

"I healed my body with my mind!"

After being struck by lightning, Pana Columbus developed a severe limp, until a unique therapy helped her heal...simply by thinking herself well!

The sun shined brightly as Pana Columbus and a group of friends hiked up a mountain in Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park. But as they soaked in the wondrous beauty, dark clouds suddenly moved in and the skies opened up. As thunder rumbled, Pana's stomach clutched. She'd been having a terrible feeling that something bad was going to happen to her. *I have to get down from here*, she panicked. Just then, she heard a sharp, crackling sound...and then everything went black.

Hours later, when she woke up in the hospital, doctors told Pana, "You were struck by lightning...it hit your heart. It's a miracle you survived!"

Pana was indeed grateful to be alive. Still, she had third-degree burns zig-zagging down her torso, left hip and legs. Thankfully, they weren't deep enough to require skin grafts. Yet, months after her burns had healed and her pain subsided, Pana still struggled to walk. Her legs felt like dead weight. Even after months of physical therapy, Pana walked with a severe limp.

Will I ever be able to walk normally again? Pana despaired, unable to do many of the activities she once loved.

An incredible solution

Pana's friends understood her worry.

Just witnessing her being struck by lightning had left them with emotional scars they'd feared would never heal. But they'd found help with somatic experiencing (SE), a holistic therapy that uses a mind-body approach to overcome trauma and stress disorders.

SE is based on the theory that we subconsciously hold on

to remnants of trauma, which causes our body to react, resulting in an array of physical and emotional symptoms, from pain to anxiety. But by focusing the mind on how we feel, we can identify and release the trauma, ultimately healing the body.

Pana's friends believed her walking issues were a manifestation of the trauma she'd suffered, and hoping SE could help her, they had their practitioner, Marcus Kurek, reach out. Desperate, Pana agreed to give it a try. "When the body experiences trauma,



"I am amazed—it gave me my life back!" says Pana of somatic experiencing

muscles often can't relax, which is likely what's occurring in your legs and hip," Marcus explained during Pana's first session.

He then had Pana lie down on a massage table and close her eyes, but he didn't touch her. He simply instructed her to relax and focus her mind on her legs and how she felt.

"I don't feel anything in my legs," Pana told him, her frustration rising.

"That's okay. Just relax and explore what it feels like *not* to feel anything in your legs. It takes time for the mind to connect with the body," he assured her, as he continuously guided her focus back to how she felt.

After a few sessions, to Pana's surprise, her legs began to shake during her session. And something remarkable happened: Her limp became less pronounced. Her body, Marcus explained, was releasing the trauma, allowing her muscles to finally relax.

Pana underwent SE each week for six months, until finally...she was walking normally. And today, she's even hiking again! "The mind-body connection is amazing," says Pana. "I healed my body with my mind!" —Maureen Sangiorgio

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"This mind-body technique cures symptoms by releasing 'stuck' trauma"

—Lynn Bourbeau,
SE therapist

Release pain, anxiety and sadness...with this little-known therapy!



You don't have to be struck by lightning to experience trauma—a fender bender or a stressful day can have similar effects. And when the tension from trauma isn't released (through shaking, crying, etc.), it can get "stuck" in our

nervous system, resulting in fatigue, anxiety, headaches or blue moods, says Lynn Bourbeau, a somatic experiencing (SE) therapist (LynnTherapy.com). But SE helps the body release the effects of trauma, eliminating any symptoms, she says.

You also learn "resourcing" techniques—like listening to music or talking to a friend—that prevent your body from holding on to trauma in the first place. To try it yourself, find a therapist at TraumaHealing.org or search "somatic experiencing" online.

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