



Treatment for dystonia in musicians

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Any musician will tell you, making music is their passion. But for 22-year-old Megan Coiley, her drive to become a virtuoso almost ended her career.

Coiley started playing piano when she was just 3 years old and by the time she was 14, she began having pain in her hands.

"I saw an orthopedist, I saw two neurologists, I saw a physician, regular physician, I saw a couple physical therapists, but none of them were really very helpful," Coiley said.

Over the next three years, her condition worsened, and she had difficulty with everyday tasks.

"I started getting the weakness, and I couldn't hold or lift things," she said. "I didn't have very much accuracy. Writing became very painful, typing became very painful."

Coiley was diagnosed with dystonia, a movement disorder that causes involuntary contractions of the muscles. So she turned to the Golandsky Institute in New York City. Artistic director Edna Golandsky, has been teaching the Taubman approach for 40 years, which is a technique that corrects hand injuries and helps musicians avoid further injury.

"They come from certain movements that we make that we are taught to do.. such as [curling](#) the fingers, stretching them, putting them on the piano and lifting them one finger at a time, supposedly to strengthen them," Golandsky said.

When Coiley had her first lesson with Golandsky, she could barely move her hands.

"At first, we couldn't go to the piano because I had fists," Coiley said. "So we worked on some simple things like turning a doorknob and using the same motions I would eventually be using at the piano."

"The Taubman approach has to do with possessing the knowledge of how to play tension free," Golandsky said. "How to play without discomfort and how to play without pain and how to not get injured."

In just two lessons, Coiley felt relief, and three months later, she had full use of her hands.

"There was more sunlight in there," Coiley said, pointing to her hands. "I could feel more open to what we were doing, what we were working on. It was incredible."

Now she's applying to college for music, where she hopes to teach others.

But the Taubman approach isn't just for musicians – Golandsky has also helped surgeons, athletes and people with carpal tunnel. And her message is the same for each student:

"Nothing is wrong with you, because very often musicians are told something is wrong, its all in your head. It's not in your head, it's in your hands, and anyone can correct it," she said.