



# Essential Alchemy

The Ancient Art of Healing Naturally

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## Season 3, Episode 13: Straighten that Spine with Dr. Ryan Wohlfert

**Jodi:** I'm so excited to be joined today by my dear friend, Dr. Ryan Wohlfert. He is a certified mindset specialist, certified chiropractic sports physician and certified chiropractic biophysicist, biophysics physician using a specific spinal rehab and postural correction protocol to help patients resolve chronic pain and prevent disease and organ dysfunction with 23+ years, even though you look so young, of education and clinical experience.

Dr. Ryan has helped thousands correct their spine, upgrade energy and longevity, eliminate dependence on medication, and make simple, healthy pain-free living possible. And I'm excited to have you here to talk about spinal health for resilience. Welcome, Dr. Wohlfert.

**Ryan:** I love getting this information out there to people because not enough people know about it and even fewer are even talking about it. And that's probably why people don't know.

**Jodi:** Why is addressing one's spinal health and structure essential not only for chronic pain but also for resilience and function?

**Ryan:** I love starting off with that because it gives a nice premise of what we're talking about. And the premise and principle that I go on is the spine, it's the foundation of our strength in our body and the health in our body because of what houses the jobs it does, which we'll get into. But why this is so important, why we need to address it is over two-thirds of our population in the world has this distorted spinal posture and spinal curves that lead to chronic issues like chronic pain, but also chronic fatigue.

I love starting off with that because it gives a nice premise of what we're talking about. And the premise and principle that I go on is the spine, it's the foundation of our strength in our body and health in our body because of what houses the jobs it does, which we'll get into. But why this is so important and why we need to address it is over two-thirds of our population in the world has this distorted spinal posture and spinal curves that lead to chronic issues like chronic pain, but also chronic fatigue, increased medication use, disability, arthritis, and accelerated aging.

And those are like more physical things, but it also affects your mood, your emotions, your resilience physically, mentally, and emotionally. This might be shocking to a lot of people, it's not only physical like musculoskeletal health, but it's also how it affects our organs because there's multiple studies that have shown that this distorted, this weakened injured type spinal posture, which again we'll talk about it increases the risk of death, okay?

**Ryan:** From cardiovascular issues, pulmonary issues, and from all causes. Think about how we're increasingly in these forward-flexed postures or in this forward-flexed posture, day after day, looking at our iPhones, looking at our smartphones, iPads, laptops, computers, just sitting on the couch watching TV, possibly. It's becoming a serious problem, not just with the adults, but looking around and seeing all the kids. In children that are in that forward flexed posture, that's leading to that accelerated aging. There is a way to instruct people on how to correct their spine and look and address spinal structure is not only something that just doesn't look great, but how your body doesn't function.

And when it's in that position, you lose that resiliency. I know you have a lot of experts on here talking about nutrition and exercise and those are so important. But we have to address the core of our body, not just our stomach. That's what people equate to the core, but the core in the foundation of your body is actually your spine. So we have to address that as a source of these issues.

**Jodi:** What does a healthy spine look like?

**Ryan:** If we're looking at you from the front, we want everything straight up and down. If we have our feet about hip-width, the part right to the point is straight ahead flared out slightly. And if we take it like right between our feet, like midway between our feet, a point there. And go up from the ground. We want the pelvis like the pubic bone. We want the middle of the chest and we want the nose like right here, all lined up. That's perfect posture there now. But what can happen, and I'll get into the side part of it, I like addressing the front part because most people will just look at that slung, oh, I gotta improve my posture. That we're gonna sit up straight while there's also the element front to back. Because if it gets off as little as five millimeters, it creates a weakness in your body and spine and it's not gonna be as resilient.

People might think, okay, that's scoliosis. It doesn't have to be a diagnosis of scoliosis, but if we're hammering a nail, we want that nail to be straight up and down, right? But if there's just a little bend in that nail and we hit it, what's gonna happen? It's gonna continue to weaken and that's gonna continue to get more of a kink in it. That's why that straight front-to-back view is so important from the side. It's the same premise.

Looking down from your ankle, we want the ankle bone lined up with your hip or the center of your pelvis, the center of your shoulder, and the center of the ear. And that's the one that most people look at as like, I gotta sit up straight even as we talk. I'm sure people are sitting up straight as I'm, it's that reminder, my posture, it's kinda like breathing. As soon as you mention breathing, people start breathing. So that's the normal posture. That's the normal external posture.

**Ryan:** The deal is if your posture is distorted like that, typically your spine is distorted as well. But let's say we look at you and those points are lined up. That doesn't mean your spine is in a healthy position because the spine has to have from the side these different curves on the right.

One in the neck, one in the mid-back, and one in the low back all evening out. Because of what those do, I'll go right into why we need this posture. Why is this so essential to our overall health and being able to withstand the forces and the gravity that we put on it? These curves and healthy spinal correct structure decrease the physical and neurological stress on your body because it provides shock absorption. Think about a spring, it will withstand the forces from compression, from walking, running, jogging, or even just sitting there in general. But the more force that we put on it, it can absorb that stress. It protects the spinal cord, provides leverage for movement, and creates more efficiency when we have the correct spinal structure.

It incurs more efficiency for movement, needs less energy wasted, and fewer resources used to just be in the world. So it'll increase our resilience because your body does not have to figure out just by sitting there how to use more energy. Now we can use it for healing, we can use it for the immune system, we can use it for our metabolism.

And lastly, why it's the foundation of strength in our body and our health is because of what's inside of it and what the spine protects, which is our nervous system, our spinal cord. That goes right down the middle of the spine, and if you are in a distorted posture, we'll just take the most common one – that slumped posture head forward, shoulders rounded, mid-back, rounded low back flat. That posture there that's been shown to stretch the spinal cord. Neurologically it stretches the spinal cord, it wears down, and creates calluses on the spinal cord if it's rubbing up against the bones.

And then secondly, this is where multiple studies have shown how this affects our lifespan. These are not chiropractic journals or anything like that. These are top medical journals showing how this thoracic hyperkyphosis, that's what we're talking about. Head forward posture, mid-back rounded is a predictor alone for taking up to 15 years off somebody's life. So that's where this whole risk of disease and death comes from it.

**Jodi:** It kind of compresses the diaphragm and impacts breathing and the organs as well.

**Ryan:** Because then you can do a simple test to get into that posture try to take a deep breath in and out, and then sit up straight, or try to sit up straight and then do it. And it's much easier to do.

**Ryan:** Sometimes if you can't get into that upright posture, that means it's already degenerated to a point where you might need some extra help rather than just trying to force it because your body can only force it for so long or, or try to be aware of it where we have to make it more of an unconscious type activity rather than being constantly aware of it, 24/7.

**Jodi:** What's sad is that I think people think of chiropractic care like when they've been in a car accident or they have a sports injury, they only go in there like in response to knowing they've been hurt. It doesn't occur to them to be proactive and preventative.

**Ryan:** That's a lot with even nutrition and exercise. There's gotta be some sort of crisis. Unfortunately, I think many people realize, and that's why I'm so happy you're having me on here, so I can kind of dispel these, misconceptions, but just because you don't have pain in your spine doesn't mean your spine is fine. It's always important to get it checked. Check your posture. But there are, and we'll go over ways of how to assess your own posture.

**Jodi:** Most of us kind of lean over to one side, which I think is a good indicator that we're not aligned. We can get into that a little bit and then kind of talk about what we can do to correct it.

**Ryan:** The technique I use is called CBP, Chiropractic Biophysics, or even Clinical Biomechanics of Posture. That's another CBP acronym for that. And it is actually the most validated scientific chiropractic technique in the journals. There's over 300 journals with this just specific technique, and it's a whole spine, whole body technique to take just how we've discussed already of correcting the posture while also getting functional improvements in people's lives.

There's one study or maybe two that I'll mention before I get into the actual protocol, but when you lose the curve in the neck, it goes forward into your head translation. This goes perfectly with what the Essential Alchemy Podcast is all about. Creating resilience is when you're in that posture. The signals going to and from the brain to adapt and modify how we respond to the environment. Well, there's one study in nature, so it's the most cited journal in the world, shows that when

CBP corrects that posture, it improved conduction times. It improved the conduction potential of these nerves going to a neural activity created neuroplasticity changes. And it was hypothesized because we're taking stress off of the spinal cord. So now it can actually function and change the actual structure of that instead of it being stretched like a rubber band, where it's 10 feet tight and smaller.

**Ryan:** So keep that in mind as we go through this and why the spine is the foundation of our strength. Because when we can't line up against gravity, because that's off and I'll show you how to assess that. Then we're gonna lead to more dysfunction, lead to more symptoms, not just pain, but also fatigue that's been shown disability. That's obviously a huge problem too.

**Jodi:** Do you think that poor spinal alignment compromises vagus nerve function and signaling?

**Ryan:** Yes, because the most common postural distortion is the forward head posture on the neck. Right up like the brainstem area, which houses these parasympathetic functioning activities, helps you rest and digest, helps you digest food. The biggest example I use for that is you don't have to have problems down in the gut to have problems in the gut or symptoms, because of how the vagus nerve in the parasympathetic nervous system works up here and sympathetic as well.

Christopher Reeves, most people are familiar with him. He broke his neck. He was quadriplegic. He couldn't move. People saw him in the wheelchair, but what he broke his neck right up here. It's not like it severed the spinal cord, but it dented it maybe two centimeters. And look how his body shut down. Physically couldn't move. He had to have a pacemaker installed because his heart wouldn't function on its own. He had to have a defibrillator. Because again, his heart wouldn't function on its own. He had to have help with his breathing. He had to, and this is where the gut comes in, in how the nerves up here affect all the way throughout the body as he couldn't go to the bathroom on his own. People had to help him go to the bathroom, had to push on his stomach to do that.

It's not like he fell and hurt these organs, but these were being affected up there.

**Jodi:** That really correlates to what I'm talking about. The neck is really, I think the bottleneck to healing, especially with structures. I'm so grateful that you're addressing how we can recognize if structures are out of balance, in addition to seeing someone like you, but kind of align ourselves to correct it.

**Ryan:** Let's get into the easy assessment parts. And just to give you a preview, we're gonna assess and then the EAT method. Exercise, Adjust, Traction. And I'll explain each of those. I love the acronym, and that's straight from CBP.

Assess their simple techniques. You can do the wall test for forward head posture. That's probably the easiest. So you stand up against the wall, put your mid-back and your head up against the wall. Your feet should be about five to 10 centimeters. Two to four inches away from the wall.

**Ryan:** You should be comfortable. If you can't touch the head to the wall comfortably, more than likely you have forward head posture. That doesn't mean it's just that, but where is that coming from? Is it coming from a thoracic or your mid-back being hunched over? Because that can be driving the head going forward. So if you don't do anything here and your head is forward and you're just going like this, I guess it's better than nothing.

But we have to open up the chest too. Open up the thoracic spine. Now let's say you can't do it against the wall, but you want to, so try it lying down. And if you can't lie flat without your head and your head's not touching the floor, again, forward head posture. Now we can get into even more. You can look in the mirror for the front, see if your head is shifted from side to side. See if your body is shifted side to side. Check the gap. So taking a comfortable stance, look at the gap between your hips and your arms when your arms are just relaxed at your side. When you're standing, if there's an increased space, on one compared to the other, that could mean that your body has shifted one way, maybe from sitting down too much, leaning one way, maybe from scoliosis, maybe from your legs. One leg can be shorter than the other one, the pelvis can be dropped. So that's a way to do that.

**Jodi:** My old chiropractor used to have two scales, and sometimes leaning that I would be like 30 pounds heavier on one leg than the other.

**Ryan:** Your body is a master of compensation. It's gonna find the least resources to get the job done, even if it's at the expense of you getting sicker, and that's why we get these postures because a lot of 'em are compensations of old injuries or chronically being in these poor postural positions.

So those are like DIY stuff you can do at home. One, there's something called a posture screen where we can take a picture of your posture and put points on there, and it measures how far you are away from that center of gravity. And then the most accurate way is standing, full spine X-rays. Because that will see the translations or the shifts and also the curves of the spine. That's why I said at the beginning that just looking at the outer posture gives you a good clue. But it's not always the definitive of what is going on on the inside. Just like a mechanic can hear or drive a car that's not functioning properly or there's something off. Or making a noise or the check engine light is on. But unless he gets under the hood or gets lifted up on a lift, he can't diagnose what the problem is and see what is wrong with the car. And that's the same thing with standing spinal X-rays.

**Jodi:** You did an amazing job outlining the problem and making people aware of what they should do. Can you now share some corrective spinal care and posture plans?

**Ryan:** Let's do some EATing. EAT. I'm not gonna talk about general exercises. These are more so specific postural exercises, we call 'em mirror images because it's easy for me to show you in this, and I have the ability to shift my neck and head this way and still face the camera. If you find during the assessment, or let's say you're doing it at home and you find that your head is shifted to one side. Your nose should be lined up over your chest if you find that it's one way. If it's shifted, this is a hard thing for people to do because it gets stuck there. What you do is mirror image. So what's the mirror image? Posture of a right head shift. We're gonna take it to the other side.

And how you do that is you basically put your shoulder against something to prevent it from moving, like against a wall, or usually we do these standing. Put it against the wall and you take your head the other way and you train it that way. These are general recommendations. I don't like giving these out just in general unless we know what the problem is. So specific postural exercises like that, a great one for the thoracic. For the mid-back to open up the chest, bring the head back. I like what is called thoracic mobility, but it's also for the forward head posture is putting your hands behind your head and neck. You can do this sitting, which is preferable.

Taking the elbows back, take your head back into your hands and you can probably feel the chest may be stretching if you're tight through there and you're really activating right between the shoulder blades, keeping the head there. If you can, you're gonna do a rotation without losing the position of the head and neck and not collapsing the elbows forward, you want to keep the elbows back, chest up tall, and think about a rod going right through your head, right through your spine and you're rotating around. That just kinda hurt, just doing that for like 20 seconds as I was demonstrating. I feel the circulation like that is like an energy hack. It increases the energy throughout the body because it takes stress off the spinal cord.

Those are, especially that last one, thoracic mobility. If you can't do it because maybe your shoulders and you're so kyphotic it's called, or hyper kyphotic arthritis, maybe even like fractures in the spine that you've had, then you can just squeeze in the shoulder blades together and take the head back. There's always ways to adapt it to the person.

As a chiropractor, I want to give you tips to do at home. So this is adjusted by a corrective care chiropractor, CBP. But it's also adjusting your lifestyle. How can you adjust your lifestyle so you're not leaning to one side? How you are holding the phone, how you're looking at your phone, how you're sitting. Look at how you are going about your day, when you're driving in your car, when you're sitting to eat dinner or lunch. Are you hunched over? When you're looking at your phone, is it down on your lap or better bring it up towards in front of you, laptop, iPad? Don't be in this slumped posture while you're looking at those.

**Ryan:** Then adjust how you are doing that. You want it straight up and down, just like we are when we're standing, when you're on your phone, when you're sleeping when you are picking things up. We want a nice, strong spine where the hips are over the shoulders or over the head. I don't wanna guarantee it, but I'm pretty close to guaranteeing that most people have heard you wanna lift with the legs and hips. Not with the spine, not with the back. This is what they're talking about. Not in a rounded position. If it's hard for you to get in that position and that structure, that spinal position and structure posture, then it might be time to get it looked at just because it might be stuck or restricted in that posture. So that's the adjust your lifestyle.

**Jodi:** Fascia constriction goes with what you're doing.

**Ryan:** Traction. Sometimes people are like traction. There's no other better word for it, but there's simple supportive and corrective traction methods. One that we do in our office, but then also I do help people do virtually. But if you're trying to do it your own, remember we talked about the most common postural distortion is this forward flexed posture head down. We're losing that.

So these are called simple towel exercises or towel supports, where you roll up bath towels and you put one underneath your lower back and one underneath your neck. And that helps to support the spine and mold it because so many times the spine is broken down from days, weeks, months, years of us being in a progressively weakening posture like this, forward flex posture, or from acute injuries that we've had that our body's compensated for. Now the ligaments, so this is actually the secret sauce, I don't want it to be a secret, of CBP, corrective chiropractic care is remolding the ligaments in the correct healthy position. I shouldn't say just like, cuz it is different but similar to correcting the poor spinal structure.

A dentist is not gonna correct the structure of your teeth. And the orthodontist and dentist, if they said, okay, I want you to push on your teeth three times a week. Is that gonna change the structure of the teeth? No, but braces do. The great news, unlike with braces where you have to wear them 24/7, these are in spurts. So like once a day you work up to 15 to 20 minutes, maybe even 30 minutes on these towels to help support the spine. So those are specific exercises there.

This is where the whole assessment comes into play, where do you put the towel? In general, without me seeing anybody, but knowing the most common postural distortion that, two-thirds of the world has underneath the lower part of the neck. And laying on that, starting off like five minutes, increasing it a couple of minutes each day till you get to 15 to 20 minutes. It's a passive form of an active passive form of traction. Because we need that to reform the ligaments.



**Jodi:** Thank you so much for demystifying Spinal Health and Resilience.

This was so incredibly helpful. Thank you so much for demystifying Spinal Health and Resilience. Can you share where people can find you to learn more?

**Ryan:** I'd love for you to go to Drwolfert.com. I'll have you link to a spinal hygiene mini class, like it's a one-page mini class that I created that goes into even these a little bit more. I even go to hydrate the exercise, adjusting lifestyle and traction, so you can get more specific on that.

**Jodi:** That's so fabulous. Thank you so much for your time. This was amazing.