Michael Dresser: I’m Michael, you're listening to thought-provoking talk on Michael Dressers Authors and Answers Show Coast to Coast and broadcast live on the lifestyle talk radio network. Call us toll-free anywhere in the US at 18884543378 or email your questions and your comments to [michal@dressershow.com](mailto:michal@dressershow.com). Our guest Dr. Nathaniel Tindel, MD, he is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon who practices in New York City and Long Island. He’s affiliated with Lenox Hospital and he’s assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, he's director of the New York Center for Spinal Disorders and let's say Nathaniel hi and welcome to the show.

Dr. Tindel: Thank you for having me

Michael Dresser: Oh, by the way we interviewed what, about 2 years ago

Dr. Tindel: Perhaps

Michael Dresser: No I think I remember, I think we talked about this a long time ago but the book is “I've got your back: the truth about spine surgery straight from a surgeon” and there is 19 out of 20 cases that there is an alternative to back surgery so what we're saying is, that, that when the doctor diagnoses it, says back surgery, that it isn't always the case.

Dr. Tindel: You bet.

Michael Dresser: So, when we're looking at a back what do we see when we talk about tremendous amount of back pains Etc., what is the overarching theme a common denominator that you have found that causes back problems?

Dr. Tindel: Well I think one of the problems is when it comes to back pain, which is so pervasive in our society, in other words so many people have back pain, they think that there's a quick fix, that they go to the doctor or surgeon in a white coat and they're going to do a procedure and their pain is going to be gone. And what I found over the many years that I’ve been in practice is, that’s simply not the case and a lot of people opt for having a procedure or surgery and sometimes end up worse off than they were to start with.

Michael Dresser: And one of the things that's obviously one of the bullet points in the front of the book which is really key, is the key to successful pain management that's really about 90% of it isn't it?

Dr. Tindel: I would even say more than that, almost everybody that comes to my office, ends up doing well without surgery and that's my primary goal is to get them better without surgery even though I'm a surgeon and I do a lot of surgery, I would tell you more than 9 out of 10 get better without surgery.

Michael Dresser: Okay there, are there some very - when I say not necessarily quick fixes, but are there some proactive things that we can do to make sure or at least address a problem before it happens?

Dr. Tindel: Sure, I think that, you know the old feeling, that when your back hurts you should stay in bed or stay at home and be sedentary well that just doesn't work anymore. We know a lot more now about the back and actually the more active you are the more you move it, the better off you'll be. So first of all, we try and get you over the fear that they’re going to hurt themselves. It might be uncomfortable when they first start mobilizing and getting involved in some activity, but once they're doing it, they're going to feel better and if we can get them over the initial fear, we find that patients do much, much better

Michael Dresser: What usually causes a low back to go out, are we looking at the I'm sure there's a difference between, the muscles or the spinal the spinal cord itself?

Dr. Tindel: I could tell you that there's hundreds of causes of back pain anything for muscle strains to ligamentous injuries to slipped bones, herniated discs, ruptured discs, but the fact is that according to a New England Medicine Journal that came out recently; 85% of the time we don't understand what causes an individual's back pain, even if we made it our life's work we would still not know what actually causes that pain.

Michael Dresser: Now obviously, the older you get the more fragile you get, I don’t want to say that, I'll tell you what, don't tell anybody I said that. The older you get the more fragile you get so what is it that we can do once you pass 50 and 60 years old what is it that you can do to keep that back strong?

Dr. Tindel: Well a big topic right now that patients and the public is becoming aware of, is fragility or what we call osteoporosis which means soft boned. In the last 5 years or so therefore it's a very, very Innovative research and procedures now that we can do minimally invasive and they do work well so if somebody does have say, a broken bone due to osteoporosis we can actually make them feel much better quickly, but that doesn't mean that they need to have it done and I will tell you again, 9 out of 10 people I see with broken bones due to osteoporosis do very well without actually having to do anything even close to surgery.

Michael Dresser: Okay now what about exercise you know I've heard time and time again over the years interviews that I've done a tremendous amount of women obviously get osteoporosis men are also susceptible obviously, but for the most part we relate osteoporosis with women and they've been diagnosed and they've been recommended to go do weight lifting.

Dr. Tindel: I'm not so sure weightlifting is the best exercise. When it comes to osteoporosis, among appropriate well-balanced diet, and if necessary some supplements to help support the bones make a bone stronger. What we talk about is weight-bearing exercise in other words, bones are very interesting structure. Bone actually likes stress, when a bone sees stress it actually gets stronger. So, what we like to tell people to do is to weight-bearing exercise whether that's walking, or playing tennis, that's the kind of exercise, actually swimming is not great for osteoporosis and I'm not so sure that weight lifting is the ideal exercise either.

Michael Dresser: So, it's important then, to keep moving.

Dr. Tindel: That's right.

Michael Dresser: Okay and most of us are so sedentary today with the advent of your computer there are people who just don't get out of the chair, you know, to do anything. Okay now so the reduction of stress you know, and you said these are your words back pain isn't just about on your back, it's about your head.

Dr. Tindel: That's right and a lot of back pain is in our head and I'm not saying that people are imagining it, it’s a real but if we can conquer the fear and conquer the idea that we're going to hurt ourselves we can get over that hurdle and we can move on and address the problem at hand.

Michael Dresser: Okay so effectively if we reduce some stress it’ll eliminate some of the back pain and also too I keep hearing this over and over and over again and it has to do with, you know, a myriad of different physical discomforts, and it's about getting enough sleep.

Dr. Tindel: Oh, I can’t stress that enough, more importantly than sleep, it's also making sure you get good sleep in other words, not just enough sleep but sleep that makes you feel well rested. And that is something that I find is pervasive in people who have back problems, is that I also find that one of the core issues is that they're not sleeping well and if you can wake up in the morning and feel refreshed and feel like you got good night sleep, dealing with back pains a lot easier.

Michael Dresser: There is something that you're saying here that I've heard again and I think I've got an internal time clock with this, it's a standard sleep routine to including some sleep time and evening rituals

Dr. Tindel: That's right and some people have to work all night and it makes it more difficult to get good sleep habits but other people do have difficulty getting sleep and sometimes just even just tackling that issue can make other problems better.

Michael Dresser: So I talked about ritual are we talking about let’s say - I'll just pick a time, 10 at night is the time that I go to sleep every night and 8 o’clock in the morning is when I get up in the morning, and they're whatever amount of time that I sleep between, and if that kind of a ritual and my body is used to it and create the time clock and if I do that in and of itself it could help tremendously.

Dr. Tindel: I think so, and it's even more than that, it's not just at 8 I'm going to go to sleep I think if 8 is your going to bed time then 7 you need to start unwinding. I don't think watching a horror film between 6 and 8 just before you go to bed is a good idea. You just start going through a process where you sort of relax, whatever you choose your activity, the slow process over maybe an hour or so where you get to that point where when you do go to sleep you're calm and relaxed and you get to sleep quickly and easily.

Michael Dresser: Now one of the things that it is so obvious but people that, when we approach this in a moment, that people they hear it they know what the problems are, they know what the end result is they know what the ramifications are but it's all about losing weight and people just won't do it.

Dr. Tindel: Well it gets back to that issue of you know, getting out there doing some exercise. Obviously, weight has a lot more ramifications and certainly if you imagine carrying around a brick in your shirt all day long you’d think that by the end of the day you might have some back pain. And so, we presume that patients who are carrying a little extra weight are probably putting a little bit more stress on their back, but the fact is we don't have any really hard data to make that statement. We don't know for sure if somebody who is heavier than somebody else will necessarily have a higher chance of having a back pain episode or issue. That doesn’t mean that it’s not good for you and we certainly like our patients to be slimmer then heavier.

Michael Dresser: You know and I see this constantly and I am one of those people that has fallen into this particular category that if my back starts to go out one of my legs shrinks a little bit and I get one foot that gets longer than the other.

Dr Tindel: Well, believe it or not, most of us have one leg that is longer or shorter than the other and for most people it’s not an issue. When it gets more than an inch or so in discrepancy, that’s when we become more concerned about it. But if you see a podiatrist or your local orthpaedic surgeon or even you primary care physician, they can test you for it and it takes about 2 minutes and they can give you a little shoe lift, if that is necessary or something less invasive like something inside the shoe like a little felt pad that can raise your heel up.

Michael Dresser: Or effectively you can buy those at most markets, can’t you?

Dr. Tindel: That’s right.

Michael Dresser: Ok. Now here comes the big one for a lot of people. It’s called stop smoking. There are people who are not getting the message, no matter what you do, no matter what kind of warnings you show them, they are still smoking. Now the price of cigarettes has sky rocketed, it’s limited to where you can go smoke, but the are still doing it.

Dr. Tindel: You bet. And this is something I talk about a lot in the book and most people don’t realize that among all the other things that smoking has an effect on, whether it’s the skin, the lungs, your general health, your immune system, but believe it or not, it also affects the discs in your back and specifically the lumbar discs. And it has been shown that smoking not only causes premature disc degeneration, but people who smoke have higher chance of having back problems and back pain. So, one of the things we like to work on is smoking cessation which is really really important.

Michael Dresser: Well I didn’t think the patches 100 years ago when I quit smoking, the patches worked for me where it was one of those areas where it took away that desire, that need, to have a cigarette right now and as the time went by I was fine and was completely off of them. But you know, to this day, and it’s been since probably 1991 when I quit smoking I can still feel one in my hand.

Dr. Tindel: Well, congratulations that you stopped smoking. I think that its’ great and I tell my patient’s it’s never too late to stop and I think it’s great you did and I hope that people get the message that smoking isn’t very good for them.

Michael Dresser: And by the way, you can stop smoking and you can still get cancer too.

Dr. Tindel. That’s right and

Michael Dresser: So there is that period of time afterwards and that’s what I have to sit back and look at and I was one of those people at the same time that did not, that there was nothing you could have said to me at the time, and I smoke for 35 years, to quit smoking until the one day I decided that is what I wanted to do. But you can see again, you can see what it does to your lungs, you see the statistics, you can see people dying of cancer but if you get somebody that it’s such a horrible addition, and we are talking addiction, that it’s very hard to quit.

Dr. Tindel: You bet. And the other issue is that of second had smoke. If you have somebody else in the house who is smoking or who you are beathing in the smoke in from, it’s as bad, if not worse than smoking yourself.

Micheal Dresser: Ok now you also mentioned a couple of other options which would be hypnosis, and maybe some acupuncture.

Dr. Tindel: I think there is plenty of options. Those are just a few. I think anything that gets you moving, gets you mobilized, gets you stretched out, gets you feeling stronger and more secure, more confident about you back, whether is aquatherapy or yoga, seeing a chiropractor. I am one orthopaedic spine surgeon who thinks chiropractors are great. Anything that can get you out there and get going is what I recommend and there are so many options that I rarely have patients who end up going through all the options, they try a couple and they are already feeling better. I go through them in detail in the book and I think there are so many options out there that somebody would be hardpressed not to try a couple and not feel better.

Michael Dresser: Wonderful. Nathaniel, we are going to break and we will be right back so please stay with us. Our guest, Dr. Nathaniel Tindel, his book is I’ve Got Your Back: The Truth about spine surgery, straight from a surgeon. And I’m Michael Dresser and your listening to the Live Style Talk radio network and we will be back right after this.

Michael Dresser: The book is I’ve Got Your back: the truth about spine surgery straight from a surgeon, our guest is Dr. Nathan Tindel. Nathan, Nathaniel let me ask you this question: Do you have a website we can find you at?

Dr. Tindel: Yes, its www. newyorkcenterforspinaldisorders.com

Michael Dresser: OK, it’s the NewYorkCenterforspinaldisorders.com

Dr. Tindel: Or nycenterforspinaldisorders.com

Michael Dresser: Great and let me ask you this question: What was it that finally triggered you to put this information to pen and people need to know this information.

Dr. Tindel: That’s a great question. You know, I spent several years as the Director of Spinal Surgery at Montefiore Medical Center which is a huge medical center and it was during that time that I became known in the New York City are for problem backs. In other words, backs that had surgery or patient’s with back problems that had surgery that didn’t go as planned and what astounded me was the number of patients who had surgery who were doing so poorly and I started to analyze these patients and look at them clearly and what I saw was that there were clear patterns, of not only patients but problems that went down this road of making the mistake of having surgery for reasons that we are not so sure can get better with surgery. And that is why I put the book together, for patients who are suffereing and are wondering hey, is that quick fix for me? Should I have my surgery and will it make me better. And I would tell anybody who has back pain or anyone who is suffering with back problems who is even remotely thinking of doing something about to read this book. It’s a three hour consultation with your very own spine surgeon. I don’t think any spine surgeon is going to give you three hours, no matter how much you pay them. Any you read this book cover to cover and you will know everything there is to know about back problems, back treatments, back options, what works and what doesn’t work and you will walk away with a good understanding of whether your particular problem may or may not respond to which kind of solution you are looking for.

Michael Dresser: I’ve got the book in my hand and what your saying is what I’m seeing in the book. Let me ask you this: I’ve got one of those backs that if I’m not very careful it will go out on me and I’m constantly moving, I walk a lot, I exercise a lot, I am a body builder and yadi yah and the list goes on and I’m in my middle sixties. Now, one of the things that I have found that works for me, and let me know if you think this will work or not, is that when my back starts to tighten up, I have one of those genie massagers, those two hand massagers, and I use that and it seems to loosen the muscles up and I put a little ice on it and I’m ready to rock.

Dr. Tindel: Well, I think you have pointed out something that is really important and that is that everybody is different, everybody has a unique solution to their problem and the good news is that you found your solution to your problem. And that is part of what I feel my job is, as a physician, with my patients, to find out what works and works for them. What works for one person, is not always what works for somebody else. Finding that match is the crucial most important thing for me to do for a patient.

Michael Dresser: Now, how critical is ice. I keep hearing ice, ice, ice, ice, ice and if you get your back to hot, people have gotten into hot showers and it just made it disastrous.

Dr. Tindel: Well, you know, people try ice and people try heat and sometomes a combination of the two works well and I would say try both, but avoid the extremes. I’ve seen patients who have fallen asleep with hot packs on their back and ended up with skin problems because of burning so you have to be cautious. Ice can also burn, so there is no harm in trying it and certainly see if it helps and I think you have come onto something that works well for you.

Michael Dresser. Nathaniel, what I think would be an absolutely great idea is if you could get this in to the pediatrics section of every hospital and everyone doing pediatrics because if you start young, and if you follow the process the road map that you have put out here could avoid a tremendous amount of trouble, being proactive instead of reactive

Dr. Tindel: That’s a great idea

Michael Dresser: Again, please your website.

Dr. Tindel: its [www.nycenterforspinaldisorders.com](http://www.nycenterforspinaldisorders.com) or newyorkcenterforspinaldisorders.com

Michael Dresser: OK we have about a minute to go and let me ask you this, is there a question I didn’t ask you that I should have that would have brought information up that we need to hear. I want to make sure we cover the bases and we have covered everything. Is there a question I forgot to ask you.

Dr. Tindel: No, I think we have covered a lot of stuff. You know, one of the reasons I wrote the book was to have patients approach their doctor not as someone who is going to provide that quick fix but someone who is going to provide a partnership and that’s the kind of doctor that you want to look for if you have a serious back problem. You want someone who is going to work with you and not just going to provide that quick solution because often times it just doesn’t work out that way.

Michael Dresser: And where can we buy your book?

Dr. Tindel: You can buy it online, amazon.com, Walmart, you can get it in your favorite bookstore, they can order it; it’s available everywhere.

Michael Dresser: Wonderful. Hey, Nathaniel thank you for joining us. I appreciated it and I’m going to ice up as soon as the show is over.

Dr. Tindel: Thank you very much

Michael Dresser (laughing): Thank you. I’m Michael Dresser and your listening to the Life Style Talk Radio network.