The Magic of Somatics

Improve Your Mind-Body Connection

Take Back Your Body,
Develop Free and Easy Movement
and Look Better Than You Have In Years

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Hanna Somatics Gold™
How can you tell "older" people at a distance?
It's by how they stand and move, isn't it?

Would you like to have the physical prowess you had when you were years younger? Would you like people to see it in how you stand and move?

Did you know that the loss of physical prowess - the physical pains of aging and injury, back trouble, bursitis, and morning stiffness - come largely from tension habits developed over a lifetime? Did you know that years of chronic tension can be erased by improving the mind-body connection? Did you know that you can regain the freedom and grace you had when you were years younger and continue to improve as you get older?

The Magic of Somatics comes from a breakthrough in mind-body integration.

In The Magic of Somatics, Lawrence Gold, a certified somatic educator, guides you from pain and limitation to comfort and freedom through physical and attentional exercises that restore the freedom and strength of your younger years.

The Magic of Somatics consists of eleven guided lessons in the somatic transformations. With them, you can get relief from such common conditions as chronic back trouble, headaches, stress, sciatica, neck pain, and other conditions. The days of guarding a bad back can be over.

Do The Magic of Somatics and get the surprise of your life.
Regain the physical prowess you had when you were younger.
... from Session 1

People have one universal response to injury: we tighten up. We protect our injury. Another name for this is cringing. We have the same response to other stressful situations. We tighten up and protect ourselves.

To continue self-protection longer than necessary leads to tension habits, which in turn lead to chronic muscular fatigue, pain, stiffness, pinched nerves, joint damage, and other ills. Our self-protection becomes the source of our ills. It is not the passage of time, but the accumulated effects of injury, that cause many of the signs of aging.

The somatic transformations are a basic breakthrough in reversing the effects of aging on physical comfort and freedom of movement. They provide a way to discover and release obsolete tension habits, regardless of how old they are and regardless of how long we have been in pain. With somatic transformations, you can erase chronic pains that have persisted for years, as if by magic. You can regain the freedom of movement you had when you were younger.
Most people regard magic as a fanciful thing, a falsity, an illusion. That is the irony of those who cannot do magic: they define magic as “the art of illusion”. There are no illusions here. The statements and promises made here are sincere, the results, actual. The ways of magic are not haphazard; they are deliberate. This is magic with a purpose: enhancing the prowess of body and mind. Read all of it. Do it exactly as described. Act on purpose.
INTRODUCTION

Somatic: pertaining to the experience of one's own body from within

Transformation: change of shape, experience, and function

In The Magic of Somatics, you will improve how you look, feel and function. You will gain these improvements from sensation-producing movement sequences known as “Somatic Transformations”. You will find that you feel different – and more like yourself.

The Magic of Somatics is that, from the state in which you begin, you transform yourself in ways you had no idea existed or could exist. Somatics may be seen as an act of alchemy: from the dross of pain and limitation, you create the gold of comfort and freedom - using nothing but acts made potent by your attention and intention. That's very practical magic.
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Why the “Magic” of Somatics?

What is magic?

It’s the appearance of something out of nothing, the disappearance of something into nothing, and seemingly impossible and inexplicable feats accomplished.

The Universe is magic; it’s the stupendous “everything” that came out of nothing, mysteriously, and continues to exist contained in a great mystery. From nothing came something -- inexplicably, the impossible, made possible. Life is magic; from that same nothingness, living consciousness mysteriously exists. Intention is magic; despite the tendency for life to go on as it has, living beings exist who deliberately change the course of events in unpredictable ways, maintaining the mystery of life. Knowledge is magic; breakthroughs happen unpredictably out of the marriage of the Universe, consciousness, and intentionality, reminding us that, despite what we know, there is still the infinite unknown.

The magical mystery of the Universe, life and consciousness, intentionality, knowledge and the infinite unknown make possible the great feat we call, “civilization.”

Only the sense that things are commonplace and the sense of “one-thing-after-another” that the passage of time creates makes us forget the magic behind them.

I’ve said these things to get you to consider the mystery of magic. Before you read on, I ask you to consider any one these ideas deeply for a time, now. Stop for a moment and ponder it until you experience the sense of mystery that makes magic, magic.

Some magicians work their magic by distracting your attention from where the action really is.

The magic of Somatics is the opposite sort; it works by getting you to put your attention where the action really is. By following the guidelines given here, you are going to create something out of nothing: new sensations, and greater physical and mental prowess. You’re going to get some things to disappear into nothing: old pains and limitations, both physical and mental. And your feat will be to increase your freedom as you do these things, things that you may never have done before and may never have thought you could do.

Words are commonplace; these actions are not. Far from it. They are most unusual. You will have to focus your attention and exercise your intelligence in new ways.

Welcome to your initiation into practical magic.
SECTION 1

Session 1:
Introduction to the Somatic Transformations

Session 2:
Making Bending and Straightening Easier and Freeing Tight Shoulders
Session 1:
Orientation to the Magic of Somatics

Who is This Program For?

The Magic of Somatics is for people who want to improve their freedom of movement and their physical comfort. It is for people who suffer the pains and stiffness of aging, for athletes who want to boost their peak physical performance, and for people who have had injuries and have pain that has never gone away.

The Magic of Somatics teaches exotic movement patterns called “The Somatic Transformations”, which produce lasting improvements in how you move and how you feel.

It is appropriate for people with long-standing chronic, rather than recent acute injuries. If you have had a recent injury, get the advice of your physician before beginning any regimen of physical conditioning. Show this program to your physician and to your physical therapist, if you are under their care, for their considered and intelligent evaluation.

What to Expect

Generally, you can expect decreases of chronic pain and increases in freedom of movement. You can expect improvements in flexibility, strength, coordination, balance, posture and appearance. You'll feel better and look better. Your energy level is likely to increase. In fact, expect to discover that you have more strength and speed from your usual amount of effort.

More than that, your stress level will decrease. You’ll get improvements in your ability to notice details, in your patience, in your ability to see how things connect and relate, in your ability to correct your own actions, and in your problem-solving ability in life in general.

The results you get will largely reflect how well you convert words into actions. Your first performances of these somatic transformations are likely to be approximations of the instructions; you may find, at times, that what you think you are doing and what you are actually doing are two different things! With practice, you will find you can do the movements more exactly as instructed and get quicker improvements.

The Somatic Transformations are safe to do, provided you do them gently and with consideration for your comfort. Regulate your effort to be within the range of sensations you are willing to experience. The most common mistake people make is to use too much effort, which sometimes leads to cramping. If you get a cramp, use less effort and lend more attention to what you are feeling. Soon, you will no longer tend to cramp.
The Origins of the Somatic Transformations

Though the somatic transformations are new, their underlying principles are similar to those of ancient yoga, dating back thousands of years. The word, “yoga”, means “union”; the somatic transformations improve your sense of the union of your body and mind; your body will be able better to do what your mind intends it to do. So the basic discoveries upon which the somatic transformations are based are ancient.

More recently, three individuals stand out as originators whose work contributed to the methods found in this program: F. Matthias Alexander, Moshe Feldenkrais, and Thomas Hanna. Alexander developed a system of movement education called The Alexander Technique. Many practitioners of that approach exist today. Alexander was a Shakespearean orator whose techniques grew out his search for a way to control his stage fright. Moshe Feldenkrais studied Alexander’s technique and integrated it with own insights and methods. The result was called Functional Integration. Thomas Hanna, in turn, evolved Functional Integration along his own lines, calling the result Hanna Somatic Education, described in his book, Somatics: Reawakening the Mind’s Control of Movement, Flexibility, and Health (published by Harper-Collins).

In each case, what was involved was a way to improve self-awareness and freedom of movement – intentions originally found in ancient yoga. The integration and the evolution of what I learned from Thomas Hanna has led to The Somatic Transformations.

The Somatic Transformations enhance your overall functioning by having you put your intention where your attention is and your attention where your intention is.

Why People Age Poorly

Simple answer: insult and injury.

People have one universal response to injury: we tighten up. We protect our injury. Another name for this is cringing. We have the same response to other stressful situations. We tighten up and protect ourselves.

To continue self-protection longer than necessary leads to tension habits, which in turn lead to chronic muscular fatigue, pain, stiffness, pinched nerves, joint damage, and other ills. Our self-protection becomes the source of our ills. It is not the passage of time, but the accumulated effects of injury, that cause many of the signs of aging.

The somatic transformations are a basic breakthrough in reversing the effects of aging. They provide a way to discover and release obsolete tension habits, regardless of how old they are and regardless of how long we have been in pain. With somatics, you can erase chronic pains that have persisted for years, as if by magic. You can regain the freedom of movement you had when you were younger.
How Best to Learn the Magic of Somatics

To be effective, the somatic transformations require concentration, care, and undistracted time. Act deliberately, knowing what you intend to do. For that, you need to understand the instructions. It may be helpful to listen to them on tape as you follow along in this guidebook before doing them the first time. That will help boost your concentration.

The meaning of the instructions becomes clearer with experience. Always do them in an exploratory way. There is an unsuspected depth in you. The more you do the movements, the more you will discover. The somatic transformations are more than you think.

To get the most benefit from a somatic transformation, go slowly enough to sense the movement as you do it, gently enough to be comfortable, and using only the muscles needed to accomplish each movement. That way, you will continually uncover patterns of tension you have held without awareness and be able to release them into a greater grace and freedom. Practically speaking, you are likely to start out using more muscles than necessary; with practice, you will be able to distinguish the muscles that are essential to the movement and to use only those.

In general, the earlier sessions prepare you for those that come later. To start, do one new session (one part of one SECTION) several times within a week until it’s very familiar to you. Use the guided instructions until you know them so well that you know what’s coming ahead of time—and you’re right! After you’ve done all twelve sessions, start over. You’ll be surprised at the new richness of your second pass through.

If a transformation seems too difficult or feels painful, go more slowly and more gently. You may need to go back to an earlier session to prepare yourself better.

The somatic transformations have several levels of complexity, which you may add as you improve. The simplest steps of the movement are numbered. More advanced additions to movements appear indented, as follows:

1. (main instruction, basic level)

TRY THIS! ⇒ addition (intermediate level)

TRY THIS! ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ addition (more advanced level)

After you have learned the movements of a session, refer to this guidebook to refresh your memory and to learn finer nuances of the movements, which boost their effectiveness.

Note: The improvements you get from the somatic transformations are cumulative. Unlike conventional postural training, you do not need to hold good posture to have good posture after doing these transformations. Your posture will improve naturally. Do not hold “good posture”, as it only adds tension to your other habitual tensions. If anything, relax into good posture.
The Feeling is the Thing

Unlike most systems of exercise, the essence of the somatic transformations is the sensations they produce, particularly during the slow relaxation phase of each somatic transformation. The magic occurs during the relaxation phase.

Pace Yourself

Doing things at the usual speed, we tend to do them in the usual way.

The whole point of these transformations is to do something in a new way: to change how we move and feel.

You may have noticed that you can’t see much detail in things that are moving quickly; it’s much easier to see the details of things that are holding still or moving slowly.

The same is true of your body-image.

In the case of the somatic transformations, the slower you move, the more time you have for details to “fade in” to your perception. In other words, during a movement, you may not at first perceive the restrictions and habitual tensions of your usual way of moving. However, as you slow down and pay attention to the sensation of movement, you discover the unnecessary tensions you hold during movement. People forget to breathe! You may even discover that you are holding tension that directly interferes with the movement you are doing.

At that point, you can release those interfering tensions. As you do, you will notice your movement getting smoother, feeling more elegant and under your control.

Go slower with each repetition, maintaining the smoothness of the movement.

At the beginning of this explanation were the words, “The whole point of these transformations is to do something in a new way: to change how we move and feel.” These words are, at this moment, an abstract generality to you; they don’t have much meaning. Their meaning will be obvious once you experience results from the somatic transformations.

Here’s another set of words that will have meaning once you start the somatic transformations: INTEND, ALLOW, DO.

That means, “Know exactly what you INTEND to do, get the distinct feeling of ALLOWING yourself to do it (relax into doing it), and then, DO it.
Why “Gently”?

Going gently calls for you to develop more care and awareness of what you are doing. So going gently is not being lazy, nor is it a sign that you are weak. It is a way of operating more carefully and effectively, and it is particularly valuable when confronting a challenge. It is a way of working smarter, not harder.

The Special Use of Language in the Magic of Somatics

In the instructions, certain terms have specific meanings, as follows:

up = away from the ground, against gravity
down = toward the ground, giving in to gravity
out = away from the center of your body
in = toward the center of your body
forward = toward your front
backward = toward your back
underside = the side on which you are lying or sitting
topside = your uppermost side in relation to the Earth
slowly = slowly enough to feel your movement continuously as you move
gently = two “notches” more gently than you think of as gentle, but with enough effort to feel what you are doing
smoothly = without sudden movements or loss of control

Pause and feel. = Stop moving, and in the position you are in, feel your muscles at work.

Feel what’s working. = Notice the sensation of muscles working.

where the movement comes from = as you move, the location of the most vivid sensation of movement

The very practical reason for this choice of language is so you have an easier time understanding the instructions. Nearly all of these movements are exotic and unfamiliar. We want them to be as easy as possible to learn.
Concerns with stretching muscles point to one key observation: muscles get shortened.

The key question is, "Why?"

Your muscles are controlled by your nervous system. Your muscles have no control of their own. The obvious conclusion to draw is that your muscles get shortened because your nervous system is stimulating them to contract.

Athletes and dancers attempt to stretch their hamstrings to avoid injury. "Attempt" is the correct word because stretching produces only limited and temporary effects, which is one reason why so many athletes (and dancers) suffer pulled hamstrings and knee problems.

As anyone who has had someone stretch their hamstrings for them knows, forcible stretching is usually a painful ordeal. In addition, stretching the hamstrings disrupts their natural coordination with the muscles of the fronts of the thighs, which is why our legs feel shaky after stretching the hamstrings. The same is true of stretching any other muscle. More than that, because muscular tension is maintained as a postural habit (by which we maintain our sense of "normal" tension and posture), forceful stretching does nothing to change that habit; like "going on a diet", we soon rebound to the way we were, or worse. If we stretch ourselves by pitting one muscle group against another, what often results is an increase in tension in both muscle groups.

Oddly enough, if you try to relax habitually tight muscles by an act of will, you are likely to find that you can’t relax past a certain point, even with special breathing, visualization, or other techniques.

At that point, you may assume that those muscles are completely relaxed and need stretching. You may not realize that you are contracting "on automatic" due to postural habits stored in your nervous system. Any attempt to stretch them simply re-triggers the impulse to re-contract them to restore the sense of what is "familiar". That is why hamstrings (and other muscles) tighten up again so soon after stretching or massage.

Fortunately, there is a more effective way to manage muscular tension than by stretching. To understand how it works, let’s start with the recognition that muscles that need stretching are actually contracting.
What is necessary, then, is to shift your familiar "tension set point" – your sense of what "relaxed" is – from habitually tense to habitually relaxed. That way, you contract only when you intend to do so.

To change your set-point requires more than stretching or massaging; it requires you to learn – or relearn – how to relax and what that feels like.

**The Whole Body Yawn**

Yawning is relaxing — but it’s not an attempt to relax.

Next time you yawn, notice what’s happening. You’re not relaxing the muscles of your mouth and neck; you’re tightening them! It’s *afterward* that you experience relaxation.

This is an important clue. You are experiencing a basic way we operate. To relax, we must be reminded of the difference between tension and relaxation. We must feel the difference. Yawning does that.

This process of tension/relaxation can be applied systematically to the whole body. The movement maneuvers given in this program do exactly that. They involve very much the same quality of tension and relaxation as yawning does – and they produce a similar result: relaxation, greater freedom of movement, and recovery of our energy from wasteful habitual tension.

Doing movements with feeling in slow motion is the key to somatic transformation.

Significant results come relatively quickly from doing the somatic transformations. Make the transformations part of your daily regimen, and soon strength and freedom of movement become second nature. You enjoy assurance of your fitness for physical activity of all kinds.
Session 2

Making Bending and Straightening Easier

(Modified from Thomas Hanna, in *Somatics*:) At first glance, this very simple maneuver resembles a sit-up (abdominal crunch). There are two very significant differences:

1. As much emphasis is placed on arching backward as on curling forward.
2. The movement is done in very slow motion with the intent to feel the muscular effort decreasing into full relaxation.

You are balancing the strength and control of your abdominal muscles and your back muscles. You are developing flexibility through freedom of movement in both directions.

THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT: equalizing the smoothness with which you bend forward and backward

STARTING POSITION: lying on your back, knees up, legs balanced (upright) leaning neither in nor out

1. Lay your arms loosely at your sides.

2. Take a deep breath.

3. Create a hollow arch under the small of your back: SIMULTANEOUSLY:

   + Press your head back into the surface on which you are lying.
   
   *Do this a few times, tightening and relaxing, until you feel what it does to the rest of your body. Notice that your breastbone lifts. Feel it in your back.*

   + Gently and gradually tighten the muscles of the small of your back.

   *Feel the hollow arch form and your tailbone turn down into the surface.*

   + Exhale.

   *You feel how exhaling tightens your back more strongly.*

4. Slowly inhale and relax all efforts.

   *You feel your back flatten out, a bit.*
5. Help your back flatten further by exhaling and tightening your abdomen, a bit.

*If you have trouble understanding how to tighten your abdomen:*

- Place your hands on your abdomen – one on your solar plexus and one on your navel.
- Lift your head until your hands feel something move.
- Lower your head to rest.
- Repeat until you can tighten your abdomen at will.

*Notice that you expel a bit more air when you use your abdominal muscles to exhale.*

6. Relax and lie back.

7. Arch your back and exhale, as before.

⇒ *TRY THIS!* ⇒ Lift your feet a bit.

*You feel how your abdomen tightens more.*

8. Inhale and relax all efforts.

Repeat until you can feel which muscles are working or you cease to improve, for this session.
Freeing Tight Shoulders

THE ESSENCE OF THE MOVEMENT: feeling the muscular contraction where your shoulder meets your neck

STARTING POSITION: lying on your stomach, face turned to one side, hand in front of your nose, palm down, other arm by your side

If lying on your stomach causes neck pain, place a pillow under your chest to lift you and make room for your head.

1. Leaving your hand down, slowly lift your elbow. Lift your elbow as high as you can.

   You feel your shoulder move toward your neck. At first, the sensation may be vague. Stay lifted until you feel which muscles tire. “Pulse” the effort of lifting to feel more clearly.

2. Feel gravity as you lower your elbow as slowly as you can.

   If you feel any pain while lowering, pause and relax in place (see page 102). Then continue.

   Imagine having broad shoulders, as you lower your arm.

   Notice the last place that relaxes.

   Repeat this lifting and lowering action slowly until you feel where the movement comes from and the movement gets smoother.

3. Lift your head so that you move your neck toward the muscles you felt tire.

4. Feel gravity as you lower your head.

   Come to complete relaxation.

   Repeat this lifting and lowering action until you can contract the neck/shoulder area strongly, at will.
5. Lift your elbow, as before, and hold the position.

6. Lift your head as before, and hold the position.

   *Feel both actions at the same place in the neck/shoulder area.*

7. Keeping your neck/shoulder area tight, roll to the side until your elbow is down on the surface. Relax your arm completely.

   *If you feel any pain while lowering, pause and relax in place (see page 102). Then continue.*

8. Slowly relax your neck until your head is down.

2. Relax completely.

**Repeat 1. - 9. until you feel yourself sink deeper into the surface on which you are lying.**

3. Lift your head, as before, and hold the position.

4. Lift your elbow, as before, and hold the position.

   *Feel both actions at the same place in the neck/shoulder area.*

5. Keeping your neck/shoulder area tight, lower your head down to the surface.

   *Use your shoulder to push your neck and head down to the surface.*

13. Slowly relax your arm and shoulder until your elbow is down.

   *Imagine broad shoulders as you lower; allow your shoulder to spread away from your neck.*
Repeat until you are satisfied with the change.

Turn onto your back and feel the difference in your two shoulders.

Now, repeat for the other side.

The next time you do this sequence, begin with the other arm and shoulder.
SECTION 2

Session 3:
Ending Back Pain and Flattening Your Abdomen at the Same Time

Session 4:
Freeing the Back and Front of Your Torso for Flexibility and Freeing Your Abdomen for Diaphragmatic Breathing
### Session 3

**Ending Back Pain and Flattening Your Abdomen at the Same Time**

Back spasms and a protruding belly come from the same condition: habitual tension in the muscles of the low back and spine. These movement transformations enable you to free those muscles. Result: a straighter, stronger, more comfortable back and a flatter belly.

**THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT:** gaining enough control of this movement for smoothness and balance

**STARTING POSITION:** Lying on your back, face turned to the side with your ear in the palm of your hand, the knee of the same side bent and turned out to the side,

As you lie on your back, notice how each shoulder contacts the surface. Notice how your back meets the surface. Notice how your buttocks meet the surface. Notice how your legs meet the surface. You will compare this to how you feel at the end of this section.

1. Bring your attention to your bent arm.

2. Slowly press your shoulder into the surface. Do it by pulling your shoulder back, not by rolling onto your shoulder.

   **Remember to breathe!**

   Feel which muscles contract. Feel your chest lift slightly as you press your shoulder down and back into the surface.

   ⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Inhal as you press your shoulder

   You feel your back arch slightly on that side.

3. As slowly as you can, relax that effort, so your chest sinks down.

   Feel where you relax at the last moment.

Repeat this pressing and releasing action until you can feel where the movement comes from and can do it slowly and with confidence. Be sure to relax completely between repetitions.

Notice if you feel new muscles working with each repetition.
3. Bring your attention to your shoulder.

4. Shrug your shoulder toward the side of your neck.

5. Slowly relax.

Repeat the movement until you get an increase of control.

7. Bring your attention to the same shoulder.

8. Push the back of that shoulder into the surface, and hold.

9. Tighten the muscles of your waist, as if to stretch the leg of the opposite side.

   You feel muscles tighten between your shoulder blade and your waist on that side, and your back arch a bit.

Slowly relax. Feel the relaxation as it occurs.

Repeat the movement until you get an increase of control.
NEXT POSITION: Your hand is behind your waist (same side as before). If necessary, you roll slightly to the side so your arm and shoulder are comfortable. Your face is still turned.

1. Press your elbow against the surface, and relax.

   Go slowly enough to feel where the movement comes from.

Repeat this movement until you can do it slowly, comfortably and with confidence. Do not force past any restrictions to full relaxation; instead, recontract the muscles that pull your elbow against the surface, and relax again. Repeat and notice how you get looser, each time.

2. Press your elbow and hold.

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Turn your eyes to the side and look over your shoulder.

   You feel the muscles of your neck and upper back contract and your waist lifts up, slightly.

2. Tighten your waist on that side by stretching the opposite leg.

   You feel the muscles of your back contract on that side; your back arches, a bit.

3. As slowly as you can, relax.

   You feel gravity as a steady, continuous pull. Be sure to relax completely between repetitions.

Repeat this movement slowly, about five times, total.

Repeat until you can feel where the movement comes from and can do it slowly and confidently.
NEXT POSITION: The palm of your hand is on the front of your hip bone.

1. Pull your shoulder snugly against the surface and hold.
2. Press your hand against your hip bone and hold.
   *You now feel your upper arm press against the surface.*
3. Slowly relax all efforts.
4. Pull your shoulder snugly against the surface and hold.
5. Press your hand against your hip bone and hold.
6. Slide your hand from your hip bone, toward your chest.
   *As you move, notice where in your back you feel muscles working.*
7. Slowly relax.
8. Repeat. This time, stop at any position where you become aware of any discomfort in your back.
10. Again, press and relax in that position.
11. Now, press and slide your hand more toward your chest. Again, stop at any position in which you notice discomfort in your back.
12. Slowly relax.

Continue in that manner until you have located and relaxed all areas of discomfort.

**NEXT POSITION:** Your face is turned and your hand is under your ear.

1. Press your shoulder into the surface, so your chest lifts, and hold.

2. Press your ear against your hand, and hold.

   *Feel how the two moves combine into one. You press your ear against your hand and your shoulder against the surface.*

   You feel your back arch a bit, as you press.

   ⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Tip your head way back, so the base of your head pulls against your shoulder.

   You feel a tight muscle running from the back of your head, behind your ear, to your shoulder blade.

3. Slowly, relax.

**Do this combination movement until you get better at it.**

4. Bring your attention to your straight leg.

5. Push your calf against the surface, so your hip lifts, slightly.

   *Your hips roll slightly to one side.*

Repeat this movement until you can do it easily and confidently, as described.

**NEXT POSITION: Turn your face forward.**

1. Press your calf down and hold.
2. Press the back of your head down and hold.
3. Relax both simultaneously.

Repeat this action until you feel the small of your back contract.

4. Press both and hold.
5. Slowly turn your face a bit to the side until you locate a place that feels a bit sore.

Repeat in the same position.

7. Press down, turn a bit more to the side and locate another place that’s sore.
8. Slowly relax.

**In this way, locate and release the soreness in a number of positions.**

9. Press your calf down and hold.
   
   You feel your hip lift up, a bit.
10. Press your shoulder down and hold.
11. Press your ear against your hand and hold.
   
   You feel your hip lift up, a bit more.
12. Slowly, turn your face forward until you locate any position that reveals some soreness. Stay there.

13. Slowly relax in that position.

In a similar manner, locate and release soreness in various positions until you are facing forward.

Lie flat and notice the difference in how your two sides feel.

Now, do your other side.

After you’ve done your other side, do the movements for Making Bending and Straightening Easier (page 15).
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Session 4

Breathe Easily, Live Longer

Makes sense, doesn’t it?

This session is about freeing your abdomen and chest from chronic tension.

When the muscles of the front of our body are tight, the tension interferes with our primary muscle of breathing, our diaphragm.

The diaphragm, located deep behind our abdominal organs, works like a piston; as it tightens, it pulls out of our chest cavity, creating space for air to rush in. That is, it pushes down into our abdominal cavity. The result? Our abdomen swells outward with each inhalation. For that to happen, our abdominal muscles must be supple and free.

This is the natural, healthy state.

However, the current fashion is a flat, hard abdomen: “abs of steel”. “Abs of steel” are hazardous to health, as Thomas Hanna, father of the field of Somatics, and director of The Novato Institute for Somatic Research and Training pointed out:

A research study was carried out with 153 heart attack patients in the coronary care unit of a Minneapolis-St. Paul hospital. These patients were examined to determine whether they were abdominal diaphragmatic breathers or thoracic [chest] breathers, whose tight abdominal muscles forced them into the labored chest-lifting characteristic of shallow breathers. The results of the survey were devastatingly clear: Every single one of the 153 patients examined were thoracic breathers!1

Because this view goes against popular ideas of physical appeal, it takes courage and intelligence to choose health over what will turn out to be a passing fashion.

The movement transformations that follow free your breathing. When you combine them with the previous movement maneuvers, you will discover that your posture straightens, your belly flattens, and you stand taller without any special effort to do so. In other words, you get the effect of “abs of steel”, a flatter abdomen, without abs of steel.

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Freeing the Back and Front of Your Torso for Flexibility

Modified from Thomas Hanna’s instructions in Somatics: ReAwakening the Mind’s Control of Movement, Flexibility, and Health

**THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT:** equalizing the smoothness of movement of the muscles of the back and front of the torso. This is not a typical “crunch”; the key is the slow relaxation out of the muscular effort, in both directions, arching backward as well as curling forward.

**STARTING POSITION:** lying on your back, knees up, legs balanced upright leaning neither in, nor out

1. Interlace your fingers and place your hands behind your neck.
2. Lay your elbows out flat on the floor.
3. Take a deep breath.
4. Exhale and curl forward. **SIMULTANEOUSLY:**
   - Bring your elbows together in front of your face. (Pause)
   - Gently squeeze the sides of your head with your forearms.
     
     *You feel your chest tighten.*
   - Point your elbows toward your knees by curling forward.
     
     *Your shoulders roll forward and your abdomen tightens.*
   - Lift your head and look at your knees.
     
     *You feel your abdomen tighten more.*
   - Gently press the small of your back down.
     
     *You feel your abdomen tighten further.*

⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Slide or push your feet away from your buttocks, to help your back flatten.

*By now you have exhaled completely.*
5. *When you need to breathe*, inhale, hold your breath, and relax your abdomen to lie back.

6. Slowly allow your elbows to spread to the sides.

7. Relax completely, still holding your breath with an open air passage, *as if still inhaling*.

8. Now, begin to exhale.

9. As you exhale, arch *backward*: Press your shoulders down into the surface upon which you are lying, then relax.

   *Do this a few times, tightening and relaxing, to feel what it does to the rest of your body.*

   ⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Press your elbows back down. Tighten and relax -- feel . . .

   ⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Push the back of your head down. Tighten and relax -- feel . . .

   ⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Turn your tailbone down into the surface, by tightening the small of your back.

   ⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Pull your heels toward your buttocks by tightening the backs of your legs.

10. *When you need to breathe*, inhale and relax your abdomen. Hold your breath for a moment.

11. Relax all efforts and exhale.

   *You feel the muscles of your back relax.*
Continue the cycle of movements until you feel you have gotten looser and are satisfied with the result of this transformation — generally, about five (5) repetitions.
VARIATION:

1. Interlace your fingers and place your hands behind your neck.

2. Lay your elbows out flat on the floor.

3. Take a deep breath.

4. Exhale and curl forward. SIMULTANEOUSLY:
   - Bring your elbows together in front of your face. (Pause)
     ⇒ try this! ⇒ Gently squeeze the sides of your head with your forearms.

     You feel your chest tighten.
   - Point your elbows at your knees by curling forward.

     Your shoulders roll forward and your abdomen tightens.
   - Lift your head and look at your knees.

     You feel your abdomen tighten more.

     ⇒ try this! ⇒ Gently press the small of your back down.

     You feel your abdomen tighten further.

8. Slide or push your feet away from your buttocks, to help your back flatten.

By now you have exhaled completely.

5. When you need to breathe, inhale and slowly relax your abdomen to lie all the way back.

6. Relax completely.
7. Now, actively inhale even more and arch backward: SIMULTANEOUSLY:

+ Shrug your shoulders toward your ears. *Do it by feel.*

Notice how this action helps to tighten the small of your back.

⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Press your elbows back. Tighten and relax to feel . . .

⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Push the back of your head down. Tighten and relax to feel . . .

⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Turn your tailbone down into the surface, by tightening the small of your back . . .

⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Pull your heels toward your buttocks by tightening the backs of your legs.

*Feel the sensation you have created.*

8. Exhale and curl forward, as before.

Continue the cycle of movements until you feel you have gotten looser and are satisfied with the result of this transformation — generally, about five (5) slow repetitions.

Going slowly is all-important to your ability to feel/change your control over your movement.
**Fuller Breathing with Less Effort**

The benefits of this movement, like the others, is cumulative.

**THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT:** smoothly synchronizing your breathing with the muscular efforts of this movement

**STARTING POSITION:** on your back, knees up and balanced, arms slightly away from your sides, palms down

1. Turn your face to the right.
2. Bring your attention to your right arm.
3. Roll your arm toward your side by turning your elbow away from your torso; your hand rolls onto your thumb. *Keep your arm straight.*
   - Notice that your shoulder lifts off the surface. Help your shoulder lift.
4. Exhale. *Feel how the act of exhaling increases your ability to lift.*
5. Lift your head, still looking to the right. *You feel the muscles of your abdomen contract. Notice where you feel it. Notice the feeling of your left ribs pressing down, your right ribs slightly lifted.*
6. Inhale to capacity, still lifted. Hold your breath.
7. Slowly relax back, rolling your arm outward onto your thumb. *Inhale into any air space that becomes available.*
8. Relax and breathe freely.

Repeat until you feel a bit stronger and gain a bit of muscular control. The movement gets smoother and your breathing capacity increases on the side done.

Now, lie flat and feel what breathing feels like.
Next, do the other side.

⇒ Next, alternate sides, one repetition each, synchronizing the act of lifting your head and rolling your shoulder forward. Continue until you get some improvement in breathing capacity.
SECTION 3

Session 5:
Agile Legs

Session 6:
A Fast Way to Strengthen Legs
Session 5

The Legs: Key to Balance and Agility

Balance and coordination of the legs is essential for agility and good posture. Tight legs deprive us of the sense of being at balance, which leads us to tighten up more generally, distorting our posture and limiting our movement.

Our feet, in particular, must meet the ground squarely, in a relaxed fashion, when standing, for us to feel balanced. The structure of our feet determines how they bear weight. The thickest part of our foot is the heel; the next thickest is the inside, front-to-back arch (inside three toes); and the least thick is the outside, front to back arch (outside two toes). Standing at balance, weight is distributed approximately as follows:

◊ heels: 65%
◊ inside arch: 25%
◊ outside arch: 10%

Check the soles of your shoes for their wear pattern and see if your feet meet the ground squarely; uneven wear (left vs. right) indicates balance problems.

Our toes have two major functions: aiding balance and providing propulsion in walking.

Our toes help us balance by lifting up or "biting down" on the ground, as needed. They provide propulsion by spring-in-the-step, which comes from their muscles, which extend into the lower leg -- primarily those of the three toes of the inside arch.

The inner and outer arches, together, form the recognizable front-to-back arch for which some people need arch supports. They also form side-to-side arches at the "balls" of the feet, which allow our feet to adjust to uneven surfaces.

One reason people need arch supports is that the muscles of their calves (which go into the feet and lift the arch by tightening) are only partially functioning. Another reason people need arch supports is that the muscles of the calves at the outsides the ankle are too tight and force the feet to roll inward. In both cases, the problem lies in the calves; it can often be resolved by improving muscular functioning.

Another reason feet fail to meet the ground squarely is that the calves are rotated outward (feet stand on the outside edge) or rotated inward (feet roll inward). This condition
arises from tight hamstrings. To test yourself, sit with feet flat on the floor and deliberately roll sideways along the underside of a foot. Notice what’s involved.

Another important item: because of the design of our ankle joints, the most efficient ankle movement in walking occurs when our feet point straight-forward. This position also causes the knee and hip joints to move along lines of greatest efficiency and least muscular strain straightly forward. The weight distribution described above (65%/25%/10%) occurs when the feet point straight-forward when standing and walking. Deviations from this position occur when we are off-balance to one side or the other, as in the case of scoliosis (side tilt or twist). In that case, the foot of our more weight-bearing side tends to turn out to broaden our base of support on that side.

It is pointless to attempt to straighten our feet until our weight is centered better. The Somatic Transformations to Improve Reaching and Balance remedy this problem. Return to this section after getting the results they produce.
Se <i>crets of Freeing Those Tight Hamstrings</i>

Your hamstrings are the muscles that run from behind and below your knees up to your "sitbones", two knobs of bone covered by the creases on the underside of your buttocks. Soft tissue injuries, painful knees, torn menisci (the cartilage pads in your knees that cushion your bones), poor posture and other problems often come from tight hamstrings. Tight hamstrings can prevent you from reaching full leg extension, from bending over completely, and even from standing up straight. If you can't touch your toes or if you feel more comfortable slouching than sitting up straightly, your hamstrings are probably tight.

There are three hamstring muscles on the back of each thigh, one on the outside and two on the inside. They do several things. In addition to bending your knees, they help control the alternate forward- and-backward movements of walking and stabilize your knees against twisting when you turn a corner or roller skate. They also position the menisci inside the knee joints by means of fibers that pass into the knee joint.

You will feel some improvement each time you do these somatic transformations, regardless of how long you may have had tight hamstrings or how tight they are -- until you are naturally loose.

Freeing your hamstrings can prevent soft-tissue injuries and preserve joint integrity. Your hamstrings will feel stronger because you have better control of them. You will be able to run or walk faster and your knees will be more stable. Athletes find this benefit of particular interest.

Now, the basic secrets to freeing your hamstrings:

- Gaining control of the tension of your hamstrings is the secret to freeing them.

- We have to work with both legs at the same time to get control of our hamstrings. Legs work in pairs; if they didn’t, human beings would have only one leg and go places by hopping around -- as odd a sight as a crowd on pogo sticks. To work with both legs at the same time, <i>as you bend one leg, concentrate on keeping the other leg straight; as you straighten one leg, concentrate on bending the other leg slightly</i>. 

Basic Somatic Transformation for Freeing Hamstrings
(from Thomas Hanna)

THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT: balanced counter-tension between your working leg and your arms and smooth movement

STARTING POSITION: sitting on the floor with one leg bent and dropped to the side.

Draw the knee of your straight leg up enough to permit you to grasp your foot from the sides with both hands; your finger tips meet at your sole, at the ball of your foot. Get a firm grip, and you are ready to begin. Work patiently within your comfort zone.

1. Holding your foot firmly, gently push with your leg, so that your arm and shoulder stretch long. Hang your head forward. Work gently to the edge of your flexibility.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Bend your other knee as you push.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Point the toes of the “pushing” leg.

2. Now, gradually relax your push, let your knee bend, and take up the slack by drawing your leg up with your hands. Tip your head ‘way back.
   It’s a kind of moving isometric exercise.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Lock the other knee straight.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Lift the toes of the other leg to help lock the knee.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Tighten your bent-knee/hamstrings to tuck your foot tighter toward your buttock.

3. Now, relax, then push and straighten the leg you’re holding, resisting by pulling backward with your hands.
   Resistance makes you feel more clearly. You’ll notice that with each repetition, you get a little further. You’re gaining feeling and control of the muscular tension in
your hamstrings. Remember to move slowly enough and just strongly enough to feel the muscle-action clearly.

⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Bow your head forward as you straighten your leg.

⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Bend the other knee.

4. Wrap your hands around the sides of your bent-knee leg and rub from hip to foot and back, again, as if you were pushing down and pulling up a long stocking – five times or so.

After about ten slow motion repetitions, stand up and feel the difference between your two legs. Walk. Notice the difference in how your legs feel.

Now, do your other leg.

VARIATIONS: (Each position increases awareness and control.)

- on your back
- on your sides

Finish this section by doing the exercise in Section 10, page 72, Freeing Your Hands, Wrists and Forearms.
Balancing Your Feet to Free Your Hamstrings Further

This movement is the same as the preceding one, except for the hand position on your foot.

THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT: keeping your ankle relaxed as you move your leg

STARTING POSITION: sitting on the floor with one leg bent and dropped to the side.

Draw your straight leg up enough to permit you to grasp the sole of your foot with both hands; your fingertips meet at your heel at the pivot point of foot movement. To find the pivot point, pull upward into your heel with your fingers, then flex and extend your foot; position your fingertips so their pressure neither causes your ankle to flex nor prevents it from flexing.

With your hands in this position, do the preceding somatic transformation for freeing the hamstrings.

VARIATIONS: (Each position increases awareness and control.)
- sitting
- on your back
- on your sides
The Athletes’ Prayer for Loose Calves

You’ve often seen runners stretch their calf muscles by leaning forward against a wall and pressing backward with one heel. This somatic transformation does it better; not only does it loosen your calves, it also puts spring in your step and helps your feet fit the ground better.

THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT: coordinating (synchronizing) the movements of the toes with those of the foot and ankle

STARTING POSITION: standing, hands placed against a wall or post at shoulder height, head in line with the torso (not looking down), feet pointing straight-forward

1. Balancing on one leg, move the other leg back until your toes touch the ground with a straight knee. This is your “working leg” for this maneuver. The other leg controls the amount of weight you put through the “working” leg.

2. Gradually apply weight to the toes of the working leg, feeling the sole of your foot contract. Lean into the wall with straight elbows.

   You feel your hands simultaneously push against the surface on which you are leaning.

3. Gently grip the floor with your toes.

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Push the wall to send more force through your foot.

4. Gradually and simultaneously, relax your toes and lower your heel ½” or so.

5. Pause in place and feel your calf and foot.

6. Lifting your heel only slightly, grip the floor with your toes, again.

7. Ease off and lower your heel some more.

   Repeat the cycle of contracting and relaxing until your heel touches down.
⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Aim so your heel touches the ground squarely (on neither the outside nor inside edge).

8. When you are down, sink into the ground and let your foot go soft and spread.

9. Wiggle your toes.

10. Repeat.

11. Walk. Feel differences between your legs and feet.

Switch sides.

VARIATIONS:

Turn your heel:

◇ out
◇ in

As you do, you feel the effect in the arches of your foot. Turn your heel to find a sore or vulnerable place in your calf and work gently and attentively in that position to relieve the discomfort. It will go.

Repeat as desired or necessary to get the result.
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Session 6

The Saunter, the Swagger, and the Refrigerator Walk

“One of the most ancient and famous of riddles is that of the Sphinx: ‘What is it that has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?’ In Greek mythology, Oedipus provided the correct answer: the human being, who crawls on all fours in infancy, walks on two legs in adulthood, and leans on a cane in old age.” (Thomas Hanna, Somatics)

If we look more deeply within that answer, we find that more can be said, for there are a few basic ways of walking that can be observed among human beings. I call them the saunter, the swagger, and the refrigerator walk.

The saunter is the easy-going swing of walking. The dancer, Fred Astaire, exemplified the easy saunter. The female version can be seen in the hip-swinging movements of Marilyn Monroe.

The swagger is an exaggerated and demonstrative attitude demonstrated by tough guys. There’s a lot of side-to-side swaying in that walking – sign of tight waist muscles. Another dancer, actor Jimmy Cagney, who played many gangster roles, exemplified the swagger.

And then, there’s the “refrigerator walk”. Ever seen anybody move a refrigerator? First, they up-end it; then, they “walk” it by tipping it from one side to the other. This is the typical movement pattern of the elderly who have become so tight that their arms barely swing when they walk. Their whole body turns with each step. Actor Robert Mitchum showed the beginnings of this way of walking; his arms swung, while the rest of his torso barely moved, giving him a top-heavy look.

The tighter the walk, the tighter the legs. The freer the walk, the more “reach” there is in the legs, with each step. You’ll notice this for yourself.
A Fast Way to Strengthen Legs

It doesn’t take a lot of time and exercise to create strong legs. All it takes is developing better coordination and control, something that can be done relatively quickly.

THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT: synchronizing your control of your groin muscles with those of the backs of your legs.

STARTING POSITION: on your back, left knee up and balanced, right knee bent and dropped to the side, arms laid back so your hands are near your ears.

1. Bring your right knee up.  
   *Feet are positioned equally from your buttocks.*

2. Lift your both hips by pressing down upon your feet.  
   *Your hips are level.*

3. Bring your attention to your right hip.

4. Let your right hip sag.  
   *Your knee is upright, foot flat on the surface.*

5. Bring your attention to your left hip.

6. Slowly lift it a bit by pressing down on your left foot.  
   Hold this position.  
   *You feel the tension in the back of your legs and buttock.*

7. Bring your attention to your right leg.

8. Bring the knee of your right leg near to your left thigh.  
   Squeeze your knee near your thigh.  
   *You feel the tightening of your groin and right inner thigh muscles.*

⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Simultaneously, press down into the surface with your left shoulder. Hold this position.
Feel how your left shoulder and right groin reinforce each other. Squeeze them in unison a few times!

9. Slowly let your weight down onto your right side; keep your right leg steady and upright, foot flat on the surface.

10. Now, let your weight down onto your left side; keep your right leg steady and upright.

11. Slowly relax your right groin muscles and slowly lay your right knee down sideways; your knee stays bent. Go about four inches (4") down, then two inches (2") up repeatedly, until you are all the way down.

12. Tighten your right buttock.

⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Lift your head to tighten your abdomen.
⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Look down your thigh at your knee.

13. Relax your neck and head.

You feel your chest and shoulders relax.

14. Relax your buttock.

Now, repeat the entire sequence, keeping your right leg as steady and upright as possible. Continue until you can lower your right leg more smoothly than before.

After you have done one side, stand and notice how one side feels more solid than the other.

After you finish, do the other side.

Now, repeat this movement for the right hip and left leg (i.e., in reverse).
ADVANCED VARIATION ("search & rescue"):

⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ After your have lowered your right hip, slide your left foot away from you until you feel a vulnerable place in your left low back or buttock region near the waistband. Do the rest of the sequence in that position.

Continue to locate and work in vulnerable positions until they are gone or improved to your satisfaction.
SECTION 4

Session 7:
A Free and Comfortable Neck, part 1

Session 8:
A Free and Comfortable Neck, part 2
Session 7

Secrets of a Free and Comfortable Neck, part 1

There are three basic movements of the neck: forward-and-backward, turning left and right, and side-tilting ear-to-shoulder. All movements of our head involve one or combinations of these neck movements.

Sudden jolting movements of the head, such as occur when we fall or experience a collision, induce us to tighten our neck muscles. This kind of shock to the nervous system may make a strong impression on us, sometimes to the extent that we feel that we must hold onto our neck and head from then on. The resulting tension may cause us to have headaches, dizziness, or neck pain.

The somatic transformations that follow free neck and head movements from this kind of conditioning.

Our neck and shoulders are related.

You may have noticed, when our neck hurts, up go our shoulders to protect it. In the following somatic transformations, it is as important to feel what you are doing with your shoulders as it is to feel what you are doing with your neck.

Work in an exploratory fashion, feeling the effects as you do the movements. Don’t let your attention wander; keep it in the movement all the way to the end, and you will probably discover and release tensions that you didn’t know you had.
**Freeing Your Neck So You Can Turn Your Head Better**

This sequence relieves muscular tension that interferes with your ability to turn your head left and right. For people who have a problem turning their head when driving, this movement helps.

**THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT:** controlling the muscles of your throat and neck

**STARTING POSITION:** on your back, knees up & together, feet near your buttocks, hands near your ears, arms lying flat, elbows pointing out

1. By pressing down with your feet, lift your hips high.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Exhale as you do so.

2. Slightly lift your head so the weight comes off your scalp. Keep your chin tucked near your neck.
   You feel your throat constrict, a bit. If it doesn’t constrict, make it constrict by tucking your chin back towards your adam’s apple.

3. Keep your head up and let your hips come down.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Inhale as you do so.

4. Let your head sink down.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Continue to inhale.

5. Rest and breathe freely.

**Repeat twice (3 times total).**

**SUMMARY:**
- hips up } exhale
- head up
- hips down } inhale
- head down

The following instructions are a repetition of the preceding instructions, with changes of head position, only.
6. Turn your head slightly to the left (about 1/2 inch).

7. By pressing down with your feet, lift your hips high.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Exhale as you do so.

8. Slightly lift your head so the weight comes off your scalp. Keep your head turned as you lift.
   
   *Feel the air space in the nasal passage in your throat behind your nose.*

8. Keep your head up and let your hips come down.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Inhale as you do so.

9. Slowly . . . let your head down.

   *Continue to feel the air space behind your nose.*

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Continue to inhale.

10. Take two full, deep breaths, and relax.

    **Repeat, same position.**

11. Next, turn your head slightly further and repeat the lifting and lowering action two (2) times, total, in each position.

12. Repeat until your head is turned all the way to the left.
13. Now, do the entire sequence, turning your head back to center, by stages.

14. When you reach center, do two repetitions.

Continue the entire sequence to the far right and back to center.
Session 8

Improving the Flexibility of Your Neck

This movement works by locating positions in which you feel sensations of discomfort – tension, fatigue, or just a vulnerable feeling – and freeing the areas of tension. As you cease holding your neck tight, those sensations will fade out and disappear.

ESSENCE OF THE MOVEMENT: maintaining constant snugness between your neck and shoulder as you move

STARTING POSITION: sidelying, underside arm – either extended straight in front of you or folded and tucked under your waist (advanced position), hand of your topside arm on your abdomen, knees bent and straight ahead of your hips, ankles touching

1. Slowly lift your head, pause and feel until the sensation “sets in”, then slowly lower it to complete rest.

   Feel where the effort of lifting comes from. Feel what lets go at the last moment you relax.

   Repeat until you feel sure of the movement.

2. Raise your elbow and slowly shrug your topside shoulder toward your ear until the sensation “sets in”, then slowly relax.

   Shrug so you feel the same place contract in your neck as you felt when you lifted your head.

   Repeat until you can move your shoulder directly to the same place each time.

3. Lift your head and hold.

4. Shrug your shoulder and hold.

   Feel how both actions contract the same place in your neck.

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Inhale.
5. Keep your neck and shoulder snugly together as you lower your head.

*Your shoulder moves along with your neck and head. Go all the way down to complete rest.*

6. Relax your shoulder.

*You feel your neck and shoulder relax.*

7. Exhale.

**POSITION VARIATIONS:**

(for discomfort nearer to the front of your neck:)

Turn your face toward the topside shoulder and tuck in your chin *until you feel the place contract*. Slowly move your elbow forward until you *feel your shoulder move straight into the point of discomfort*.

(for discomfort nearer to the back of your neck:)

Slide your hand toward the side of your ribs. Your elbow points backward. Stop sliding when you feel the trouble spot contract; you have reached it. Tip your head back (thrust your lower teeth forward). Feel your shoulder “plug in” to the back of your neck.

Rest for one SLOW breath and repeat the entire cycle until you are satisfied with the amount of improvement you have created.

Continue to locate and release points of pain until they are all gone or until you have gotten a satisfactory improvement, for now.

Now, turn over and do your other side.
Getting Kinks out of Your Neck

Some people have kinks in the back of their neck. Of course, these are not kinks; they are simply painfully contracted muscles. This somatic transformation helps you to locate and free those muscles, so the sensation of a kink disappears.

ESSENCE OF THE MOVEMENT: finding positions that reveal kinks in your neck, gaining control of the muscles that make you feel that way

STARTING POSITION: lying on your stomach, face turned to one side, hands palms down under the side of your face, the hand of the side you are facing under your cheek, the other hand under your ear

1. Shrug and relax the shoulder of the under-your-ear hand. (Shrugging is a movement of your shoulder toward your neck and ear.)

   Feel what tightens. Feel where it tightens.

2. Lift the elbow of the under-your-ear hand. Leave your hand down. Lift gently and firmly to the extreme, within your comfort zone. The top of your shoulder stays relaxed.

   Feel what tightens. Can you feel it go into your neck?

3. Slowly lower your elbow and relax.

   You feel gravity pulling your arm, the whole time.

Repeat these movements until you can feel the tension in your neck increase and decrease.

4. Shrug and hold. As a unit, lift your head, hand, and elbow. Keep the back of your hand against your ear.

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ In your imagination, look at the place where you feel the tension in your neck.

5. Lower yourself to complete rest.

Repeat until you can do this movement surely.
6. Shrug and lift. Keep contact between your hand and ear. By lifting your elbow, turn your head and arm as a unit. Feel the tension move. Keep turning until you locate a position in which you feel a kink.

7. Lower yourself straight down onto your chin. 

*Relentlessly maintain the angle in which you can feel the “kink” with which you are working, all the way down.*

Touch down, then slowly let your head roll *from where your chin touches* to where it wants to go. *Do not reposition your head mid-way.*

8. Melt into relaxation.

Repeat these same two movements:

1. lift and locate a spot
2. lower and relax

Locate, tighten and relax into each “kink”. You will notice that it diminishes and disappears. Continue until they are all gone or until you are satisfied with the improvement for this session.

Then, do your other side.
SECTION 5

Session 9:
 Movements to Improve Reaching and Balance

Session 10:
 More Comfortable Hands, Wrists and Forearms
Insights about Injuries and Aging

One thing about injuries: they almost always affect one side of the body differently than the other. An ankle sprain, a cut, a blow, a bruise – these usually occur from movement in some direction other than forward-at-balance, or from some direction other than straight-ahead.

The guarding that results involves one side of the body more than the other. That means that one side of the body has more of a tension habit than the other.

The result? Often, a side-tilt, also known as a scoliosis – curvature of the spine, from the muscles of one side of the body being tighter – and often, the appearance of one leg being shorter than the other. The experience is one of being out of balance. Shoes wear unevenly; clothes don’t fit quite rightly. These effects are usually only a matter of muscular conditioning for which, until recently, there was no adequate method of correction.

The movements of this section progressively release this tension habit, leading to a correction of posture and balance.
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Session 9

Improving Reaching

ESSENCE OF THE MOVEMENT: maintaining straight bodily alignment – head-to-feet – as you shorten and lengthen the sides of your body

STARTING POSITION: sidelying, underside leg bent at the knee, top leg straight, hand of the topside arm lying on your stomach, elbow of the underside arm bent and tucked under the side of your waist

1. Slowly lift and lower your head.

   You feel your topside ribs and waist contract and shorten, relax and lengthen.

   Repeat until you can feel where the movement comes from.

2. Slowly lift and lower your topside leg.

   You feel your waist contract and shorten, relax and lengthen.

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ As you lift your leg, press the calf of your other leg down.

   You feel how it increases your strength.

   Repeat until you can feel where the movement comes from.

3. Slowly lift and lower your head and your topside leg.

   You feel the sensation of effort in the top side of your waist, ribs, and neck.

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Push the underside calf down as you lift.

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Pull the elbow of your underside arm into your hip bone (on the side).

   Now, lift and lower your topside leg.

   You feel a connection deep in your pelvis.

   Repeat until you can distinctly feel your waist shorten and lengthen.
⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ As you lift and lower, place your attention on the breathing passage behind your nose.

4. With your next repetition, after you lower your leg, reach long with your leg. Relax and reach again until you feel where the movement comes from and feel stronger doing it.

   *You feel the underside of your waist contract, as you reach.*

5. With succeeding repetitions, lower your leg and continue the movement by reaching with (i.e., stretching or lengthening) your leg. Reach until it lifts.

   ⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Push your head down as you lift your leg.

   *Feel the connection between the muscles of your topside hip and your underside waist.*


Repeat until you get stronger and smoother doing this combination movement. Turn onto your back and feel the difference between your left and right sides.

Now, turn onto your other side and repeat the sequence.
**Improving Balance**

**STARTING POSITION:** sidelying, underside leg straight, topside leg bent at the knee in front of the other leg, hand of the topside arm on the soft part of the elbow of the other arm

1. Bring your attention to your underside leg. Position it so the side of your foot lies flush (snug) with the surface on which you are lying.

2. In that position, slowly lift and lower your underside leg.

   *Feel where your inner thigh muscles and groin tighten and loosen. Keep that feeling as you repeat the movement.*

Repeat until you can feel where the movement comes from, a little less effort each time.

3. Slowly lift and lower your head.

   *You feel your neck, topside ribs and waist contract and relax.*

   *Be sure you are facing forward; don’t turn your head.*

Repeat until you can feel where the movement comes from.

4. Combination movement: Slowly lift and lower your head and your underside leg.

   *Feel what’s working.*

   *Be sure to relax completely between repetitions.*

Continue until you can distinctly feel the connection between the two actions.

⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ As you lift and lower, place your attention on the breathing passage behind your nose.

*Pause and feel.*

⇒ **TRY THIS!** ⇒ Experiment with leg position:

   - Turn your heel out/toes in as you lift.
   - Turn your heel in/toes out as you lift.

Repeat until you get stronger and smoother doing this combination movement.
Turn onto your back and feel the difference between your left and right sides.
Now, turn onto your other side and repeat the sequence.
Notice what you feel when you stand up, again.
Session 10

Secrets of More Comfortable Hands, Wrists and Forearms

The majority of our actions with our hands involve grasping and gripping, which is to say, tightening the muscles of our forearms. These movements do not particularly involve loosening the muscles of our forearms.

For that reason, we tend to develop habitual tensions that cause our fingers to curl tighter as we get older. As some people age, this habitual tension grows to such an extent that extra effort is needed to open their hands. They feel stiff. As a result of this tension, tendons get strained and the delicate finger joints get compressed. In time, these joints may get painful and knobby from overcompression, alone.

Knuckle-cracking is a stretching habit some people form to alleviate such discomfort.

There is a better way. There are somatic transformations that free the hands, wrists, and forearms, and so improve comfort and mobility.

If you have pain already, start gently and do a small amount. As your pain decreases, increase the movements to your new comfortable limit. Never force. This is not a stretch, it is a coordination and control exercise that improves your ability to relax your muscles and so give more slack to your tendons.
Freeing Your Hands, Wrists and Forearms

THE ESSENCE OF THIS MANEUVER: equalizing the effort you use to grip with your hands with the effort you use to spread your elbows apart
(Never force this movement or “work through” the pain; work within your comfort zone.)

STARTING POSITION: sitting, hands clasped (fingers interlaced) in front of your face, elbows together

1. Press with the fingertips of your index fingers. Feel the effort. Now, do the same with each of the other fingers. Squeeze and release a few times, each.

   *This movement gives you a distinct feeling of the strength of each finger.*

2. Equalize the pressure of all of your fingers and grip your hands together, firmly. Maintain this grip until instructed to relax it.

3. Spread your elbows until the grip of your hands prevents further spreading.

4. Simultaneously and slowly ...

   - spread your elbows about 2”,
   - relax your wrists a bit, so they bend backward.

5. Straighten your wrists a bit by using the muscles that bend the wrist, keeping your elbows the same distance apart.

   *This action gives you control of the muscles that bend your wrists. Your wrists bend backward a little more, each time.*
Repeat Steps 3. through 5. until you get no further gain in flexibility and your wrists are bent backward to your comfortable limit.

6. Relax your hands a bit, so your fingers begin to straighten.

7. Regrip your hands, keeping your elbows and wrists in the same position.

Repeat Steps 6. and 7. until you have fully relaxed your fingers and they are straight.

8. When your fingers and wrists are straight, continue to grip, relax, and push your hands down until your elbows are straight. (Do not force. Work within your comfort zone.)

*Your palms and wrists now feel open and relaxed.*
NEW POSITION: hands clasped in front of your chest, palms facing forward, elbows pointing forward
(Never force this movement or “work through the pain; work within your comfort zone.)

1. Press and release each of your fingers.

2. Grip your hands together, fingers interlaced, so all fingers press equally.

3. Spread your elbows apart until the grip of your hands prevents going wider.

4. Simultaneously and slowly
   - relax your hands
   - spread your elbows 2”

5. Regrip your hands, keeping your elbows in position.

Repeat Steps 4 and 5, pushing your hands further away, each time, until your fingers are straight.

6. Continue the movements, pushing your hands forward, until your arms are straight. (Do not force. Work within your comfort zone.)
NEXT POSITION: hands clasped behind your neck, palms facing upward

1. Press and release each of your fingers.

2. Grip your hands together, fingers interlaced, so all fingers press equally.

3. Partially straighten your elbows (push your hands upward) until the grip of your hands prevents going wider.

4. Simultaneously and slowly
   - relax your hands
   - push your hands upward by straightening your elbows.

5. Regrip your hands, keeping your elbows in position.

6. Repeat Steps 4. and 5., gripping, relaxing, and pushing upward, until your fingers and elbows are straight. (Do not force. Work within your comfort zone.)

Shake your hands out gently. Open and close your hands and feel how much softer they feel.
**Scooping with Your Hands to Free Your Forearms Further**

**ESSENCE OF THE MOVEMENT:** making a smooth, circular scooping movement

The key to this series of movements is to locate any restriction to smooth, *easy* movement, which may exist anywhere in your body. *Anywhere.* A restriction exists when you must apply extra effort to continue the movement. Locate and stop at the first “edge” of any restriction; do not force your way through it. Maintain your position and locate the muscular tension that is creating the restriction. Relax and continue the movement from where you left off.

**STARTING POSITION:** sitting, arms lifted like wings at shoulder height, palms facing the sides

1. Keep your elbows straight and turn your palms backward.
   
   *Your shoulders roll forward and your arms turn.*

2. Cup your hands.

Make a circular scooping motion back, under, and up the front. End with palms up, hands open and flat.

Repeat this movement slowly for smoothness and circularity.

Feel, relax, and continue.
NEXT POSITION: arms straight at shoulder height, wrists bent, palms facing each other, hands open and flat, fingertips pointing up

1. Turn your arms so your fingers point forward, hands open and flat, wrists bent.
   
   *Your arms rotate along their length, elbows straight.*

2. Continue the movement until your fingers point downward.

3. Make a “flipping back-and-up” movement with the backs of your hands, as if scooping something.
   
   *Your wrists bend back. Elbows straight.*

4. End with fingers pointing up, palms facing outward.

Feel, relax, and continue.

Repeat this movement slowly for smoothness and circularity.
NEXT POSITION: sitting, arms straight forward at shoulder height, palms facing forward as if pushing something

1. Keep your elbows straight and turn your hands thumbs down so your wrists face to the sides.

   *Your shoulders roll forward and your arms turn along their length.*

2. Cup your hands.

3. Make a circular scooping motion to the sides, under, and up the center. End with palms up, hands open flatly.

   ![Image](image.png)

Feel, relax, and continue.

Repeat this movement slowly for smoothness and circularity.
NEXT POSITION: arms straight forward at shoulder height, palms facing forward, fingers up, hands open and flat

1. Turn so your palms face you, hands open and flat, wrists straight.  
   *Your arms rotate along their length. Keep your elbows straight.*

2. Turn your arms so your fingertips of your two hands point toward each other.

3. Continue the movement until your fingertips point downward.

4. Make a “flipping up” movement with the backs of your hands, as if scooping something out to the sides.  
   *Your wrists bend back. Elbows straight.*

5. End with fingers pointing up, palms facing forward.

Repeat this movement for smoothness and circularity.
SECTION 6

Session 11:
Improving Your Ability to Twist

Session 12:
Improving Breathing Capacity and Endurance
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Session 11

Twisting: True Suppleness

Because we humans stand and move uprightly, it is important for us to be able to twist to have a 360° view of our surroundings. Checking behind us while parallel parking is only one of the latest evolutionary developments that require us to be able to twist. Before that, there was rolling over in bed! And before that, there was walking – the synchronized swinging of hips and shoulders, arms and legs actually comes from the waist, our center of twisting.

Twisting is one of the movements lost in aging – not because we break down, but because we develop habitual tensions that interfere with twisting and at last forget how. Some unfortunate people never learn how to twist; when they walk, their torso moves as a solid block. Such people are especially prone to hip joint wear and breakdown. One of the best ways to preserve our hip joints is to allow our hips to move freely in a twisting movement that starts from the waist.

Twisting is accomplished as a whole body act; the legs are involved, the muscles of the waist are involved, the shoulders are involved, the muscles of the neck are involved, and the muscles of the eyes are involved. Twisting is very involving – and it is the essence of suppleness.

The somatic transformations that follow develop more and more relaxed twisting. They have the added benefit of increasing breathing capacity, and in general are very restful and very satisfying.
**The Cat Twist**

Many times, you may have seen a cat roll around on the floor. There is a good reason for this, as you will soon find out.

**THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT:** movement of your legs and hips independently from your arms and shoulders; the ability to shift the air in your lungs from side to side

**EXPECTED OUTCOME:** more suppleness in twisting, better-coordinated abdominal muscles, and improved breathing capacity

**Preparation for the “Cat Twist” Maneuver**

1. Lift the knee of your topside leg; brace yourself with your arm or arms.
2. Slowly let your knee come down. **(2 times)**
   
   *Feel your whole torso begin to turn. You will feel the muscles of the waist and ribs working.*

3. Bend your knee a little more, and repeat **(2 times)**.
   
   *Keep your foot resting on the inside surface of your other leg.*

4. Straighten your leg more (bend your knee a little less), and repeat. **(2 times)**
NEXT POSITION: everything the same, except: foot of
the topside leg resting in front of the other leg
(repeating the previous sequence:)

1. Lift the knee of your topside leg; brace youself with
   your arm or arms.

2. Slowly let your knee come down. (2 times)
   
   *Feel your whole torso begin to turn. You will feel the
   muscles of the waist and ribs working.*

3. Bend your knee a little more, and do 2 times.
   
   *Keep your foot resting on the front surface of your other
   knee.*

4. Straighten your leg more (bend your knee a little less),
   and do 2 times.

Turn on your other side and repeat the entire sequence.
The “Cat Twist” Maneuver

Use this movement to relax progressively into a twisted position.

NEXT POSITION: sidelying, fingers of both hands interlaced above your head, elbows together; knees bent and ankles together

1. Slowly swing your topside elbow up and across until it rests upon the floor on the opposite side.

_Gently, ending in your most relaxed state. Feel the muscles of your torso working._

⇒ _TRY THIS!_ ⇒ Inhale into your chest on the top side as you swing across.

2. Swing your knees across until they rest on your opposite side.

_Feel the muscles of your torso working._

⇒ _TRY THIS!_ ⇒ Inhale into your chest on the underside as you swing your legs over.

3. Swing your other elbow up and across until it rests upon your other elbow, again.

⇒ _TRY THIS!_ ⇒ Exhale as you swing across.

Repeat the movements in the opposite direction.
VARIATIONS:

A) Keep your head snug against the topside arm as you swing over. Keep looking at your topside arm elbow as you turn.

B) Keep your head snug against the underside arm as you swing over. Keep looking at your underside arm elbow as you turn.

C) Keep your nose and knees pointed the same direction as you move.
Session 12

Improving Breathing Capacity and Endurance

Preparation for Breathing Transformations

You will need to read through these instructions, understanding each step, before beginning. Then, read and do each step before moving on. The effects accumulate as you do the steps.

EXPECTED RESULTS for the following somatic transformations:

◊ more relaxed breathing, more relaxed ribs
◊ longer neck, more erect posture
◊ calm

THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT: slowing down and smoothing out your breathing

STARTING POSITION: lying on your back, knees up, feet near your buttocks, equally spaced

1. Notice the speed and depth of your breathing for a few breaths.
2. Begin to equalize the period of inhalation with the period of exhalation. Continue until they are more equal.
3. Begin to equalize the pause between inhalation and exhalation with the pause between exhalation and inhalation. Continue until they are more equal.
4. Begin to extend the period between inhalation and exhalation. Do this until your breath has slowed down and deepened, somewhat.
5. Begin to extend the period between exhalation and inhalation. Continue until the two periods are nearly equal.
6. Now, breathe naturally for a time.
7. Now, do the following breathing sequence:

**5 slow breath cycles:**

- 6 seconds inhale, 2 second pause;
- 6 seconds exhale, 3 second pause;
- 6 seconds inhale, 4 second pause,
- 6 seconds exhale, 5 second pause
- 6 seconds exhale, 6 second pause

Rest and breathe naturally.

**Perform four (4) times, total.**
Improving Abdominal Breathing and Getting Taller and More Slender

THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT: relaxing the inside of your abdomen, chest and neck so your torso lengthens and flattens

STARTING POSITION: lying on your back, knees up, feet planted near buttocks

Variation “A”

1. Exhale all the way (down to the bottom).
   ⇒ VARIATION: ⇒ Exhale just until you need extra effort to exhale further.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Lift your head and curl forward.

2. Close your epiglottis (breathing passage “valve” -- the “coughing muscle”).

3. Strongly attempt to breathe in, but prevent air from coming in.
   1. Relax your neck and head.
      ⇒ VARIATION: ⇒ (If you have curled forward:)
         Relax and uncurl, to lie back (still exhaled).

2. Get the feeling of sucking your brain out of your head, through your neck and chest, into your abdomen, above the navel.
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Rock your head side-to-side, rhythmically.
   ⇒ OPTION: ⇒ Take a fresh, full breath, exhale and continue to rock your head side to side.

5. Gradually, smoothly, and slowly relax the attempt to breathe in, while lengthening (flattening) your spine (still keeping air out).
   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Rock your pelvis gently forward and back as you relax.
TRY THIS! Slide your elbows in-and-out (shoulders relaxed, resting on the floor, not moving).

1. When fully relaxed, take and release 1 or 2 breaths.

Repeat 2 times more or until you are satisfied.

* To locate your epiglottis muscle, try an experiment. Cough and feel what stops the expulsion of air just before you cough. What you are feeling is the closing and then sudden opening of your epiglottis. Try closing it, again, and this time tighten your abdomen and feel the build-up of pressure in your chest. Now exhale, close your epiglottis and create the feeling of a vacuum in your chest by preventing yourself from inhaling. That’s what you need to do for this somatic transformation.
### Variation “B”

1. Exhale all the way (down to the bottom).

   ⇒ VARIATION: ⇒ Exhale just until you need extra effort to exhale further.

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Lift your head and curl forward.

2. Close your epiglottis (“coughing muscle”).

3. Strongly attempt to breathe in, but prevent air from coming in.

4. Relax your neck and head.

   ⇒ VARIATION: ⇒ (If you have curled forward:) Relax and uncurl, to lie back (still exhaled).

5. Get the feeling of sucking your brain out of your head, through your neck and chest, into your abdomen, below the navel. (You will end up sucking in your gut.)

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Turn your head side-to-side.

   ⇒ OPTION: ⇒ Take a fresh, full breath, exhale and continue.

4. Gradually, smoothly, and slowly relax the attempt to breathe in, while lengthening (flattening) your spine (still keeping air out).

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Rock the pelvis gently forward and back as you relax the muscles.

   ⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Slide your elbows in-and-out (shoulders relaxed, resting on the floor, not moving).

5. When fully relaxed, take and release 1 or 2 full, deep breaths.
The Magic of Somatics

Breathing Expansion

THE ESSENCE OF THIS MOVEMENT: getting clear recognition of the impulse to inhale and expanding your natural breathing capacity beyond your usual maximum

You need to read these instructions through once before beginning. Then, sitting up, rehearse each of the steps until you can remember them, lying down. Then, do the movements in position.

**Variation “A”**

**STARTING POSITION:** lying on your back, legs straight

1. Take a full breath and hold it with an open air passage (as if still to breathe in).
2. Exhale very slightly and wait.
   
   *You will soon feel the impulse to breathe.*
3. Take air without exhaling.
4. Repeat (2) - (3) until you can expand no further.

Exhale and breathe freely.

Do three (3) times or until you are satisfied.

**Variation “B”**

**STARTING POSITION:** lying on your back, knees up, feet equally spaced near your buttocks

1. Exhale, sounding the letter, “h” (“hhhhh”) to get the feel.
2. Inhale to the center of your body, silently breathing in: “hhhhhh”.
3. Note the first moment you feel restriction to breathing in. Find your first limit.
   
   *Use the “Feathering” technique, page 101. It may take 10 seconds or more before you recognize a restriction.*
4. Back off slightly, breathe in gently against the restriction, and relax, keeping the air in.
⇒ TRY THIS! ⇒ Rock your pelvis forward and back.

5. When the restriction lets go, inhale and expand further to the periphery.

Repeat (4.) & (5.) until you must exhale.

6. Breathe (“hhhhhh”) through your mouth and nose for a few breaths.

Inhale and repeat the entire procedure.
Variation “C”

STARTING POSITION: on your back, one arm laid back by your head, the opposite leg bent, knee dropped out, foot against the inside of the opposite knee joint

1. Press your laid-back arm into the surface on which you are lying.
2. Inhale easily to capacity.
3. Feel and relax any restrictions to inhaling more fully.
   Use the “Feathering” technique, page 101. It may take 10 seconds or more before you recognize a restriction.
4. Inhale into the space made by relaxing restrictions.
5. Exhale and relax.

Repeat Steps (1. - 4.) until you get no further expansion.

5. Press the side of your bent leg and your laid-back arm into the surface on which you are lying.
   Use equal strength.
6. Inhale easily to capacity.
7. Feel and relax any restrictions to inhaling more fully.
   Use the “Feathering” technique, page 101. It may take 10 seconds or more before you recognize a restriction.
8. Inhale into the space made by relaxing restrictions.
9. Exhale and relax.

Repeat Steps (5. - 8.) until you get no further expansion.
Advanced Techniques to Apply
Once You Have Gotten Very Familiar with
the Somatic Transformations
The “Feathering” Technique

Typically, people use much more effort to do a movement than is necessary by involving muscles that are unnecessary for the movement. Such inefficient movement contributes strain to movement and to living. The Transformations found in this Guidebook provide ideal opportunities to develop more efficient, easier movement. One technique to do so is called, “feathering”. It’s called that because you use it to locate the edges of restrictions to movement with the delicacy of a feather.

In a nutshell, it works this way: When doing certain movements, you will notice that as you reach a certain position (unique to you), you must apply more effort to continue moving. You have encountered a restriction to movement -- a restriction created, in many cases, by tension held somewhere in the body, usually without awareness and in an unsuspected area. At that point in the transformation, do the “feathering” technique.

The “Feathering” Technique

1. Back off from the position of restriction, then slowly resume movement toward the restriction and notice the exact position at which you first sense it.

2. Back off, again. Reapproach, again sensing the edge of the restriction with the delicacy of a feather.

Repeat until you have a clear sense of where you first encounter restriction.

3. Now, find the edge and pause. Scan the whole body for tension, the tension of effort.

4. Relax anything you find that is more than needed to do the simple movement you intend.

At that point, the restriction to movement will have disappeared or moved. Continue the movement past the point at which you stopped to do the “feathering” technique, as your newfound freedom permits.
**Pause and Relax -- another relaxation technique**

This is another technique for reducing effort in movement.

As you do any of the movements in this Guidebook, you may pause in place, scan the whole body for extra tension, and relax it. You will often undergo a postural shift, and increase of freedom and comfort, and experience a feeling of sudden, additional mental clarity.

Review “INTEND, ALLOW, DO” in “Pace Yourself” on page 10.
The “Teasing” Technique

The purpose of all of the somatic transformations is to free your muscular system. This process involves both awareness and control.

It is typical of many human beings to have only enough control of movement to get by. Hence, the meaning of the word, “gentle”, is nebulous for many and equated with “weakness” by others.

It is also typical that people have only a vague sense of certain muscles.

Finally, by using too much force or effort, people fail to sense the subtle tensions that maintain habitual postures. Too much force produces too much sensation, which drowns out the subtler sensations of habitual postures.

The Teasing technique accomplishes three purposes. It:

• enables you to locate areas of your muscular system with precision movements that engage more and more of the body.

• develops finer control over effort and speed of movement.

• enables you to release patterns of tension that are otherwise beyond reach of your awareness.

You can use this technique with any of the transformations given here.

The technique has three stages:

1. Locate a place where you have tension or discomfort.

2. Learn how to move to tighten that place deliberately.

3. In a series of contractions, tighten and relax at a gradually decreasing level of intensity until you experience a postural release.

More detailed instructions follow, immediately below.
The “Teasing” Technique

1. Locate a place where you have discomfort you would like to erase.

2. Tighten the area and notice how you move.

3. Relax the effort.

4. Tighten and release repeatedly until you can feel the sensation increase and decrease.

5. With each cycle of tightening and releasing, notice what body parts move and deliberately add them to the action of tightening and releasing.
   
   You will notice that your ability to tighten gets considerably stronger.

6. When you are capable of a strong contraction, contract and hold.
   
   Notice the amount of effort you are exerting.

7. Release and then re-tighten less, though enough to feel the area distinctly.

8. Slowly release the area, maintaining continuous awareness of the decreasing tension.

9. Repeat tightening and releasing and decreasing levels of effort until you experience a postural release.
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The source text from which much of The Magic of Somatics was elaborated, the
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