

3 Surprising Reasons You Have Back Pain

Welcome, fellow back pain sufferer. I feel for you.

I know what it's like to worry that you will suffer like this forever—that no matter what you do or how hard you try, your body is broken and nothing will stop the pain, ever.



By Esther Gokhale

You feel desperate—for some relief, some *hope*; you're ready to try anything, but are also scared that it will end in another disappointment. I understand your suffering because it's part of my own story. When I was just 27, I had agonizing and debilitating back pain due to a herniated lumbar disc.

“I felt betrayed by my failing body.”

I couldn't sleep, I couldn't lift my baby; I couldn't even put my shoes on without pain. I even needed my husband to lift a cooking pot so I could use it.

I was horrified that this might be as good as I would ever feel again. I also felt betrayed by my failing body. I used to be a gifted athlete, and a yoga model in India, where I grew up. If I had an injury, my body would recover quickly. And now...I couldn't even bend over to put my shoes on!

I'd lost confidence in my body and its ability to do the things I wanted to do. So I know what it's like to feel deeply discouraged. To feel that your life has collapsed and that you'll never be able to do the things you love to do.

Well, I'm here to give you *hope*. I discovered a way to get myself out of pain and make my body strong again. It's been over 30 years since I've had pain, or even an ache, in my back. In fact, my body's stronger than it's ever been.

So don't let anybody tell you there's not much you can do about back pain.

I now have confidence in my body to support me in whatever I want to do: I've slept on bare earth in Samiland for a week; I've learned cross-country skiing with my infant son on my back; I've moved heavy furniture without a problem.

*Let me show you how I did it,
and how you can do it too.*

In this e-book are a few starting insights you'll need to help yourself out of pain. You won't find these in conventional wisdom—I hope they're coming, but we're not there just yet. I'm sharing this knowledge to give you a better understanding of the scientific principles behind the Gokhale Method, and the approach you can expect when you undertake your posture journey with us.

I'm so glad you're here.

Esther Gokhale

As taught at:



As seen in:



“The patients I have referred to Esther have, without exception, found her work to be life-changing.”
-Dr. Salwan Abi Ezzi, MD



“Every year, tens of thousands of patients undergo major back surgery, without any benefits. Using Gokhale’s novel techniques, many of these patients can quickly return to a pain-free life.”
- Dr. John Adler, MD,
Stanford University Medical Clinic

“The greatest contribution ever made to non-surgical back pain treatment.”
- Dr. Helen Barkan, MD, PhD, Mayo Clinic



“I need to do things that make sense and that I can see results from. Esther Gokhale’s work is like that.”
- Susan Wojcicki, CEO, YouTube

“The Gokhale Method helped me resolve a five-year injury after nothing else worked.”
- Patti Sue Plumer, 3-time Olympian



REASON 1:

Swaying

If you live in an industrialized country like the U.S., you probably hold yourself upright using tension in your lower back muscles, like this:



Since early childhood we learn to “stand up straight” by tensing our lower backs.

Many of us have been encouraged to do this since early childhood—you might remember being told to “sit up straight” or to “pull your shoulders back” by your parents or teachers.

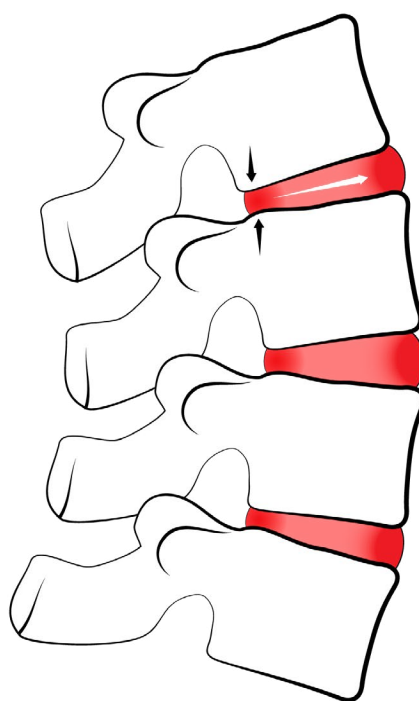
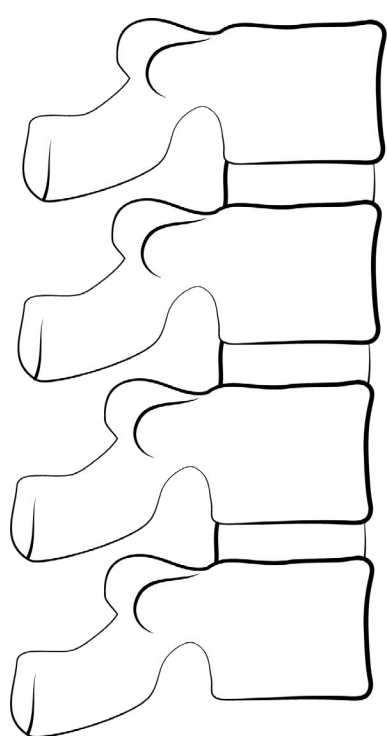
While well-intentioned, these misguided directions were actually teaching us how to *force* ourselves “upright” using tension in our back muscles.

When the muscles of your lower back are working hard to hold you upright, their tension creates a curvature or “sway” in the lumbar region:

Tight lower back muscles cause the spine to arch.




When the spine curves, the discs that fit between the vertebrae become compressed at the back, and the bulk of the disc is pushed to the front and bulges. This leads to disc wear and tear, degeneration, and pain.



Arching the lower back causes compression of the vertebral discs.

SOLUTION:

Reposition your rib cage

A photograph showing two women. On the left, a woman with dark hair and a red hair clip, wearing a bright blue zip-up jacket, is smiling and looking towards the woman on the right. She has her hands on the upper abdomen of the woman on the right. On the right, an older woman with short reddish-brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt with "Old school" embroidered on it, is smiling and looking down at her abdomen. The background is plain white.

*Helping
a student
learn the
“rib anchor”*

This is achieved using a technique we call the “rib anchor” and it’s the first thing we teach in our Gokhale Method courses. It sets you on your way to a decompressed, straighter lumbar spine.

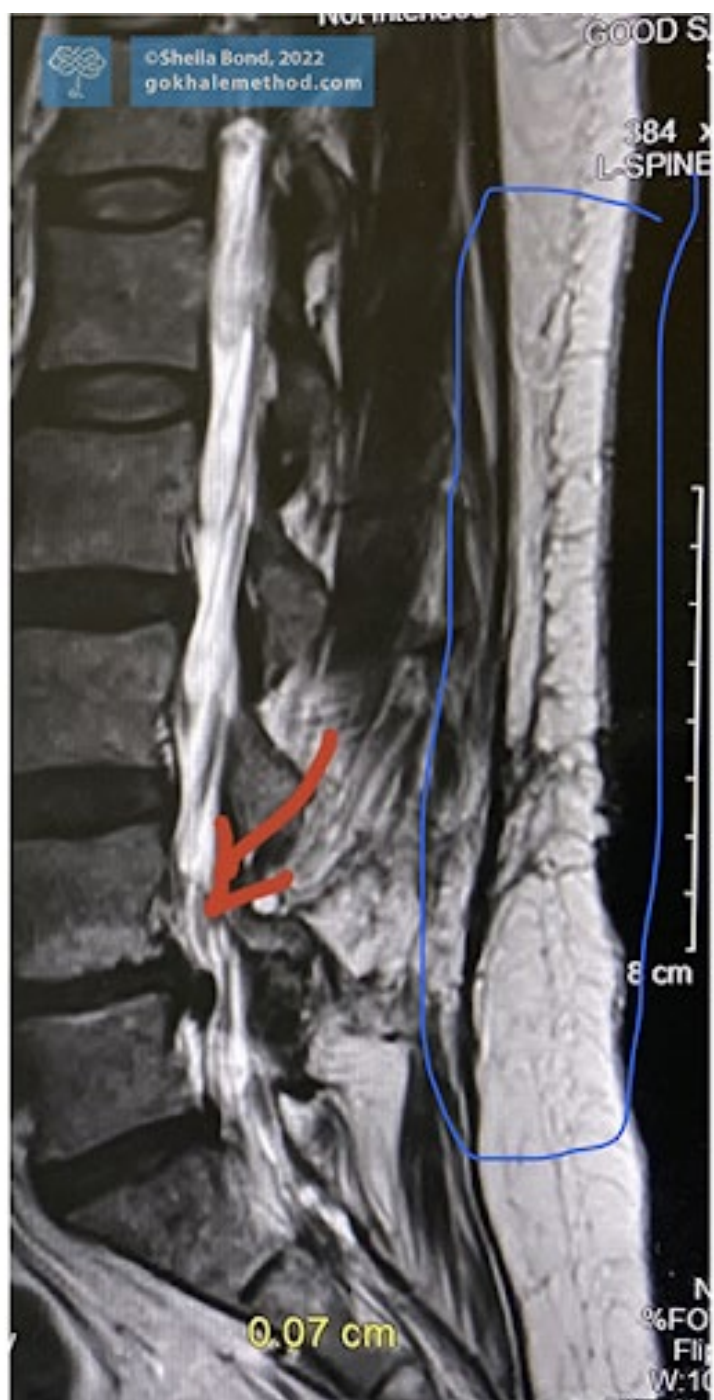
No more disc bulge, wear and tear, or tight muscles. It’s the first step toward being both upright *and* relaxed.

Case Study: Sheila's Journey

Esther's notes: Sheila came to me with the particularly difficult challenge of having young children to take care of *and* being in severe pain. A critical part of her healing journey was learning to stop swaying her back. Here is Sheila's account of her journey with the Gokhale Method:

“In May 2022, I severely herniated the spinal disc between my L4 and L5 vertebrae. I had previously herniated this disc in 2015, and had a laminectomy (a surgical operation to remove part of the back of vertebrae)...that left me in terrible pain. Following surgery, I also went to physical therapy for a year and a half, but it gave me more pain than it took away.

[After the second herniation], I couldn't dress myself. I could barely move or function at all.



My MRI from May 2022, showing my second L4/L5 herniation (red arrow). I was particularly disturbed by the amount of tissue damage in the area after my first surgery (circled in blue).

I felt so bad for all my kids. [I tried to continue working, but] standing and sitting were both unbearable.

From my bed, my sister and father helped me to sign up for the online Gokhale Elements Course. Esther was kind and gentle, and confident that she could help me. I couldn't sit so Esther guided me to a position lying on the floor with my feet in a chair—that relieved enough of the pain so we could talk. From the very first lesson I found some relief. It was small gains at first. The tiniest shifts helped a lot. I hadn't slept well in so long.

Each session gave me a posture gem that I needed to know. I practiced over Zoom with Esther, and by myself in between our sessions. It was amazing to me that I was learning how to heal myself and avoid pain.

By lesson 14 or 15 I was able to walk without a cane, [and] at the end of my 18 lessons, I actually danced. I have always loved dance, and it was thrilling to start to do that again, at my own gentle pace.

[Now] I want to share my story far and wide. Everyone in pain deserves to have realistic hope, and to know that they can heal. 🙏

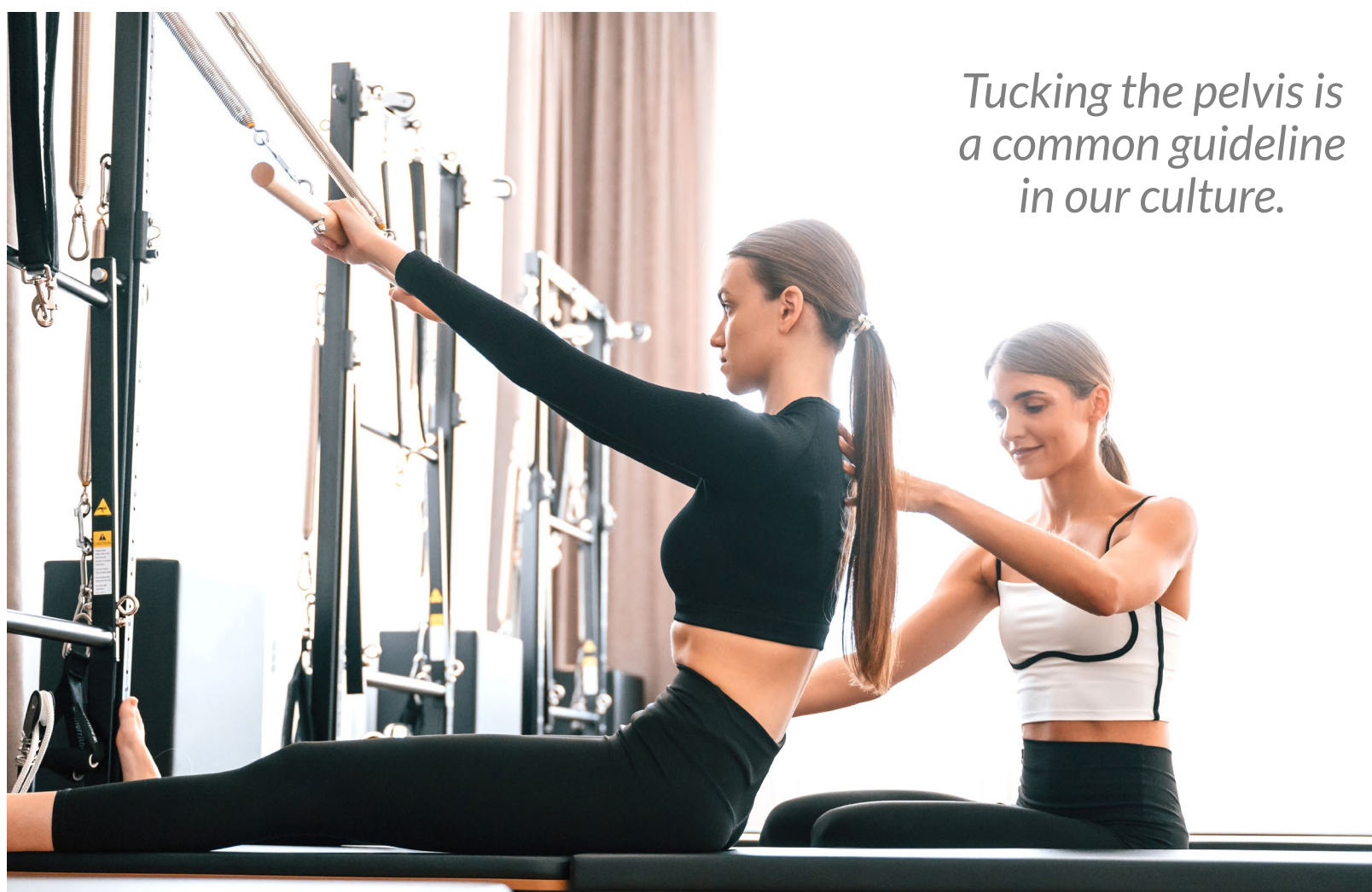


Getting back to living again after learning the Gokhale Method.

REASON 2:

Tucking Your Pelvis

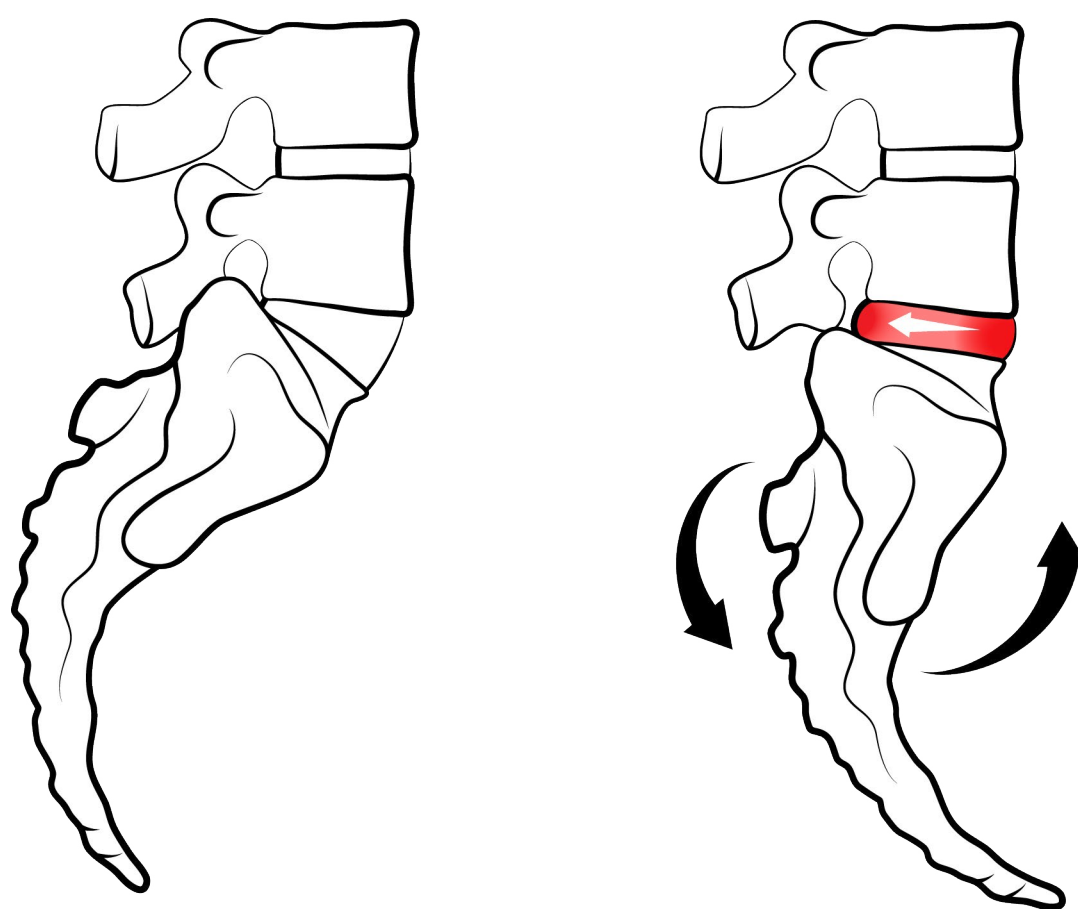
You may have been taught to tuck your pelvis in exercise classes, physical therapy appointments, or ballet classes. This is another case of well-intentioned but problematic advice.



Tucking the pelvis is a common guideline in our culture.

While there is some rationale for tucking the pelvis (it can straighten out a sway—see **Reason 1: Swaying**), tucking causes a number of other problems.

As your tail curls under, the lowest disc in the spine (which is the only wedge-shaped disc in the human body) becomes compressed at the front, bulging the disc out the back:



Tucking the sacrum causes the L5-S1 disc to protrude backward towards the nerve roots.

This is the worst direction for the disc to protrude, as the nerve roots run immediately behind the discs. This is why sciatica is often associated with a bulged or herniated L5-S1 disc.

Tucking your pelvis also sets you up for glute amnesia, predisposes your hips for arthritic changes, and causes rounding in your upper body.

SOLUTION:

Reposition your pelvis



Monitoring a student's pelvic position as she practices the Gokhale Method technique of glidewalking.

When you untuck your pelvis, the pressure on L5-S1 and the sciatic nerve is released. Take care, though: many people will attempt to untuck their pelvis by using their lower back muscles to stick their bottom out behind them—this does more harm than good. In the Gokhale Method, we'll teach you how to gently and safely coax your pelvis into a new position using gravity and muscle tone in the right places, rather than tension in the lower back. And as a bonus, you'll develop some gorgeous glutes along the way.

REASON 3:

Weak Deep Abdominal Muscles

A third major contributor to back pain is weak deep abdominal muscles. Although most people are aware that strong abs are important for back health, some of the most common ab workouts actually cause damage to the spinal discs and nerves by curving the spine and straining the neck. In fact, sit-ups “crunch” the spine so badly that the US and Canadian militaries have phased them out.

Popular abdominal exercises often compress the spinal discs



The most popular ab exercises (crunches and sit-ups) also often leave out the three deep ab muscle layers (transversus abdominis, and the internal and external obliques), which are critical for bracing the trunk and protecting the spine; this is especially important during weight bearing, impact, twisting, and most sports.

These common ab exercises mainly target the most superficial ab layer—the rectus abdominis (or “six-pack”) muscle, which is the least important ab for spinal health. And, in fact, an overly contracted rectus abdominis results in a tucked pelvis, creating back pain and dysfunction (see ***Reason 2: Tucking Your Pelvis*** above).



Less common core strengthening exercises also tend to result in distortion of the spine.

SOLUTION:

Strengthen your deep abdominal muscles in a way that doesn't distort your spine.



The inner corset provides a great ab workout without compressing your discs and will become your ticket to pain-free exercise of all kinds.

The most efficient and surefire way to get your ab workout is during your normal, everyday activities.

The Gokhale Method technique “inner corset” involves elongating and protecting the spine by working the deep abdominal and back muscles. The inner corset can be contracted in any position, without the need for special equipment or dedicated time; you can strengthen your abs while you’re carrying the laundry, chopping vegetables, or even just brushing your teeth. It’s the way your abs are meant to work out, and your ticket to an active lifestyle for decades to come.

An Invitation to an **Active, Pain-Free Life**

How wonderful it would have been if someone had taught this body wisdom to my parents, so they could have held me and guided me in ways that safeguarded my spine from a young age. Or I could have been taught this in school, or as part of the curriculum at Harvard and Princeton, where I was a biochemistry major. Or as part of my prenatal course—before I herniated a disc.



*Get back to
pain-free movement*

While we can't change the past, the good news is, it's never too late to transform your posture and reclaim a pain-free life. I'll show you how you can comfortably sit, garden, or stand for hours without pain. Pain and injury should be the exception—not the norm. You don't have to accept that after you reach 50, disc degeneration is "normal," or that back pain is inevitable. You don't have to accept that your hips will wear out and you'll need a walker or a wheelchair in old age.

3 Surprising Reasons You Have Back Pain



“It’s never too late to reclaim a pain-free life.”

You don’t have to suffer any longer. Our bodies are truly remarkable, and made to be strong and mobile. Our wonderful community of dedicated teachers and I are here to help you.

Come join a free workshop and find out how.



My team of teachers and I are ready to help you resolve back pain for good.

Yours in health and joy,

Esther Gokhale

Next Step: **Join A Free Workshop**



See first-hand how subtle adjustments to the ways you sit, bend, or sleep can have a profound effect on how your body feels.

This one-hour live workshop is led by a qualified Gokhale Method teacher. Learn:

- *How and why the Gokhale Method works.
- *A first technique to help address your pain immediately.
- *Personalized answers to *your* questions.

Leave with hope for a pain-free future!

[Sign up for a live workshop](#)



[Take me to the on-demand workshop](#)

