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TIP: TALK IT OFF

(Written with the assistance of Michelle Rose Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist)

Low back pain and sciatica, those pesky uninvited guests that seem to stick around for too long, can cause a chain of discomfort from your lower back down to your legs. Traditional therapies can help, but there's another surprising remedy: good, old-fashioned conversation.

Research shows that talking about your issues can lessen your low back pain and sciatica. By expressing your worries, you help yourself understand what's happening. These hidden feelings can often sneak into our bodies, causing physical symptoms like back pain and sciatica.

Chatting with someone you trust can act like a pressure release for stored emotions. This helps you understand your feelings better, gives you more



control over your situation, and can reduce stress and anxiety, which are known to make low back pain and sciatica worse.

Moreover, talking about your problems doesn't just help emotionally. **It can help you find real solutions to manage your pain.** For example, you might discover that work stress is increasing your pain, or an unhealthy relationship is a main cause. Knowing the root causes helps you to choose the best ways to cope. This might even help relieve the physical tension and pain associated with stress and anxiety.

Talking can also encourage a more positive attitude. With this optimistic view, you're better equipped to handle life's challenges, improving your well-being and reducing low back pain and sciatica.

There's a number of people you can talk to talking about what you are facing (or refusing to face). You could confide in a friend or family member, or seek help from a mental health professional. Support groups, where

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people with chronic pain can share their experiences, are also an excellent resource. This may help to reduce that all too common experience of feeling lonely, which researchers suspect increases chronic pain levels (Loeffler et al, 2021).

Discussing your issues can be a powerful tool in managing low back pain and sciatica. Taking the time to talk about your problems can guide you towards improved well-being and less frequent pain.

While some might resort to alcohol, drugs, or binge-watching TV to distract from their issues, these avoidance behaviors can do more harm than good. These can block good feelings, like joy and happiness. When you try to dodge feeling bad, you might accidentally stop yourself from feeling good too.

Avoiding discomfort doesn't make pain disappear; it may make it worse. Research has found that those who dodge negative emotions may develop a habit of expecting the worst (Egan et al, 2016; Hopthrow, 2017). This behavior can lead to feeling insecure and increases the likelihood of



assuming the worst in any situation. If you ignore the emotional side of pain, you might miss out on ways to feel better.

Studies show that our emotions can change how we experience pain. Confronting uncomfortable emotions related to our situation can improve how we manage feelings. Understanding and discussing our feelings can enhance our emotional health and our ability to cope with physical pain (Lumley et al, 2011).

Surprisingly, research shows that being aware of our emotions can help us to logically understand and manage our pain. We feel a variety of emotions, both good and bad. Understanding these feelings helps us

find better ways to manage pain. So, it's important to express, not ignore, our feelings.

Psychologist Lisa Feldman Barrett found that negative emotions might indicate we're not meeting certain needs (Barrett, 2012). Ignoring these feelings might mean we're also overlooking signals that something needs to change because our needs aren't being met. Interestingly, the brain areas responsible for feeling emotions also recognize our needs (Craig, 2010).

Often, talking about our painful emotions helps us realize that an unmet need can intensify physical pain. Negative feelings, especially when continually ignored, can appear as physical symptoms. That's why it's crucial to consider talking to someone about your feelings if you're dealing with pain. This could help identify a hidden need causing your emotional distress and worsening your physical back and/or sciatic pain.

Research

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