

# Moving Forward

A newsletter for those in pain.  
December 2007



“I’m hurting. I must be weak.” **WRONG!**

Yes, you read correctly. Pain is not caused by lack of strength. Think about this: if being strong kept you from hurting wouldn’t all body builders and strong men be pain free? They are not, and that’s a fact.

But, it is also a fact that people often reduce their pain with a strengthening routine. So, what’s the deal?

The deal is that mechanical pain has nothing to do with your muscles (an adapting system) and everything to

do with your nervous system (a learning system).

Strengthening is carried out in a very graded and progressive manner for efficient adaptation. You move a little bit more with a little more force over time, never making huge jumps. This gradual forward motion allows the nervous system to learn confidence with more unprotected movement (freeing the muscles to generate better power). Strength increases ALONG

WITH a reduction in pain. It doesn’t cause it.

Is strength training the best way to reduce pain? Not usually. Many get little to no gain, or even get worse with such an approach. Did you think that physical therapy was just strengthening? Read below.



Putting it to practice

At Forward Motion

I like to tell my patients that they will progress through 3 stages.

## 1) Feel Better

Having less pain is an important first step. This is usually accomplished through gentle hands-on manual therapy.

## 2) Move Better

As you are feeling less pain and are in a less protective state, movement therapy is incorporated to improve your freedom of movement.

## 3) Move More

The last step is achieving an improved tolerance to activity. Being able to tolerate more activity, harder activities, more often. Conditioning of some form is often helpful at this point.

These 3 stages overlap and all 3 tend to improve together, but the focus of your therapy will tend to proceed in this order.

That’s how it’s done at Forward Motion Physical Therapy!

## Isn’t physical therapy just strengthening?

This misconception is common and scares away many in pain who need physical therapy. Squats would sound scary to me too if my back hurt!

Physical therapists are experts in treating movement

dysfunction. Strengthening may be one of many ways of addressing this (although maybe not the best for pain, as discussed above).

Your physical therapist should be able to help you hurt less, move better, and

move more. It is fair for you to expect this and question why if it is not happening. Most programs will include varying forms of manual therapy, movement therapy, and education.



“You shouldn’t have to take the mindset of a body builder to feel better and physical therapy shouldn’t feel like personal training. That’s what personal training is for.”

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