

Moving Being

Unlike most other creatures, our musculo-skeletal system is relatively dormant for some time after birth. But when our muscles are able to hold our bones upright and the spine assumes a central position, we can articulate - our real life can be said to begin: we have become independent. From then onwards our posture, and the stresses and strains it experiences, offers useful clues about what we are making of life.

The human body has evolved to give us the most refined combination of strength, flexibility and coordination known in nature. To achieve this we have 'borrowed' design feature from all other creatures, so that although we can be outrun, outclimbed or outswum, none other can compete with us if taken in triathlon.

Our skeleton is extremely robust, our leg bones being as strong as teak. Their joints, which enable us to move our arms and legs freely, are so well connected that it has been estimated that they could maintain 150 years regular use. Yet in our time, the most feared disorder of bone is not fracture from use but the softening of bone. 'osteoporosis', which is a result of under use. Similarly, the disfiguring, incapacitating swelling of joints known as 'arthritis' is not associated with too much activity but with insufficient movement.

Our muscles, although laying claim to individual fame, such as the arm's bulging biceps, belong to a supremely organized system. Almost all muscles take part in most actions. Reaching out with the arm is possible only because the back and leg muscles increase their tension; sitting down to rest actually increases tension because many muscles are thereby inhibited. And when even one muscle becomes injured, even the simplest activity feels restricted.

Muscles also perform other vital functions. Their external movements cause inner massage-like effects that help the function of the internal organs by improving circulation. Movements also help to dissipate excessive nervous energy, which restores balance to the neurological workings of the system.

Demonstration

Principles of Physical Development – what moves lives!

Illustration of Curves and Spirals

Breathing

Function and Malfunction

Practical

1 Primary moves: the Head and Neck

2 Spinal Twists

3 Open Chest

4 Sitting and Squatting

5 Inversion: Benefits and Precautions

6 Correcting the Spine

7 How Do You Walk?

Discussion - Recommended Reading

Bertherat T – The Body Has Its Reasons – Heinemann – 1988

Cody J – Visualizing Muscles – University Press of Kansas – 1990

Gelb M – Body Learning – Owl Books – 1996

Phillips K – The Spirit of Yoga – Cassell Illustrated – 2001

Thomson C L – Breathe – Kingston Publications – Edinburgh 1984

Tsiaras A – The Architecture and Design of Man and Women

The Human Body – Doubleday – 2004