic health and wellness. Her practice integrates the wisdom of traditional Eastern Medicine with modern biomedical understanding, allowing her to effectively address a wide range of conditions—including chronic pain, stress-related disorders, digestive concerns, women's health issues, headaches, autoimmune and preventive wellness. Renowned for her compassionate and personalized approach, Dr. Pullen designs individualized treatment plans that may include acupuncture, herbal medicine, homeopathy, cupping, tui na (Oriental medical massage), and TCM nutrition. She is deeply committed to identifying and treating the root cause of illness rather than merely managing symptoms, empowering each patient to achieve lasting balance and well-being.

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# ADVANCE CHRONIC MOBILE WOUND CARE:

## How Amniotic Membrane Therapy Is Saving Lives in Southwest Florida

By Jean Evins Remy, FNP-BC

For the millions of Americans suffering from chronic wounds that refuse to heal after 30 days, hope arrives through advanced regenerative medicine. Jean Remy, FNP-BC, brings cutting-edge amniotic membrane therapy directly to patients throughout Southwest Florida offering a life-saving solution for diabetic ulcers, chronic pressure ulcers, venous leg ulcers, and other non-healing chronic wounds unresponsive to traditional treatments.

### The Critical Nature of Chronic Wound Care

Chronic wounds affect over 6.5 million patients annually in the United States, with approximately 5 million deaths resulting from complications including severe infections, sepsis, and gangrene. These non-healing wounds—defined as wounds that fail to progress through normal healing stages within 30 days—create devastating impacts on patients' quality of life while placing enormous strain on healthcare systems and families.

Common chronic wounds include diabetic foot ulcers, pressure ulcers (bedsores), venous stasis ulcers, arterial ulcers, surgical wounds with delayed healing, and traumatic wounds resistant to conventional therapy. Without proper treatment, these conditions can rapidly progress to life-threatening infections requiring amputation or resulting in death.

### Advanced Amniotic Membrane Technology

Amniotic membrane allografts represent a revolutionary approach to chronic wound healing. These bioactive tissue grafts, derived from human placental tissue, contain powerful growth factors, cytokines, and

structural proteins that stimulate cellular regeneration and reduce inflammation. Unlike traditional wound dressings that simply cover wounds, amniotic membranes actively promote healing at the cellular level.

The membranes provide a natural scaffold for new tissue growth while delivering essential nutrients directly to damaged areas. This advanced therapy has shown remarkable success rates in healing wounds that have remained open for months or even years, often preventing the need for amputation and dramatically improving patient outcomes.

### Concierge-Level Chronic Wound Care

Jean Remy, FNP-BC, provides personalized, concierge-level mobile wound care services that extend far beyond traditional clinical visits. Understanding that chronic wound patients often face mobility challenges, he offers comprehensive home visits throughout southwest Florida and in his downtown Naples location. He will also make visits to independent living facilities, assisted living communities.

His collaborative approach involves working directly with patients' primary physicians, caregivers, family members, and home health agencies to ensure seamless continuity of care. This coordinated treatment model ensures proper wound assessment, infection management, amniotic membrane application, and ongoing monitoring throughout the healing process.

### Flexible Treatment Options

Recognizing that chronic wounds require urgent attention regardless of the day or time, Jean Remy

maintains availability five days a week for wound treatments. His downtown Naples office provides a welcoming and safe clinical environment, while his mobile services bring advanced care directly to patients who cannot travel.

Services are available for Cigna and Medicare patients, making advanced amniotic membrane therapy accessible to those who need it most. This insurance coverage removes financial barriers that often prevent patients from accessing life-saving wound care treatments.

### Comprehensive Wound Assessment and Treatment

Each patient receives thorough wound evaluation including assessment of underlying conditions contributing to delayed healing such as diabetes, peripheral vascular disease, or autoimmune disorders. Treatment protocols address infection control, proper wound preparation, precise amniotic membrane application, and detailed aftercare instructions.

The goal extends beyond simply healing wounds—it's about restoring patients' independence, keeping them in their preferred living situations, and preventing the devastating complications that can result from untreated chronic wounds.

For patients and families struggling with chronic wounds that won't heal, Jean Remy's advanced amniotic membrane therapy offers new hope for recovery and improved quality of life. For more information call 239-231-9024 today!

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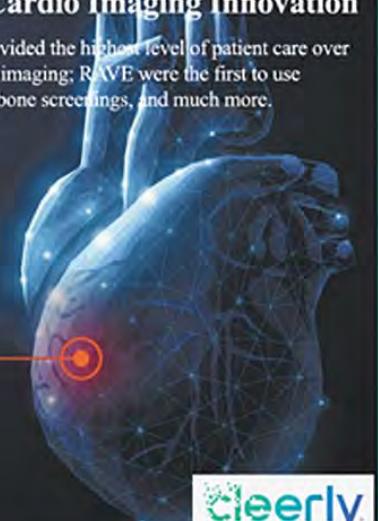
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# 2026 Open Enrollment is Here!

By Ulla-Undine Merritt (Dee) National Producer Number (NPN) 8853366

**Medicare Open Enrollment is January - March.** What can be changed at this time of the year is Medicare Part D Drug Plans and Medicare Advantage Plans. You can make one change from one Part C Advantage Plan to another Advantage Plan from the same company or another. You can change from one Advantage Plan to a stand-alone Part D Drug Plan, this is not advised unless you have a secondary to Original Medicare, which is a Medigap and also called a Medicare Supplement. I always do the Medicare Supplement Applications 1st to make sure that the person is approved. Medicare Supplement have medical underwriting and you may not qualify. There are certain Special Election Periods that may qualify you as a guaranteed issue. You can NOT change from one Part D drug Plan to another this time of year.

**Substantial changes to Medicare Part D,** stand-alone drug plans as well as Advantage Plans, you won't have to pay more than \$2,100 in out-of-pocket costs, which include deductibles, co-pays, and coinsurance. It is especially important to check your plans formulary as medication must be in formulary to be capped. 2026 RX deductibles will be capped at \$615.00. As a reminder the cost of the plan is not as important as the cost plus your medications, that is what you look at, the total cost. It is important to know what the medication is used for to determine if it is covered by the plan. Example Wycovy may be covered but to be covered it must be used for certain heart conditions or diabetes, Medicare does not cover weight loss medications at this time.

**Medicare Part C / Advantage Plans** annually Medicare Advantage Plans make changes. They must all include the same features as Original Medicare but not at the same cost share. They can have a premium, Medical and or Prescription deductible, copays and coinsurance can change. Extra Value such as Vision, Dental, Over the Counter, Part B Give Back, transportation, etc. can all change or be eliminated. Medicare sets the annual in-network out of pocket maximum; in 2025 it is \$9,250 and \$13,900 for in-network and out-of-network services combined. However, individual insurance plans may set lower limits. These limits apply to Part A and B services only, and do not apply to Part D cost share.



The old saying if it is not broken do not fix it DOES NOT apply to Medicare Advantage Plans. Every year I see many people that have not checked/compared their current plan to what is new. I have saved so many people hundreds and in many cases thousands of dollars. You should be working with a broker that represents many insurance companies. Make sure you check them out, especially if you are going to allow someone in your house. I recommend meeting in their office. For myself we represent most insurance companies in our area and to carry all their literature with me is almost impossible. We use three large screens so that our clients can clearly see and compare the differences between the plans. The minimum information we need is all your doctors, medications: names, milligrams, and dosage. We load your current plan and then compare it to all the other companies in your area. What companies have all your doctors, the price for your medication normally makes a significant difference. Then the Extra Value, what is most important to you. We do NOT CHARGE for our review and if warranted we will change your insurance plan for you. Ethics is most important and if you are on the best plan we will tell you, plus you can see for yourself.

As a reminder it is illegal for an insurance agent to contact you unless you give them permission. There are specific forms that you should sign, such as a Scope of Appointment which outlines what you want to talk about. This form should be signed at least 48 hours prior to your meeting or if you walk into their office, prior to speaking about Medicare.

Medicare Seminar's they are good for general information. A one-to-one appointment where you can dive into your doctors and medication is best, plus you can then compare other companies in one place.

When you turn 65 you are eligible for Medicare, once you have worked 40 quarters roughly 10 years there is no cost for Medicare Part "A". Part A covers Hospitals, Skilled Nursing, Home Health & Hospice. Medicare Part B you can choose to take at 65 or you can hold off if you are still working and have credible coverage. If you do not have group health insurance that is considered qualified, and then you want it you would have a late enrollment penalty for each month you did not have Part B & Part D, and that penalty will last for the rest of your life. Part B covers doctors, imaging, blood work, ambulance, durable medical equipment, etc. Part D is a Medicare Drug Plan and covers medications. During your initial enrollment period it is especially important to understand your options! Medicare Supplements/Medigap Plans are NOT guaranteed issue, you may need to medically qualify. You can purchase a Medigap Plan during your 1st 6 months on Medicare Part B without medical underwriting. There are a lot of things you need to know. Again, work with an agent you can trust! **Especially important:** when you move you need to know your options. Can you keep the same plan? Do you need to make a change and what does that look like?

Logical Insurance Solutions is a SWFL Insurance Broker that works with most of the insurance carriers in your area, we are happy to help you through the maze. We offer Free Medicare Seminars, Personal Appointments & Virtual appointments. Please e-mail [info@logicalinsurance.com](mailto:info@logicalinsurance.com) to register or call 239-362-0855 for dates.

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# Slowing the Pace of Your Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

**R**emember the old merry-go-rounds on the playground when you were a kid? You would spin in circles until you felt like you were going to fly off. That's how life can feel if you don't make some necessary changes.

You live a much faster lifestyle than your parents did. Your children will live an even faster lifestyle than you did. As we enter a new year, perhaps it is a good time to evaluate the pace of your life and make some necessary adjustments. The Psalmist tells us:

***2In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.***  
Psalm 127:2

If you are getting up early and staying up late but still don't feel like you can get everything done... you are probably trying to do too much.

Living at a hectic pace comes at a price. You end up feeling more stressed because you are trying to cram too many things into your day. You end up having no margin in your life. As the margins get tighter the stress goes higher.

You have to take time to recharge your batteries. Here's a lesson I learned years ago: You have just enough time to do the will of God. If you can't get everything done on your "to do" list, maybe there are things on the list you shouldn't be doing.

I want to share with you two simple strategies to help you slow down the pace of your life so that you can enjoy life.

The first strategy is to learn to be content. If you're serious about slowing down, you don't start with your schedule—you start with your heart.

The Apostle Paul said this about contentment. ***"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."***

Philippians 4:11-13

If you're going to slow down your life, you have to learn contentment. Paul also said this about contentment: ***'But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.'*** 1 Tim. 6:6-7

What he is saying in these passages is that we need to understand that life isn't about things.

Contentment means this: I don't need more in order to be happy.

I'm not waiting for *more* in order to be happy. I'm happy right now. I have dreams and I have goals but I don't need *more* in order to be happy. That's contentment.

Contentment will come easier when you realize two things: life is not a competition with other people and having *more* will not make you happier. This is not the message promoted by our culture, but it is true.

Jesus said it like this, ***"Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."*** Luke 12:15

If you find yourself making statements like this:

- My life is a rat race.
- I don't know how I'm going to get it all done.
- I am just so exhausted.
- I don't know how much more of this I can take.
- I just want to escape.

These phrases are all warning signs that you are on the road to burn out. You need to slow down the pace.

Perhaps as we begin this new year, taking an honest evaluation of your life and determine if some changes are necessary. Are you content in your life right now?

As the merry-go-round spins faster it is only a matter of time before you either get sick, or fall off. Or, better yet, just slow down, be content, and enjoy the ride.

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