

The Straits of 'Straight'

Far too often, 'straight' posture is misunderstood. We think of it as stiff and rigid, but it's actually the opposite. 'Straight' posture should be supple, even, and relaxed. It should also be sustainable, while still permitting movement. When we comprehend the idea of what 'straight' posture really is and how to obtain it (and what it isn't and what we shouldn't do if we want to achieve it), we can start making progress towards better posture, health, and general well-being.

The goal of working on our postural balance is not to force change and mold our bodies into a preconceived notion of 'straight'. Rather, it is about creating a space for change to happen naturally and in accordance to what is physiologically and structurally sound for a two-legged vertebrate, and for our own personal makeup. For this to happen, it is important to re-activate precise movement sequences that we may have forgotten or buried under years of habits of misuse, overuse and underuse of our bodies. The process is sometimes as much about un-learning old habits and correcting wrong ideas about our own structure and function, as it is about learning new ways of standing, sitting and walking.

Working towards achieving better posture begins with working on our postural awareness. This involves paying attention to the inner relationships within our body, as well as the latter's relationship to the context in the present

moment. This self-observation practice develops in us a heightened sense of awareness of our postural alignment, the quality of our actions, the energy we bring to a situation, and the affordances and responses of the environment. The ability to sense subtle changes in our body, such as strain, pain, or fatigue, allows us to identify early signs of unnecessary tension and take action to alleviate it before it becomes a problem. Additionally, being aware of our bodies allows us to recognize patterns of movement and reaction that could be enhanced or changed for greater efficiency and effectiveness. As we become more aware of how our physical, mental, and emotional states interact with our surroundings, we create a feedback loop that helps us balance our internal state with our external environment, which allows us to navigate life's experiences with more ease.

Postural awareness is the key to experiencing 'flow', a state of being completely absorbed in an activity. Mindful movement practices help us reconnect with our bodies, our breath, and our environment in the here and now, a vital basis for adjusting and flowing with life's obstacles. Ultimately, awareness-based activities are essential for cultivating resilience and living life to the fullest.

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