



A CONTINUUM WORTH CONSIDERING

Two different careers, the same outcomes.

By John Hartenberger

As a physical therapist for 20 years, then a pastor for 16 years, now once again a physical therapist, I've had the opportunity to look at and observe life and people from many different angles. In other words, I've seen and experienced the worst of times and the best of times, and in that process I've noticed and learned a fairly consistent continuum with hurting people that can be applied in almost any context. The continuum goes like this:

RELIEF → REHABILITATION → DEVELOPMENT

Let me explain, understanding that this continuum at its core is highly relational.

First of all, let's say a person is injured, whether it's physically, emotionally, or even spiritually, or a combination of all three (not an easy reality to swallow). Maybe they have injured their back at work, or hurt their shoulder or knee playing softball, or maybe have had their home destroyed by a natural disaster. This is exactly where the first step of the continuum kicks in, where **relief** is not only desired but necessary. Relief is all about the gracious pouring out of assistance from people to a hurting person. As a pastor, relief meant "being there" many times with material items to relieve immediate needs. As a physical therapist, relief means helping reduce the pain of an acute condition of a physically hurting individual. The point is, "relief" is done primarily through a caring relationship.

Secondly, once the immediacy of relief has been met, the next step of the continuum kicks in, **rehabilitation**. Quite simply, rehabilitation involves helping an individual return to pre-injury status. As a pastor, this meant walking side by side, in relationship with an individual to assist, guide, direct, rebuild, even struggle, back to the point they were at before trauma happened. Similarly, as a physical therapist, rehabilitation is conceptually very similar, where in goal-oriented relationship; a physical therapist walks side by side with an individual, through evaluation, manual therapy, individualized and specific exercise, and various therapeutic techniques, to help that person achieve pre-injury status. This can be a very fascinating and rewarding step for both the patient and the therapist.

Once rehabilitation has hopefully been achieved, the final ongoing step in the continuum is **development**, quite simply referring to a further development of a person's potential. As a pastor, this primarily involved helping a person through a process of discovering their unique God-given design and then encouraging that person to serve to "make a difference" because of that unique design. As a physical therapist, development, once rehabilitation has been achieved, involves once again walking side by side with an individual to that next step of physical health, which can involve many local agencies that are motivated by healthy lifestyles. This may even involve "working out" with people that you've provided relief and rehab to, or at least referring them to people who can help further develop them. Once again, development occurs best in the context of relationship.

So there you have it – a continuum that works whether a pastor or physical therapist or somewhere in-between!

At Orthopedic & Spine Therapy, our desire is to provide relief, rehabilitation, and encourage ongoing development of people we have the privilege of coming in contact with. Our therapists are not only highly trained, but also highly attentive to the needs of our patients and the journeys our patients are on. It is also our desire, in relationship with our patients, to do our best to help them along this continuum from **relief** to **rehabilitation** onward toward ongoing **development**.

Tags: physical therapist, pastor, career change, relationships, rehab, rehabilitation,