

## 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

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*"Health is a state of complete harmony of the body, mind, and spirit."*

-B.K.S. Iyengar

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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.

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Ida Rolf, the founder of Rolfing.

# What is Qi?

A fundamental concept of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) dating back over 3,000 years, qi (pronounced "chee") is the Chinese word for energy, which also carries with it connotations of air, breath, and life force.

In TCM, it is understood that everything from humans and animals to rocks and trees is filled with qi. This energy facilitates function, communication, and connection and is the uniting force of the universe, as well as the animating life force in all objects.

## Qi in the Body

Qi flows through the body via 14 meridian channels, which run either up or down throughout the body along specific pathways. These pathways deliver energy to organs, structures, and systems in a constant pattern, and when qi is flowing unimpeded along these meridians, a person is said to be in balance.

Illness, injury, stress, and other trauma

can cause blockages along these meridians, thus impairing or stopping the flow of qi and resulting in energy congestion. Several TCM techniques are designed to clear these blockages and restore balance and flow to the body's energy.

## Working with Qi

Along each meridian are points, known as acupoints or pressure points, where these energy blockages are likely to occur. Significant acupoints are also known as trigger points, and these are often starting points for therapists working to clear congested qi.

An important principle of qi is that clearing blockages at certain trigger points will help restore flow and thus impact parts of the body that are connected along the various meridians. For example, this could mean that working on someone's foot might benefit an internal organ like the liver, or benefit his or her heart. This concept further illustrates that qi in the body is

one balanced system in which one imbalance can affect several body parts and even alter emotional states.



Keeping qi in balance.

# Exercise Myths

## Fiction Vs. Fact

Although old fitness fictions like "no pain, no gain" are fading fast, plenty of misconceptions still exist. Following are some of the most common myths, counteracted by the latest research.

**FICTION:** YOU WILL BURN MORE FAT IF YOU EXERCISE LONGER AT A LOWER INTENSITY.

**FACT:** The most important focus in exercise and weight control is how many calories are burned during the activity. The faster you walk, step or run, the more calories you use per minute. However, high-intensity exercise may be more difficult to sustain.

**FICTION:** IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WORK OUT HARD AND OFTEN, EXERCISE IS A WASTE OF TIME.

**FACT:** Any exercise is better than none. For example, regular walking or

gardening for as little as an hour a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

**FICTION:** IF YOU EXERCISE LONG AND HARD ENOUGH, YOU WILL ALWAYS GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT.

**FACT:** In reality, genetics plays an important role in how people respond to exercise. Your development of strength, speed, and endurance may be very different from that of other people you know.

**FICTION:** THE HEALTH AND FITNESS BENEFITS OF MIND-BODY EXERCISE LIKE T'AI CHI AND YOGA ARE QUESTIONABLE.

**FACT:** The benefits abound! T'ai Chi, for example, has been shown to help treat low-back pain and fibromyalgia. Improved flexibility, strength, and stress management are just some of the

benefits.

**FICTION:** HOME WORKOUTS ARE FINE, BUT GOING TO A GYM IS THE BEST WAY TO GET FIT.

**FACT:** Some people find it easier to stick to a home-based fitness program. In spite of all the hype on trendy exercise programs and facilities, the best program for you is the one you will participate in consistently.

This information was provided by IDEA, [www.ideafit.com](http://www.ideafit.com).

*"Make yourself  
a prioty."*

-unknown

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<https://www.releafmassagetherapy.com/gift-certificates-and-products>

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Starting June 1, 2023 our rate per treatment will increase \$5 for all existing clients, and look as follows:

30 minutes-\$65

45 minutes-\$80

60 minutes-\$90

75 minutes-\$110

90 minutes-\$130

This is effective immediately for NEW clients that schedule on or after 4/27/23.

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I (Andrea) will be adding the option of "Aligned Alchemy" for \$35 to any massage session. This add-on incorporates multiple modalities of alchemical energy work and intuitive guidance DURING your massage treatment. More information can be found on the website under "additional services".

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