

# Healing from a Car Crash

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How many times have you said, “Oh, it will never happen to me?” Then sure enough, that day shows up when you are rear-ended in a car accident. You wonder, “How could this have happened?” Not only are you left bruised and battered, but you are now emotionally scarred as well. The alarming part is that long after the bruises are healed and the bones have been repaired, you are still suffering from the trauma of the crash.

Automobile accidents occur millions of times each year. The Federal Highway Administration claims that there are 3.2 million people injured in automobile accidents each year (statistics from the year 2000). These are just the number of injuries within the United States.

Let’s examine what is actually happening while one is going through a car crash. First, there is impact trauma. Isaac Newton created a wonderful theory to explain this concept. This idea is called **Newton’s Third Law of Motion, or  $E=MV^2$** . A car traveling down the highway at 65 miles per hour will have more impact on whatever it hits than a car traveling at only 15 miles per hour. The faster the speed of the car and the heavier the car the more “trauma” will be created.

In essence, if you are in the car or hit by that car, your body will absorb the impact of the trauma, somewhat like a sponge. If the initial trauma does not kill you right away, you may experience a significant amount of damage to your body, both externally and internally. If you are lucky enough, a paramedic ambulance will rush you to an emergency room to help stabilize your body. If this is successful, you might then have the long road of healing ahead. The good news is that your body is capable of healing anything. The bad news is that most people do the wrong things in order to heal and will suffer long-term damage for many years to come.

Secondly, there is an emotional holding that usually accompanies the impact trauma. If you are in a car accident you might be worried about what is going to happen to you. If you were on your way to pick up your children at school you might be fearful that no one will know that you have been in a crash and your children will be left stranded alone at school. These emotions do not just go away by themselves.

In the aftermath of a car accident, it is important to release the trauma and the impact energy as quickly as possible. This will prevent the body from storing the trauma to resurface another day. If not corrected, long after the medical doctor who treated you has either died or retired, you could still be experiencing many of the consequences of the crash.

The following will detail some of the important steps in order to heal completely from an automobile accident.

## Physical Repair

After a traumatic impact, it is important to stabilize the body and mechanically evaluate all the body systems. Scientific testing with x-rays, blood tests, and palpation techniques are a wonderful way to do this. Medical specialists ensure that no bones are broken, blood vessels ruptured or other bodily intrusions are present that could jeopardize your life in the immediate or long-term. Western scientific mechanistic medicine does

this very well. If any bones are broken, the bones are set in plaster. If surgery is needed to repair life-threatening situations, it is done. Stabilize the body first and then allow it to heal later. Life-saving medications might also be important at this time.

## **Movement**

Unfortunately, that is all most people usually do after an automobile accident. The reality is that after the bones have healed and the bruises have gone away, there is still much to be done. The sooner you take action the better in this case. The longer you wait, the more adverse problems you will have later on.

When you are in a traumatic accident, either pain limits your movement or you are told by attending medical staff not to move. You might even have been immobilized with your body tied down and your neck in a “C” collar. While this strategy might help some people in the short-term, most people are harmed in the long-term.

An animal in nature will try to shake out an injury or gently move through it. When we stop moving after an automobile accident we are giving the muscles and the nervous system a message that it is not safe to move. This begins to establish a pattern that often plagues many people for years to come.

After it has been established that there are no life-threatening injuries, (like a broken neck), it is imperative to start moving the body and keep moving the body for days and weeks ahead. The last thing you want is for the memory pattern to be locked in place.

What types of movements should one participate in? The types of movements need to be slow and relaxed. Avoid fitness routines as they will be “war-like” and will most likely lock the memory in place for good. Try putting on some music and moving your body to the beat. Go for an easy walk where you move your arms, shoulders and hips. Lie on the floor and just stretch out a bit.

The secret here is to not let the memory get stuck in the tissues of the body. The last thing one heard is, “Don’t move.” Now you need to remind the nervous system that it is safe to move. Start slowly and build from there.

## **Bodywork**

The sooner you can receive a massage or bodywork after a car accident, the better. The energy of impact will settle into the body if you allow it. The body, like a sponge, absorbs the impact trauma. Just because you did not break any bones does not mean that you have not been “traumatized.” As energy settles into your body, it begins to harm the physical body. The kinetic energy of the movement gets transferred into one’s body.

Muscles often remain in a flexed position. You will often tense up in a self-protection posture when you hear brakes squealing behind you before impact. The impact trauma then gets lodged in your tissues as if you were to “catch” the energy. (A person who is intoxicated is less likely to suffer from the consequences of an automobile accident because his nervous system has been slowed down enough so that his muscles do not contract fast enough to catch the energy).

Here is an example of how this works. Mary was driving along the highway when a deer ran out in front of her. She slammed on the brakes but the road was wet and she

began to skid. She pressed her foot as hard as possible into the floorboard but the car just kept skidding along. She collided with a tree.

Mary was taken by ambulance to the hospital. She was in a lot of pain but she did not break any bones. After a careful examination, Mary was released from the hospital with some pain medication. With a few days of rest, Mary was back at her normal life. Surprisingly, six months later, Mary's right hip began to hurt. She could not figure out what she had done to cause this pain. Little did she realize, her right leg was still pressing down on the brake as hard as possible. Nobody ever told her that it was safe to let her leg go now. Only with several bodywork sessions was Mary able to understand and heal her remaining trauma in her leg.

If you do not remove the physical trauma, the energy will settle into the soft tissue. The common mistake that people make who follow the traditional route with Western scientific medicine is that they are told by their medical doctor or physical therapist that their muscles are weak and need to be strengthened. This is actually the opposite of what is true. The muscles have become shortened due to the crash and subsequently, the fascia begins to harden and stiffen. The last thing you would want to do is to build strength around an injury. You want to get the injury out before you even consider adding any strength work.

Body work and massage are wonderful tools to begin this process. While there are a host of styles and techniques that are effective, here are few suggestions.

### **Rolfing**

Rolfing is a type of structural bodywork that reshapes the fascia, designed to realign the physical body. Many people who have experienced the ten sessions report deeper senses of freedom and openings in their body. (**Rolf.org**)

### **Hellerwork**

Hellerwork is another type of hands-on bodywork that releases long-held trauma. Movement and emotional cues are also used to provide a holistic experience. (**Hellerwork.com**)

### **Myofascial Release**

Developed by John Barnes, Myofascial Release uses a sensitive and focused approach to release trauma patterns in the fascia tissues of the body. Using a sustained pressure, the soft tissue begins to unwind. (**Myofascialrelease.com**)

### **Chiropractic**

Chiropractic offers many tools to realign body systems that have been left out of balance. Chiropractic is much more than just adjusting the bones.

### **Intuitive Connective Tissue Bodywork**

Developed by Jon Burras, **Intuitive Connective Tissue Bodywork (ICTB)** is a hands-on approach to carving out layers of trauma that have settled into the body. The body is unwrapped like an onion whose skins are being peeled away. (**JonBurras.com**)

### **Swedish Massage**

The most popular of all massage styles, Swedish massage helps to move fresh blood to the muscles, stretch the limbs and loosen the joints. This is a great choice to begin healing the body from its trauma.

## **Energetic**

Trauma is energy stored within the soft tissues of the body. Energy that enters the body does not necessarily leave on its own. Skillful techniques are often required to remove the layers of energy that have been absorbed.

Imagine a sponge soaking up water. The sponge will not necessarily release this water on its own very readily. The human body experiencing a trauma will act like the sponge. The energy of impact will settle in and eventually create other disturbances. For instance, retired professional football players have a much greater incidence of Alzheimer's disease than the average person. (In a study commissioned by the NFL, retired professional football players reported a dementia-related diagnosis five times greater than the national average). Imagine all the impact to the head that a football player might have experienced throughout his career. There is a tremendous amount of energy that has been stored in the head with each blow. The fact that he is wearing a helmet does not completely protect him from the impacts.

Intervention is often required to free up this energy that has been stored in the muscles and connective tissue. There are many techniques that help facilitate this release of energy. One such technique is called "**Reiki**" (**Reiki.org**). The average reiki session will require the patient to lie down while fully clothed. The practitioner will gently guide her hands to areas of energy imbalance and with a soft touch begin to remove these blockages.

Another technique that works with energy is **cranial sacral therapy** (**Upledger.com**). A light and focused touch will help to release blocked fluid systems, like in the cranial sacral system. Deeply held connective tissue is released and energy shifts begin to take place.

The ancient practice of acupuncture is another method for releasing energy blocks. Using needles, meridian channels are balanced. These channels travel throughout the body. This is like connecting the dots. If your shoulder hurts, it may not be originating from your shoulder. Acupuncture will begin to rebalance these energy pathways.

No matter which technique you choose, it is important to release the stored energy of impact. This will help the body to heal even faster. The sooner you begin the release of this energy, the less likely it will settle into the body for the long haul.

## **Reeducation**

When certain areas of the body have been traumatized, they have not only been bruised and battered, they have imprinted a memory. This memory is of pain and of holding on tightly. The muscles have not received the message that the accident is over and it is safe to move again.

Look around at a shopping mall. Notice the many people who might be shuffling their feet or limping to one side. This will not be hard to spot once you draw your

awareness in that direction. In fact, nearly everyone in his or her lifetime has experienced some form of trauma, no matter how old he is. From the battles of sports to the wounds of war, falls from skateboards to the collisions of an auto crash, we have all had trauma. Nearly everyone is still carrying that trauma with him or her as well.

Reeducation occurs when you begin to remind the muscles and the nervous system that it is safe to move again. The longer the injury has been in place the more stubborn it might be to letting go. There are many therapeutic techniques that could help in this way. Here are a couple that you might explore.

### **Feldenkrais**

Gentle floor movements are facilitated that allow your nervous system to reprogram itself. Often areas of intense holding and limitations are able to free themselves and shift. (**Feldenkrais.com**)

### **Alexander**

The Alexander technique is another system of gentle and soft movements designed to shift how the nervous system releases the holding patterns in the muscles. (**Alexandertechnique.com**)

### **Continuum**

Continuum is more of a free-form movement exploration designed to treat the body as a liquid system. Movements are small and precise. The premise is that all the liquid mediums of the body have innate intelligence. (**Continuummovement.com**)

### **Trager Mentastics**

Short for “mental gymnastics,” Milton Trager designed a simple movement rehabilitation system that has deep and long-lasting results. Deep emotional and physical patterns are released. (**Trager.com**)

## **Emotions**

One of the most neglected aspects of healing from any trauma, including a car accident, is the emotional factor. Being in an accident most often leaves one in a state of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). While we often associate PTSD with veterans returning from war, any sudden jolt to the nervous system can leave one frozen in a state of shock

PTSD is essentially fear. When you hear the brakes squealing and brace for impact, your nervous system is trying to protect you. After the crash you might be in pain or in an altered state. Medical intervention is then administered that will systematically treat you like a machine. There is no place for feelings and release through this system.

After the danger has passed is when the emotional healing can begin. The easiest way to come out of PTSD is by crying. While many people have a great resistance to crying, this might be the best thing for someone. Crying is surrender. The opposite of fear is relaxation. After the tears, a profound sense of relaxation ensues. While you are crying you might remind yourself of the following. “**I survived the car accident. It is safe to let go now.**” Seldom does anyone ever tells you that it is safe to let go. Without this information your body might be holding on for years to come, creating an assortment of physical and mental ailments.

There are also many therapeutic tools that might be useful as well. These tools are listed below.

### **NET (Neuro-Emotional Technique)**

This therapeutic system is often utilized by holistic chiropractors and other alternative health practitioners. Muscle testing or applied kinesiology is used to relay the information to your brain that it is now safe to let go and relax. ([NETMindBody.com](http://NETMindBody.com))

### **EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique)**

Through EFT, tapping is used to stimulate the nervous system to let go and shift the current state of one's Fight or Flight Response. ([Emofree.com](http://Emofree.com))

### **EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing) or REMD (Rapid Eye Movement Desensitization)**

These similar techniques use a shifting of the eyes back and forth while focusing on a particular thought to change the nervous system. This technique is often found utilized by professional psychotherapists. ([Emdr-therapy.com](http://Emdr-therapy.com))

## **Conclusion**

The aftermath of a car accident is when the healing begins. Just because the bruises are gone and the bones are healed does not necessarily mean that you are better. The trauma of the crash may very well be alive within your body. The sooner you begin to address this, the fewer complications you will have to deal with later on. Even if the accident were many years ago, the complications might still ensue. The good news is that the body will always heal itself no matter how long ago the accident occurred, (if you place enough energy and effort in the right direction).

While safety features in cars have been greatly enhanced, automobile accidents continue to exist. While these safety features are more likely to save many that would have otherwise died without them, the trauma left behind continues to plaque most people. However, this is the greatest time to be alive as more and more wonderful tools are now available to bring you back to balance. It is never too late to begin releasing the many layers of trauma. Car accidents will continue to occur but you do not have to suffer forever.

## **Resources**

**Sept. 10, 2009, Study of Retired NFL Players, University of Michigan  
Institute for Social Research**

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