

"Chiropractic Success Stories"

James W. Healey, DC

Chiropractic is a profession which offers tremendous rewards to those who practice it and those who use it as a service. The rewards can be measured in many ways and are as individual as the person who experiences them. There are rewards of lifestyle: what a practice provides a chiropractor on a monetary level; what chiropractic principles provide to the chiropractor in making choices about his daily life; and the chiropractor being surrounded in the community by people he's helped to understand and apply those same chiropractic principles. There are rewards of satisfaction: earning and enjoying the respect of patients and peers; knowing that lives change for the better because of what chiropractic does; or having a young patient decide to become a chiropractor because of the chiropractor's suggestion or model.

It can be reasonably said that these rewards are the result of successes and they are the effects of chiropractic or a chiropractor as a cause. The success stories are many and varied and all wonderful. They are not, however, all chiropractic successes. As great as chiropractic is (and I believe it is one of the most meaningful ways of life), it does not do everything. It's not supposed to. There are many times when I hear "chiropractic successes" and feel like asking, "What's chiropractic about it?" That doesn't mean the story is bad or a failure for chiropractic, it's just not a chiropractic story.

Let's examine a few hypothetical, though quite possible and maybe even common, examples:

Ann was in her third trimester of what her obstetrician told her was a medically normal pregnancy when she started having back pain. Because Ann didn't want to take "extra" drugs while she was pregnant, she decided to visit a chiropractor who advertised as a drugless back-pain specialist. As a result of the chiropractor's talk on drugs, Ann stopped taking the bladder sedatives prescribed for her urinary urgency and planned on attending the chiropractor's upcoming anti-vaccination talk, feeling more like she would not vaccinate her newborn. She seems happy and her chiropractor is pleased. Success? Chiropractic?

Charlie had arm pain for over a year and it started to interfere with his work and home life. He had been to all the medical specialists and tried all their prescriptions, but it was still bad and getting worse. He was almost ready to accept that surgery was his only remaining option, as the surgeons had said, when a co-worker suggested he visit a chiropractor. The chiropractor treated Charlie and was able to control his pain in a matter of weeks. Charlie never had the surgery and now feels much better. He can handle the flare-ups which come every four months or so with a few chiropractic visits and it's far less expensive than even one day in a hospital. Charlie is thrilled. Success? Chiropractic?

Bill had been injured while in the Navy years ago when he was thrown from a tower down to the lower deck in rough seas, landing on his back and hip on the hard steel deck. Ever since, he's had a "weak back" that would "go out" from time to time. Years later, Bill visited a chiropractor who explained that chiropractic was not a treatment for bad backs; what a subluxation was and how common they were, and that Bill, whether he had been injured or not, and everyone else who had a spine, is better off

without subluxation for as much of their lives as possible. It made sense to Bill who went home and brought his wife and young kid in, and they've been getting checked at least once a week for nearly 35 years and plan to do so until they die. Bill even has had his dog checked. Success? Chiropractic?

I believe that each of these stories is a success story in its own right. Obviously, the outcomes were positive for the people involved. Were they chiropractic stories?

Ann made decisions about the use of drugs prescribed or recommended for medical reasons. Ann was given information by a chiropractor, but not about chiropractic needs or concerns. This is a medical story, not a chiropractic story, though I believe medicine would not call it a success. It is more of an anti-drug success story.

Charlie sought help from a chiropractor for his medical needs. As many people do, Charlie understood and accepted chiropractic to be the "alternative" medical care and, as also often happens, the chiropractor accepted Charlie on that basis. There are those who wish to see chiropractic accepted as medicine or believe that, because of the Charlies of the world who come to chiropractors with medical expectations, chiropractors should fill the medical role. This story is a medical story involving the practice of medicine by a chiropractor. His being a chiropractor does not make what he did chiropractic any more than assisting in the birth of her baby would make obstetrics the practice of chiropractic.

Now Bill also went to the chiropractor with medical expectations. The difference is that Bill's chiropractor would not accept him on that basis and instead educated Bill about chiropractic expectations. Bill chose chiropractic -- not medicine practiced by a chiropractor.

Bill's story is unique among the examples given here. This is not a medical story about a chiropractor. It is a chiropractic success story. Bill's story is unique in another way as well. I don't know Ann or Charlie, I just made them up. But Bill I've known all my life. It's ironic that my greatest chiropractic success story hero isn't even a chiropractor, but his choice of chiropractic then has meant a lifetime free of subluxation for me. Bill's my father.

James W. Healey, D.C.
Princeton, New Jersey

SEPTEMBER 1991