

My name is Mandy and my story began 13 years ago. While working upstairs in a Bank one day I was in a rush to get documents downstairs to catch the courier and in my hurry, I caught the heel of my shoe on the top of the first concrete stair. What happened next was a tumble right from the top to the bottom down a flight of concrete stairs at the back of the building. When I landed at the bottom, the staff bikes that were leaning up against the wall, fell on top of my head and back. I was fairly stunned and after picking myself up after some minutes of lying there underneath a heap of bikes, I headed to the bathroom to clean up the blood. Though sore for quite a few days afterwards, I thought nothing more of it. A week or so later, I started to experience some strange symptoms. My head seemed cloudy, I started to drift off into daydreams - being unable to concentrate on my work, and I also started to experience severe headaches and eventually, bilateral migraines with vomiting and light and sound sensitivity. As well, I had problems with my ears, they were constantly ringing - similar to tinnitus. I started to develop irritable bowel problems and I had an 'unbalanced' feeling, I noticed one shoulder seemed lower than the other and my head would click every time I turned it. I would go to courses at the Bank and be unable to focus for more than minutes at a time, the constant fogginess in my head and the band-like feeling around my forehead was unbearable and it would have me in tears every night.

Fast-forward a few weeks and the problem became so bad, that I could no longer concentrate on my work at all, and I resigned from my Banking job. I went to countless medical professionals and had brain scans and neurological testing done, all of which came back clear. This only added to my confusion. One rehabilitation specialist took some brain scans and other tests and then proceeded to tell me it was literally "all in my head" so I was to take up a hobby, stop thinking about it, and basically stop being a hypochondriac - there was obviously nothing wrong with me that he could see. So he gave me 1,000 painkillers and sent me on my way. I tried virtually everyone in the medical profession including rheumatologists and several neurologists. I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia by one doctor, but I refused to believe that this was what the problem was. I knew nothing about chiropractic at that time. I did try osteopathy, but osteopaths were extremely harsh and brutal on my spine, and manipulated it to the point of making me feel like a ragdoll.

I started work at a Finance Company but the problem became so bad that after six months, I left there and decided less stressful work was the way to go, and so applied for a job doing basic clerical work in an Accounting Firm. Still, the problem persisted so I decided it was definitely not due to stress at the workplace!

By this time, I was on multitudes of medications and anti-depressants. I could not go out of the house without medications in my car, handbag and pockets just in case I needed them. I was also having regular liver and kidney blood tests due to the chemical strain my internal organs were being put under. I combined painkillers with anti-inflammatories and took Imigran (called Imitrex in the States) and other migraine and headache meds daily. I even injected Imigran into my legs on a regular basis. Strangers walking down the street would stop and ask me if I wanted them to pray for me. It seemed I projected an image of someone who had given up hope. I stopped communicating with friends and lived on my own, just barely existing through every day. I didn't want people around me, and preferred being alone as much as possible. My weight dropped to 43kg through no interest in eating and the constant head pain and drugs. I would go to bed each night praying that I wouldn't wake up in the morning, as I'd had enough of life. I was 23 years old.

At this point I was so miserable that one day, while walking down the street I purposely walked in front of a passing vehicle. Luckily for me, the car swerved and avoided me. The driver must have thought I was nuts. I wasn't even shocked, just numb that my plan to end it all hadn't worked.

It was around this time that I met my future husband. He had been a chiropractic patient for back problems, so he immediately sent me to his chiropractor, to see if he might help me. This chiropractor changed my life. What took the entire medical profession years to miss, it took a chiropractor one week to find and correct the nerve interference causing the problem in my case. What a difference. Over the years I began to depend heavily on chiropractors using various different techniques for quality of life. Regardless of the type of chiropractor there is not a profession in the world that I have a higher regard and respect for. In short, I owe them my life. Unfortunately for me though, even though these General Chiropractors could clear away my migraines, ear problems, headaches and fogginess, it was always short-term. They all told me I had such a severely unstable upper cervical spine, and none of them had come across a patient with such instability issues. X-rays were taken of my spine and studied by different chiropractors but a conclusion to the instability could not be established. I started to develop panic / anxiety attacks if I knew a migraine was coming, and would rush to the chiropractor, and sit there shaking uncontrollably in the waiting room.

Fast-forward again several years later, and I was married with a child, had done my Real Estate License and was working in Rural Real Estate with my husband. By this time I had been to 15 different chiropractors in total over approx 13 years, using all sorts of different treatments and techniques. I hadn't gone one week without being adjusted in all that time. I depended upon chiropractic like no-one else did and became a very well-known patient among the chiropractors in the areas I lived in! They were my life-line. If I had a headache or ear problems or a migraine, I'd go straight to the chiropractor. But my adjustments would not hold for more than three days, sometimes a week tops. The rest of my spine was not unstable, only the C0-C2 area. I knew this was an unstable area anyway, but mine was unbelievably unstable. I got to the point of joking to the CAs that I may as well take in my pillow and toothbrush to the adjusting room because I was pretty much always living at chiropractic centres.

So I started to do my own research on the upper cervical spine, and by chance I came across a small group within the Chiropractic Profession that specialised in my problem area! Specific Upper Cervical Doctors. Chiropractors specializing in THIS area was immediately like a magnet for me! I had to find out absolutely everything I could as I thought if anybody could, it was these Specific Upper Cervical Doctors that may be able to help me with why my upper cervical spine had been so unstable for so long. What followed was a quest for information, and through sources mainly from America, I was given UC websites, a DVD and other information which I read and watched over and over again. The more I read up about the upper cervical spine and these Specific Upper Cervical Doctors, the more I had to find one for myself in New Zealand. Easier said than done. Eventually, some awesome Upper Cervical Doctors and Advocates in the USA were able to supply me with the names of the very few UC Docs here in New Zealand. From this, I began to try and see why they were so hard to come by in this country. What I discovered, was a lot of the Specific Upper Cervical techniques were not even covered in the curriculum at the New Zealand College of Chiropractic. The Director of the Techniques Dept that used to teach Upper Cervical techniques had left, and techniques such as toggle recoil had been pretty much left out of the curriculum after that point. I was told that very few NZ chiropractic students took Specific Upper Cervical techniques seriously enough to incorporate them into their own chiropractic practices in New Zealand. I was on a mission by this time, and wrote to the NZ Chiropractic Board, the NZ Chiropractic Association and the NZ College of Chiropractic about this issue. I have yet to hear back from them.

Fortunately for me, after contacting the few Upper Cervical Doctors in Auckland (seven hours away from where I live) and telling them my whole life story, they asked me to definitely come and see them so they could do a thorough investigation of my upper cervical spine. I counted down the weeks and days, until just a few weeks ago when I finally was able to make it up to Auckland. What followed was amazing. The x-rays, and scans etc that these Upper Cervical Doctors did were very different and so much more specific and precise, and they were able to see - for want of a better word - that my Atlas and Axis were 'twisted' in a way that had not been picked up by other chiropractors, and it was definitely contributing to the C1-C2 instability and therefore me not being able to hold my adjustments. Rather than the usual quick adjustment to the side of the head, and then sending me home, these UC Docs concentrated on finding the reason behind the instability, looking closely at C1 and C2 and they worked on reducing muscle tension as well - Upper Cervical for the major atlas work I needed, and Network Spinal Analysis to keep things tidy and prevent my adjustment from not holding. Over the roughly two weeks of being in Auckland I had just one very precise Specific Upper Cervical toggle-recoil atlas adjustment lying on my side (first time I had ever laid on my side for an adjustment and it was such an extremely low-force adjustment, that I hardly felt a thing). Amazingly, this adjustment held for longer than any other adjustment to my upper cervical spine done by general chiropractors had in 13 years of treatment. Finally, I was on the complete right track. I had found a speciality group within the chiropractic profession that focused so precisely on my head/neck misalignment problem that I had endured for so long, and they were going to correct it properly and precisely for me, and it was working! I had one UC adjustment in the two weeks I was in Auckland and that was it. I did not have to have another one while up there. This has never happened before. Obviously I will need to go back for further assessment and maintenance treatment, and to work out a care plan so I can keep on the right track, but I am amazed at the progress so far. I have not had a headache or migraine since my trip to Auckland. I feel much more 'balanced' and my ears are not ringing.

Also, my head no longer 'clicks' every time I turn it. I have been able to reduce my medication and anti-depressants so my kidneys and liver can recover and I no longer seem to have irritable bowel problems. In conclusion, there is now a proper flow of communication between my brain, nervous system and body.

Chiropractic saved my life, but Specific Upper Cervical Doctors enhanced it so much more. And its getting my adjustments to hold that will lead to my regaining health after all. It's the upper cervical stability that I have been seeking for 13 years that I am finally getting! Thank God for Upper Cervical Doctors. I now know why entire practices in the US are built solely on this tool, and I hope over time that New Zealand also will have more of these UC practices as well.

Mandy