

**STUBBORN  
SHOULDER  
PAIN  
SECRETS**

by Matt Hsu

## DISCLAIMER

*Doing the things you'll learn from this guide is "at your own risk," because that is the only way it can be. You might strain a muscle here and there. You might temporarily make something hurt more. You may accidentally seriously injure yourself (although we really don't expect that). However, these are the risks of learning what your body needs to move and feel better. If you aren't willing to take on the risks and consequences, then please do not use this book.*

*Nothing in this guide is to be construed as medical advice or as a substitute for individual medical attention. The author and publisher are not medical practitioners and make no claims of medical expertise.*

*Although these exercises are not more forceful than anything you may do in the course of a normal day, if for any reason you know you should not be doing stretching or exercising (due to whatever rare condition you may have), please consult with a physician.*

*For those are ready to embark on the journey, please note that any exercise, any sport, any activity has an inherent risk of injury. Be safe, responsible, and don't hurt yourself. When you work out your body, the responsibility for your safety is entirely in your hands.*

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# Introduction



This book is designed to help you understand shoulder problems.

First, we're going to cover three unbelievably important secrets about shoulder problems that will establish a firm foundation for getting your shoulders moving better.

Second, we'll introduce a couple simple exercises to start improving your shoulder comfort and mobility.

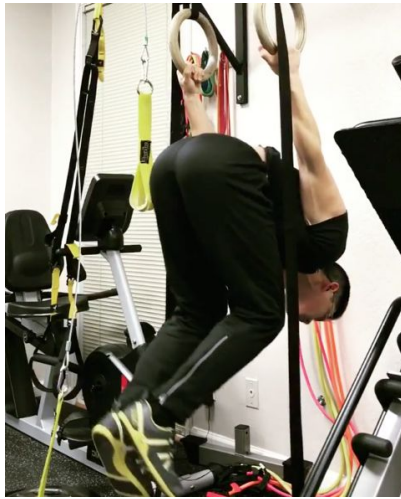
There was a time when I couldn't sleep on my right shoulder at all. If I lay down on my right side, my upper arm bone (the humerus) would noticeably slide and clunk in the socket. I couldn't lift my arm and hand up to the side.

I spent months struggling with my shoulder. Multiple trips to the doctor, multiple trips to physical therapy, various anti-inflammatories, and a bunch of wasted hours on ineffective exercises that gave me no results.

Doctors told me to just rest, so that's what I did! Weeks turned into months.

I rested and rested, and within 1 year, my hands, wrists, and elbows were hurting too! Months turned into years. I just couldn't do any of the things that I wanted to do.

I visited massage therapists, chiropractors, acupuncturists, and physical therapists. From time to time, I'd get a few hours of relief. My shoulder would feel a little better for a while, but as soon as I went back to the computer or went back to trying to play hockey, the shoulder would feel sloppy and unstable. It felt like the ball just wasn't in the right place in the socket.



It took me a long time to get my shoulder feeling good enough to sleep on.

It took me even longer to be able to feel comfortable playing hockey, doing pull ups, swinging on monkey bars, and working on handstands and other gymnastics-style movements (like you see in the picture to the left).

After going through various treatments and spending tons of time and money trying to make my shoulders feel better, I realized that my experience was really common.

And I realized that I could help others going through the same frustrations.

In this book, you're going to learn some secrets that have helped me get out of my shoulder problems and that have helped others get out of theirs.

# Frank and the philosophy of shoulder pain

Since 2007, I've helped myself and a lot of other people with their shoulder issues. I've worked with moms and dads who just wanted to be able to throw a ball. I've worked with athletes. I've worked with CEO's and programmers and everything in between.



I've worked with retired guys like Frank from the Netherlands (the smiling guy on the left) who had shoulder pain for 15 years.

Here's what I've learned over the last decade getting myself out of shoulder pain and helping others train to do the

same: **the way we view pain in our bodies severely limits the results we get.**

So I want to help you get a new perspective that helps you help your shoulder!

Have you noticed that a lot of treatments for shoulder problems are geared towards rest, rest, rest? That the treatments involve someone rubbing your shoulder or putting some fancy technological device on it?

And have you noticed that eventually you end up not being able to use your shoulder at all, and you feel uncomfortable all the time? Sound familiar? It's

probably the frustrating situation you're in right now.

This is not how you want things to end up, but unfortunately that's where all this rest gets you!

**You have to take a different approach to shoulder pain if you want your shoulders to feel better and move better!**

Frank had seen everyone he could think of in the Netherlands before he came to see me. Doctors and therapists told him that he had permanent nerve damage and that he should just accept the constant shoulder pain and the sensation of intermittent electric shocks all the way down into his fingers.

He had trouble sleeping. He gave up on playing tennis (a sport he LOVED).

**And it took us all of thirty minutes to relieve his shoulder problem by about 80%. It took another couple weeks before he was reintroducing tennis to his life.**

*Living with a shoulder that irritates day and night gets very frustrating. After 15 years of all kinds of medical investigations and treatments, I had given up hope that someone or something could relieve me from that awful and nagging pain which also included an electric sensation from my neck to my shoulder and down to my fingertips.*

*My newly working shoulder gives me renewed energy and desire to pick up sports after such a long time of being unable to be active. Above all, I enjoy having a good*

*night's rest. Thanks so much!*

*~Frank von Harenberg*

Results like this don't always come in thirty minutes. That's not something anyone can guarantee. But what we've seen is that consistent work with the right mental framework can help you improve just about *any* shoulder problem!

The mental aspect of dealing with stubborn shoulder pain is the MOST important part of your journey to healing.

So let's start changing your mindset and get into the three secrets.

And if you're interested in the exercise that worked like magic for Frank, it's actually the second one in the exercises you'll find at the end of this book!

# Let's get into the Stubborn Shoulder Pain Secrets...

## Secret #1: Pain doesn't always mean "damage."

First, let's be clear about something. Pain sometimes does mean damage. You cut your finger and damage your skin. Pain from damage.

You get into a car accident or tackled by a linebacker, and your shoulder gets really badly pulled out of place - okay, you got some pain from damage.

Those are both short-term situations that we could call acute and traumatic (short-lived events with really clear damage being done).

But if you're reading this, I'm hoping you weren't just in a car accident a moment ago. I'm really hoping you aren't reading this in the locker room in the middle of a football game.

You're more likely dealing with shoulder pain that's been going on for months or years. Maybe it was triggered by an acute event at first, but now you're far-removed from that event.

And the pain is still lingering.

Or maybe you didn't have a major event, but your shoulder just started feeling



worse and worse over time.

Or maybe one day you just felt like you couldn't lift your arm anymore to reach the top shelf to grab the bigger serving bowls.

**In all these cases, you don't have a traumatic/acute issue with your shoulder. You've got a stubborn shoulder pain problem.**

Here's the thing, with stubborn shoulder pain problems, everyone's looking for signs of damage to explain your pain. Doctors are looking for tears in your rotator cuff. They're looking for signs of arthritis. They're looking for things that look "damaged."

**Medically, they're looking for a sign of "damage" to explain why you have pain.**

There's a big problem with this!

In fact, the deeper you look into the research, the more you find that "damage" like rotator cuff tears, labral tears, and arthritis aren't even closely linked with pain.

**A lot of people who have no shoulder pain or limitations have signs of rotator cuff tears, labral tears, and arthritis!**

PEOPLE WITH NO PAIN have those exact signs of "damage."

Seriously?

Seriously. That means it's pretty hard to say if those signs of damage have anything at all to do with your pain.

This isn't the only body part where this is true, by the way. This has happened with medical approaches to back pain.<sup>1</sup>

You see, X-rays and MRIs on spines regularly turn up loads of "damage" in people. Doctors think the damage causes back pain. So surgeons try to repair the supposed damage. What's interesting is the research has shown that damage shows up in just about EVERYONE - regardless of whether they have pain! And so it's now not so shocking that actual success rates for spinal surgeries aren't actually as good as once thought!

**The damage isn't actually the cause of people's back pain!** That's why medical recommendations on back pain are now turning toward exercise before pills and surgery.<sup>2</sup>

Pain pills, injections, and surgical treatments are all based on ideas that actually haven't held up well to scientific examination. Pills numb you. Injections numb you (and can also cause damage!), and surgical results are often far overstated. It just takes a long time for the research to catch up on the initial hype around surgeries.

When you start looking into it, many joint surgeries turn out to be no better than

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<sup>1</sup> Surgical management of low back pain:

<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2016/204/8/surgical-management-low-back-pain>

<sup>2</sup> Got Back Pain? Try Yoga Or Massage Before Reaching For The Pills:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/02/20/515675259/got-back-pain-try-yoga-or-massage-before-reaching-for-the-pills>

placebos when thoroughly studied.

Here's the historical pattern. A few surgeons "perfect" a new surgical technique. Surgeons claim that the procedures are highly successful because damage is repaired! Some patients get some good results. The ones who don't get good results are told there's something EVEN MORE WRONG with them (and they are offered more surgery). The surgeries get really popular.

**And eventually research shows the surgeries actually aren't working as well as the marketing hype claims. It has happened time and again with the spine, the knee, the shoulder, and the hip! <sup>3</sup>**

Of course, many of us go through life thinking if we can just get a good enough surgery for our poor shoulders, we'll be happy.

I have a friend I played hockey with in college. At last count, he'd already had five surgeries to "fix" his shoulder. None of those surgeries seemed to make it feel right again.

And his is not an isolated experience. For a rundown of studies showing the questionable results on shoulder surgery, you can check out a short list on our website.<sup>4</sup> Suffice it to say that the success numbers aren't great, and some surgeries actually seem to have a good shot at making your range of motion worse.

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<sup>3</sup> The Placebo Effect Doesn't Apply Just to Pills:

[https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/07/upshot/the-placebo-effect-doesnt-apply-just-to-pills.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/07/upshot/the-placebo-effect-doesnt-apply-just-to-pills.html?_r=0)

<sup>4</sup> How effective are surgeries for common shoulder problems? - Upright Health

<https://uprighthealth.com/effective-shoulder-surgery-common-shoulder-pain-problems/>

It's really important to realize that even though surgery can sound really great, it doesn't always deliver. Sometimes it can make things better (I've met people like this), and sometimes it can make things MUCH worse (I've met people like this too).

Exercise is a crucial component to restoring function. I've seen this with my own body and with the people I've helped in the last 10 years. **It also shows up in research on shoulder surgery versus exercise!**<sup>5</sup>

To solve stubborn shoulder pain, it's not about looking for damage in an X-ray or MRI. It's not about random intense exercise (doing tons of push-ups, for example, is usually a bad idea). It's about slow, careful, gradual exercise that builds up your control and strength!

"That sounds somewhat believable," you might be thinking. "What about all the wear and tear from using it a lot? I used it up [playing golf, rough-housing with my kids, playing football, pitching in baseball, etc.]"

These are common concerns, so we need to look into this more closely so you can make a move in the right direction and get your shoulder back!

## Secret #2: It's not about wear and tear.

A lot of times, people are worried that moving their shoulders more is going to

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<sup>5</sup> Does arthroscopic acromioplasty provide any additional value in the treatment of shoulder impingement syndrome?: a two-year randomised controlled trial. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19794168>

make things much worse. Arthritis is the word that floats around the most. Bone spurs and labral tears make people fearful of moving.

There are two ways to think about this.

**The first is to dive into the research and see that there is generally no correlation between what shows up in X-rays and MRIs and people having pain. We've kind of covered that above, but let's review it really quickly again.**

The X-rays and MRIs show a lot of “bad stuff” but the bad stuff doesn't actually seem to be a reliable cause of pain! A fantastic article in the New York Times can give you a great summary of the issues.<sup>6</sup>

Specifically in the shoulder, you can see that people with absolutely no pain at all walk around with shoulder “damage” and “bad stuff.”<sup>7</sup> And you can see that when you compare people with and without shoulder pain, the “bad stuff” doesn't correspond with actual pain!<sup>8</sup>

**The second way to look at this issue is with a real life example.**

Let me give you one example from a client I worked with in San Diego. He had

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<sup>6</sup>Sports Medicine Said to Overuse M.R.I.'s, - NY Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/29/health/mris-often-overused-often-mislead-doctors-warn.html>

<sup>7</sup> High Prevalence of Superior Labral Tears Diagnosed by MRI in Middle-Aged Patients With Asymptomatic Shoulders <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4710128/>

<sup>8</sup> Prevalence of abnormalities on shoulder MRI in symptomatic and asymptomatic older adults

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266621346\\_Prevalence\\_of\\_abnormalities\\_on\\_shoulders\\_MRI\\_in\\_symptomatic\\_and\\_asymptomatic\\_older\\_adults](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266621346_Prevalence_of_abnormalities_on_shoulders_MRI_in_symptomatic_and_asymptomatic_older_adults)

mangled his ankles in motorcycle and skydiving accidents.

He had severe bone on bone rubbing happening in his ankle joints. His ankles hurt badly when he first started working with me. “That’s not surprising!” you might be thinking. “The bone is rubbing on bone!”

**Well, what’s surprising is that once we found ways to get the muscles around the ankle to relax and then build strength, his ankle pain went away. We didn’t change anything about his bones rubbing.**

In fact, after a year of working together, he had X-rays redone. His doctor actually said, “Looking at your x-rays, I don’t know how you’re even walking.”

The point is, the bone contact wasn’t actually the thing causing his problems. As long as he maintained good muscle function, he was comfortable and functional! If we had given up and said, “you have bone on bone, so let’s not move the joint,” he would have gotten nowhere. Literally.

So I’m inviting you to consider that wear and tear isn’t as big an issue as you may have been told it is.

That leads us into SECRET #3 and what you can do to proactively change your situation!

## **Secret #3: You have to move to be able to move!**

We’ve been building to this. And, to be honest, I’ve kind of told you this secret

earlier with different phrasing. But I'm telling it to you again because it's so important that you get this idea down!

**If you don't move it, you won't be able to move it!**

Think about this: if you wanted a child to learn how to play a sport safely and remain injury free, would you tell him/her to avoid playing the sport entirely?

If a young girl wants to learn how to play tennis with good form and without getting hurt, she has to practice good form. She has to practice coordinating her movements. If a young boy wants to learn how to do gymnastics without getting hurt, he has to do the same thing. Both kids need to build strength and competence gradually with practice.

This process is universal and applies to all ages. If you do not practice good movement, you cannot build strength and competence for more movements!

**Put another way: if all you do is rest, that's all you'll be able to do.**

As you begin restoring pain free range of motion, your ability to do more things will gradually improve. And that's how you'll eventually be able to do all the things you want to do - whether it's tennis, golf, gymnastics, dance, yoga, or skydiving!

For your shoulder, you need to understand that a lack of motion is not going to restore motion. You need to gradually restore motion by learning how to move it again!

The bad news is it's really easy to throw off muscle balance around your shoulders. And bad movement patterns start to stick quickly.

The good news is that no matter how long a bad, painful movement pattern has been around, you can retrain it.

And that's what I'm inviting you to do!

## Let's get started!

Hopefully things are becoming really clear now.

Regardless of how bad things may seem, there's really only one path to take for your shoulder issues. You have to restore motion.

During the process of retraining your body, things can get uncomfortable. Muscles may bother you. Muscles may ache and complain. Over time, as you learn how to interpret those sensations and make corrections, your body will feel **SO MUCH BETTER.**

It's a process I've been through, and it's one I've seen countless clients go through as well.

I know you can get your life back, and I hope you take the steps to do so!



You probably have spent a ton of money on massages and physical therapy and chiropractic adjustments already. You're committed to feeling better.

**So what I want to offer you here will help you save tons of money in the long run.**

Here are a few exercises that can help you save thousands of dollars in massages and help you get some movement back in your shoulders.

# EXERCISES TO MAKE YOUR SHOULDERS MOVE AND FEEL BETTER

It's a good idea to do these exercises two times a day for a week to see how they affect your shoulder. If these are going to be effective for you, you'll notice your shoulder mobility and comfort improving within a few days. Some people feel positive effects right away!

If you feel these exercises making things worse, or if they just don't seem to have any positive benefit - that's okay too. Just stop doing the ones that aggravate your shoulder.

**There could be a number of reasons for things getting worse.** One reason has to do with form. If you don't execute the exercises correctly, they won't have the positive effect.

The other issue could be that these just aren't right for your situation! **Everyone has different contexts they're working in.** That's why we design our online programs to account for different variations in people's movement backgrounds. We want to make sure you have options whenever you're retraining your body. Whether you're using one of our hips programs or one of our shoulder programs, it's important to identify your own individual quirks!

For the exercises that follow in this book, we're including a link to the corresponding videos from our private library so you can see and hear exactly how

to do each exercise!

Each exercise has some anatomical terminology, but don't fret too much about that. Just focus on doing what you see in the videos.

As you get more experienced with different exercises for your shoulder, you'll get to know the different muscle groups. And soon you'll understand how to make your shoulder work well for years to come!

## Tissue work on your pecs and anterior deltoid

<https://vimeo.com/164927880/a160668e04>

Do this for 1-2 sets of 1-2 minutes. Do both sides so you can compare!



This exercise can be done with a lacrosse ball, softball, or a massage tool called the Jack Knobber. This will help you relieve tension in the front of the shoulder that can lead to impingement sensations.

If your exercise routine involves a lot of pushups or bench press, there is a very high probability that this is part of your shoulder problem. If you do not do a lot of pushups or bench press, this is generally not as big an issue, although poor posture, sedentary jobs, and

computer/phone time all can make this area need some massage work.

As a general observation, this tends to be much more important for men than women, but don't skip this if you're a woman just because I said that. If these muscles are particularly tense and/or functionally shortened, your shoulder blade will be stuck in a protracted and anteriorly tilted position. If anything goes numb while doing this, use less pressure and move to a different spot.

## Tissue work on your scapular muscles

<https://vimeo.com/164927888/ef0b3e1b09>

Do this for 1-2 sets of 1-2 minutes. Do both sides so you can compare!



People often complain about tightness and tension in the upper traps. It is very common to find tender trigger points throughout this area. But don't spend all your time just there.

You also want to spend time massaging the muscles on the shoulder blade below the

spine of the scapula (infraspinatus, teres minor, teres major).

Trigger points in these areas can lead to a surprising number of issues in the range of motion of your shoulder. Massaging these muscles can yield sometimes

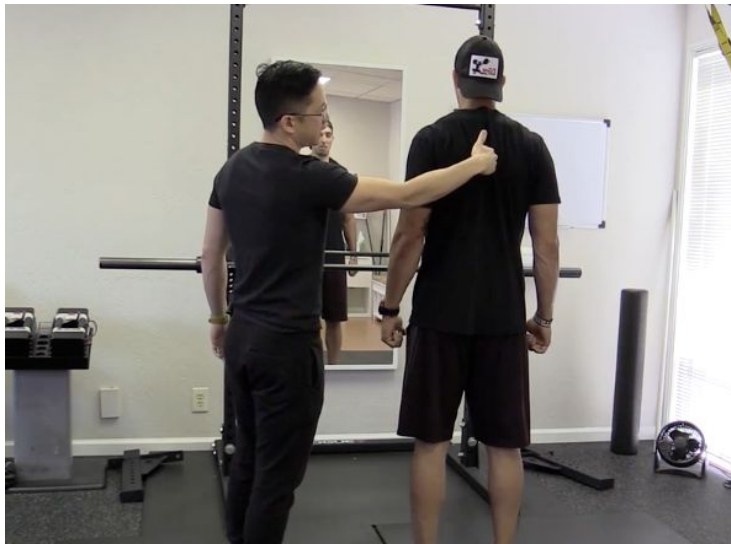
miraculous results for shoulder mobility (as well as for pain and tightness in the hands, believe it or not).

It is very common to feel extremely sharp pains as you roll across trigger points in these muscles. If anything goes numb, use less pressure. In general, it's highly unlikely you'll seriously injure anything here UNLESS you are pushing extremely hard. Make sure you're only massaging muscle and not forcing a lot of pressure onto bones.

## Standing scapular retractions

<https://vimeo.com/164903633/bfa5649528>

Do this for 3 sets of 10-20 repetitions.



This exercise helps you reprogram your muscles to pull your shoulder blades into a better position. If you feel pinching at the beginning, does it go away?

If pinching in the shoulder blade doesn't go away, take note: tissue work on the muscles on

your scapula is going to be important.

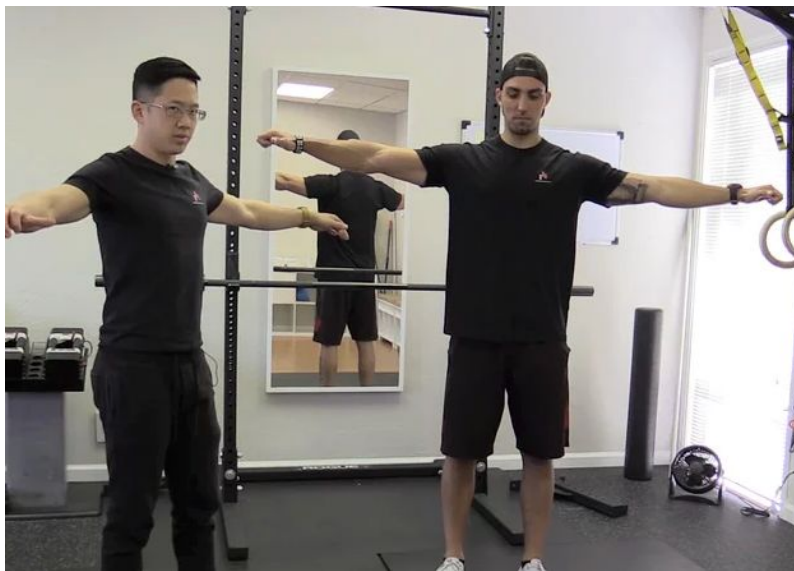
If you feel tightness in the front of your shoulder / chest, tissue work and stretching

in the front of your shoulder and along your pectoral muscles are going to be very important (see the previous two exercises!).

## Standing Arm Circles

<https://vimeo.com/164774824/dabbec2383>

Do this for 2 sets forward and 2 sets back of 20-100 circles.



This exercise is a simple way to start building some endurance in the muscles that stabilize your shoulders.

Contrary to popular belief, a sense of tightness and stiffness in the shoulders is often a sign of muscles

needing more work rather than less!

Make sure you keep your shoulder blades stabilized in the back, and do try to achieve the hand position shown in the video! It helps make sure you don't cheat by flopping your wrists or elbows!

# CONCLUSION

If you found these exercises helpful - fantastic! You're already on the right track, and we're all happy for you!

If these weren't the perfect exercises for you, don't lose hope. As I said, there could be perfectly good reasons why these won't work for you. There are still a ton of other exercise options that can gradually restore your shoulder(s) to health. It's just a question of figuring out which ones help you the most.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again - thinking about your shoulder problems the right way will help you get the best possible results.

**Remember that "damage" does not mean you can't get better!**

**Remember that getting better means not worrying about "wear and tear."**

**And remember that you have to move to be able to move!**

If you remember those three secrets, you'll find that over time, you're going to make progress that would otherwise be IMPOSSIBLE.

If you're looking for a comprehensive solution to shoulder issues, you may find the Shoulder Fix to be helpful. The Shoulder Fix is a comprehensive online program that our team of trainers developed to help people all over the world train their shoulders to move better and feel better on their own.

No matter what, the biggest secret is to never give up!

Keep moving. Keep experimenting. Keep hoping.

And always remember...

**PAIN SUCKS. LIFE SHOULDN'T.**