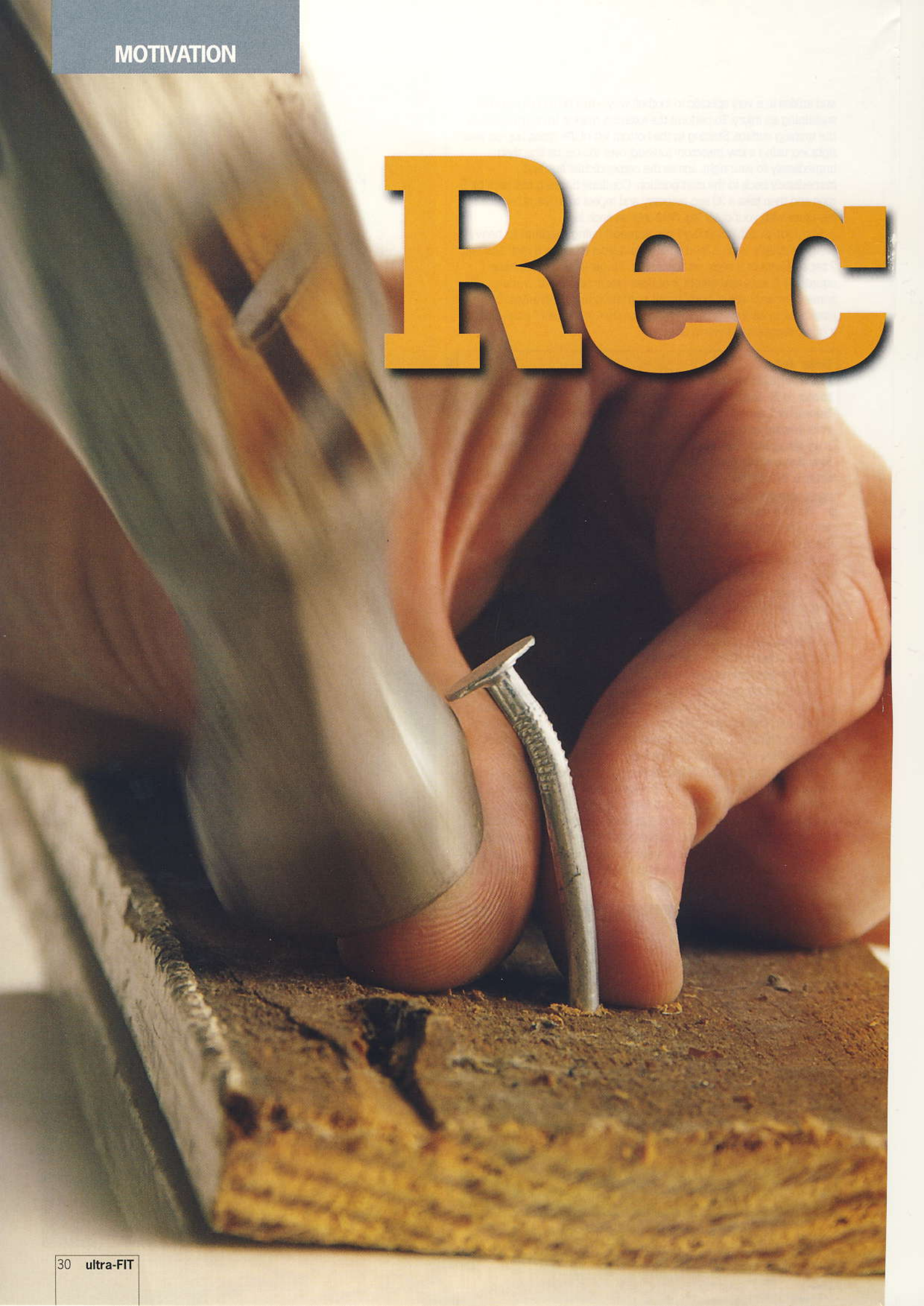


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Cognitive hypnotherapist **Trevor Silvester** unveils some unusual pain relief and recovery techniques – all tried and personally tested

**I**'m clumsy. I don't like to admit it, but I've broken far too many bones for it to be anything else. This means that I've spent a lot of time in plaster, but the upside is it's given me a lot of first hand experience in applying my skills as a cognitive hypnotherapist to pain relief and injury recovery.

Unfortunately, injury is an inevitable consequence of most sports, so finding ways of healing quickly and reducing discomfort without resorting to over the counter remedies should be part of every athlete's armoury. The good news is that there are some simple, but highly effective ways of utilising the mind/body connection to help you recover from injury and ease pain. And I know from personal experience that they work!

#### **A self-fulfilling prognosis?**

Before I became interested in cognitive hypnotherapy, like most people I took my doctor's diagnosis of what was wrong and how long it would take to recover as

gospel. In fact, studies show that a high percentage of people heal at the rate suggested by their doctor. Now it could be that doctors are spot on in their prognoses or that they just stick to an average rate of

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recovery - but this didn't appear to be the case, recovery slowed or speeded up according to what the patients in the trial

were told to expect. So, if your recovery rate can be influenced by the information that you're given by someone in a white coat - their mind influencing your body - couldn't your own mind do that for you independently?

#### **The proof of personal experience**

I'm going to use a couple of examples from my personal medical history to illustrate some techniques that can help you minimise the pain of injury and reduce your recovery period. Every time I've used this, I've recovered in half the time the doctor predicted.

The first injury was sustained as part of a celebration a couple of years ago when we bought out a bottle of champagne. I tried to open it, but the cork was a stubborn little thing and resisted my manly attempts to wring its neck. So I reached for the nearest useful implement – a table knife. Unfortunately, it slipped and severed my thumb tendon making an alarmingly large hole.

My thumb stopped responding to suggestions and I very quickly went into shock. Luckily my wife, an ex-police officer, went straight into professional mode and took control – even telling my dog to 'step back, there's nothing to see.' Some habits die-hard. Despite the fact that

I was shaking like a blender, I had the presence of mind to use a technique I teach on my cognitive hypnotherapy course to relieve my pain. I call it the 'Escudero' technique in honour of the Spanish surgeon who has used it successfully on thousands of patients, enabling them to undergo major surgery without anaesthetic.

### The Escudero technique

It's based on our saliva, and it sounds odd, but stay with me. Pain is a process the brain follows from initial stimulus – the

dry, so by staying moist it sends a contradictory message to the brain, and interrupts the pain. The affirmation focuses our intention and engages the cognitive side of the brain, which reduces our attention to signals received by the part of the brain dealing with the pain response. Taken together, they shut down our awareness of pain very effectively.

I had reason to use it again when I went skiing. I fell and dislocated my collarbone – also called an AC separation. Using the Escudero technique again, I was able to ski a mile and a half, carry my

and down my tendon weaving the tendon stronger and sticking it in place. With my collar bone, rather bizarrely what occurred to me was my Grandmother knitting, so I imagined her knitting the ligaments tight back into place, along with the comforting click of the needles I remembered from my childhood.

### Simplicity is best

On my website

([www.questinstitute.co.uk](http://www.questinstitute.co.uk)) there is a free self-hypnosis audio download to help people recover from injury which guides you through this process without dictating how to do it. I listened to it at least once per day. As an example of how well this works, I was back in the gym at full capacity only six weeks after the accident and my wife Rebecca ran a 10k race only four weeks after a stomach operation. One of the great things I love about these techniques is their simplicity; once you get the idea of them it's just a question of practising and sticking with them.

Finally, a significant factor in the pain management and healing process is something we call 'ecology'. This is simply the effect of the work you do on the greater system it's applied within. So, if I'm working with a boxer or martial artist, for example, I won't use pain control techniques to nullify the pain they might sustain from a punch. To make someone numb to pain might be possible, but it could also lead to a greater injury or death. Similarly, I won't help a runner run injured; you have to think about how long you want your participation in your sport to last, not just how well you perform on one particular day. So, use these techniques to heal in the shortest possible time - but no shorter. After all, sofas across the land are occupied by people watching the sports channels because they ruined their health by ignoring their body's essential need to heal. **UF**

## I had reason to use it again when I went skiing. I fell and dislocated my collarbone... Using the Escudero technique again, I was able to ski a mile and a half, carry my skis back to the shop and walk another mile to the hospital.

severing of the tendon, to the response – the feeling of pain in the location of the stimulus in my case. There are steps in between which, if interrupted, will prevent the feeling from being perceived. Saliva contains a strong concentration of a natural opiate (painkiller); it's probably why animals lick their wounds, and why we still have the residual instinct to 'kiss it better'. Our tongues are packed with nerve endings, so focusing as much saliva on your tongue as you can manage introduces the opiate into the nervous system. Typically you say an affirmation in your head – like 'my thumb is numb' (it doesn't have to rhyme!), three times while focusing your attention on the saliva on your tongue. I've found it helps if you swallow and repeat this three times. And that's it – amazingly it works. The degree of pain relief you experience will vary from person to person, and increases with experience. When I teach it on my course about 90% of people find it makes a difference when using a pinch to the back of the triceps as the test pain, after only a two-minute demonstration. Being able to pinch until a bruise appears with no pain is common. In my case, Escudero numbed my pain so well that when the nurse tested my thumb for nerve damage I couldn't feel the pin. In my shock I'd forgotten that I'd numbed it, and didn't remember until the next day.

I believe it works because the introduction of the opiate interrupts the pain process, as does the moistness of the mouth. When in pain your digestion system slows or shuts down – and your mouth is part of that system. As your system shuts down, your mouth becomes

skis back to the shop and walk another mile to the hospital. So, my personal experience has convinced me of the success of this technique.

### Imagine your recovery

Our bodies are amazing in the way that they heal: if it weren't so commonplace it would be miraculous. When I teach people how to become cognitive hypnotherapists they often expect healing work to be complicated, when in fact the opposite is true. The most potent resource available to you is simply your imagination. A powerful way to consciously guide your unconscious healing processes is to visualise what you want it to achieve. This doesn't have to be an anatomical representation of your problem; in fact a metaphorical similarity can be more effective. So, with my clients I talk through how they picture their injury and the process by which it will recover. I then invite them to imagine sending their unconscious a metaphor, which conceptualises what they want to occur. They need to do this regularly.

With both of my own injuries I sat down several times a day and focused on my visualisation. Cognitive hypnotherapy is based on how each individual creates their reality, so I don't believe in a single visualisation working on a particular injury for all people; it's better if each person lets their own imagination work for them. When using it for myself, I 'Google' the injury to get an anatomical idea of what is required, and then I see what idea comes to mind that sends the appropriate message to the unconscious. With my thumb I imagined a spider working up



Trevor Silvester is the founder of the Quest Institute which specialises in Cognitive Hypnotherapy and NLP and is one of the largest and most successful hypnotherapy training institutions in the UK. His work with clients includes helping sports people improve their performance using mind body techniques, and he is a member of Team Perfect ([www.perfectuk.com](http://www.perfectuk.com)) A published author and popular speaker, Trevor also runs a private practice in Harley Street, London. To order Trevor's books and audio downloads, to find out more about training with Quest, or to see a therapist he has trained, visit [www.questinstitute.co.uk](http://www.questinstitute.co.uk)