

## INTERVIEW #3 - TINA

### **What were you in physical therapy for?**

I've always had some kind of back issue stemming from an accident when I slipped on my stairs. The lower back pain intensified to the point where I couldn't even stand straight. I'm through Kaiser and the first thing they recommended was muscle relaxers and physical therapy. I went once a week for six sessions, and after that it was scheduled as needed.

I do remember the stretches I was taught for my back. if i'm in severe pain I get on a hard floor to straighten it out because the lower part of my back where i was having pain curves before it hits my butt it's like this so even laying flat you know if i was laying flat there's like an arch and so in order for it to be completely straight i had to bring my knees up to my chest while i'm laying back just to get it completely straight because my back would never be completely straight mm-hmm and and from there you can feel like you know your pain where it's it's one of those weird things it's painful but it's also stretching so it kind of feels good but it hurts at times so i do remember that was one of the the uh stretches um that i was taught at the time and how to keep my um knees to my chest because i you know that's tiresome you can't always do that and um my arms aren't long so the distance even to you know wrap around my um the back of my knees to bring them up it just felt like it you know it wasn't completely going around so um was taught how to use like a towel or you know um or he said if you have to you know you could use a shirt or a jacket to wrap around um behind my knees and pull it up to my chest so it's kind of like i'm lifting up my my knees like if you would lift weights if you're curling um up to my chest to hold it so my back would stretch

**i'm not understanding is this so this exercise was to relieve pain or part of your pt?**  
it was part of my pt.

### **Did they show you all the exercises you should do at home at your appointment?**

Yes, he taught me how to do it. First, he would show me what was going to be done and then I would do it, to see if it had to be modified. I think it was also a way for him to see how intense the pain was. I can't remember exactly how many stretches to me looking back it seemed like there was a lot but I know there were only two I could do successfully. I do remember him saying if you couldn't do the stretches correctly you might as well not do it because it can cause you some other issue or more pain or something like that but he did show it to me first and then have me do it.

I don't remember stretches being sent home with me. I remember like you know kind of like you get the receipt or something saying you were seen here, follow the doctor's order, here's your next appointment. I don't remember there being like an illustration or anything of the stretches.

I don't remember being sent home with instructions to make sure I was continuing to do it or do it correctly.

Over the next appointments, I would come in, do the stretches and he would say yes you're doing great, do you feel pain, is it getting any better. Anytime I was in pain I did the stretches because I didn't want to be in pain, but there wasn't any follow-up in between my appointments.

**How did you feel about that?**

I didn't feel any type of way.

**It didn't confuse you?**

It didn't confuse me because I thought in my mind I already knew the alternatives, like if I want to see a chiropractor then I'm going to have to find one. you go to kaiser, they give you a muscle relaxer for pain, say physical therapy may help. so that was you know the first step and of course you can go online and do all these searches so i'm like okay so a chiropractor well that's not really what kaiser um has or didn't at the time so i was like okay that was something i'll have to search on my own so this is the first step so i didn't feel like this was a big investment on my primary care provider or anything and this was just a suggestion here's an alternative besides drugs that we can prescribe you try this so no i kind of felt like you know this is my own journey

**Did the physical therapist you saw explain your goals in the visits?**

I don't think there were any explanation goals, except to eliminate the pain.

**What about discussion about your pain, was there any helpful information there for you?**

I think so, maybe because it stemmed from what they thought was an injury. it was kind of like i've always had back pain and what happens is with most you know providers is they contributed to your weight everything goes back to your weight oh well you know you're overweight you're obese this is why this is happening no matter what the situation is so in in their mind in theory oh well you also have you have an injury which was probably because my weight i slipped on my stairs not because i just wasn't being careful but because of my weight everything goes back to that so upon me slipping in the way i fell you know on my back on the stairs um it like intensified the pain or triggered. It was more of this that would help alleviate this pain from that injury.

**So you really only did the exercises when you were in pain, not as a daily preventative thing?**

yeah, not a daily thing or something that i should do daily. which is which is something i did notice like um when i started taking all those uh exercise classes um recently you know um and after all of the classes you know you do some stretches and everything um particularly in my body pump which lifting weights and after this one of the stretches are basically the stretches that i learned in pt um so it's kind of one of those things and maybe it goes hand in hand that. I probably should have been told in PT. that generally you know any activity if i'm not physically active but afterwards you should be stretching um you know as you get older you know your body doesn't move quite the same as even if your mind feels like it could do these things that probably can't and. If you're not exercising you should wake up in the morning and do stretches. or you know that kind of thing that probably would have been helpful um i'm not saying. It wouldn't have eliminated me slipping but I've never been told to stretch, I've just been

told to lose weight. never you know anything else so um probably could have been educated more but again i think it just depends on who you get as well

### **How did you feel about your physical therapist?**

He wasn't really warm and friendly. I do remember he was like this polish guy and his accent was really thick so I kept saying i'm sorry could you repeat that. He seemed kind of dry, a little bit older, not the type that's really invested in helping someone, like this isn't their passion. it's kind of like i've done this every day of my life yes do these stretches you're probably having this try this it will it's just basically a um a go through the step kind of mantra for them in particular

### **Did he offer, if you had any concerns, this is how you get a hold of me?**

None, whatsoever. You get the general template for them, they send you an email saying thank you for the visit, nice to meet, if you have any questions this is how you can contact me. but there's really no questions that I had. When you get comfortable with someone you just met or they're teaching someone or a provider and they kind of go over whatever your health issues may be or what can come from them you kind of ask questions but this wasn't that type of person at all.

### **Walk me through your appointment.**

I think he sat down and kind of went through your chart, asked me what my pain level was, what happened, could I point to where my pain is. and they kind of did that whole i don't know if you remember that in middle school when they used to check for scoliosis you know they kind of look at your your back and you did that kind of could you how far can you reach can you touch your toes and all those kind of things and. He had me walk away from and walk towards him kind of assessment kind of thing. I do remember he said he was going to show me some stretches I can do, and I remember he got on the table and did the first stretch and explained it and asked me to do it. I said well how am I supposed to jump on this table? he had to lower it. it's kind of this is what i'm saying that mannerism of someone who's just like okay um probably saw a walk the injury and already thought of these um stretches for me to do but he's so wrapped up in that the the step that he wasn't thorough that i'm not that tall and i can't just jump up on tables um before we actually lowered it um and had me you know. He helped me do the stretches to make sure I was doing it correctly, making sure that I could feel how my position was because I couldn't see it. um and you know after i did i think. he had me repeat it uh a couple of times and then i would turn and do the same on like my like the right side you know the left. and then i felt that was great then he would move on to show me the next one and he didn't forget to lift the table for himself um so that's what i remember and then like. the next appointment it was "okay how are you doing are you stretches?" Fine. "Does it feel better?" No, I'm still in pain, and he says, "okay well let me see how you're doing those stretches" and then he would assess. I think maybe by the fourth session he goes oh you're moving through them a lot faster, that's a good. I probably wasn't that much in pain so I'm just going through the motions. I think after the sixth appointment you know I didn't schedule anymore. I didn't feel like there was any need to and he wasn't he didn't teach me anything new.

**What if there was an online screen person doing it with you either telemed or just a recording of what you did in pt?**

Yeah, I think someone doing it with you live, that's my preference. It's motivating and also they can make sure I do it correctly.

**How often would you want to do an in-person session versus a zoom session?**

To begin with, I would definitely like more in person than a zoom, until I felt comfortable with the person before I would feel comfortable over zoom.

**You didn't feel the need to be encouraged or reminded or anything like that in between your in-person sessions?**

No. I think it was just with the physical therapist, there wasn't any connection there. It was more of the feeling of, okay, you've provided me with these, my back is feeling a little bit better, I never want to see you again.

**Was there any interest in tracking your progress like in a spreadsheet or some kind of chart?**

No.

**When they were when your six weeks were up, you were good with that?**

I was good with that because I was still meeting with my physician. I didn't think she was gonna offer anything more because there was nothing else to offer besides physical therapy and a prescription.

**I think it's incredible that he didn't give you any handouts, that you just remembered what to do.**

I'm what you would call a hands-on learner. He did it first, showed me and then I did it. I'm assuming because I did it correctly. I didn't look in a mirror at the appointments. I think if I looked in the mirror, I would overthink it: the way I look doesn't look how they did it because their body shape is different. but I'm trying to do it exactly how they did it, and the way it looks trips me up. more than someone watching what I'm doing and saying yes it's correct than me physically looking at myself doing it but feeling me do it.

**So you're more confident with how it feels versus how it looks?**

Yeah, because how it looks throws me off because I'm comparing myself to someone even though it's not even ideal or realistic because not everyone looks the same doing something because of a different body, height, weight, and everything. um so i'm constantly trying to push my body to do something that you know it's like it's not gonna look that way you don't look that way so it shouldn't come out that way.

Watching a video throws me off because I'm comparing myself to someone even though it's not realistic because not everyone looks the same doing something because of a different body, height, weight, and everything.