

YOUR HEALING KNEADS

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Movement Education

Wellness in Motion

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Someone may tell you it's all in your head. Yet you know it's not, because you're feeling it, in excruciating detail, in your body. Movement education pioneers agree that it may have started in your mind--way back when your body and your brain were learning together how to crawl, stand and walk--but it didn't end there. Movement education theorizes that when the body establishes responses to its emotional or physical environment, those responses are carried forward long after the original stimulus is gone. In other words, that pain in the neck, back, or head may just be the latest chapter in a story that began long ago.

the mind, anew. This is done through a series of sessions where practitioners may use hands-on manipulation to teach the student different ways to move, sit, stand, reach, bend, lift, and walk. This type of bodywork is especially beneficial for people suffering from chronic difficulties, but also for anyone trying to achieve higher levels of physical and mental wellness. Athletes, dancers, and musicians have credited movement therapy for enhanced performance. There are many variations of movement modalities, including the ones featured here. Similar in their goals, they offer subtle differences in technique and philosophy.



By teaching body awareness, movement education can have profound effects on health.

Learning New Patterns

Movement education--an umbrella term also known as re-education movement, somatic movement education, repatterning, and movement therapy--employs the philosophy that one's body structure and movements get stuck in habitual, unhealthy patterns. Movement approaches unwind the patterns and teach the body, as well as

Alexander Technique

The Alexander Technique was created by F. Matthias Alexander (1869-1955), a Shakespearean orator who began losing his voice while on stage. In trying to alleviate his chronic laryngitis, he realized that reducing neck tension

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When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around.

-Willie Nelson

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eased head compression, which in turn eased spine compression. By using his entire body to initiate an action, his movements became more unified and efficient.

Today, Alexander Technique therapists certified by the American Society for the Alexander Technique (AmSAT), the major certifying body, must have completed 1,600 hours of training over a minimum of three years to be certified. During a typical session, lasting 30 to 60 minutes, the client wears comfortable clothes and receives instruction on conducting everyday movements. The instructor may lightly touch the student while she moves to determine how much tension the muscles are involving and redirect the movement. Through gentle, physical and verbal guidance, the therapist teaches the student to release maladaptive behaviors.

Feldenkrais Method

The Feldenkrais Method was developed by Russian-born Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984). Living primarily in Israel, Feldenkrais's career in movement education evolved when an old soccer-derived knee injury vastly improved after he injured his other knee. He began researching and proposed that nearly our entire spectrum of movement is learned during our first few years of life. By communicating with the central nervous system via the skeletal system, old patterns can be replaced with new ones that lead to improved physical, mental, and emotional functioning.

Feldenkrais education has two components: group sessions, in which the teacher guides students through movement sequences, and one-on-one sessions, lasting 45 to 60 minutes, in which the student is fully clothed. The teacher uses gentle touch and movement to help the student become aware of existing patterns and new, more functional possibilities.

Hellerwork

Joseph Heller determined that movement education and deep-tissue bodywork emphasizing vertical realignment of the body can release chronic stress and tension. Hellerwork involves eleven sessions: in each session,

one hour is devoted to bodywork and thirty minutes to movement therapy. The therapist also uses verbal dialogue to explore emotional factors that may be causing tension. As a preventative technique, the goal of Hellerwork is to produce permanent, corrective change in alignment and movement.

Trager Approach

The Trager Approach originated with Milton Trager (1908-1997), who was born with a congenital spinal deformity. After receiving bodywork, he discovered he had a knack for healing touch.

Three elements make up Trager, including tablework, Mentastics -- Trager's term for "mental gymnastics" -- and recall. During tablework, the client lays on a massage table in a warm room wearing either loose-fitting clothes or underwear. The practitioner uses gentle, rhythmic touches to free the

body from restrictive movement. The session lasts from 60 to 90 minutes.

After tablework, the student receives instructions in Mentastics, which teach how to recreate the freedom and pleasurable sensory state experienced during the tablework, encouraging positive tissue response. Each time Mentastics are practiced, the changes become more permanent. The third component, recall, promotes relaxation by learning how to remember the feeling you had during tablework.

Are You Aware?

Movement education is proving to be an empowering form of healthcare available to anyone interested in self-improvement. By teaching awareness, movement education has the potential to not only make a person's body feel better, but also raise consciousness about other aspects of one's life.



Movement therapies can address postural problems as well as other seemingly unrelated issues.

Keeping Your Back Healthy

Tips to Avoid Lasting Pain

Chances are good that, at some point in your life, you will have back pain. In fact, 70-85 percent of Americans will experience back pain at some point in their lives. But even with those odds, there are still several ways to minimize your risk and give yourself the best chance to live pain-free.

Several factors can cause back pain, including stress, poor posture, bad ergonomics, lack of exercise, arthritis, osteoporosis, a sedentary lifestyle, overexertion, pregnancy, kidney stones, fibromyalgia, excess weight, and more.

With all of these potential causes lurking, it's important to look at behaviors that can help you prevent and avoid back pain before it starts. Here are a few simple healthy back tips from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke:

- Stretch and warm tissues before exercise or other strenuous activities.
- Practice good posture. Avoid

slouching when sitting or standing.

--When standing, keep your weight balanced on both feet.

--Follow good ergonomics in the workplace. When sitting for long periods of time, rest your feet on a foot support. Make sure your chair and work surfaces are at the proper height. Get up and move around in between long sitting stints.

--Avoid high-heeled shoes.

--Watch your weight. Excess weight, especially around the waist, can put undue stress on lower back muscles.

--Exercise. Core strengthening moves, especially, will also benefit your back.

--Don't lift items that are heavier than you can handle. Remember to lift with your knees, not your back. Pull in your stomach muscles, keep your head down and in line with your straight back, and do not twist when lifting.

--Get a massage. Using therapeutic bodywork can melt pain-inducing stress away from your back and the rest of your body.



Massage is a great way to beat back pain.

Navigating Online Health Information

Getting medical information on the Internet might be easy, but relying on it can be dangerous--rumors, misunderstandings, biased opinions, and outright lies await. Here are some tips for using the Internet effectively as part of your health care.

Getting Good Information

"Start at Web resources dedicated to providing only peer-reviewed medical information," says library science expert Sean Eads. "WebMD.com and Healthfinder.gov are two excellent resources where the articles are researched and written by professionals." Eads recommends avoiding websites like Wikipedia or Yahoo! Answers where anyone can provide unverified information.

Other options for information include

AskDrWiki.com, where articles can only be composed and edited by qualified medical professionals. For a more academic viewpoint of conditions, Eads suggests Searchmedica.com, which compiles medical journal articles, clinical trials, and other health magazines into its searchable database.

Trust the Professionals

Internet sources should not be used in place of health-care professionals, experts say, but rather as a supplemental tool to enable you to be a better advocate for yourself. Gather the knowledge you need to be informed and ask intelligent questions, but remember that consulting a website is not a substitute for a visit to a health-care professional.

One advantage that the Internet does have is its ability to foster connections

between people living with similar conditions. A September 2010 Pew Internet survey shows that 1 in 5 Internet users have sought out someone with the same medical condition they had. Building an online community can allow people to share experiences, and provide support across long distances and in situations where a condition is less common.

Find a Balance

Recognizing both the benefits and shortcomings of these websites is necessary to utilizing them most effectively. By using the voices of many to become more informed, you can be more involved when listening to the reliable voice of a qualified health professional.

*In three words I
can sum up
everything I've
learned about
life: it goes on.*
-Robert Frost

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