

“My neurosurgeon gave me hope to be back in the ring again after spinal surgery.”

I was 20 when I was training for a Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fight. During one of my sparring sessions, I hurt my back. I wrestled during high school as well, so I was used to getting some minor injuries and didn't think much of it. I treated the pain with ice, heat and Motrin. However, the pain continued to increase and there was no relief. I continued to train and participate in tournaments. It was not a good idea, but I was 20 and thought it would heal once I could rest. The pain increased until I was unable to stand, sit, walk or sleep. I went to the doctor and had x-rays and an MRI. I herniated my L5-S1 disc, and it was causing much pain in my back and both my legs. Pain management gave me cortisone shots, but they did not help. I tried everything and could not even sit through a meal with my family. I didn't think I would be able to do any of the things I did before I hurt my back, like riding my motorcycle and competing in Mixed Martial Arts. I had goals and things I wanted to accomplish. It was affecting everything in my life. I really had no hope.

My mother set up an appointment on Long Island with Dr. William Sonstein, a neurosurgeon at NSPC, Brain & Spine Surgery. She received his name from a friend who had undergone surgery with him and reassured her that he was the one to help me. I went to see him on January 14, 2015. When I first met with Dr. Sonstein, he had so much confidence in me and his practice that it was comforting to hear that he could help me and fix the situation. He told me I would be back in the ring, and I would have my life back. He was so positive, and he gave me hope.

I started to believe that there was a chance I would be able to compete in MMA again. He scheduled me for a spinal fusion less than two weeks later, on January 23, 2015. His staff at the office and in the hospital were just as amazing as he was. The prompt follow-up and scheduling for surgery made me feel extremely lucky to be under such great



This is me fighting with herniated disc on June 28, 2014. I won by technical knockout in the first round but I did more damage to my back. (Marcus pictured on the left)

care. Teresa, Dr. Sonstein's secretary is the best and was there to help me and my parents through everything.

It was not an overnight recovery, but Dr. Sonstein kept his word and sure enough he got me fighting again. I was back in the cage in June 2016, 1 year later doing everything I did before. I am able to lift people, run, jump, punch and kick with no problem at all. I have my life back. I ride my motorcycle, go to work and train. I am so thankful for Dr. Sonstein and his team at NSPC. His bedside manner and friendliness got me back to health. I can't thank him enough for giving me a second chance at pursuing my dreams.

As a young adult, my advice for anyone suffering from back pain is that there is no reason to live in pain all the time. Find the right doctor and get help.

This was from my July 30th, 2016 MMA fight, after my spinal fusion. I am on the top of my game; technical knockout in the first round!



My mom and I before my fight on June 28th, 2014.

Don't give up or give in to the pain. Fight for your dreams and have the life you want. There is always hope! -

Marcus Comodo, Age 22, Levittown, NY.

Actual Patient



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