

A SHOW OF HANDS

Winter 2013

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Balancing The Body

Rebecca Jones

For a child wobbling atop a two-wheel bicycle for the first time, getting it to remain upright is a scary challenge. But once that child has mastered the art of balancing on the bike, the body just remembers what to do. That's the way it is with balance. Our body has lots of tools at its disposal to help us control our upright posture, and these tools function largely at the subconscious level.

However, when one of those tools fails to work properly, our system of balance can get out of whack. Problems with our feet and neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, can throw off our balance. Eye conditions can rob us of stereoscopic vision, which helps us

Bodywork can help. Certain modalities can improve and restore balance, particularly through reeducating the body in the most efficient ways to move. Just like our bodies once learned the best way to stabilize atop a bicycle, they can also learn new, better ways to stabilize aging feet and legs. Here's a look at how two bodywork modalities--structural integration and the Feldenkrais Method--may help.

Structural Integration

Jane Elmore, MD, is a champion dressage rider, which means she spends much of her day perched atop a 1,200-pound prancing horse. Her safety absolutely depends on keeping her



Reeducate your body and bring balance.

properly locate ourselves in space. And, of course, inner ear problems can greatly affect our balance.

Many of these balance-affecting conditions are related to aging. In fact, it's estimated that one of every three people older than 65 will suffer some kind of fall this year. And half those people will fall again within 12 months.

balance. She's been doing dressage for more than 10 years, but she's found the greatest success in her sport most recently. She credits her improvement to structural integration sessions.

"I just feel so much more secure in the saddle now," says Elmore, who owns a

Continued on page 2

If you never do, you'll never know

-T. Bell

Office Hours and Contact

HAND & HAND Mobile Massage
Tom Saulnier - CMT, ZBT
805-501-2011
handnhand5@yahoo.com
www.handnhand.biz
Mon. - Sat., By Appointment

In this Issue

Balancing The Body
Happiness is Contagious
Don't Get Sick!

Continued from page 1

ranch in Denison, Texas. "They talk about the rider being a dance partner with the horse in dressage. Well, I was never a dancer. I was always overweight. But what I find now, in order to have this horse be able to respond to you, you have to be subtle in being able to shift weight from a left seat bone to a right seat bone, to both seat bones, to rotate in the seat so your shoulders follow the horse's shoulders. All this is much easier for me now, simply because I'm much freer in my movements."

Structural integration is based on the work of Dr. Ida Rolf, a biochemist who founded the modality called Rolfing, as well as the Rolf Institute in Boulder, Colorado, in 1971. Structural integration involves manipulating the body's connective tissue--the fascia--to rebalance the body and bring about pain relief from stress and injury.

"Most people come to structural integration because they've got something that hurts and can't make it better," says Marilyn Beech, past executive director and president of the board of the International Association of Structural Integrators. "But structural integration isn't really so much about getting rid of the pain as it is about getting the body lined up again. A lot of times your body is so misaligned you can't get your center of gravity over your foot. A lot of structural integrators work with athletes. It's common that afterward, they'll feel more coordinated, more efficient in their movements, and they'll have better balance."

Feldenkrais

Like structural integration, the Feldenkrais Method improves balance by teaching individuals to be more aware of proper movement. Developed by Ukrainian-born physicist Moshe Feldenkrais, the method stems from Feldenkrais' study of judo and its emphasis on perfect balance. Promoters say the method can help people experiencing pain in the back, neck, shoulders, hips, legs, or knees, but is also useful for healthy individuals, particularly athletes, who want to move more freely.

"Unlike physical therapy or occupational therapy, Feldenkrais is an educational process," says Denver practitioner Sissel Rhyme. "It works with the central

nervous system. It's bones to brain." Rhyme typically leads students through a sequence of precise movements, either sitting or lying on the floor, standing, or sitting in a chair. Throughout the process, she asks students to think about how various positions feel.

"This is intelligent exercise," she says. "You have to be a part of it mentally. It's not like being on the treadmill for 30 minutes where it doesn't matter what you think about." By increasing the awareness of how it feels to move properly, with everything structurally balanced, students can learn to let go of old patterns of movement and develop new ones that result in improved flexibility and coordination.

There are literally hundreds of such movement lessons, which vary in difficulty and complexity. Lessons can be 30-60 minutes long and can be done

in groups or privately with an instructor. The instructor will touch the students, but only gently and noninvasively. It's not at all painful or strenuous, though Rhyme reports students may find themselves exhausted after an hour. Studies have shown that 10 weeks worth of Feldenkrais lessons leads to notable improvements not just in balance, but also in the participants' sense of confidence in their ability to balance.

Rebecca Jones is a Colorado-based freelancer. Contact her at killarneyrose@comcast.net.



Ida Rolf, the founder of Rolfing.

Happiness is Contagious

Maybe mom was right. Research suggests that surrounding yourself with friends and family who are happy can actually increase your own happiness.

Scientists at Harvard University and the University of California, San Diego, found that emotions, particularly happiness, have a viral effect in how they spread from one person to another. For every happy person in your physical social network, you have a 9 percent chance of increasing your own happiness. The effect is more pronounced the closer someone is to you geographically, and it does not seem to include electronic communications. The study, "Dynamic Spread of Happiness in a Large Social Network," can be found online in the British Medical Journal (www.bmj.com).

This is especially good news considering the potential health benefits of happiness and positivity. A study published in *Stroke* magazine has indicated a "significant association"

between optimism and a reduced risk of stroke. This is in addition to studies that have linked optimism to a healthier immune system, faster wound healing, and a lower risk of heart disease. While the exact cause of the benefits is not clear, one theory is that optimistic people are more likely to take care of their health. In addition, there is hope that teaching optimism could become part of a preventative program for various conditions.

What's one way to get happy? Try massage! Exposure to stress, a contributing factor to unhappiness, over a long period of time can increase the rate of neural degeneration and increase the risk for Alzheimer's disease. Luckily, a study from Umea University in Sweden has shown that just five minutes of massage has the potential to lower stress, and 80 minutes of massage has a tremendously positive effect on stress levels. Get massage, get happy, and cheer up your friends and family!



Surrounding yourself with happy people is healthy!

Don't Get Sick!

Prevention is Key

Leslie Roste

Regardless of whether the threat is a simple cold or the flu, there are several things you can do to protect yourself from unnecessary downtime.

Proper Hand Washing

This gets top billing because of its true effectiveness in preventing illness. The most important aspects of hand washing are the length of time (at least 30 seconds) and the amount of friction you use, not the water temperature. In fact, warm water is better than hot, as hot water dries the skin, leaving more microscopic openings on its surface. In cases where hand washing is not practical, keep hand sanitizer available. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can also contribute to drying of the skin, so be diligent about moisturizing.

Immunizations

Have you had all your shots? The most underimmunized group in America is women aged 30-55. Check with your physician to make sure you are up-to-date on everything from influenza to tetanus.

Fluids and More Fluids

Staying well hydrated clearly benefits our skin, the largest organ of our immune system. The advice to stay adequately hydrated is even more important in the cold, dry months of winter.

Eat Your Vitamins

A balanced diet, which includes all food groups, gives your immune system the resources it needs when it faces a challenge like the flu.

Eight Hours of Sleep

Research continues to prove how vital

this is to every part of our well-being. It affects everything from our ability to resist illness to managing weight.

Hands and Face

It is important to keep your hands away from your face--particularly the eyes, mouth, and nose, which are favorite points of entry for viruses. Start paying attention to how frequently you touch your face. Break the habit, and you could reduce your risk of colds and flu this season by more than 50 percent.

Leslie Roste has degrees in nursing and microbiology and is employed by King Research in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

*Happy New
Year!*

-Tom

Welcome to "MESSAGE U."
Today's Subject: SAVINGS - Less is More

NEW CUSTOMERS

\$49.95/Hour - (Simi Valley/Moorpark Areas Only - all others slightly higher)

CURRENT CUSTOMERS

Buy 4 massages at regular price, receive your 5th for FREE!
(Restrictions apply. Please ask for details.)

Note: The preceding information is not medical advice. Please check with your doctor prior to starting any new exercise or nutrition plan - especially if currently under a doctor's care or if you have any pre-existing medical condition(s).

For more information, please visit our website at:
www.handnhand.biz.

HAND & HAND
Mobile Massage...at your fingertips!

HAND & HAND Mobile Massage

1464 Madera Road #N-251
Simi Valley, CA 93065



Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals