

The Mirror Trick

Charles Masarsky, DC, FICC

Author's note: Each patient education article in this column details research documented in *Somatovisceral Aspects of Chiropractic: An Evidence-Based Approach*, co-edited by Marion Todres-Masarsky, DC.

Estimate the percentage of your patients that take at least one long trip by car each year. Now add the percentage of your patients that commute at least one hour per day for work. Add to that the percentage of "stay at home" parents who do not actually stay at home, but are constantly on the run for an endless series of errands. For most of us, the combined percentage of all of the above constitutes a majority of our adult patients. We spend an enormous amount of time behind the wheel, and this has postural consequences.

The following patient education article presents a simple technique for reducing the spinal stress of driving. Please feel free to use it on your bulletin board, for lay lectures, and for your practice newsletter.

Between traveling, commuting, and running errands, many of us have practically made our cars second homes. While being able to drive is certainly a convenience, the stresses of the road can affect our posture in an adverse way. The task of avoiding some of our less responsible fellow motorists often causes us to tense up, pulling our head and neck tightly into the shoulders. During a long trip, we may find ourselves slumping, causing us to "lead with our chin" in a head-forward posture.

Either way, the result is a compression of the spine in general, and a reversal of the normal shock-absorbing curve of the neck in particular. These postural changes can lead to misalignments or restrictions (subluxations) of the spine, especially the cervical spine.

In addition to causing or aggravating backache, neck pain and headache, subluxations in the cervical spine may actually make driving more hazardous. Recent studies have demonstrated that reaction time slows down in the presence of cervical subluxation.^{1,2} The slower your reaction time, the less safe you are as a driver.

There is a simple way to reduce the spinal stress of driving. When you first get into the car, sit tall in the driver's seat. Now, adjust your rearview mirror. You have just installed a posture monitor in your car! If you shorten your spine by tensing or slumping, you will lose your rear view. That will be a reminder to gently lengthen your spine. This "mirror trick" is especially important during a long trip.

References

1. Kelly DD, Murphy BA, Backhouse DP. Use of a mental rotation reaction-time paradigm to measure the effects of upper cervical adjustments on cortical processing: a pilot study.

Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics 2000;23:246.

2. Todres-Masarsky M, Masarsky CS, Langhans E. The Somatovisceral Interface: Further Evidence. In: Masarsky CS, Todres-Masarsky M (editors). *Somatovisceral Aspects of Chiropractic: An Evidence-Based Approach*. Churchill Livingstone, New York, 2001.

Charles Masarsky, DC

Vienna, Virginia

neurofitness@aol.com

Author's note: In a previous column, I offered a free copy of my science fiction story, *Pavlov's Cat*. This story has a chiropractic message - perfect for patient "edutainment." Please feel free to request this story by contacting me at the e-mail address listed above.

SEPTEMBER 2005