

# *7 STRATEGIES TO Less Back Pain*

Feel fast pain relief and  
recover more quickly, while  
preventing future flare-ups



A photograph of a person's back, showing a red glow on the lower back area, indicating pain. The person is wearing a green t-shirt and blue jeans. The word "Ouch!" is written in a large, brown, cursive font over the top part of the image.

# Ouch!

Dealing with a back pain flare-up feels like a debilitating, often depressing, experience for you to have to manage and recover from.

After all, aren't we all looking to have a better body experience, one free from these discouraging bouts of feeling less capable than what we know we can expect from ourselves?

Most people will experience some sort of back related discomfort at some point in their lives, and the primary predictor of recurring back pain is a history of previous back pain.

Sadly, many clinical guidelines for treating back pain fail to provide specific recommendations for care, leading to feeling trapped in a never-ending loop of discomfort.

# *Back pain is no small issue*

**Back pain is the leading cause of disability worldwide and a significant drain on resources of both time and money.**

This is why rehab strategies are essential.

Effective rehabilitation helps you understand your pain, return to meaningful activities sooner, improves overall physical function, and provides a plan for both short-term relief and long-term recovery.

As a veteran neuromuscular therapist with over 25 years of clinical experience, I've had the privilege of assisting thousands of individuals like yourself.

Rest assured, you have the ability to navigate through this bout of back pain and emerge stronger and more knowledgeable.





# *A Starting Point*

**In my clinical practice, I've seen how two individuals with similar back pain can have entirely different underlying causes.**

**Tailoring strategies and interventions to each person yields superior results in both the short and long term.**

Navigating the challenges of a back flare-up can feel overwhelming. It's essential to know how to proactively manage this situation and create a tailored plan.

Here are seven strategies to help you better manage and effectively deal with a bout of back pain flare-up. These are all common-sense approaches, and some of them may surprise you!

# Strategy #1: Be compassionate with yourself

When your back is not feeling and functioning at it's finest, meet yourself with grace and compassion.

When back pain flares up, maintaining the usual pace and rhythm of life can become incredibly challenging.

This disruption can lead to unfinished tasks and a subsequent flood of guilt and inadequacy.

Accept the reality of the situation and meet yourself with kindness in the moment.

It's not necessary to completely stop all physical activities when your back pain flares up, but you're likely moving a lot slower, and that's perfectly normal.

It's a powerful response from your body to prevent further injury.

Your nervous system is activating to keep you safe, so don't ignore it and try to power through. This can lead to increased strain and a longer, more difficult, recovery.



*Give yourself a Double Dose*



*If a task normally takes a certain amount of time, plan for it to take twice as long. This gives you the space to move mindfully and avoid further strain.*

## *Strategy #2: Meet your body where it's at*

During a back pain flare-up, muscles tighten up to provide extra stiffness and stability to your spine. This is especially true for the very small spinal muscles that traverse the spaces between vertebrae.

These muscles work overtime to protect your back from further insult, effectively bracing the area.

While this added stiffness can be uncomfortable, it's a natural protective response aimed at safeguarding your body.



- ✓ Avoid forcing your body into movements or positions it resists. Forcing your body where your nervous system doesn't want to go can be very provocative and often makes things feel much worse later on.
- ✓ Instead of pushing through, focus on gentle movements and activities your body can handle without strain or further stress. This approach respects your body's current state and supports a smoother, more effective recovery.



*Instinctively, you might feel a strong urge to massage, stretch, or crack the area feeling stiff and tight.*

*However, this can potentially lead to a longer, less effective recovery.*

## *Strategy #3: Find what's comfortable*

It's incredibly challenging to find a sense of comfort when your back pain flares up, making it difficult to move and even harder to find a comfortable resting position.

Life doesn't stop when pain and discomfort begin, so managing these situations can be tricky. This often leads to uncomfortable feelings of inadequacy and negative self-talk.

During the beginning phase of a new round of back discomfort, there's a huge opportunity to get creative and find what works for you. In the solution-focused therapy paradigm, we call these moments Glimmers.



*Glimmers might be as simple as discovering a new stretch that eases the pain, finding a comfortable position that provides relief, or incorporating a breathing exercise which helps calm the nervous system.*



*Glimmers are the small solutions and strategies helping you feel and function better.*



*Staying active is crucial in the recovery from back pain, but it must be adjusted appropriately.*

*Remaining stationary out of fear or avoidance of movement is counterproductive and can lead to further issues down the road.*





## *Strategy #4: Improve your sensory information*

During a flare-up, you can utilize powerful brain-based strategies to help the nervous system dial down and feel more comfortable in your daily tasks.

Better information in can decrease discomfort out.

The key is to improve your sensory information.

This is one of my favorite parts of being a neuromuscular therapist who's heavy on the neuro!

Your joints are loaded with receptors which communicate with your brain every minute of every day, even while you're sleeping. If your brain and body can communicate better, understanding where they are in space, your pain will decrease, and your movements will smooth out.

While your back may hurt, you can move other parts of your body that feel fine, and this will help your back feel better. We can also activate key areas in the brain designed for pain modulation.

*The eyes have it!*



*Out of the twelve nerves coming straight out of the brain, powering the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, four nerves are dedicated to the eyes, more than any other sensory system in your body.*

*That's some big brain real estate.*



## *Strategy #5: Get out of your head, into your body*

This strategy builds on a few of the initial back pain-busting techniques and comes into play as the acute discomfort begins to subside.

The nerdword for this neuromuscular concept is reflexive activation.

Reflexive activation is your nervous system's natural response that allows you to multi-task as you move through your daily environments.



Reflexive activation is an automatic and involuntary process that happens without much thought or effort, helping to keep you upright and safe as you go about your activities.

This remarkable function supports you in everything you do, from walking to reaching for objects, providing stability and protection.



*It might seem like a good idea to focus on stiffening up the hurting area, but this practice is not as effective as you might think. In fact, it can actually hinder your recovery. The key is to allow your body to move naturally, letting reflexive activation do its job.*

## *Strategy #6: To medicate, or not to medicate*



**Healing is an "inside job," with intricate processes designed to return the body to its optimal state. However, sometimes external interventions can be incredibly valuable. This approach helps set the stage for a better healing outcome, often in less time.**

Pain is a sign something is going on and needs attention, but it's also perceived as a threat to our survival. Although we no longer live in an era where predators are a constant danger, our brains haven't evolved beyond those ancient instincts. This mismatch can make dealing with pain—and the medications used to treat it—confusing and complicated.

Some people try to avoid discomfort at all costs, while others view medications and modern pharmaceuticals as a threat, refusing to even consider them when their body could legitimately benefit from some outside help. This perspective often stems from a distrust of medication due to concerns about side effects, dependency, or a belief in more natural approaches to healing.



*A crucial aspect of navigating the medication debate is to tune in to your own experience and assess how your back pain is impacting your life.*

***Ask yourself:*** *How debilitating is the pain you're currently experiencing?  
Is it interfering with your sleep, which is crucial for recovery?*

*Consider whether you can find more comfortable positions or activities that help ease some of the discomfort.*

*Reflect on how your daily routine is affected—are there adjustments you can make to alleviate pain without compromising your well-being?*

*By assessing these factors, you can better determine whether seeking medication or other interventions is necessary to support your healing process.*



## Strategy #7: Learn to play the long game

As a neuromuscular therapist, I believe this is where the real magic happens.

Everything in your body is interconnected. No single part operates independently, and no system deteriorates in isolation.

Each system relies on the others for optimal functioning, constantly communicating, evaluating, and scanning for potential threats every moment of every day.

The musculoskeletal system is the interface between your brilliantly complex inner world, and your experience with the outer world at large.



*I wholeheartedly believe you should better manage and "nurse" the aches and pains you feel daily while acknowledging that these very aches and pains are important messengers trying to get your attention.*



*Build a better experience with your body.*

You can't sacrifice recovery in the pursuit of relief.

You have a threshold, and when you are tense and hurting, you are operating above that threshold. Step 1 in the rehab process is to bring you back below the threshold, and step 2 is doing the work to change the threshold.

Life's stresses and messes are never going to go away, but we don't need to experience the dramatics of it all in our bodies as much as is so common these days.



- ✓ **The Nervous System:** The queen bee of bodily functions, orchestrating everything from movement to sensory perception.
- ✓ **The Endocrine System:** Your hormonal network, regulating processes such as metabolism, growth, and mood.
- ✓ **The Lymphatic System:** Your immune system's support network, crucial for maintaining fluid balance and defending against pathogens.

*The three communication systems in the body*



*By focusing on lifestyle factors that contribute to a regulated nervous system, balanced hormones, and a healthy immune system response, you can improve your inner threshold so stress is better managed and less overwhelming.*

# *I want to empower people with knowledge.*

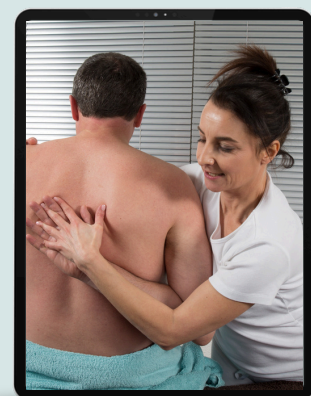
*I also want to ensure they receive the right care for their specific needs, leading to better and longer-lasting outcomes.*

In my clinical practice, I've seen how two individuals with similar back pain can have entirely different underlying causes. Tailoring strategies and interventions to each person yields superior results in both the short and long term.



I'm aware of the delicate balance between providing accessible information and ensuring advice is tailored to individual needs. In today's digital age, it's tempting to self-diagnose or treat based on online information. Generalized information can sometimes do more harm than good.

My goal is to provide personalized care addressing your unique needs and circumstances, ensuring you receive the best possible support on your journey to better health.



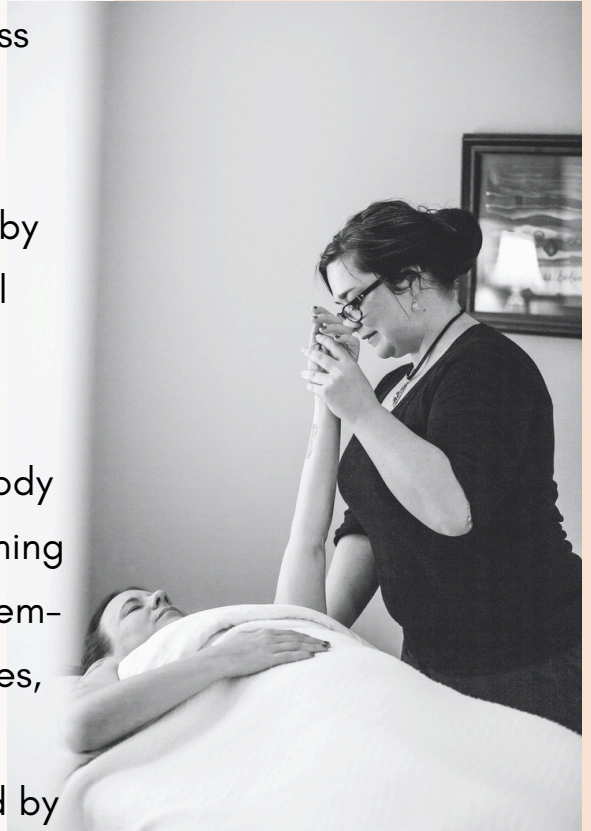
*LET'S WORK TOGETHER*

# About your Therapist

Nina Verhalen is a licensed massage therapist, certified corrective exercise specialist, and health coach with a focus on stress management. She is the founder of The Restorative Movement and Wellness Center. With over 25 years in the bodywork field, Nina has honed her expertise in neuromuscular therapy and orthopedic massage, supplemented by advanced studies in functional neurology, visceral manipulation, and cranial osteopathy.

Nina's approach is rooted in the belief that the body functions as an interconnected whole, where nothing operates in isolation. She employs a nervous-system-first methodology in treating musculoskeletal issues, aiming to not just alleviate pain but to enhance overall performance. Her practice is distinguished by a commitment to education, empowering clients with the skills and knowledge they need to take control of their health and well-being.

Nina's passion lies in helping people build better health and resilience, enabling them to live their best lives. Through her unique blend of manual therapy, movement exploration, and health coaching, she guides her clients toward lasting relief and improved recovery, fostering a sense of strength, confidence, and capability.



*Nina*





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Advanced Massage Therapeutics, LTD  
d/b/a The Restorative Movement & Wellness Center  
495 N. Riverside Dr. #207  
Gurnee, IL 60031

[www.ninaverhalen.com](http://www.ninaverhalen.com)



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