

**Episode: Better Posture With
Dr. Stephanie Owens-Burkhart**



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NATALIE BACON
JD, CFP, CERTIFIED LIFE COACH

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Welcome to the Design Your Dream Life podcast where it's all about designing your life on your terms and now your host, Natalie Bacon.

Hey friend. Welcome to the podcast. Today I have such a special treat for you. I am interviewing my physical therapist, Dr. Stephanie Owen's-Burkhart. The reason that I'm doing this is because my life has been flipped upside down by going to see Steph. She has helped me bring such awareness to things that I was doing in my everyday life that are harmful things like how to sit and how to stand.

Particularly if you are someone who works in front of a computer all day, or has a lot of screen time, this episode is going to blow your mind. For those of you who clench your teeth, or wake up with a sore neck, this episode is going to help you. We dive into how to sleep, how to sit, how to stand, what kind of posture you should have as you're living your life. Particularly for those of us on the computer, like me. I care a lot about this, and I wanted to bring her on because she will deliver the information to you so much better than I possibly could have.

She is a second generation doctor of physical therapy. She owns two practices in Chicago. She has a Bachelor of Science in neuroscience and behavioral biology. She is Pilates for rehabilitation certified, and I could go on and on. You can find her at RiverNorthPhysicalTherapy.com. If you want to learn more, she's so warm and loving and caring.

I'm telling you you're going to get some really great teachings from this episode. So without further ado, please enjoy my interview with Steph.

Hi, Stephanie. Thank you so much for being on the podcast. Hello. Thank you for having me. This is fabulous. So as you guys know, Stephanie is my physical therapist. She is located in Chicago and she has transformed my body and life in a very short time. So I wanted to bring her on so that she could give a little bit of her expertise.

So I wasn't just trying to teach you something. I really don't have the expert knowledge in. So we're going to go through some of the things that I found to be most valuable, particularly with everyone working from home right now and sitting and being in front of the computer for so many hours a day.

I know that's where a lot of my problems started and I went in for some shoulder pain and I'm also hyper mobile. And I just have learned so much about how to sleep, how to release tension, how to sit, how to stand these basic things that we're really not taught. So that's what we're going to talk about today. Stephanie, just start with telling everyone a little bit about you, because I'm sure my intro doesn't even touch on all of the amazing background that you have.

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Jeez. All right. So I'm a Doctor of physical therapy. I have a special interest in orthopedics and Pilates based rehab. So while I was in PT school, I got my full comprehensive Pilates for rehabilitation certification. And I also am into dry needling. I do cranial sacral therapy. I just try to learn as much as I can and have as many tools in my toolbox for, for my patients.

You have all the tools and your undergrad, right? What was that in? NeuroScience and behavioral biology from Emory in Atlanta. All of the things, all the things, All of the things I love it. Okay. So I just want to start off with talking about the problems that you see the most that you think are kind of preventable, that for someone listening, what should they be kind of thinking about and what would you say the main causes are for those types of problems?

Yeah. Um, the main thing I'm seeing right now is something called upper cross or upper cross syndrome. And basically I like to describe that as tech neck, especially with everyone at home in their home offices, not the best ergonomic setups. So basically what that means. It's the front of your neck gets very weak and then your chest muscles get tight just because we're always forward head.

You know, especially if you're on a laptop, the laptop's often lower than our eyesight level. So we're always looking down and forward when that happens, the front of our chest gets really tight, then the muscles in our back. So like by our shoulder blades, those get really weak and stretched out. So basically our posture just becomes that of looking down at a cell phone or laptop all day long.

That sounds terrible. What was the name? What's the science name of it again, It's just, it's called upper cross syndrome. And yeah, if you look that up, you might look at the diagram and be like, wow, that looks exactly like me. And I'm seeing not you most people who are working on a computer where does not meant to sit, you know, on a computer for 10 hours a day. And how many of you do that? It's just unbelievable.

Especially if you're doing a project or you're really into your work, you'll look at the clock and be like, Holy moly. I've been sitting here for six hours. And that really day after day, that does a toll on her body. And usually when we're in our twenties, we can get away with that. And then one day I know me and all my friends, you wake up in your thirties and suddenly everything hurts. So I'm, I'm seeing a lot of that right now.

That is actually what led me to Stephanie. My shoulder started hurting. I've just been sitting for decades and you guys know, I paid off my student loans earlier this year and I just decided to really start taking care of my body. Not that you should wait till you pay off your debt, but for

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some reason in my mind, that's what I did. And I've learned so much. So what you're kind of getting at is sitting. Can you talk a little bit about that? Like how should we sit when we're working? Like our legs, our neck, all of it, what should we be paying attention to?

Yeah. So first thing is the computer monitor. The screen needs to be at your eye level. So even if you have a laptop and you know, some times you think of that, you're like, well, I can't go out and get a whole new workstation, but you can modify what you have. So I like to put a couple textbooks underneath the laptop and then get an external keyboard, you know? Cause you don't want to be typing with your arms up by the monitor. So get an external keyboard. You know, you can get them in Amazon.

They're really inexpensive if you can in under mounted keyboard. So you know, those keyboards that are mounted underneath the desk, those are great for ergonomics. Also chairs, chairs. People ask me all the time, like, what's the best chair? What, where can I get it? They're just like pillows. There's no one size fits all. It's basically what you like and what fits your body. I'm five foot, one inch. So what's good for me is not going to be what's good for most people, but the key is making sure your feet are flat on the floor.

Also, you guys can't see this, but every thing she's saying I'm, I'm correcting as I like put my feet on the floor. As I sit up straight. Absolutely. And so many of us will like put a leg up and sit on our heel or we'll, we'll lean to one side that can cause things, uh, over time, like sciatica, uh, never have for the guys, never have a wallet or anything in your back pocket. I can't tell you how many cases of wallet induced siesta I see a year and I almost feel bad charging for it because I, I just say, Hey ya, do you have a wallet? Take it out. And then they're magically cured so.

Oh my mind is blown right now. We're just not taught this. There's so many things that I kind of want to touch back on. So I have an office where I work, but since we're still at home, Steve's also working from home. So I got this laptop stand. So we rotate. Sometimes I'll be out in the counter space. Sometimes he will.

So we got this laptop stand and it's, it was not expensive off Amazon, which is really great, but I'm still using the keyboard. So what you're saying is have the laptop higher. So my eyesight is looking straight forward and then type lower. Is that right? Absolutely

Because everyone do this, like think of lifting your arms up to where a keyboard that you know, on a laptop. If you put the laptop, I level you'd have to lift your arms. And then do you see how that, that brings your shoulders up into your ears? How many of us pretty much everyone, the opera traps, those neck muscles, those muscles that when someone walks by and squeezes them, you're like, Oh, well I'll give you an hour to stop.

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That is why those get so tight. Just because we're always lifting. Also, that's a huge stress area. Me personally, that's where I hold all my stress and tension. And I feel most people, especially people who work on a computer, that's going to be your case. So yes, exactly. Just so you get those shoulders out of your ears, make sure that the keyboard is lower.

So the keyboard is lower, the eyesight straight ahead. And then you said the legs. So when you say don't cross, I just want to make sure this is right. We can cross up the ankles, but we shouldn't cross over the knee or is it different?

Preferably no crossing at all feet flat on the floor and equal pressure through each foot. I know this is, but truthfully, if you want to know the best way to sit, even if you try to do this for, you know, start a couple of minutes and then it turns into a couple hours, it takes time to retrain habits, right? And if we've been living one way for years or decades, don't just expect that you're going to be able to correct yourself overnight.

So feet flat on the floor, and then your sits bones also known as your butt bones. They're actually called your ischial tuberosities. You want to be directly on those. So sometimes I even like reached down towards my booty, make sure I can feel them with my hands. And that's what you want to be directly at. If you have your feet flat on your floor, on the floor and you're up on your sits bones, the rest of the posture really follows suit because try that just sit up nice and tall feet flat on the floor, right on your sits bones. Can you lean forward? Really? Don't you feel like it's hard to slump forward.

It's absolutely hard. It's it's so different than what we're used to totally. Talk about. I just want to make sure I know again, why it's better to do this. I don't even really know what sciatica is. I'm sure you'll tell me in a second, but also you always pull my legs. Like they're a little bit uneven and my hips are always tight. Does uncrossing help with that?

Absolutely. So when you cross your legs, especially women, we it's just something we're taught at a young age. So it becomes second nature. When you're crossing your legs, one leg is doing something different than the other. So you'll end up getting imbalances. So like for you, you have one side of your, your back is a lot tighter than the other and it pulls your pelvis up. And when your pelvis gets pulled up, what does it pull along with it? Your leg. Wow.

And that can actually, when you're off balance in your body at all, be a precursor to injuries, right? You can be like, it's really good to be in balance. Absolutely. So, I mean, we've learned that from professional teams, that's one of the huge things that their physical therapists or trainers

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they're strength and conditioning specialists. What they do is they look at symmetries of their athletes.

They make sure the right is as similar to the left as it can be. And they've found that that has really cut down in injuries. And when they, you know, those contracts, when they're multiple millions of dollars, they want to keep those people as healthy as possible. So we've learned a lot from that, the sports realm.

I love this. This is so helpful. So I know I've been using some of these things and it's just as simple for me. I'm a, I used to be a big leg crosser. And just in the last several months, working with you, I've uncrossed my legs. And like you said, it's hard to retrain, isn't it, it's so hard. It's it's doable.

But right now it's not a habit. It's definitely conscious. I'm like, okay, don't cross my legs, but it's, it's getting easier. It's newer for my body. But now think of the compound effect of that. If I do this for the next 30, 50 years and I'm not crossing my legs.

Absolutely, absolutely. I always say what you do for one day is not that big of a deal. Right. But what you do day after day after day. And I always say this, we have to think about it and we have to plan to live to be a hundred. Right. And I would love if this body could last me, you know, up until the end, no one wants their last 10 years to be in pain or so anything you could do to prevent it on the front end. I think that's just something to really think about.

Right? Absolutely. Especially if we're doing things we don't even know are so harmful for us, which is happening with us, sitting down, working for 8 to 12 hours a day.

Absolutely. And even before that, think about it, we're in school, we're sat in a desk. So when do you start, like from six to, you know, with you and me, we with grad school at six to 26 in a desk all day long. And that's really not the most natural thing for a human body. So, wild.

So that kind of leads us into what I recently did. You guys, if you're following me on Instagram, know. I got a standing desk. I'm really excited about it. I have these little presets, I push a number and it goes to stand. But what I noticed is that I started kind of leaning on one hip and trying to make it easier to stand. So just talk a little bit about how we should be thinking about our bodies when we're standing like with our shoulders, with our hips, with our legs. Is it okay to stand all day? Should we just do a little bit at a time? Like what, what do you find is best?

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Yeah, that's a great question because standing desks are all the rage now and just like you, people are getting them for home and it's great, but standing all day long is the same as sitting all day long. I don't recommend it. I really liked to switch it up. So you could do a couple hours standing, a couple hours sitting and you just want to make sure, just like sitting feet flat on the floor, up on your sits bones standing needs to be a conscious effort as well.

So feet flat on the floor and you just think of not locking your knees out. A lot of people, both of us, we are hyper mobile. So it's easy just to lock those knees out. And we basically just hang out on our tendons and ligaments, not great for the longterm. So I always say, keep a secret bend in your knees, just a tiny little bend that only you know about, and then pulling the belly button away from the tee shirt.

And that is totally different than sucking it. Right? It's just that tiny bit like thinking of your belly button coming away from your shirt, if you do those two things, feet flat on the floor, knee, or three things, um, knees not locked out. And then that little bit of abdominal contraction or pulling the belly button in the rest will, will follow suit. You don't really have to worry about anything else.

This is so helpful because it's so interesting. I thought I was, you know, doing it all right, standing. And then what I noticed was I was leaning into one hip and that's not going to be helpful. So it's really being flat evenly on two feet on the floor.

Yes. And back to what we were talking about, asymmetries one side, being different than the other. Notice yourself when you do that, usually if you hang out on one side, that means you're hanging out on the side that is stronger and trying to get that, give that other side, which is often weaker, a little bit of a break. So those are the good way to, to say, huh? Hmm. I think I'm a little for me. I'm right side dominant. Most people are.

If you think about in your lower body, what leg would you kick a soccer ball with? So whenever I'm doing any corrective exercises, I always think about giving my left side a little, extra, little, extra love. So I'm nice and even.

I love that. That makes it really easy to know which side to focus on and just bring awareness to that. So you also mentioned that when you're really kind of tight and you're not in the best posture that you're going to have a lot of tension and that might be from stress. It might be from just habit. Talk about tension a little bit.

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So I'm someone who really didn't feel a lot of discomfort until I noticed my shoulder was hurting. But as you have worked on my back and know, I have a ton of tension in my shoulders and in my back. So how do we know if we have tension? What areas should we pay attention to and look for? Like, how can we release it ourselves is stretching the answer. What, what do you have to say about tension in general?

Yeah. So, I mean, this is, we're living in the world of tension right now, right? It's a little, it's be weird if you weren't a little bit tense right now. So something I love do, it looks a little weird, but it's great for working at home. I love to do, especially if I'm at the computer or if I had just been in one position for a long time is check into my attention.

Like check, check myself. It'd be well. Um, because oftentimes you'll just be grinding your teeth. Your shoulders will be up in your ears and you'll be like, what, what do you mean? I'm not tense. I'm fine. I am fine. Right. Whereas, so this is a good thing to do. So what I do, I curl my toes. I clenched my hands. I pull my shoulders up and in and I squeeze my eyes together really tight. So basically I'm just clenching everything in my body as tight as I can.

I hold it for about 10 seconds and then let everything go. So oftentimes you'll, and you'll feel less tension after that. So if you didn't feel like that before, that means you were probably holding things up. So that's just a really great way to kind of reset the system. You know, you tense everything up, you hold it and then let it all go. This is so great because what it is doing is it's increasing your awareness of it.

And that's what everything is. You know, everything is awareness. If you really can't fix something or work on something, if you're not aware that it is is a thing. So that's my favorite thing to do. Also, there's something it's been around since the sixties it's called Jacobson's Progressive Relaxation. You can go on YouTube and just literally put in Jacobson's Progressive Relaxation.

You find the voice that you find least annoying. That's that's what I tell everyone. And basically it's just a body scan. Most of the ones I like are like 10 to 15 minutes. I love to do that. You can do it in the middle of the day or any time that you're feeling discomfort. I like to do it at the end of the day. Cause that's just truthfully, the only time I have to do it, you know, but you listen and it goes through each part of your body where you will tense it up and then let it go. For people who've had just chronic issues of holding on to a lot of tension. It's a really great thing to do and it's easy, right? You just YouTube it make, everyone can make 10 to 15 minutes. And that's a great way to start. You know, it's, it's guided. You really don't have to think about it. I would love this. I had no idea it's been around forever too. So there's something to it. So good. Thank you.

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So the next thing I want to ask you about is knowing what to focus on. So I'm someone who's really flexible and hyper mobile. So I leaned into yoga and dance and the things I would quote unquote enjoy, but I realized I enjoyed them because they were easy for me, right.

So what I really needed was strength training. And I would just love for you to speak on bringing more awareness to ourselves and knowing what we need to focus on because not everyone needs to focus all the time on the same thing, getting more flexible or stretching. They might need to focus on strength training.

Absolutely. Yes. We're all different. And that's a really great point. Um, so many people come to me and you're like, well, I'm so flexible. I can wake up in the morning. I can forward fold Palm the floor. You know, I'm double jointed. I hear that all the time. And you know, that's not always the best thing for, so I would say you can like look at yourself by, do you lock out your elbows?

Like if you were to do a plank, do you often feel like your elbows go inside out when you stand, do you lock out your knees? If that's you then definitely working on mobility, controlled motion, strengthening the areas around the joints. That would be the best thing for you. Because for us really hyper mobile people, we just like to what I call hangout on our joints. Basically you lock the joints out and then all your body weight is just hanging out in the tendons, the cartilage and the ligaments.

And over time, that's really gonna wear that out. And then conversely, if you are a really, really tight person, you may be muscle bound. You may be really into exercising. So you have a lot of muscle, but minimal mobility. It might just be the way you were born. You know, you, you're one of those people who could never touch your toes. You're one of those people that hated it. The sit and reach in PE class. If that's you, you really should work on flexibility. You want to, I always tell people you want to be long and strong.

If the muscles can't go through their full range of motion, you're going to have problems down the line. So it's really important to identify. Do you need more flexibility? Do you need more stability and then work on that from there? Because that's the way to do it is. I mean, obviously I'm a little biased, but go see a professional go, you know, get an assessment. There's only so much you can do by Googling it yourself. You know?

So two things that I want to pick up on just really quickly, I found it so interesting. I was talking to my brother, you guys know he's a physician and he didn't even know that you could go to a PT without a referral. And so that's really the normal way, at least normal by societal terms or

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standards where we think, okay, you go after a surgery or something, but you guys know I'm from Ohio.

And one of my good friends, his wife is a PT and she saw the way I was moving. And she really guided me. She's also a doctor, a PT. And she said, you know, you really should go see a PT. And so that's where it came into my mind and my awareness. And then I just found you, well, I had my assistant do a lot of research and I was like, I need to go to the best. So I go to you now, but can you just talk a little bit about that? Can anyone go to a PT? Do you need to get a doctor referral? I just think there's a lack of PR around the industry.

Absolutely. I, as I say that all the time, we are the worst with promoting ourselves, we really need a PR manager as a, as a profession. Big time. Yeah, we are. We're the musculoskeletal experts. So in Illinois we were the 45th state. Yeah. Illinois to get what's called direct access. So most I, there are some states that don't have it like a couple, if any, and I'm not sure which ones those are right now.

Um, but most states have what's called direct access. So that means that you can come directly to your therapist to get an evaluation without having to get a doctor's referral. That being said, sometimes people's health insurances are different. I know that, you know, every once in a while I will, um, see an insurance where you need a doctor's referral before that. Usually that's really easy to get you just go to your primary care.

You know, they love, they love that you're going to get therapy. It's not like you're going there asking for, for pills. You know? So, and it's a way for you to actually address the underlying cause rather than just trying to mask it. Right. So I always tell people, check with your insurance. Most, most of the time you can go, go straight to us and we can get going the first day Medicare.

So people who are on Medicare, they can come directly to us for their evaluation. And then what's called their plan of care. Just needs to be signed off by their primary care, which is great because we want to all work together for the patient's optimal health. You know, if you can get everyone on board, that's, what's going to be best for the, for the patient. And that's really all that we should care about.

Yeah. I love that direct access. I didn't know that's what it was called, but that's what I did. I just reached out to your business and I was in, I think the next week, which was so amazing. And what I didn't know at the time was that you do a lot of this work also with Pilates. So why is Pilates so helpful for us?

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Well, um, it was a personal thing really in undergrad and even into grad school, I struggled chronic neck pain, chronic back pain, just sitting down to study was always like the first thing in my mind was like, Oh, this nagging pain. I was taking Tylenol. I almost every day I was getting headaches. And I think it was my first year in PT school. I finally said to myself like, Oh my gosh, Steph, how are you going to help other people if you can't even figure this out for yourself?

So I right across, so I went to University of Miami for PT school and literally right across the street, there was a Pilates school and it's called Pollstar Pilates, and the CEO of Pollstar is this brilliant man named Brent Anderson and he's a physical therapist too. And he was associated with University of Miami. He used to teach some classes there.

So it's just, you know, all the pieces were starting to come together. Right. And you know, you hear everything, you hear celebrities or in magazines. Oh, Pilates is so good. But so I'm like, check this out, see what this is all about. And I just first started taking classes myself. And I mean, I was hooked right away because why, I don't know why not because it was fun or I had time to do it. Or like, you know, I would, especially when you're a student, you don't really have excess time and money to do that. But how good my body started to feel, I was, I was hooked.

I'm like, I'm going to do this for the rest of my life. So while I was in PT school, I started doing my Pilates training on top of it. And yeah, never, never really looked back. I use it with pretty much everyone in everyone it's appropriate for everyone. I, the youngest kid, I would say I do Pilates based thing out of a five year old. My oldest patient has been a hundred, you know? So it's, it's really good for everyone.

So like I do Pilates when I'm there. Talk a little bit about the benefits of doing Pilates for someone like me or someone who's sitting and kind of working all day, what's that going to help with? Absolutely. So the number one thing I think Pilates helps with is body awareness. And we touched on that before you really can't fix or help a situation if you're not aware of it. So it is controlled motion.

It is against resistance. So you are building muscle, you are building a strength, it's increasing bone density for people who have osteoporosis or osteopenia. Um, but it's finding out what we need to work on. You know, like for you, we very quickly found out this girl's got flexibility for days, but can she control that flexibility for a lot of my, for instance, I see a lot of golfers, a lot of men who are golfers, because let's get honest, they'll do anything to shave a couple strokes off their game. Right. So that's, and they come in and they love it because you get that back flexibility. And all of a sudden you're driving 50 yards further. So yeah, with them, it's all about identifying where they need more flexibility. And then just working on that,

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I love that I had no idea that Pilates was so universal and I found it really, really helpful for me. Another thing that I found really helpful for me, that I had no idea that you guys do at all is work on the jaw. And this goes back to tension a little bit. So no surprise here I am a teeth grinder. I wear a night guard. I don't wake up in a lot of pain, but we were just casually talking.

And I actually asked you, what do people come in most here for? I was just curious, and you mentioned jaw TMJ stuff. And I said, Oh my gosh, you do this work. And since then you've really worked out my jaw. And I would just love for you to touch on that, where it comes from, what the cause is, how we can be more aware of it and what we can kind of do to release that sort of tension.

Absolutely. I'm so glad you brought that up. My favorite topic, the jaw. So a lot of people don't think of that as being a joint or something. When you think of physical therapy, you think like, Oh, ACL surgery, or I threw out my back, the jaw is just a joint, just like your elbow is a joint. And the interesting thing about the jaw is it's connected at our chin, right? So I always tell people like, if you hurt your right wrist, is that going to do anything to your left wrist? No, they don't affect each other.

But if your right jaw is injured, it's going to do something to your left because it's connected. And so again, it's just in our society of increased stress, increased tension, a lot of us clench or grind at night, and that's, you'll wake up. You'll have some headache.

Sometimes your face hurts. Sometimes you don't even feel anything in the morning, but you will jaw pain manifests in many ways. So it could be an earache. It can be headache. It could be your teeth hurting. It could just be facial pain. It could be neck pain. There's so many things that the jaw affects.

And um, like you said, you sleep with a night guard, which is great. It doesn't keep you from clenching or grinding, but I tell people you're either clenching or grinding on soft plastic or you're clenching and grinding on your teeth. And guess what, guys, teeth are expensive. Over time if you clench every night over time, you can cause little micro-fractures in the teeth. And then what does that lead to? We can lead to root canals. It can lead to actually having to get implants. So, you know, a lot of people don't like to sleep in mouth guards, but I tell them, Hey, do this, or I have to get 10 grand of new teeth later. You know?

You really worked out my jaw. So you like massaged it. And it would actually hurt a little bit more than the other exercises we do. But afterwards it was such a release. So for anyone who's listening, you know, kind of talk about, should they massage it or even if it is just something that they bring awareness to like, hey, release the jaw. Like, is that helpful as a preventative measure for them?

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Yes, absolutely. So the first thing you can do is throughout the day, make sure that you're not jamming your tongue up to the, up to the roof of your mouth or to the back of your teeth. That is something called tongue thrusting. And so many people do it. Another way you can check to see if you're a tongue thruster is get up, look in the mirror, stick your tongue out.

And if you can see the scalloping or the indentations of your teeth along the tongue, that means you're a tongue thruster and overtime that is going to problems. I bet if you look at your tongue and if you see those indentations, I bet you get headaches. That's just something that goes along with it. Where should your tongue be? So yeah. So the best thing to do. So you take the tip of your tongue and you put it right behind your front teeth.

So you know, your two front teeth in the front, put the tip of your tongue there and then just let it drop and float in your mouth. Oftentimes people will say, Oh my gosh, that feels crazy. My tongue feels too big for that. Like, it's, it doesn't fit in the mouth. And you want to know why that is because from, you know, years or months or weeks of thrusting your tongue and sticking your tongue forward, you actually stretch your tongue out from the back of your throat.

So it takes two weeks for that tongue to go back to it's a non stretched out position. I know so wild and yet. And so if you think about it, if, if there's constant tension, you know, with the, with the clenching or with the tongue, how is that not going to lead to, to pain or how's that not going to lead to headaches? And your jaw is right next to your station tube, which is your, your ear, your ear canal.

So oftentimes people won't even have something that they feel is jar, face pain. They'll just have a nagging earache. And you know, they go to the ENT. They don't find anything. They get put on antibiotics, stuff like that. So if you're someone who has just ear pain chronically, you really want to take a look at your job.

Fascinating. I had no idea. I, you know, have had my night guard for a while, but, and that's helpful, right? I'm not grinding away at my teeth like you mentioned, but just to have this almost preventative and more awareness around, okay. Release the jaw and the tongue exercise, you guys have to try it. It's it feels so weird because we're not used to having our tongue lower and floating like that, which is again, going to be one of those things where if you start doing it now and you get in the habit of it longterm, it's going to be so much better for your mouth, for your health, for your job. All of it. And dentists will, thank you.

Love it. Right? It's like, what's changed. This is great. So one other thing that I wanted to bring up for everyone is sleeping. We talked about sitting and standing and tension. What about

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sleeping? What kind of pillow should you sleep with and how do you know? Is it the neck that you should pay attention to? I know for me, I'm kind of like gummy. I wake up and I'm like, what happened?

I'm all over the place. At the foot of the bed. People ask me about sleep all the time. And sleep is a tricky one, because once you're asleep, you can't really control what you're doing. You know? And so the pillow question is something that's asked every day. So my dad, my dad's a chiropractor. And he, he always says this, his right after chiropractic school, he went out and he bought a \$250 pillow. All right.

It was like huge thing for him. Best pillow of his life. He slept with it, you know, used it for 10 years, you know, and then, but he's laughs about it and says, but currently his favorite pillow that makes them wake up and feel like a million bucks is a \$7.99 pillow from Aldi. So it's like, that just shows you it's a personal, personal preference.

But as a rule of thumb, the best way to sleep is on your back. They did a, some, some research and showed that that has the least amount of forces throughout your discs. So that, you know, the discs between your vertebrae, when it's one pillow underneath your head, one pillow underneath your knees, you don't have to use it a pillow, or you use a roller that is the most, you know, the least amount of pressure through your spine. If you sleep like that, and you kind of want to focus on your neck not being inclined or too far up. Right? You want it to be straight.

Yes. Yes, exactly. So you don't want to be, that's why I say one pillow rather than two, because you don't want your chin tucked to your chest. You want no loud, like you've said, you want your cervical spine to be in a neutral position. So yeah. One pillow try a bunch of pillows.

You know, there's, there's many things out there. There's those memory foam pillows, which I like personally, I use a down pillow, hypoallergenic down pillow. That's my favorite. But just try, try a bunch, try your friend's pillows, try when we're able to see people again. Right. And if you're a side sleeper, which many people are just, again, one pillow underneath your head and then a pillow between the knees is optimal.

And if you're on your side. You still want to make sure that your neck isn't into your shoulder, right? That it's straight. Exactly. Yes. I don't recommend side sleeping if you have shoulder problems. But again, me personally, I fall asleep every night on my back and I wake up on my belly. So you do what you can when you're conscious, right? I do not recommend falling asleep on your stomach if you can avoid it. Oh, I'm totally gonna tell Steve this.

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I'm a side sleeper and I know no coincidence. It's my left shoulder that I came in for, which is doing so much better now, but I'm most comfortable falling asleep on my left shoulder. And I've found that even just consciously trying to fall asleep on my back, even though it's a little bit different for me, I'm still able to fall asleep and sure. Do I end up on my side sometimes? Yes. But I still think that's better than just saying, well, I'm not going to try at all.

Absolutely. And do you know what I tell people to do when they're trying is make a pillow barricade? So you'll actually put pillows, like, you know, they could be the little decorative pillows around you to try to keep you in that position because oftentimes, you know, when you go to, to turn in your sleep, if you feel that that barricade around you, it'll just keep you from flipping at night. Try that little tips to try to retrain your body to sleep optimally. Yeah.

I love this. Okay. So as we kind of wrap up here, is there anything that we haven't talked about in terms of really big mistakes to avoid or even some at home stretches to kind of think about for anyone listening?

The number one thing is it's never too late to start. You know, you're never too far gone that it can't be fixed. Also you, even if you're not experiencing pain, this is what we want to do. You know, we live in a society so much of sick care, right? Like we wait until things are we're sick or we wait until things hurt. If you're feeling good, let's keep that momentum going.

You know, really trying to cause prevent, I mean, prevention, it's all about prevention. Also planned breaks when you're working, especially if you're at a computer, I love, you know, everyone's got a, everyone's got a phone, everyone's got an Apple watch. There's so many things that we can use to help us. So for instance, my fiance, he once an hour. He has an alarm go. He works from home. So, you know, he's at the kitchen table all day, once an hour, he has an alarm go off and him, he, for two minutes, he walks up and down our stairs.

Like it's just something to reset the body, get the blood going. I love little things. Like you can mix it up once an hour, do 10 pushups once an hour, do 10 sit ups, you know, just a little weight. You get off your butt, you get moving and you just make sure that you're not becoming a chair.

I love this so much. I am for sure. Becoming a chair. So you have been my first kind of effort to undo this. And I love what you said about, you're never too far gone and, and really thinking about it preventatively. So I'm going to implement that and just do, even if it's little exercises or little movement, that's really achievable and not too hard for your brain to overcome that you won't want to do it.

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Totally even like 10 jumping jacks, because it's also been proven that increased blood flow helps with your cognition. You will be smarter. You'll be sharper. If once in a while you get that blood pumping again, you know, it's going to be it's, it's going to be good for your job. It's going to be good for your productivity

And I feel that way, too. Even though you can be in the flow and not noticing it, as soon as you start to notice it, or I love the idea of a timer because you come back feeling refreshed and holds you accountable. It's the hardest part is starting, right? Like just starting, you just have to tell yourself, like, this is what I'm going to do. You know, that that timer is going to go off and you'll be like, ah, I'm in the middle of this.

I don't want to do it, but just commit, you know, I, I guarantee you, you won't be disappointed when you sit back down after those two minutes, you're never going to be like, Oh man, I wish I didn't do those pushups. Right? The hardest thing, what's the hardest thing about working out, getting to the gym, right?

Once you're there, you're never like, Oh man, I really wish I didn't do that workout. Right. The best workout is the workout that's finished. So just getting started. It was the hardest part. It really is. It's so true. I always say zero to one is the hardest. And one to a hundred is not as hard. Right?

I love this. So you mentioned that your dad is a chiropractor. Your mom is also a physical therapist and your dad or your brothers also chiropractic, right? Really unoriginal. My brother, Brian, we're a year and a week apart, people used to think we were twins all the time when we were younger because of my really tall stature. Um, but yeah, so I'm totally born and bred, uh, healthcare family, like, like you said, my dad and my brother are chiropractors.

My mom and I are PTs. So you could imagine our, uh, dinner talk is really fun. Thank you so much for being here. Stephanie, can you tell everyone where they can find you? Yes. So I'm located at 409 West Huron in Chicago, Illinois, and that's on the third floor. I also have a clinic in the Southwest suburbs in Homer Glen.

I also have a Pilates studio there too. So if you just want to come in and try some classes, we do that seven days a week there and the River North location is RiverNorthPhysicalTherapy.com. What's the other, what's the other website. The other is RefreshPilatesStudio.com.

I love that. Thank you so much. Oh, wait, do you have an Instagram? People can find your, I do [@RiverNorthPhysicalTherapy](https://www.instagram.com/RiverNorthPhysicalTherapy) and uh, at [@RefreshPilates](https://www.instagram.com/RefreshPilates) amazing. You are brilliant and I'm so

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glad that you came into my life and you shared your, all of your knowledge here today. I know it's going to help so many people. So thank you. Well, thank you for letting me talk about my favorite topics. Of course come back. Hopefully. Thanks for having me. Of course. All right. Thanks everyone. We'll talk to you next week.

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