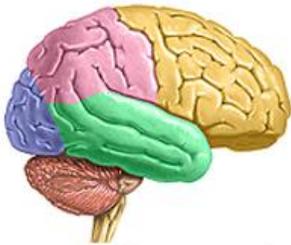




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RIO: Why Fixing Your Brain Can Fix Your Back

by Nancy Joeckel, B.S.

Many of my clients ask: "If my back (or whatever part) hurts, why are you working on my brain?" RIO (Reciprocal Inhibition Optimization) is a gentle hands-on method. It uses your body to show your brain how to use your muscles more effectively, which can allow chronic, painful areas to feel better surprisingly quickly.

In this article I'll explain what RIO is, why you would want to do it, and how it is performed. I'll also give you some examples of ways in which I have found it to be effective.

When your body hurts, it's often due to tight muscles. You can stretch them, heat them, ice them, massage them, take medications, or do other things to temporarily relax them. Usually, this has to be done over and over, and the problem is not permanently fixed. Each time you return to activity, the problem recurs.

RIO (Reciprocal Inhibition Optimization) works on a different principle. It shows your brain how to operate your muscles differently. Here's an easy way to see what I mean. If you have a phone or computer problem, your first thought might be to buy a new phone or laptop. That would be trying to fix or replace the hardware when what you really need to do is download a newer app or fix a glitch in the software. RIO gives your brain better software to run your muscles with. It does this by making use of a natural process called 'reciprocal inhibition.'

What is reciprocal inhibition? If you want to pick up a glass of water, not only does the biceps muscle need to contract in order to hold the glass up, but the opposite muscle, the triceps, has to relax. Otherwise, your arm won't move. That's an example of normal reciprocal inhibition (RI). Normal RI means your brain is using each muscle for the right job at the right time and in the right amount.

What would happen if - when you pick up that glass of water and the biceps contracts - instead of just the triceps relaxing, a muscle in your thigh also relaxes? Each time you pick up the glass of water, you would lose your balance. Before you even noticed it, your brain would tighten up other muscles in your thigh or hip to try to keep you steady. The only thing you might notice is that each time you pick something up, your hip goes into spasm. That's faulty RI at work.

We all develop faulty reciprocal inhibition over our lifetime. This can occur after an accident, from chronic overuse, after an illness, or even from a poorly fitting work station. Some faulty RI actually begins in childhood, as we learn to move and use our bodies. Unfortunately, once these patterns are established, our brain doesn't usually fix them without outside help.

With RIO, I can identify what mistakes the brain is making and show it how to correct them. The beauty of this technique is that it is just like fixing any type of software problem. Once it's fixed, it's fixed. Often times fairly dramatic results appear in very few sessions - and those results last permanently.

You may be wondering why you haven't heard of RIO if it's so effective. This is because it is a technique I have personally developed and used over the past 35 years, so in the grand scheme of things, very few people have been exposed to it. However, RIO is solidly based in science and in empirical (derived from experience) data. In developing this method, I have worked with prominent Stanford neurophysiologists and top robotic experts at the National Institute of Health, along with dozens of physicians, biomechanics specialists, and functional kinesiologists.

In addition, over the past 35 years I have applied this method to close to 5000 individuals with common, chronic musculoskeletal problems. I've collected data on the vast majority of these folks and found that with appropriately selected

clients, more than 70% of people find that their problems resolve. An additional 20-25% experience partial improvement after a short course of sessions.

With RIO, you keep your clothes on and usually lie down. I may ask you to sit or stand during parts of the session. I'll direct you to move your arms, legs, head, etc. in certain positions. You will find, to your surprise, that you can do some of the moves but not others. Then, while I have you move again, I gently press on certain spots in your muscles over your clothing. Immediately afterwards, you find that you can suddenly do the move you couldn't do earlier. That is the moment when the faulty reciprocal inhibition (RI) is corrected.

For example, I might have you hold your arm up and out while you lift your leg a certain way. When there is poor RI at work, you can't do it. Then, after I have triggered the brain to re-learn the move, you can readily perform it. That's the apparent magic of the brain's coordination mechanism - and that's what I call Reciprocal Inhibition Optimization (RIO).

I am a neuromuscular educator. RIO works because it shows the brain how to upgrade its own coordination software and learn more elegant pathways for running your muscles. Over the years, I have used RIO on people with shin splints, low back pain, golfer's shoulder, tennis elbow, neck pain, and many, many other common, chronic musculoskeletal problems.

While I wish to clearly state that I do not diagnose or treat specific conditions, I am saying that I do work with people who have been diagnosed with these conditions and that 90-95% have reported significant, lasting relief after experiencing RIO. (Please note: I am not a Physical Therapist, Massage Therapist or any other type of licensed practitioner, and I do not claim to diagnose or treat any medical conditions).

I have found that people with shin splints, for example, often have coordination problems involving the legs and the shoulders. Once addressed, these problems usually correct, and patients report relief in 1-2 sessions. People with tennis elbow often have problems with coordination of the arms and the thighs. These coordination issues often resolve in 2-4 sessions.

I remember working with a man in his 50's who came in because his low back had become tight and sore from working out. His trainer had carefully assessed his workout and found nothing wrong with it, but had suggested he work out less and only at very light levels.

After we worked, he wrote me, "I've been doing my usual exercises and am scoring much better than I did in the months before our sessions. And, I don't have any of that feeling of strain and pain anymore."

A 78-year-old client also comes to mind. She was in otherwise good health, but had gradually become unable to manage the stairs at her mountain cottage

due to weak and painful knees. She had had successful arthroscopic surgery, had completed physical therapy, and had done conscientious home-care for several years.

After we worked, she wrote, "Your work made such a difference in being able to enjoy our cottage! I am able to go up and down the stairs without effort and do a walk at 8,000 ft. that I've been unable to go on for a couple of years." She maintained this level of function and ease as I followed her up over the next five years.

As effective as RIO can be in a wide variety of situations, it is still only a coordination education method. I don't want you to be under the misconception that this is a miracle cure for every ache and pain!

There are 'hardware problems' where there has been damage to the brain, such as in neurological disorders like Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, ALS (Lou Gehrig's), post-polio syndrome, and stroke to name a few. Disorders like these change the actual structure of the brain and nervous system. I have found that people with these problems generally do not improve after RIO.

RIO is only one piece of the puzzle when your body is using muscles to try to protect underlying structural problems such as with ligament tears, severe degenerative arthritis (where joints are bone-on-bone), or severe spinal disc damage. In these situations, other care is also needed. And there are other cases where pure re-conditioning - simply strengthening muscles to their normal tone - is all that is needed.

However, in people who are appropriate for RIO, in the words of Rising Health's Dr. Daniel Newman, "I have found RIO to be the most effective way to rapidly enhance the resolution of a staggering majority of common musculoskeletal issues."

If you are interested in learning more about RIO go to riomethod.com. If you would like to schedule a consult to see if RIO is right for you, please call Rising Health Wellness Center (360-696-3800) to arrange for an initial session.