

## Why is My Office a Pain in My...?

### Introduction

Ow, Ow, Ow!

~~Well, that is~~ This is how ~~it~~ my journey to become an occupational therapist began started for me.

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away (~~well, okay,~~ Pittsburgh) ~~was only 4 hours away—but, have you driven on the PA Turnpike recently?~~ there ~~lived~~ toiled an ~~graduate~~ occupational therapy graduate student learning how to take care of everyone who neededs her. She learned how to help ~~adults~~people who could no longer take care of themselves. She learned how to teach ~~a~~ children who lacked mobility to play games. She learned how to help people move ~~a~~ stiff finger joints. And in the process, she gave herself wrist pain, thumb pain and elbow pain.

Yup, ~~that~~ the she was me. The monthly commute back and forth from Pittsburgh to Maryland (family beckons) coupled with the demands of master's thesis did me in. ~~Oh, believe me,~~ I learned all about how to treat ~~all of these pains those pains, and and~~ I even learned the basics of ergonomics: (the science of designing equipment and devices to work with the body,) too. However, I didn't learn how to help myself treat my own pain. I went to the local pharmacy and bought a brace. I iced my wrists every night. I even ~~went out and~~ bought something called an "ergonomic wrist rest" and begged it to help me. It refused.

~~Let me tell you,~~ So I was delighted +loved the day we when our class learned how to make custom hand splints! I got my partner to make me one of the most complicated splint designs known to woman. I needed something to support my entire hand, but especially my thumb and my wrist, which (~~which also helps the elbow—I'll explain that later, don't worry about that now~~) ~~and it~~ took a lot of plastic and some professorial intervention. ~~Eventually,~~ I managed to protect myself my trusty hand enough to make it through school, ~~and~~ At that point I told myself that this occupational therapist + would have to learn how to keep her own ~~the~~ pains at bay, ~~and that is~~ That's when re this journey really began.

It's true: ~~The basic fact is, while although~~ occupational therapists and physical therapists are some the best people around for fixing you could see to solve your aches and pains, we don't know everything about everything all the time. ~~(yes, we freely admit that).~~ Many OTs and PTs know how to treat these types a myriad of everyday-of injuries, ~~and~~ In fact, many ~~OTs and PTs~~ know the basics of ergonomics, ~~but~~ However, their training stops there ~~after the basics.~~ I wanted to learn more than ~~that~~ that the basics.

After my experience with hand pain ~~all that trouble~~ in graduate school I became the out-patient expert on the treatment of repetitive strain and work-related injuries. Doctors would send patients to me who ~~already had failed with~~ hadn't been helped by other treatments in other clinics and with other professionals. *Fix him! Make her pain go away!* would be written on the prescriptions. And, not to toot my own horn, but – I did. I could. I could get rid of or greatly reduce the pain. Why? Because I wouldn't let the patients ~~do~~keep doing ~~what~~the things they had been ~~were~~ doing – that were causing their pain in the first place. You might say that I ergonomically re-educated them to be able to move, sit, and stand in ways that worked for them.

Keep this in mind: if you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got!