

Guide to Dr. John Sarno's 12 Daily Reminders

Dr. John Sarno developed the 12 Daily Reminders as part of his approach to treating chronic pain conditions for people suffering Tension Myositis Syndrome (TMS).

He believed that many cases of chronic pain were caused by repressed emotions and stress, rather than physical problems in the body. The 12 Daily Reminders were designed to help patients become aware of and address these underlying emotional issues.

The 12 Daily Reminders are meant for people who have either received a TMS diagnosis from a healthcare provider or come to the conclusion their pain may be due to psychological conditions after taking the necessary tests to exclude any serious structural damage or illness.

Promote healing and recovery

Dr. John Sarno wrote the 12 Daily Reminders in the first person because he wanted people to personalize and internalize the messages.

By writing in the first person, the reminders feel like a personal affirmation, encouraging you to take ownership of your own healing process.

The 12 Daily Reminders are meant to be repeated every day as a form of self-talk or positive affirmation. By using the first person, you can feel as though you are speaking directly to yourself, reinforcing the messages and making them more effective in promoting healing and recovery.

Dr. John Sarno's 12 Daily Reminders

1. The pain is due to TMS not to a structural abnormality.
2. The direct reason for the pain is mild oxygen deprivation.
3. TMS is a harmless condition caused by my repressed emotions.
4. The principal emotion is my repressed anger.
5. TMS exists only to distract my attention from the emotions.
6. Since my body is basically normal there is nothing to fear.
7. Therefore physical activity is not dangerous.
8. And I must resume all normal physical activity.
9. I won't be concerned or intimidated by the pain.
10. I will shift my attention from pain to the emotional issues.
11. I intend to be in control and not my subconscious mind.
12. I must think psychological at all times, not physical.

Dr. Sarno's most popular book, "Healing Back Pain: The Mind-Body Connection", features these reminders. The book was first published in 1991 and has become a consistent bestseller in the field of health and wellness.

These daily reminders are still incorporated into most TMS healing programs. Since these reminders were first published, health professionals have come up with additional techniques to help overcome the acute and chronic pain of TMS.

Daily Reminders 1 - The pain is due to TMS not to a structural abnormality

Daily Reminders 1 stresses the importance of recognizing that pain is only due to TMS. People with this condition often make the mistake of accepting the diagnosis while still believing their body is damaged or injured. Accepting the diagnosis requires knowing that intense and severe physical symptoms can have a psychological origin.

Daily Reminder 2 - The direct reason for the pain is mild oxygen deprivation

Daily Reminder 2 explains pain is felt because of mild oxygen deprivation in the area or not enough blood flow can cause severe pain without causing any damage. Chronic pain is a complex phenomenon that involves not just physical factors like tissue damage, but also psychological, social, and cultural factors. Pain can be influenced by emotional and cognitive factors like anxiety, depression, stress and beliefs about pain.

Daily Reminder 3 - TMS is a harmless condition caused by my repressed emotions

Daily Reminder 3 is vital in understanding TMS is harmless. A TMS diagnosis does not mean your body is permanently damaged, and this realization can be a game-changer for people dealing with chronic pain.

Daily Reminder 4 - The principal emotion is my repressed anger

Daily Reminder 4 highlights the power of repressed anger and its potential to cause harm, manifesting in TMS symptoms. TMS can also be triggered and fueled by other repressed emotions, such as fear, self-pity, helplessness, and resentment.

Daily Reminder 5 - TMS exists only to distract my attention from the emotions

Daily Reminder 5 states that TMS functions to unconsciously divert attention away from underlying emotional issues. A study published in the journal "Psychosomatic Medicine" in 2019 found that emotional suppression, a common coping mechanism for dealing with stress and difficult emotions, was associated with increased pain sensitivity.

Daily Reminder 6 - Since my body is basically normal there is nothing to fear

Daily Reminder 6 points out that since your body's physical condition is within a normal range, there is no cause for concern. Neuroplasticity shows the brain has the ability to change and adapt in response to experience. This means that chronic pain can be influenced by the way an individual thinks, feels, and behaves.

Daily Reminder 7 - Therefore physical activity is not dangerous

Daily Reminder 7 supposes that since your body is basically normal, physical activity is not dangerous. Studies show that exercise can help to reduce inflammation, improve circulation, and release endorphins, which are your body's natural painkillers. Exercise can also help to improve mood and reduce stress, and alleviate chronic pain.

Daily Reminder 8 - And I must resume all normal physical activity

Daily Reminder 8 calls on you to resume all your regular physical activity, including exercise, work, and leisure activities. By resuming these activities, you're able to refocus your attention away from the pain and toward activities you enjoy.

Daily Reminder 9 - I won't be concerned or intimidated by the pain

Daily Reminder 9 tells you not to be apprehensive or intimidated by the pain. Several medical studies have investigated the relationship between pain and psychological factors such as fear, anxiety, and catastrophizing or exaggerating the negative consequences of pain.

Daily Reminder 10 - I will shift my attention from pain to the emotional issues

Daily Reminder 10 says to shift your focus from the physical pain to the psychological triggers. Addressing psychological factors such as anxiety, depression, and pain-related fear was effective in reducing pain severity and disability in people with chronic back pain.

Daily Reminder 11 - I intend to be in control and not my subconscious mind

Daily Reminder 11 aims for you to maintain control and not be at the mercy of your subconscious. A study published in the "Journal of Pain" in 2012 found a self-management program for chronic pain that included components aimed at enhancing self-efficacy was effective in improving pain intensity, and pain interference.

Daily Reminder 12 - I must think psychological at all times, not physical

Daily Reminder 12 wants you to concentrate on remaining psychologically aware rather than physically motivated. Addressing psychological factors in pain management can involve techniques such as structured writing, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, and relaxation techniques. These approaches can help you identify and modify negative thought patterns and behaviors to dissipate pain.

Overcome your pain

Dr. John Sarno's 12 Daily Reminders are a valuable resource for anyone suffering from Tension Myositis Syndrome (TMS).

These reminders provide a practical summary of the Dr. Sarno method and offer insights into how to manage and mitigate acute and chronic pain.