Everything is connected.

There is not break in the continuity of living matter. Your back is not separate from your neck. Your hand is not separate from your foot. What happens in one area impacts another.

So why is it that when our back hurts we blame the back? Maybe, just maybe the back is not the problem. Most often it’s not!

One of my favorite quotes that I use all the time when teaching is by Ida Rolf, ‘Where you think it is, it ain’t.’ How perfect! Sounds a lot like Stop Chasing Pain doesn’t it? Treat pain, but don’t get caught up chasing it.
Have you been diagnosed with back pain? Sadly, over 80% of the US population has the same diagnosis. But what caused it? You gotta look deeper into the body. How deep? Start with looking SOMEWHERE ELSE and we are gonna be doing just that by going after the neck with the Stop Chasing Pain RAIL Reset System.

**R = Release**  
**A = Activate**  
**I = Integrate**  
**L = Locomotion**

You may discover this system to be one of the most powerful and effective ways to help alleviate back pain. The RAIL Reset System is a simple 4-step process designed to improve communication and patterning of movement by tapping into the power of your nervous system.

**Release** the areas working too much. Activate the ones not working enough, Integrate them into a simple pattern. Locomotion with walking. You’re done. Simple.

To generate power you need mobility. To have mobility you need stability. Proximal stability feeds distal mobility. Instability signals the brain and nervous system to put the brakes on power output because it feels threatened. A lack of stability is threat to your nervous system. The brain is in control of the gas pedal and it controls how much juice it puts into a muscle. It will inhibit (neural down regulate) one muscle in a pattern and facilitate (neural up regulate) another in an attempt to gain stability. It robs Peter to pay Paul.

The brain is a lazy piece of meat and it does not like to work hard. It’s one goal is survival and energy conservation. It cheats and takes the easy way out every chance it gets. When dysfunctional movement patterns exist the brain will simply choose an easier alternate path to accomplishing a given task.

For example, if the **Deep Core Stabilizing** system of your body is unstable, your nervous system will simply recruit more superficial power amplifiers to take over. One of the most common relationships is inhibition (weakness) of the deep neck flexors, gluteus maximus and multifidi of the lower back to overuse and tightness in the neck extensors. Lack of stability in the anterior neck, lower back and pelvis causes a reflex compensation in the neck extensors to take over the job of the neck flexors. You see this in the everyday posture of today. Rounded shoulders, forward tilt of the pelvis and the head sitting far over the shoulders. and excessive tightness, tension and pain in the back of the neck and head. This altered movement pattern may lead to instability in the lower back and pelvis causing pain.

Let’s take a look at some of the structures in the Deep Core stabilizing system based on the work of Thomas Myers.
According to Myers, the Deep Core Line is the primary stabilizing system of the body. Dysfunction in this system leads to compensation patterns, energy leaks, decreased force production and power output. It's the master cylinder for your engine. Envision a car with an 8-cylinder engine only firing on 4 cylinders. It has the power capacity, but can't unleash it. Athletes often try to get more power out of an 8-cylinder engine rather than ensuring all 8 are firing first. We will focus on the deep neck flexors for this RAIL Reset. The deep neck flexors (Longus Colli and Capitis) flex, side bend, and rotate the head. They do a ton of stuff and are critical stabilizers of the head and neck. They are often inhibited and weak. The key is to activate the neck flexors after releasing areas of your body that have been prone to tightness and stiffness.
Release the neck extensors close to the back of the head and on the head. Massage by hand or use a lacrosse ball, tennis ball, myofascial release ball, foam roller, etc. Anything that releases tension in the neck. Spots are not difficult to find. If it hurts massage it. The neck extensors are also activation points for the gluteus maximus. You will often find weakness in the butt attributed to tightness in the upper neck.

Activate/Integrate the deep neck flexors, glute max, and multifidi with the following movement. See picture.

Lie face down. Legs are straight. Slowly squeeze your butt nice and tight. Make sure you keep breathing. Do not hold your breath. Breathing should be independent of movement. Tuck your chin as if you were trying to rest your forehead on the ground (do not let it rest). Relax your arms and legs taking care not to push them into the ground. Hold position for 10 seconds while squeezing the butt. Repeat two times. Do this two times a day for three days.

Locomotion stand up and walk.footer

You should feel activation of your anterior neck, lower back and butt. If there is an increase in pain during the movement STOP! That means you are not ready for this intervention. See your healthcare provider. This is not intended to replace medical advice by your physician or therapist)

Your body will steal stability from somewhere else in order to feel safe. It will rob you of strength in one pattern and give it to you in another. That’s called a compensation. Tap into the power of your nervous system to unleash power. Regress to progress. To become a badass you don’t always have to go stronger, harder, faster, and longer. Pull back on the throttle to expand your comfort zone in movement and your body will grant you the strength. Have fun and feel better!