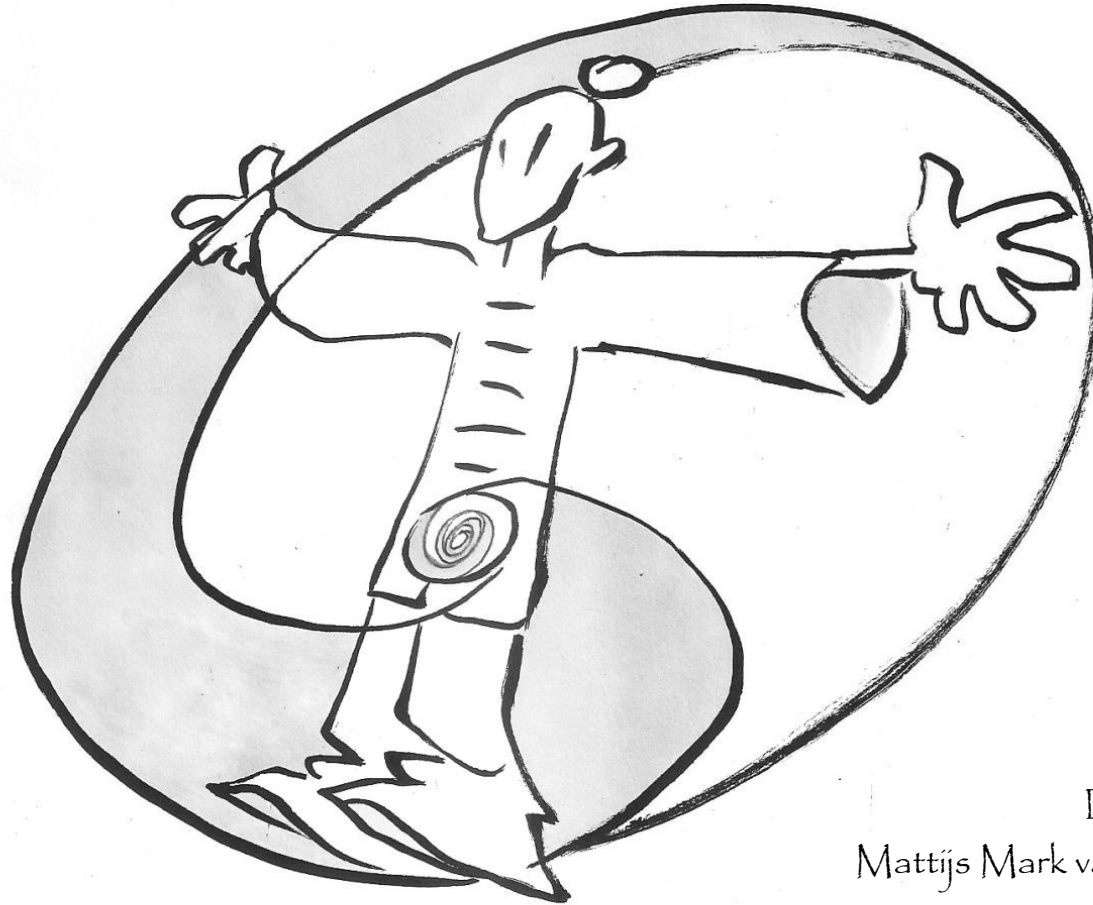


Sense Motivated Movement



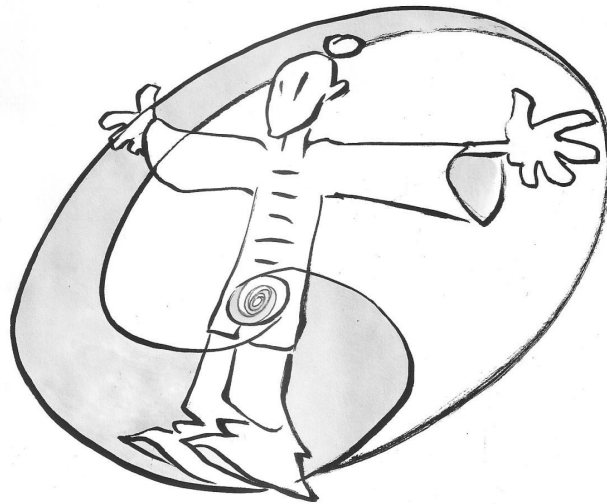
Drawings by
Mattijs Mark van Katwijk

Denise Bloemen and Inge Maassen

Denise Bloemen

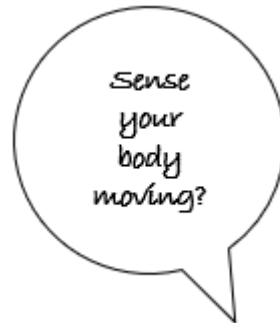
Inge Maassen

Sense Motivated Movement



Drawings by
Mattijs Mark van Katwijk

About this book



This book is an introduction to a very different way of moving — naturally, like an animal or a healthy child. A child moves from within, pushing up, for example, against the earth to stand. In so doing, he makes use of his skeleton.

This book supports you in:

- consciously "being" in your body
- experiencing your skeletal structure
- with relaxed muscles
- from a deep inner centre of strength.

How can we return to initiating our movement in the skeleton with relaxed muscles and from a centre of inner power? This is clearly explained with many examples, fun cartoons and simple exercises.

The idea is that in your daily life you will start to **Move in a Sense Motivated manner**, playing with the principles discussed here. You will begin to experience tremendous strength when the joints of spine, arms and legs start to "open up" with this new way of living.

Denise Bloemen (b 1935) discovered many of the basic principles she uses in this book in her own body.

She is a physiotherapist, with more than 50 years of practical experience, and a Healing Tao instructor with an in-depth knowledge of the Chinese healing arts.

Inge Maassen started her working life as a publisher before becoming a Senior Healing Tao instructor.



This book is dedicated to Wim Goedbloed for his support during the entire process

Sense Motivated Movement is based on the 3rd edition (2018) of the Dutch book

GevoelsBewust Bewegen ISBN 978-90-822584-0-0

Translation: Edward Doolan

Colophon

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Photos Denise and Inge: Nikki Nooteboom

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though quotations for articles or reviews can be used with reference to the book.

Relevant websites

www.gevoelsbewustbewegen.nl

www.healingdao.nl

How it all started:

The search for something
you don't know exactly what
and don't know where to look.
All this in the firm belief,
that you're not going to find it.

This is how it feels sometimes...

The gentle drive,
the eagerness, the conviction....

"Go on...,
it's not difficult at all..."

The hand... that leads with strength,
and makes you feel...

"Don't think.
No talking...
Just be in your power
deep inside, in your body."

The doubt of how
to keep hold of this...
when I am on the work floor
and get a phone call,
full of urgent panic.

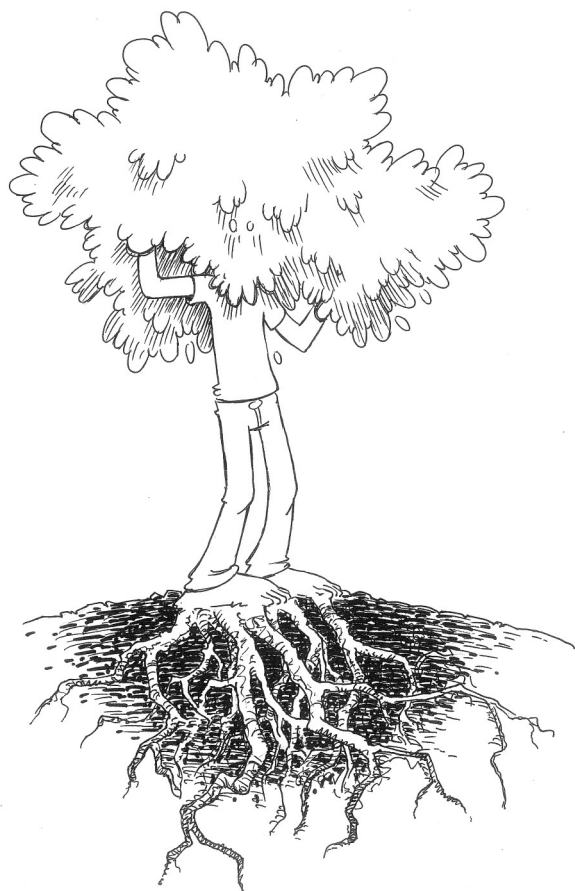
Faces... no longer smooth and expressionless,
but paler and more alive.
Alive with...
what had been latent for years.

And after all that wrestling...
and beyond the tears...
there is now...
very deep inside...

A friendly gratitude in my bones...
Friends now, with my long-lost bony allies.

Thank you...

Mieke, engineer
participant.

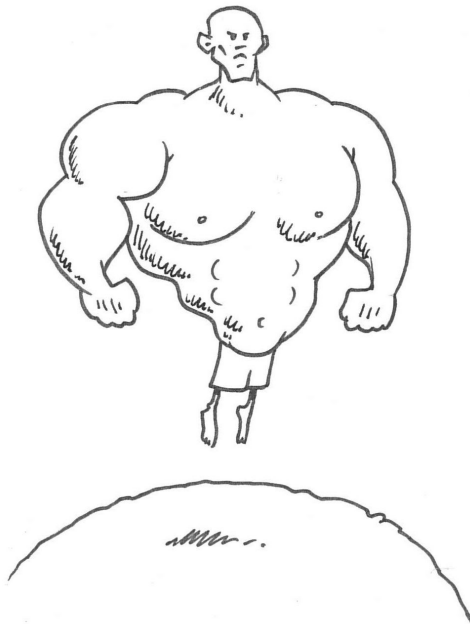


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Foreword



Every now and then you come across somebody who has something you do not encounter every day. A certain zest for life, vitality, sparkle, or an irresistible charisma. It makes them appealing or special, as if they are harbouring a secret of unknown value. A secret that cannot be captured in words.

I recently met someone like that, a lady with all of the above characteristics. The special thing about her was: the lady in question was born in 1935! At an age when many are quietly retreating behind the scenes, she challenged me after I had expressed my surprise at her vitality. “Push me over!” she teased me. I felt a little uneasy at the thought of easily applying my 100 or so kilos to push over an “old lady”. She smiled mischievously and gently closed her eyes. She opened her eyes with a fiery look and said: “It’s ok big guy, push me, and don’t hold back...” Feeling a little guilty, I pushed her. It was as if I was pushing against a tree, there was no movement at all! “Come on, come on, don’t hold back...” No matter how hard I pushed, Denise Bloemen did not budge.

Disconcerted, I asked her about her secret. “It all started with a very painful back”, she answered. I hung onto her every word as she started to tell me a little about her life. “I contracted a disorder known as Sheuermann’s disease in my spine when I was about 30. Doctors prognosed that the pain radiating out to my rib cage would get worse and that my back would grow more curved over time. I decided not to wait for that to happen and started to work on myself.”

Her search for healing would go down many avenues. She found the answer in herself and in the Tao, created many thousands of years ago by the Chinese. Denise is apprenticed to Tao masters such as Mantak Chia and has learned the ancient techniques of the Healing Tao tradition.

I could see that there was no crookedness whatsoever in her spine.

She challenged me again to bend her arm. She tensed her muscles and I was able to bend her arm with ease. “Now try it again” she said, after a moment of turning inwards. Even though her arm seemed now to be quite relaxed, it was not possible to move it at all.

“Nothing is as strong as gentleness”, she said, “and that is exactly the problem” (referring to us Westerners). In general, too much mental energy is applied. Even when grounding, roots are visualised from the feet downwards. Our heads are completely full (gesturing grandly with her hands), no energy flows through the body itself.

The back is yang, but the way you engage it with gentleness is yin, feminine, earthly, that is what makes it strong. Strength comes from relaxation, but we have forgotten that. Uniting the opposites is what bestows power. “Otherwise, you become old and stiff, and often at a young age” (with a wink at me).

I longed to learn more from this wise lady who freely shared her knowledge. “Some of my students say that my knowledge should be written down before I die, but that will not work: you have to experience it first hand.” I nodded and she suggested we do a few exercises. Under her guidance we began to shake our legs, to which she said, laughing, “You mustn’t do the shaking! Let the earth shake you.” And damn, it worked. “Stop now once and for all with all of this male yang attitude and tune into the earth’s energy, let it work its way into your bones.” So, we went through a short series of exercises and after about twenty minutes I felt reborn. What a wonderful powerful energy flowed through me! “This is feminine energy; you can feed yourself on that”, Denise said.

What a pity that we do not learn these things in our physical education system when we are young. How different our health would be if people like Denise would teach our children these kinds of energetic exercises from an early age!

If I listen carefully to my body as she has recommended, I feel that it longs for further initiation, for relaxation, gentleness and vitality.

Lars Faber, 2014
www.degewijdereis.nl
From: De Koorddanser



Denise Bloemen

About the author

Muscle Tension

“Tilt your pelvis, shoulders back, back straight!”

During my training as a physiotherapist, and also in the more than 50 years that I worked with that, I noticed again and again that we worked with posture and movement in a way that promoted muscle tension. I questioned this more and more over the course of time.

Nature itself gave me a helping hand when I was confronted with fairly serious back problems. It transpired that I had Scheuermann's disease, which was accompanied by severe nerve pain. This prompted me to start experimenting on my own in the hope of becoming symptom-free.

To relax is to let go

I discovered that the pain became less when I relaxed my muscles. The more I could relax my muscles, the less painful my movements became. For the first time, I could feel the skeleton underneath my muscles. I subsequently noticed that I could move with even less pain if I took my skeleton as the starting point of my movement; by which I mean that I allowed the movement begin in the skeleton rather than in the muscles. Initiating movement in this way meant that I now only used the muscles necessary for the specific movement in question; in this way I generated no more muscle tension than necessary.

Open joints

It became clear to me that I was using my muscles in a totally new way. The joints of the skeleton - including all the joints of the spinal column - now opened up. This was accompanied by a feeling of vitality caused by the improved flow of energy. The pain, caused by the deformity and wear and tear in the vertebrae - which radiated out to my ribs - disappeared.

Unlocking the skeleton

Then bit by bit, I allowed the movements to flow through my skeleton,

which in turn opened up the joints and unblocked my skeleton even more. Everything fell into place: my pelvis tilted, my back straightened and my neck aligned itself. Now I could utilise all my joints fully with an absolute minimum of muscle tension. It all just happened.

I then took a close look at my walking, sitting, standing, lying down and lifting. Around that time, a teacher in the Zen school introduced me to the One Point, which took me even deeper into my body. It transpired that the more I continued to practise, the more and more I became aware of my own strength and stability.

As I developed more conscious awareness in my back, I came more into my own power; by opening my skeleton with the earth as my starting point, I felt more and more connected to everything.

My movements started to shift from the outside world to the inner world with the skeleton as my starting point. The outer goal no longer initiated my movement now; instead, I moved from the inside towards a goal outside of me.

Not only did I switch from the outside to the inside, but I also switched from the front to the back: my physical consciousness – the awareness of my physical body – moved more and more from the front of my body to the back.

And finally, I noticed, that when I placed my awareness in my pelvis as well – in the One Point – I could feel even more power, structure and energy flow. So, from outside to inside, from front to back and from top to bottom.

Paramedical ramblings

After lots of exploration into all kinds of systems other than physiotherapy – psychodrama, Reiki, Phyllis Krystal (*Cutting the ties that bind*), Aura- and Chakra Healing, and later also Reconnection - I delved into Chinese Taoism. I was particularly inspired by this because the physical body is more the starting point here. My idea that the more subtle “heavenly” vibrations can enter the earth through the human body and vice versa, became clearer.

**From outside to inside,
from front to back,
and from top to bottom**





Being open as a human being between heaven and earth is an important Taoist principle: *"If you embrace earth, heaven will chase you."*

The gifts of the Tao

The Healing Tao system and my later studies of Traditional Chinese Medicine deepened my vision of healing. Tui Na and Chinese Organ Massage (Chi Nei Tsang) were developed from these.

I became a Healing Tao teacher and discovered that there were many similarities in this ancient Chinese system to that which I had discovered in my physical body. It was great to see this common ground and it formed a fascinating extension to my own knowledge and experience.

Conscious Movement

The way in which I was taught Chi Kung and other forms of movement, and through my own self-learning, convinced me that many people could benefit from my knowledge and experience with movement. In the meanwhile I have been teaching for several years what I call *conscious awareness in movement*, and I notice that especially people who have had no specific formal physical training can more easily return to their own original way of moving when they were an infant.

Moreover, this way of moving provides a wonderful basis for physical and energetic conscious-awareness and the opening of the body between earthly and heavenly forces irrespective of whatever background people have.

A word of thanks

I would like to thank the many teachers who have shared their knowledge and experiences with me. Although I am aware that everything originated from my own physical pain and physiotherapeutic knowledge, I know that I would never have developed in this way without my many teachers and students too as sparring partners.

Moreover, this book would never have come about if co-author Inge Maassen had not patiently enticed me to share my knowledge in this way. I am also very happy to have cartoonist Mattijs van Katwijk, who, in his own individual humorous way, created the playful drawings that appeal so much to me.

There are many people who have read along with us as we wrote, tried out exercises etc. whose support has been invaluable to me. All that remains is to thank my husband Wim Goedbloed for his supportive presence and care, especially at times when Inge and I were writing.

Students and readers

I feel completely happy and fulfilled when I see how clients and course attendees gradually open up in their physical bodies, resulting in complaints disappearing and them experiencing their *own* strength.

I look forward to sharing my experiences with you, the reader, and hope that this knowledge will not be reduced to a theory in your head only. The intention is that you experience it, so that it brings you to your own personal power. The key is to experience and consciously play with this material day in and day out.

*Denise Bloemen,
July 2014*

"I am very happy with the translation of our book by Eddie Doolan. He has become a dear friend and I am touched by his involvement, dedication and understanding of the material."

*Denise Bloemen,
March 2023*



Inge Maassen

Co-auteur Inge Maassen

About ten years ago I got to know Denise as colleague and fellow teacher within the Healing Tao system of which I am the Senior teacher. Her enormous internal strength and vitality struck me and I tried, first without words and later with, to discover her secret.

When I look at Denise, it seems to me that her body is structured differently to most people's; it presents itself as strong and supple, straight as well as flexible, broad, powerful and also open. It is almost as if it exudes a vitalising pulsation. Her energy reminds me of a three-year-old child whose energy is purely physical and close to the ground. Denise (born 1935) has for me energetically something really amazing and I gradually learn from her expertise.

I have been working with her for eight years now; organising her groups and supporting her where possible during the group sessions. Therefore, I feel I know her work really well.

From a very young age I was intrigued by the energetic dimension, especially the higher frequencies of that world. I began with the purely spiritual, working in the 70's and 80's at the Ankh-Hermes publishing house. I subsequently worked to get clarity around emotional processes as a Sann-yasin in the groups of Osho (Bhagwan). When I later trained as a classical homeopath from an anthroposophical basis, I also obtained mental clarity, especially around processes of illness and health.

I finally found my path in the Healing Tao tradition of Mantak Chia; I have been teaching for 22 years now in the Taoist tradition where the spiritual and mental, the emotional and energetic and their interconnections are made clear. The more I worked with the "lower frequencies" of the abdo-

men and pelvis, the more I become aware of my bones, and the more awareness, spiritual refinement, emotional balance and vital energy arose in me as a result. It makes me very happy. I am passionate about passing this on in the training, teaching and coaching sessions I give. Originally, I worked with a publisher which allowed me to develop my love and skill for words. I am especially good finding a descriptive word where one does not easily come to mind; it always requires translation, like putting a dream into words, or making an idea visual. Translating the physical-energetic into words is something I am particularly interested in. The workshops with Denise and now this book as well are a welcome challenge in this respect.

For a long time, Denise has resisted bringing out into the open what she does and what she has to offer. I am glad, however, that I have persevered and that this book is here now, as an introduction to a way of moving that will benefit many people, and with which apprentices can deepen their insights and practical experience.

I am especially grateful to and happy with Naomi Duveen and Mattijs van Katwijk for continuously trying out the exercises Denise and I described; reading, correcting and rereading the text.

Inge Maassen,
Senior Healing Tao Teacher
www.healingdao.nl
July 2014



Mattijs M. van Katwijk

Artist Mattijs M. van Katwijk

Mattijs was trained as a visual artist at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague. At the moment he is mainly active as a cartoonist.

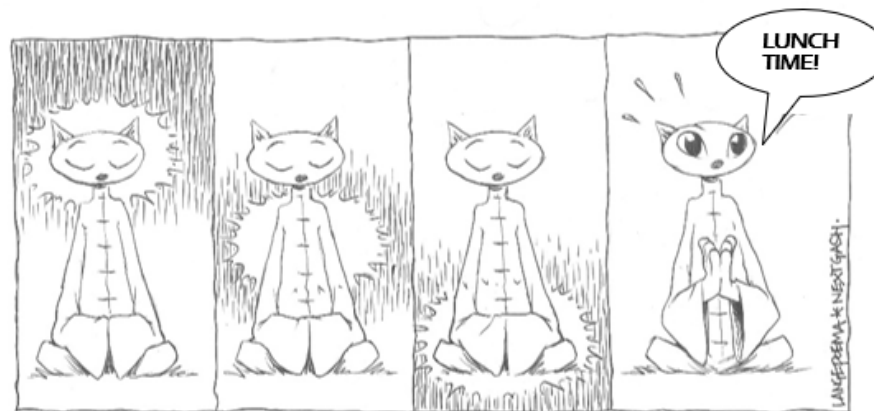
In addition, he has been a professional Taoist teacher since 2004.

In his trainings, he combines in a practical way his experiences in martial arts, health and working with people.

Structure, clarity and an infectious enthusiasm go hand in hand with subtlety and humour.

Bringing body and soul together is his great passion, just as is his bringing his images to life.

For more information: www.studiomeng.nl



Introduction

Communication from head-to-head

In fact, writing this book is quite an impossible task. Text passed from head-to-head takes us into the mental, which hinders conscious physical feeling in the body.

This difficulty – to find those words that make an exercise physically palpable and doable for students – kept me from writing anything down for years. Nevertheless, together with Inge, I have started to write it down now because it would be a real pity to lose all this experiential knowledge. But even now as we write, we realise that this problem – how to transmit physical feeling through the medium of written word – will repeatedly occur.

Can we find the words that bring you into your body, that bring your attention deep inside and open you to processes of change? Not easy; but we will give it a go. It would be a great pity if what is written down would only reside within the head, resulting in the experience of "moving from within" being lost.

Learning from a teacher who has the subject matter in hand

It goes without saying that learning from someone who has mastered sense motivated movement is important. As a student, you can participate and feel along with this teacher; he or she can let you experience what it is like to stand in your own power. You can ask questions and the teacher can observe you as you explore your own body.

Another advantage is that you can also feel directly with your own hands what is happening in the teacher's body during the different exercises, so that it becomes easier to transfer the physical idea behind the words to your own body.

We hope this inspires you and that you will get the opportunity to take lessons from an experienced teacher.



A light-hearted playful approach is important

Being consciously physically aware in your body is a developmental process that is not about being right or wrong. Practising lightly and playfully, and experiencing what happens inside you with an almost childlike wonder is what makes this path enormously exciting. Be aware that ingrained patterns of movement do not easily give way to moving more “from within”; give yourself time.

You will also notice that if you understand the material in this book mentally, your body will not be able to replicate it immediately. The key is to grow, little by little, step by step, towards being constantly “in your body”.

Suppose it does not feel pleasant at all in your body?

Being able to objectively observe what is happening physically in your body is also part of the process. If there is pain, for example, or tiredness, or restlessness, this will take your attention to the body in an unpleasant way. It is understandable that the only thing you want in that moment is to get away from that feeling as quickly as possible and shift your consciousness out of that area. However, by doing so, you stop the process of self-healing.

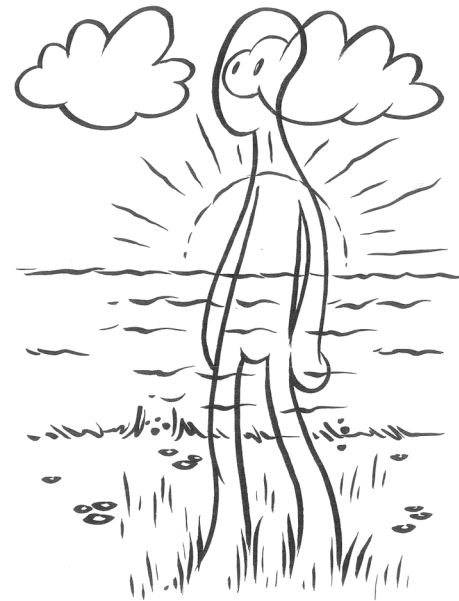
The subtle art is to keep on feeling in your body and relaxing into it. Your body reacts to everything; it recognises your internal messages, but also reacts acutely to any thoughts or feelings that arise within you.

From our point of view, it is not so much about following an exercise programme, but about being constantly aware of what is happening in your body throughout the day.

Was it easier in the past?

People close to nature and small children are more sensitive of the environment around them. This results in their being more anchored in their physical body and attuned to its needs. Our western society focuses more and more on the development of our mental faculties.

However, from a holistic perspective, if one part functions less well it naturally has an effect on everything else.



Focusing only on the mental side of things may well be at the expense of both our physical consciousness as well as our overall health. In our opinion, an overall physical, energetic and psychological war of attrition is taking place at the moment, which we, of course, hope can be reversed.

Church morality

The origin of the emphasis on mental development probably lies in our patriarchal culture in which Christianity still plays such an important role. The generally accepted view that the mind is more important than the body has its origins in the Christian Church. In our opinion, harmony between body and spirit can only come about when the mutual dependence of one upon the other is recognised. Fortunately, everyone can always free themselves from whatever programming they have had in the past.

The inner approach to your body

Using muscle tension to block out feelings

Most of us like to keep unpleasant feelings out of our conscious mind.

Muscle tension is *the* method we use for this.

When we relax tensed muscles, these unpleasant feelings can come to the surface in the form of restlessness, nausea, pain, fatigue, cold, heat, dizziness – in other words as a multitude of bodily feelings.

It is not necessary to know exactly what the original emotion was that caused a particular muscle to become tense. Usually it is enough to remain present with the less pleasant *physical* sensation in a relaxed, accepting way; being present allows you to breathe more freely – and the breathing movement in turn creates energy flow — a flowing river becomes clearer of its own accord.

Expressing emotions and feeling emotions

Expressing emotions is different from feeling them in your body. Staying present with your gentle attention and with a smile often bring the ultimate relief. Expressing an emotion momentarily gives some space, but often it does not resolve the depth of our experience of inner pain.

The soft gaze

Can you observe yourself with a soft gaze?

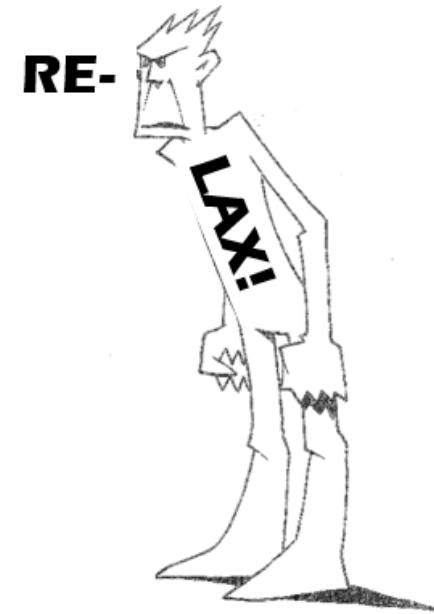
When you feel loving, endeared, grateful or happy,
you come more into yourself.

It starts in the eyes;

the eyes relax and become soft,
the whole face relaxes.

And your smile appears automatically – your soft gaze.

This is the best approach to adopt when you want to explore your inner



The soft gaze

N V L E
 O IO N
 N WITH YOUR
 C OWN
 O BODY
 M
 M T
 U A
 N C
 I

world. You are then no longer using your willpower, you are not thinking or feeling obligated in any way – you simply let it happen. This creates room for change to happen inside.

*"Nothing is so strong as gentleness.
 Nothing is so gentle as real strength!"*
St. Francis

So being gentle with your body is essential in order to allow all that is happening within you to come to the surface. This feeling not only takes quite some courage, but also acceptance of everything that comes up in your feeling-consciousness.

Compare it to a deep conversation with a close friend who really empathetically listens to you. In this space you say more than you normally would and show more of yourself. You also receive useful insights simply because you are listened to; the other person does not even have to say anything.

Engaging with the subject matter

You can always let go of any "posture"

Is there a precisely correct posture – one in which the body functions optimally? And if so, are we talking about a posture which you can hold once you have found it?

In our view, there is no such thing as a correct posture, but there is such a thing as a flexible and supple body. In its interaction with the environment, the body is constantly searching for possibilities to function in the most optimal way possible. Since everything around us is constantly changing, we have, in each moment, the option to move with that change, open to everything we can utilise, and let go of what we no longer need.

This book does not teach you to adopt a specific type of posture

We never really talk about "posture"; it is a word that conjures up rigidity, just as a military posture exudes rigidity. Instead of the word posture, we would rather speak of a "dance around balance". Everything that is rigid and fixed inclines towards death; life is flexible, alert and supple.

Posture as a dance around balance

We assume that everyone would like to have a healthy and happy body that moves with ease.

What do we need for that?

Being conscious within your body,
including your back, as well as deep within the pelvis, and also in the
soles of your feet

with:

relaxed muscles,
One Point, and
a conscious open skeleton.





For some people this is all much easier to achieve than for others. If you have a chronic problem that causes you a lot of physical discomfort, it will take more time to relax the muscles involved and to open the joints. But... you do have more motivation than the person who has no complaints. Experience shows that a lot can be achieved with this way of conscious movement. Denise has seen many physical limitations disappear and many complaints dissipate.

What is actually happening?

Have you ever seen or read about the way Chinese fighters are trained? The film *Karate Kid* is a good example. For hours, days, weeks, months he had to paint the fences with a big block brush, up and down, other hand, back and forth, two brushes - ten hours a day. Until he collapsed, but... he did not collapse. He kept on going. His body learned how to make those movements in such a way that he could always continue to paint.

The same process can happen with long distance runners and cyclists. Something special occurs when one perseveres with a specific, constantly-repeated movement despite extreme fatigue. A different system kicks in; a system that does not expend energy, but rather generates it. However, even if you are familiar with this other system of movement, it does not mean that you can easily invoke it at will. One may not be able to simply turn it on; it happens of its own accord.

This other form of movement is what this book is all about: what is this other system and how can we access in our own body at will?

The time-consuming Chinese Qi training of practising ten hours a day for years with a teacher who has also mastered it this way, no longer appeals to Westerners. We hope that sense motivated movement offers a more accessible path. The pitfall remains that the knowledge continues to reside in the head, and that the principles will be passed from head-to-head without first being physically felt in one's own body.

Working with the material

The exercises in this book are there to put flesh and bones on the theory and to offer you the possibility of trying things out. Even though you may not do the exercise exactly as intended, the benefit is that — when combined with the compassion of your soft gaze — you will “feel” more and more of what is happening inside you. In this way you give yourself loving attention, which opens up new possibilities.

Feeling-awareness grows

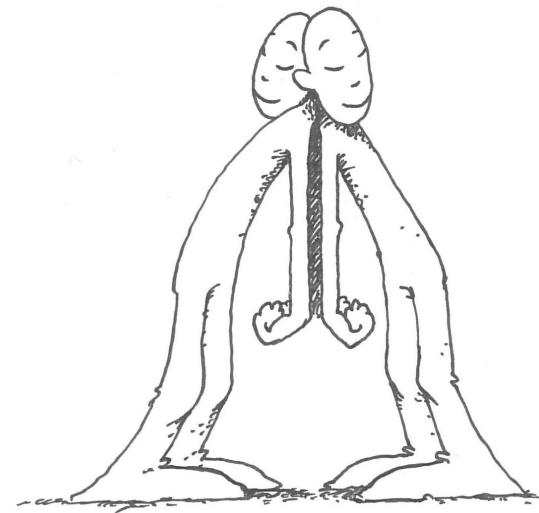
Not everyone has developed an awareness of what they feel in their body. People who can, feel their skin as skin, muscles as muscles and bones as bones; all different. Because we are so estranged from the purely physical, this is not so simple anymore. But... awareness of what we feel grows and the consciousness around it becomes more and more refined. It would be nice to be able to give this process the time and space it needs. As you develop, you will be better able to differentiate between that which you “know”, can “visualise”, or actually “feel” in your body.

Practicing with a buddy

For some exercises you need a partner, someone to help you. The trick is to slowly make the other person more adept at, and more conscious of what you are practising together — another form of sparring. The buddy always provides a safe container; the basis of that is:

Looking with a soft smile;
coming from deep within the pelvis;
touching the other with relaxed hands;
sitting easily and comfortably
while continuing to breathe calmly.

If you take good care of yourself as the active buddy, it is easier for the passive other to relax and keep feeling whatever is physically happening.



Connecting to the Earth

What is grounding?

When we talk about “grounding”, we talk about whether the body can become part of the larger body we call Earth. We would like to feel the exchange; the continuous dialogue of our body with Mother Earth.

Grounding and feeling are in fact the same thing

Emotions that we have not been able to process fully locate themselves – as we have seen above – somewhere in our body in the form of muscle tension. This muscle tension forms a block between us and the earth. “Grounding”, in the sense of letting go of this block between ourselves and the earth, is best achieved when we dare to feel what is happening physically. We can then allow also the power of the earth to flow back into our bodies.

Something completely different is... grounding through visualisation

When you are good at creating images and can easily visualise, for example, a long tail to ground with, you are actually doing something else. What you are doing is at a higher vibratory level – and will probably only ground you at that higher vibratory level. However, that is not what we mean here. In the more physical grounding, the idea is that you feel your skeleton and let go of all muscle tension around it.

With your feet in the earth

You connect yourself with the earth through your skeleton. As you stand, your body weight sinks via the skeleton into your feet; form the connection between your skeleton and the earth. Therefore, we are first going to work with the soles of our feet to see if we can strengthen the conscious feeling-awareness in them.



Making the feet aware

Can you sit in a way that you can easily take hold your feet?
Socks off is handy.
Start with one foot.
With your hands, and more specifically, with your fingertips,
Move the skin, the muscles, etc.
over the bones of your foot.
On the bottom as well as on the top,
all around the toes,
including your hefty heel bone...

Before you switch to the other foot, put both feet on the floor and feel the difference. The more time you spend doing this, the more your conscious awareness will develop.

9 points of the foot

Now we move to the sole of the foot. It has nine obvious points of contact with the floor:

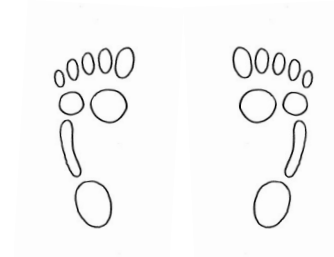
Five toes which touch the floor (5)
the balls behind the big and little toes (2)
the "line" where the outer edge of the sole touches the ground (1)
and the heel (1).

So how do you now make sure that you really feel these 9 points connecting with the floor? There are many ways, this is one:

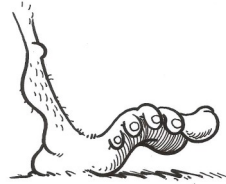
Connecting the sole of the foot to the earth

Five toes...
Standing barefoot, you claw with base of every toe
over the floor in a single movement.
The heel remains on the ground.
Do you feel the bottoms of all your toes more clearly now?
Balls of the foot and heel too...?

Making the feet aware



Making the feet aware...cont.



With your focus on the ball behind the big toe
pretend to grind out that cigarette butt
as you rotate your foot on the floor.
Then do the same with the ball behind the little toe.
Conclude by grinding the base of your heel firmly into the ground.

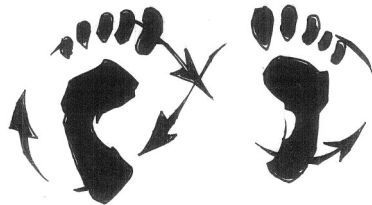
The outer edge of the foot sole...
To feel this clearly and distinctly end by vigorously rubbing
the side of the sole of your foot across the floor.

If you now set both feet approximately hip-width apart on the floor,
do you feel the difference between one foot and the other?
And between one leg and the other?
Can you feel all 9 contact-points of that foot?

And how is the other foot doing?

When the soles of both of your feet have a more palpable presence, it is
nice to investigate how you can stand so that all nine points of both feet
are always more or less in connection with the earth. Maybe not only now,
but also, for instance, when you are waiting somewhere for someone.

Moving your weight over the foot soles



Moving your weight over the soles of the feet

Imagine that you are waiting somewhere...
Are you constantly aware of your connection with the earth
through the 18 points underneath the soles of both feet,
also too when you move ever so slightly?
At which of those points does your weight apply the most pressure?

Feel, in this moment you can shift your weight from point to point
along each of these points – forwards, backwards, sideways,
slowly tracing out lemniscates, shifting from one foot to the other,
all the while feeling the connection with the earth at all 18 points.
Doing nothing...
is also very important.

What is happening now?
Sometimes you can feel
that there is a kind of suction in the soles of your feet,
which pulls up energy from the earth.

Supposing you lose contact with the soles of your feet, then it might be because the movement did not start in your feet, but in your head. If a movement starts at the top you have lost contact with the ground.

Grounding the muscles

Muscle tension and grounding do not go well together

Why is it important to relax our muscles? The muscles we are talking about here are the muscles we use to move the skeleton. For example, when you want to bend our arm, the muscle on the inside of the elbow (the flexor) tightens and the muscle on the outside (the extensor) relaxes. These are the muscles of the upper arm which are attached to the bones of the lower arm by tendons.

The muscles we use to move the skeleton run over the associated joints; if they are overexerted, they tend to pull the bones of the joint too much towards each other. The surfaces of the bones in the joint then rub against each other, causing wear and tear (which can lead to osteoarthritis). If the muscles are more relaxed there is more room in the joint, and the synovial fluid can circulate more easily.

Extreme physical training and physical exertion can result in muscle tension that cannot easily be released. Both physical pain and emotional strain also creates muscle tension, as we talked about earlier.

All of this muscle tension results in certain waste by-products getting stuck in the body, which in turn affect both the blood circulation as well as the grounding of the area in question. The combination of these symptoms does not make the healing of such an area any easier.

Moving over the soles of the feet... cont.



Shaking the coat



Shaking the coat

Everything around the skeleton makes up the what we will call the “coat of the skeleton”. This includes skin, muscles and connective tissue. We are now going to shake this coat as much as we can so that the tissues release their tension and the skeleton becomes much more palpable as a result. While shaking, we try to distinguish between the different types of tissue: the skin independently of the muscles, the muscles separately from the skeleton. The longer you shake, the easier and clearer it all becomes.

You stand comfortably and shake yourself
like a dog shaking the water from its fur.

Now, if you shake one leg,
can you feel the muscles separately from the bones ?
And, does it feel the same if you do it with the other leg?

Put your hands on your buttocks
and feel if they are relaxed as you shake.
Deeper inside yourself you may feel space
opening up between your buttock muscles and your pelvis (ilium).

Put your hands loosely on your belly.
As you shake your belly, allow it to make contact with your hands.
Can you feel both the skin as well as the muscles just underneath?
Are your intestines rocking nicely too?

With your hands on your rib cage
can you feel the skin moving over the ribs as you shake?

Shake out your arms above the ground – one at a time or together –
here too feel the muscles coming loose from the bones.
Feel with your fingertips
whether you can move the skin over your skull bone.

How does your body feel now?

Tensing and relaxing the muscles around the bones

If perhaps you noticed that it was not easy for you to completely relax your muscles the following exercise may help.

It is a well-known phenomenon that the deepest relaxation comes when you tense a muscle to its maximum, and then release it suddenly. So don't relax gently, but let go instantaneously. Note that it is important to breathe out while you tense the muscles!

After each tense-and-release round, feel what it is like to be relaxed in this part of your body. Take your time for this. Do you feel yourself expanding? Getting bigger? Everyone experiences this in their own way. Continuing to breathe normally and your soft smile will help here.

Lie on your back with your knees supported
by a rolled-up blanket, or a thick pillow.
Are your legs loose and relaxed? Are you lying comfortably?

Can you now use the muscles of your left arm
to squeeze on the bones of this arm?

To do this you must keep on tensing. And on and on...
but without changing the position of the arm you are squeezing.
Therefore, you are not making a fist,
nor lifting your arm off the floor, nor pushing it into the floor.

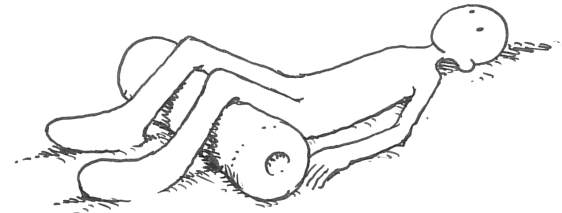
And now, all of a sudden... let go. What do you feel?
Allow yourself to fully sink into this feeling before you tense again.
Take your time...

It is good to tense-and-relax the same body part
at least three times in succession.
And then the other arm.

The left leg – and then the right...

Tense your pelvic floor,
by pulling the anus up towards the pubic bone.

Tensing and relaxing the muscles





Now try to pull the buttock muscles up against the pelvic bone, that is, from the outside inwards.

At the same time, pull your abdomen in as much as you can towards the inside (anterior side) of the pelvic bone; you are now squeezing the whole pelvic girdle .

Gradually try to see if you can include the sides of the pelvis as well.

Try to grasp your spine from the inside.

Squeeze, squeeze... and then suddenly let go and sink into the feeling of expansion...

If this doesn't work so well, try to lift your head and at the same time push it downwards from deep inside – do not forget your soft gaze.

You can now feel how the muscles fully encircle your neck vertebrae.

This same feeling of tension-and-relaxation can also be experienced around the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae.

You can easily expand and contract the ribs at the same time; feel how your shoulder blades are pulled together and downwards.

Clench your teeth, feel the tension that this induces... notice how the relaxation flows back into the jaws and... how the tongue gently fills the mouth cavity.

You can tightly tense up your nose... and relax it again, Your cheeks can also be pulled up... and allowed to relax...

You can pinch your eyes shut..., pull a wrinkle between your eyebrows... and finally, move your eyebrows up to your hairline. Time and again relaxing everything all at once, sinking into the resultant feeling and taking this in.

What is it like now to try to squeeze every muscle around your whole skeleton at the same time... and then to let everything go all at once. Relax and let yourself sink into the resultant feelingenjoy.....

Grounding of the skeleton

Your skeleton has a lower vibration/frequency (because of its density) than your muscles. Most people do not find it easy to feel their skeleton. This is because it is only possible if the muscles around the bones are relaxed.

Everyone can learn to do this. Eventually you will be able to feel the skeleton as a whole, as well as all the individual bones and bone connections (joints) distinctly from one another.

Why is this so important? Because we would like to initiate each movement in the skeleton. This does not mean that you do not use muscles when you move but by making your skeleton your starting point when you begin to move, you do not use any more muscle tension than is necessary to make a specific movement.

Penetrating deep into the bones

With a smile, we are first going to tap the bones of the skeleton so that all the bones feel "seen". The hand or fist that you use to tap the bones falls in a relaxed manner onto the skin. By doing it this way you feel the hand or fist penetrating right through the tissue and into the bone.

Sacrum...

At the base of the spine the sacrum, queen of bones, lives.

If the sacrum is awake, then the skeleton awakens.

With rubbing, drumming and tapping, you make her conscious.

Pelvis...

You start at the left side of the pelvis
and let your relaxed fists loosely fall
on the front and backside of the pelvic bone.

Can you feel your fists penetrate to the pelvic bone?

Legs and feet...

After lightly tapping the hip joint, continue with the left leg,
which you tap on the inside and the outside,
on the frontside, and the backside.

Penetrating deep into the bones



Penetrating deep into the bones... cont.



The bones of your feet may find it more comfortable if you beat them with a loose and open hand.

Before you start tapping and beating the rest of your pelvis and leg extensively, first feel the difference between the left and right sides.

Arms and hands...

Can you feel the bones of your left arm if you tap them with a loose fist?

And the bones of your hand?

Are you aware that your other arm wants to be treated too?

Ribs, sternum and collar bones...

These too, you can beat with one or two relaxed open palms.

For some people, it may feel more comfortable to use loose fists or fingertips.

Facial bones and skull...

With loose fingertips, tap the jaws, teeth and molars, cheek bones, temples and forehead.

Lastly, tap the whole of the skull.

Shoulder blades and spine...

The back is easier to feel

if you have a buddy who taps your back.

If you do not have a buddy,

then you might want to gently bump your upper back against a door or wall while resting your pelvis against it.

In this way you make your ribs and shoulder blades more palpable.

With the knuckles of your left and right fists you can tap the lumbar vertebrae.

Which of your bones are now more consciously aware? It is also interesting to note which bones you hardly feel at all. How do your vertebrae feel, for example?

Let everything go along the backside of your skeleton

When one thinks about sitting or standing in a more relaxed way, many people slump a little; the shoulders & spine fall forward and the chest collapses. What physically happens here is that the tissue at the back of your spine goes into a "passive stretch" and at the frontside of the spine, the space between the vertebrae (intervertebral discs) becomes compressed. The relaxation is much deeper if you let all the tension flow away along the back of the body instead of along the front. Let it flow over the skull and down along the cervical vertebrae, ribs and spine, through the pelvis and sit bones and further down through the thigh bones and into the earth. "Think" of the skin and the muscles as flowing downwards in ripples; let everything go.

Try to keep doing this as you start to shake in the next exercise.

Trampoline bouncing

Letting go downwards ... the earth "pushes" back

As you shake yourself, you might experience the earth as a trampoline that keeps pushing back, only not so spectacularly. As you keep dropping onto the bed of the trampoline, the bones of your skeleton begin to move, especially on the rebound. The earth, as it were, then "pushes" the whole skeleton upwards from the bones of the feet.

The more relaxed the tissue around the skeleton is, the better you can follow the movements in the different parts of your skeleton.

See if you can stand such that your weight is equally distributed over the soles of both your feet.

Can you still feel the bones in your feet?

You "push" downwards, through your skeleton, with your feet – which remain fully in contact with the floor – as if you are pushing off a trampoline.

If you stay relaxed

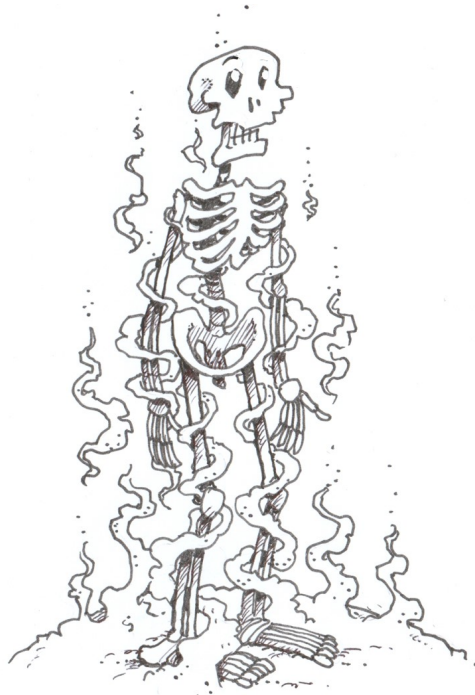
you will start to feel the earth "pushing" back up into your bones.



Trampoline bouncing



Trampoline bouncing...cont.



After a while, if you continue to shake in this way, you will, start to feel the push-back momentum moving further upwards through your skeleton.

When you put your hands on the top edge (iliac crest) of your pelvis, can you feel how the pelvis moves, and that this movement starts in the feet?

If you place your hands flat on your sacrum you may feel that there is a tiny bit of movement between the sacrum and your pelvic wings (the ilia). Perhaps even your tailbone deeply inside you is able to move.

With your fingers on the lumbar vertebrae can you feel the movement of the vertebrae here? When you place your hands a little higher up your back on the lower ribs, with your fingers again on the spine, can you feel the movement coming up from the earth through your skeleton and into your chest?

At the sides of the ribcage you can feel the movement coming into the ribs. With the hands on the breastbone and the ribs you can feel the movement of the earth coming up through the pelvis, vertebrae and ribs. Now place your hands on your collar bones to feel this movement coming up even higher.

Can you also feel the movement when you put your fingertips on your cervical vertebrae, jaws or temples?

Can you look lovingly at those places where you feel no movement? These are places where you probably have muscle tension. Can you feel that? Without judgement?

Is your skeleton more present now? More conscious?

Grounding in your skeleton while lying down

Lying down is actually not the easiest thing in the world to do! Most people even need instructions in order to be able to lie down in such a way that they do not strain their backs. Let's see how it works...

Lying down and getting up

When sitting on the floor or on your bed,
gently roll over onto your side with your knees tucked up towards
your chest.
From this position, while still holding your knees bent and using your
arm to help, roll your whole body over into a supine position.
The emphasis here is to move the body as a whole and not to begin
by rolling your legs and lower back first.
(If you start by first turning your legs and then your upper body,
or vice versa, there will be too much strain on the vertebrae.)
Now pull your pelvis up a little with your hands in the hollows of
your knees, so that all of your back touches with the subsurface.
One by one, you place your feet flat on the floor,
while still keeping the knees bent.

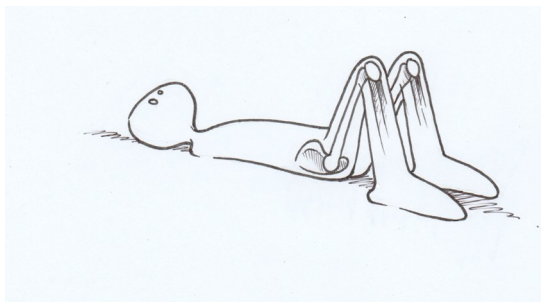
The above may seem very simple, but most people will lie down in such a
way that their pelvis tilts, resulting in lumbar lordosis.

Were you able to let your pelvis fully relax on the floor when placing
your feet on the ground one at a time?
Essential here is making the movement from the hip joint
rather than from your pelvis.

In this lying-down position you can deeply relax inside yourself and maybe
even let go the stress of the day. It is good to just lie down, knees bent,
feet on the ground after a long day at work. If you are cold, get yourself a
mat or a blanket – a couch is usually too soft or too tilted. Ten minutes or
so is a good start, longer is, of course, also fine. The often-stressed-out
nervous system can now relax in a pleasant way.

Lying down and getting up

Relaxing in the constructive rest position



Can you relax your eyes so that they close of their own accord, that is, just not keeping them open any longer?
Feel into if you are lying down comfortably.

What happens when you relax your leg and hip muscles?
Do your knees fall together or apart?

By exploring the floor beneath your feet, try to find
the spot where you feel the most relaxation in the knees and pelvis...
And what do you feel is a nice position for your arms?

Relaxing in the constructive rest position...

Let yourself be carried by the floor.

Can you feel the contents of your abdomen resting in your pelvis?
Can you feel your lungs and heart relaxing in your ribcage?
Can you feel your brain resting in your skull, eyes in their sockets...?
And how your loose tongue fills your whole mouth?

While still lying in the constructive rest position, do you notice...
the weight of your thighs disappearing into your hip sockets?
and the weight of your calves sinking via your feet onto the floor?

Do you feel all your vertebrae moving as you breathe?
And your ribs?

This total relaxation creates
more space between your vertebrae,
allowing the spine to begin to lengthen.
Can you simply allow this?

If you are lying with your head on a thin cushion, then you can pull the top
of the cushion a little upwards in the line of the length of your body and
perhaps you can now feel that you have actually become taller.

One Point

The One Point is a “being” place deep inside our body, not easy to describe in words. However, we can approximately describe the feeling, the position and the effect of the One Point.

What is the point of the One Point?

The One Point brings us balance and physical presence at a deep level. No matter what the circumstances, we stay close to ourselves.

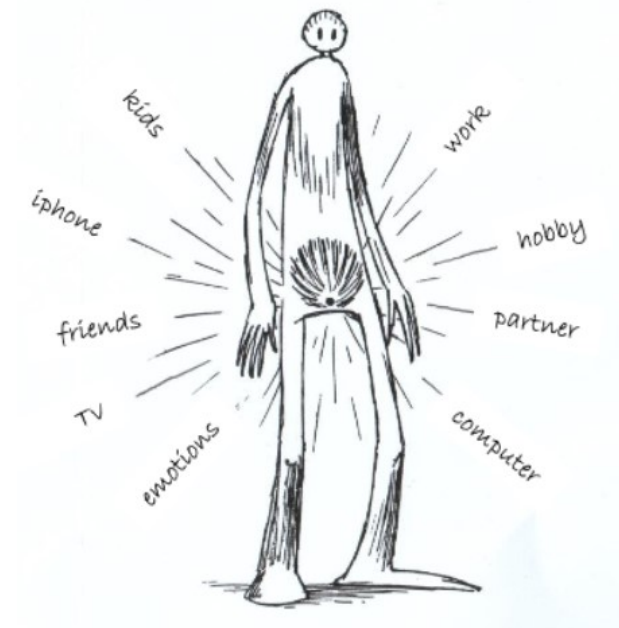
It is much easier to experience your skeleton when you are in your One Point; you will notice then too that it is easier to “open” your joints.

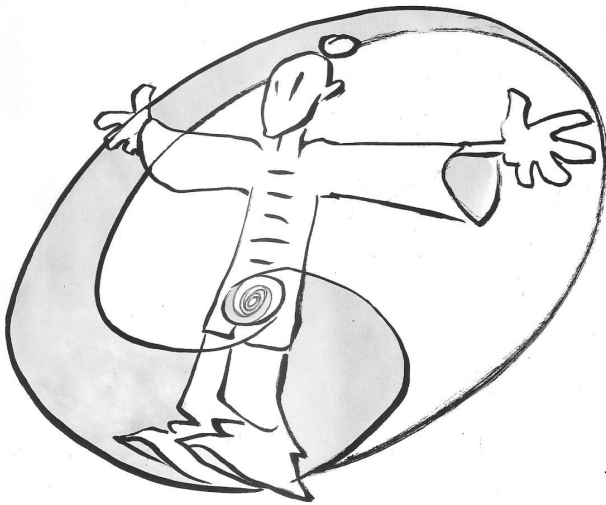
When something touches us emotionally, we feel it more physically and it is also easier to get clear about what is ours and what belongs to the other. Possible tension that arises from a conflict can ebb away into the One Point.

While being in the One Point we can maintain connection with every part of our lives. Even if you are focussed on something, or fascinated by something, you do not lose yourself in it. You stay open to everything and everyone around you.

The One Point itself also nourishes us with energy; it is a kind of passage-way to all the energy there is. This may sound strange, but hopefully you will experience it. We can open ourselves to this energy or shut it out.

When two opposites are combined, a third force emerges. For example, if you make your body extremely heavy, but at the same time think it light, then you encounter something new. The force you feel in your body when you bring two opposites together is the same force you feel when you are in the One Point. We call this the “third force” – a neutral energy.





A word dance...

The One Point is a place in the body
where everything is potentially present,
both the one and the not-one.
It is both empty and full, light and heavy.
It is simultaneously both large and small.
Left and right come together there, above and below,
conscious and unconscious.
There is stillness in movement here and movement in stillness too.

It is the point where everything comes together
and from which everything arises.

It is located deep in the pelvis,
there where yin and yang come together.

No matter how you choose to get there, you will never arrive....

The trick is to "be" there.

When you are there, you are totally in the here-and-now,
where past and future come together.

You are with yourself, neither rational nor emotional.

You are just there, open between heaven and earth.

The One Point is the force that brought you here on earth, a gentle, neutral primordial force. As a baby you were aware of it. A healthy baby's grip is so gentle and so strong that its whole body can be lifted up when its baby fingers curl themselves around your finger.

"Being" in the One Point

When you are in the One Point, you are present, you are there.

You do not have to be right, but neither do you have to be wrong.

With the other person there is a dialogue, not a discussion.

Physically you are powerful and gentle;
supple and agile, alert and relaxed.

There is stillness in your movement
and movement in the stillness.

Where in the body?

If you draw a vertical line from the crown of your head straight down through your pelvic floor and a horizontal line through the head of the thigh bones or through the top (upper point) of both trochanters, then you will find the One Point at the intersection of these two lines. The exact spot is, however, slightly different for everyone. When you first start with this you can only experience the feeling of being or not being in this third force with the help of a buddy.

You can't get there from the outside... no way!

The trick is to let go of your thinking and become physical. You have to get out of your head to drop into the depths of your pelvis – not by visualisation but simply by being present there. Another challenge is the spot itself: the One Point is located in the area of your sexual organs, not the easiest of places for everyone to be.

To experience your One Point, the muscles need to be relaxed

For many people it is not easy to be so deep inside the body, first and foremost because one needs to be able to relax the muscles. The deeper one can relax inside oneself, the more powerful the One Point experience.

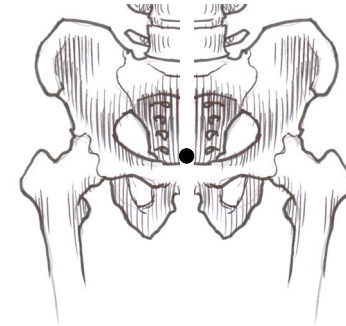
Getting down in the pelvis – lying down

If you want to practice the One Point together, it is nice to do a little exercise to start with which improves the blood circulation in the pelvis, making it easier to be in the One Point.

The “little-baby” exercise is a very simple one:

You lie on your back with your arms and legs in the air.
Now you wave and shake, chortle and grin
in a delightfully playful way
utilising all the bones and little bones in your skeleton.

You could, for example, first shake the bones of your feet,
then those of the lower legs, etc.,



Coming down in the pelvis—lying down

Coming down in the pelvis—lying down cont..

and feel how all the tissues become increasingly loose as they flap around your bones.

Experience too, how the pelvic bones and back jiggle on the floor and how your intestines move loosely in the pelvic bowl.

Three-in-one: the skeleton has become more aware, the muscles more relaxed and the pelvis well supplied with blood.

Coming down in the pelvis—sitting

Getting down in the pelvis – sitting

Can you move your Sitz bones over the chair in such a way that you feel the skin coming loose from the bones? At the front, back and on both sides.

You could also sit on your hands on the chair, and do all these movements in a gentler way; you might then more clearly feel the skin moving over the bones or feel the bones of your hands with your Sitz bones.

Duality and the One Point

Duality and the One Point – discovery with a buddy

You need a partner to help you to be sure that you are in your One Point. One of you lies on your back and the other (the buddy) places their hands under the back of your head. The buddy then continues as follows:

Turn the head of your partner to the side,
bring one hand under the back of your partner's head,
lift the head up a little and then slide your other hand under so that you are cradling the head.
Now you can easily and safely lift your partner's head, and lay it down again.

In between the following exercises, you can talk about your different experiences with each other. It feels safe and comfortable for the person lying down if their head is always resting in the hands of the buddy.

1

First, let your buddy try to lift your head up slightly



while you push against those hands as you try to keep your head resting on the ground.

Do not do this for too long, a second is enough for both of you to be able to feel the muscle tension this creates.

2

Then allow your head to totally relax into the gentle rocking cradle formed by your buddy's hands. Can you, as the buddy, feel the weight of their head and the relaxation in the neck muscles?

3

Now relax your body in such a way that it becomes very heavy, and at the same time "think" you are light as a feather. Your buddy lifts your head again – what do you experience now?

4

Lastly, you lie relaxed in your One Point; what happens now when your buddy tries to lift your head?

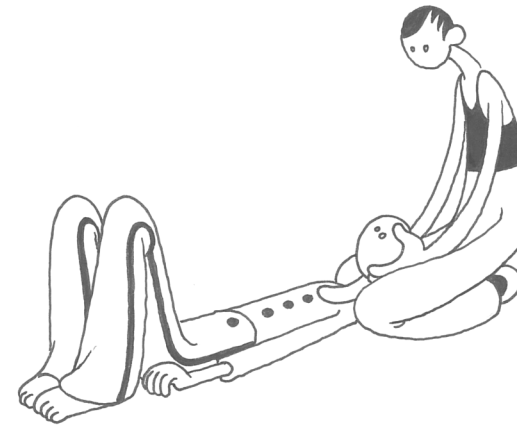
You may have experienced in the third and fourth exercises something called "the third force". How does that feel? Don't you find it strange that when you are in your One Point, your head can hardly be lifted at all even though there is no muscle tension? How does it feel for you lying down to be in this third force? Are you aware of the fact that your entire body feels like one whole complete physical entity? Can your buddy feel that too? The duality of being light and heavy at the same time creates an indivisible unity – in yourself and with the whole of existence. The third force, a totally impartial neutrality, can now be felt.

Tension-relaxation and the One Point – with a buddy

Now we are going to look at how the One Point works. What happens when you are very tense or totally relaxed and the other person (or your work or society) wants to "push" you in a certain direction?

1

Sitting on a chair or on the floor, with your legs crossed, totally relaxed, you allow yourself to be pushed in all directions. Your buddy – sitting behind you – catches you, and



Tension-relaxation and the One Point

Tension-relaxation and the One Point
cont...

also takes care of your head and neck.

Hard work, isn't?

2

Now you are going to tense all of your muscles at once,
even those in your face,
and then let your buddy push you around again
while they at the same time catch you and look out for you.
Do you notice how quickly you fall off your pedestal?

We have just felt what it is like to be pushed around when you are completely relaxed and when you are tense. Next, we are going to invite in the third force. Your buddy can help you to feel when you are in your One Point by pushing you evenly and steadily (no jerks). If your partner is already familiar with the One Point, it helps if they are also in their One Point while doing this exercise.

The more even and longer the push, while gently increasing the pushing force, the deeper you can sink into your One Point.

It is essential in this process that your partner lets you know when you are applying counter-pressure – even if it is very subtle – indicating that you are not in your One Point.

3

You are in the same position
and totally relaxed in your One Point.
Your buddy pushes continuously against the side of your pelvis
for a time until you feel, "I am fully there in my One Point now".
Your buddy will also experience this.

If this works, your buddy can do the same higher up your body,
starting at the bottom of your ribs,
and so on, up to your shoulder.
See if you can experience
there being no difference
in the feeling of being in your One Point
at these different positions.

The more force your buddy applies, the stronger you will experience the

One Point. It goes without saying that you can also train the One Point in the same way on the other side of your body and in your back. It is helpful if your buddy continually encourages you to relax.

If both of you relax in your One Points after these exercises, can you then feel that you are now very present? And how about your energy – do you feel fit, energetic, alert? If so, it is because you have now entered a state of relaxation with energy.

In daily life...

Suppose you decide to lounge on the couch tonight. After a while you might find it difficult to get up out of that couch from which you can conclude that you are not in your One Point; that you are relaxed without energy. The other things you would like to do this evening will not happen because you are in a kind of lifeless relaxation.

Now you remember the One Point – you are there. Do you experience more presence? Does it make getting up easier? Quicker?

Doing exercises... while in the One Point:

You can try the previous exercises: [Shaking the coat](#) and [Trampoline bouncing](#) while you are in the One Point.

Do you feel how this is different?

Tram, bus or boat... and the One Point

Standing in a tram or on a bus is a good way to practise being in your One Point. Sitting too, for that matter.

Emotions disappear... in the One Point

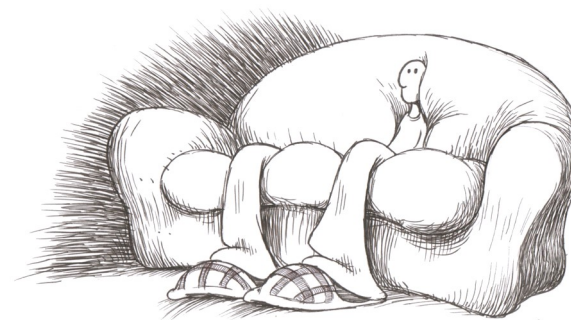
Another possibility while you are in the One Point is to allow all emotions disappear into it.

Just try to let your anger “flow down” into the One Point; fascinating, isn't it?

You are in the One Point and something happens that would normally upset you. You may notice that your reaction is less powerful and that you can maintain a better overview; you don't lose yourself to the same extent.

Dialogue or discussion... One Point-sensitive?

In daily life...



It is a challenge not to be in one's head but instead in the One Point during a difficult conversation.

It is nice to experiment with this.

Do you notice that the tone of the conversation changes, that you do not have to convince the other person of your point of view? Both you and the other are "free".

When are you there?

When you are in the One Point, your soft gaze appears automatically. You can feel it in the smile in your eyes and the relaxation in your face. AT the same time deeper in your body everything becomes softer and more powerful. Your voice comes from deeper down and is often lower in tone.

You are gentler towards yourself, courageous enough to admit your own faults and both compassionate and clear towards the other.

Do not be frustrated if you do not succeed right away. You just need some more time.

Abdomen, Tantien, Hara – The One Point and other traditions

The abdominal region contains our primal source of energy, which the Chinese call Tantien and the Japanese Hara. What is the difference between Tantien and the One Point?

The Tantien or Hara is a large area, more or less from the diaphragm to the pelvic floor with its centre just below the navel.

When you move from your centre into the depths of the Tantien or Hara, you come into a "pulsating" place where yin and yang come together. This spot can be tiny, less than a point, but also much bigger. Here new energy is born. This is "original energy", also called primordial chi in the Tao.

You can focus on, and move from the Tantien or Hara, where your own collected energy is. But you can also be in your One Point, the passage way to where all energy that exists. If you start functioning, moving, thinking, etc. from here, you will always connected to the greater whole.



Feeling-Awareness

The development of feeling-awareness has dramatically diminished in Western society; this does not help us with developing our feeling-awareness in movement.

It is necessary to develop this awareness, not only for yourself but also when you are working with each other. You can refine the sensory nerves in every part of your body just like the blind do.

Learning to feel in this way is a process and this is easier for some than for others. However, it is something that everyone can develop. We will now continue this learning process with the help of touching and being touched.

What all can we feel?

In real physical feeling we mean that you can feel both the skin and the underlying tissue and differentiate between them; you can feel the muscles separately from the skin, and the bones separately from the muscles. To be able to do this we need sensitive soft relaxed hands that are present and aware. And, of course, your One Point.

Hands feel the body

Sensitive soft hands are relaxed

You can, for example, let your relaxed hand gently drop onto your knee. If you now drag that hand over your skin up along your thigh and higher, you can feel how your hand automatically forms itself to wherever it is at that moment.

If you relax your hand on any object - a ball, or a cushion, or lump – that object will form your hand. Can you feel the grace and ease in that?

Your relaxed hands can be gently dragged over the whole of your body.

How does that feel?

Would your loved one like this too?



Hands feel the body

We are now going to feel deeper and deeper into our bodies from the outside in: from skin into muscles and into the bones. You feel with your hands, so coming from the skin on the outside and sinking gently inwards into the body.

Try the following...

Rub your hands vigorously together (One Point!) and gently take hold of your upper leg.

Can you feel the skin through your clothes?

How does your skin feel? Warm, cold?

Now, with soft hands, try to move the muscles under your skin a little over the bone.

How do your muscles feel here? Tense? Relaxed?

Roll them gently around the bone of your thigh.

Can you feel the bone? You can only do this if the muscles here are relaxed.

Tense your muscles and try to find the bone.

Can't be done, eh?

If you tense your hands or fingers because you think you can feel more deeply that way, you will only feel part of the bone under the tissues. Try it now with totally relaxed hands. You will probably feel much more and there will be no muscle tension in the part being felt.

With a buddy...

In the previous exercise – experiencing the muscles separately from the bone and experiencing the bone within your relaxed muscle tissue – you explored the substance of the thigh. And if you explore with a buddy, you will find that it is very pleasant to feel the skin and muscle tissue being moved nice and loosely over the skeletal forms.

When you make genuine contact with yourself or the other, you feel the other person through your fingers or the palm of your hand. If the other makes contact with you, you feel the other through your body. Can you feel the hand of the other through your skin, your muscles, your bones?



Body feels the hands

When you touch yourself, you normally feel through your hands. But now we are going to turn it around: you feel your hand(s) with your body, as if someone else were touching you. Of course, this is easier to feel when you are actually working with someone else. The ultimate goal, however, is to be able to feel your *own* hands with your body (skin, muscle tissue, bones), thus deepening your body's awareness.

Try-out

Put your relaxed hands around your thigh again.
Can you feel your hands through the skin of your thigh?
How do they feel?

Do your hands feel nice, do they have a pleasant soft feeling?
Are your hands cool or cold, warm, hard or soft?
Do your hands really embrace your thigh?
Do you reach out to your hands with the awareness of your leg?
How deep does that feeling go?
Can you feel your hands through the thick coat of fat and muscle?

Now you move your hands gently through the thick coat of muscles, connective tissue, fatty tissue, etc. surrounding the thigh bone.

If you continue to do this very gently for a while,
can the thigh bone feel your hands through
this coat of muscle and skin?
Just try it every now and then...

If you didn't do so well sensing these things, then it is best to practise with a buddy first. Perhaps you have a child who delights in these kinds of things. Children are often more consciously aware of their bodies.

Feeling from the bones

There are parts of the skeleton that are easier to feel than others, simply

Hands feel the body cont...



Feeling from the bones

Feeling from the bones... cont.



because they are closer to the surface. If you lie with your back on the floor, you can easily feel, for example, the back of your skull, some ribs and vertebrae, your sacrum and your heel bones.

If you are sitting on a sturdy chair, you can feel your sit bones; in the same way, you can feel your hand, elbow or knuckles of your fingers on the table.

As you can see, much of the skeleton can already be felt when it is in contact with the surrounding environment.

However, the idea is to experience the skeleton from the inside out, without having contact with the surrounding environment. Let us take a look.

If you put the back of your hand and forearm loosely on the table, feel where the table makes contact with the bones of your hand. See if you can make small movements across the table top, in such a way that you are moving the bone within the tissue while your skin sticks to the table, as it were.

Keep on moving your skeleton inside the tissue in such a way that you can consciously feel it more and more.

Maybe you can feel what it is like to put your cheek against the door, or lie on the floor and feel your skull...

Of course, you can also put your hand on more difficult body parts and move your skeleton under that hand.

An even bigger step is to move your skull or your cheek on the pillow of your bed, in other words, against a softer surface.

The point is to make contact with a specific bone via the outside world, and then to sense the outside world from this bone – in the latter case, the softness of the pillow.

Ultimately, the idea is that you can feel your whole skeleton inside yourself without contact with the environment.

The interplay between bones and muscles

Something about muscles

Every muscle consists of a number of parts: a tendon, a belly, and a tendon again. However, tendon-belly-tendon are not separate parts. Thinner tendons (think of a tough steak) also run through the entire belly of the muscle and come together at the ends of the muscle where they attach to the skeleton.

In the belly of the muscle, you will find muscle bundles (fascicles) containing muscle spindles (sarcolemmae). These muscle spindles can contract, relax (nervous system signal no longer present) and relax-extend in a spiralling motion. A contracted muscle is, as we know, shorter and thicker; a relaxed muscle is longer; a relaxed-extended muscle is even longer again.

The muscles can do 3 things:

- contract
- relax,
- or extend in a relaxed way.

The latter is under the control of the skeleton. How this happens will become clearer in this chapter. The fact is that if we start every movement in the skeleton then our muscles are used in an entirely different way.

Bones and muscles are inextricably linked

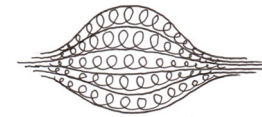
A joint consists of two or more bones held together by ligaments, muscles and tendons.

The more often you tense particular muscle groups, the higher the baseline tension of the muscle group becomes, the longer it persists and the more the bones of that joint are pulled together. If the joint bones are constantly being rubbed too tightly along each other, the synovial fluid cannot circulate easily and it becomes more difficult to get rid of waste products.

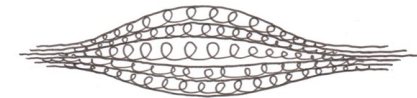
Wear and tear and painful joints can result, especially in old age.

How do you move with minimal muscle tension?

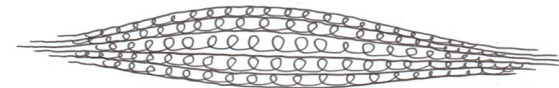
It goes without saying that muscles move your joints. However, when the



Tensed muscle

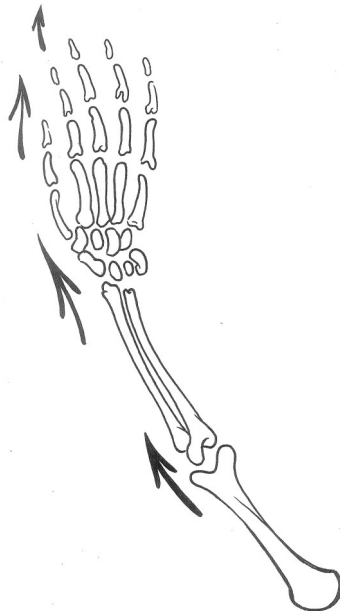


Relaxed muscle



Extended muscle

Speed of movement



skeleton initiates every movement, you need less muscle tension to make a specific movement.

You normally move by using the muscles but you will find that you move much more easily when your skeleton becomes the starting point. The following exercise will help you to experience this.

Speed of movement is only possible if the muscles are relaxed!

Put your elbow on the table or on the chair armrest.

Turn the palm of your hand in the usual way – using your muscles – towards your face and then away from your face, first slowly and then quickly.

Now bring your attention to the bones of your forearm and relax the muscles as much as possible.

Make the same movement again,

but now from the bones, both slowly and quickly as before.

Can you feel any difference to the way you moved previously?

It is nice to try this with other parts of your skeleton as well.

Opening the joints allows soft power to flow through

We have seen that tensed muscles become shorter and thicker and pull the bones up against each other. However, we also have the option of relaxing the muscles and instead extending the whole coat (muscles, tissue and skin) by sliding the bones through the coat, which in turn opens up the joints. When we do this, more energy can flow through the connective tissue. And this is exactly what we want because you now get a lot of (soft!) strength.

However, you can only achieve this if you have consciousness in the bones of your skeleton. We are going to focus on this now because feeling the bones is far beyond the conscious awareness of the average person – this whole process simply takes time!

In other words, if you separate the bones of a joint, that is open the joint, then the muscles, tendons and other connective tissue lengthen. This has a huge effect on the energy you feel flowing through your body. What exactly is happening?

The sliding of the bones

It should be clear that no matter how hard you try to open a joint using muscle tension, it will only result in the bones of the joint being pulled closer together and close the joint instead. Furthermore, less energy flows through the connective tissue if the muscles are tense. The muscle keeps the energy to itself, it becomes shorter and thicker, and acquires a higher base level tension; this base level tension is called the tonus of a muscle at rest. The higher base level tension results in the bones of the joint being continuously pulled closer together, which has consequences for the health of the joint in the long term.

In the wrist joint...

With your forearm and hand relaxed on a table,
grasp your wrist using the index finger & thumb of the other hand.

Feel what happens
when you tense the muscles of your forearm and hand?
And when you let go again?
Can you feel how, in the wrist joint, the bones of the forearm & hand
move towards each other when you tense them?
And when you relax the muscles,
can you feel the joint opening up?

Now something completely new:

While still holding your wrist –
try to "slide" your hand out of your forearm
(think of a telescope).
Do the same while in your One Point. What happens then?

It is impossible to open a joint with muscle tension!

Place your relaxed arm in a curve on the table – and
try to separate the bones of the upper and lower arm.
Your arm continues to maintain the same position;

The sliding of the bones





there is no inclination for the curvature of the elbow to change.
If you open the elbow joint by sliding the bones of your forearm
away from those of the upper arm,
a tremendous force will flow through it.

Ask someone nearby

to push your forearm from the inner side of the arm outwards
away from your body,

and then from the outside in, to push your arm towards your body.

Can this person move your forearm from its position.

Cat's claw

Now we're going to try to open all the joints of your hand,
including all small bones of your fingers (phalanges),
by sliding the respective bones towards your fingertips.
You can make this "cat's claw" a little easier
if your hand is not lying on the table,
but rather by holding it slightly bent in mid-air.

In order to be able to relax your hand even more,
you can let it fall on your leg a couple of times
and even drag it a bit along the thigh like we did before.

In this relaxed state we are now going to try
to slide all the little bones of the hand
out towards the fingertips.
That is to say, nothing changes in the posture of your hand
but if you can manage to do it even just a little bit,
then you'll experience how strong a hand it is.

Follow the skeleton

When opening a joint, you always follow the lay of the bones in relation to
each other. In other words, you follow the direction of the skeleton in that
moment. So, you follow the "angle" that the joint makes at that moment
irrespective of whether the joint is more flexed or extended, .

Opening a joint is actually sliding its bones apart

You can slide the two bones that form a joint away from each other, just like extending a telescope, so that the relaxed muscles and connective tissue can extend further in a relaxed way.

With a more highly developed sense of feeling-awareness (which you develop the more you practise), you can feel the bones sliding inside the coat of muscles and connective tissue covering the skeleton.

Were you able to feel it a little in the previous exercises?

The flow of energy through the connective tissue

Our energetic power is transmitted through connective tissue found throughout the body: in and around muscles and tendons, the membranes around bones and organs, the subcutaneous connective tissue, etc. Energy flows through all these tissues.

Heavenly and earthly forces

In the body's complex energetic system, we find, among other things, a system of channels that support the flow of heavenly and earthly energies. When open to these energies, the body feels whole.

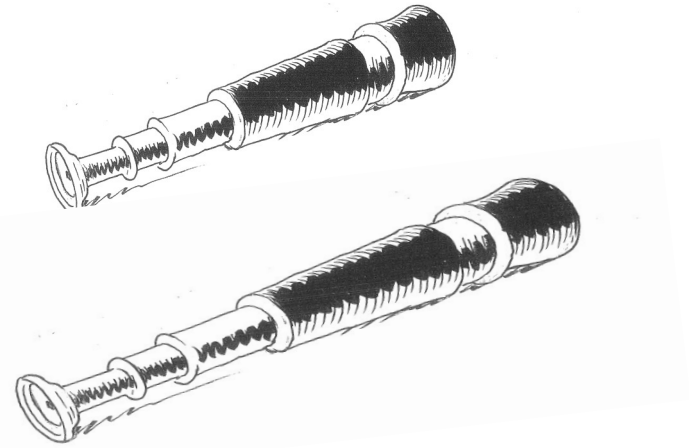
The earth energy that you experience is a purely physical force, good for all kinds of heavy lifting, but also for everyday physical movements.

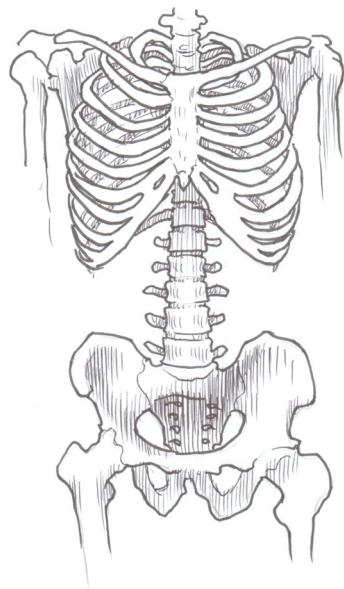
The heavenly energy (which is actually attracted by the earth's magnetic field) has a much lighter quality. Being open to this energy can inspire you, give you insights, etc.

More power by sliding open

These forces flow more profusely when we slide the bones through relaxed muscles.

A tense muscle bottles up a lot of power but this power does not flow and as a result blocks the flow of energy through the rest of the body. For example, a bodybuilder's energy is completely locked up in their muscles and as a result they have only their own strength at their disposal with little or no access to the power of the earth.





The Skeleton

From the Tau Te Ching by Lau-Tzu

"We join spokes together in a wheel,
but it is the centre hole
that makes the wagon move.
We shape clay into a pot,
but it is the emptiness inside
that holds whatever we want.
We hammer wood for a house,
but it is the inner space
that makes it liveable.
We work with BEING,
but NON-BEING is what we use."

So too it is with the skeleton. In its Non-Being it provides space to the organs, nerves, blood vessels, etc. and in its Being it provides possibilities for the attachments of muscles, ligaments, and tendons, which give form to the body.

Making the skeleton conscious – seven possible motivations

Moving with minimal muscle tension

With skeletal awareness, we can move more easily and more flexibly, and are looser. In this we will only succeed if our skeleton is reasonably conscious.

When the skeleton really initiates the beginning of every movement, and One Point is our fixed abode, then the joints open very easily. The muscles remain relaxed and can extend further, allowing the neutral force to flow through the connective tissue.

Open in all directions

When you are aware of your skeleton and initiate the opening of the joints

from there, you are creating space from within. The relaxed muscles extend further when the bones “slide apart”, that is logical. You notice that you now have more energy, that is to say that in the slightly “extended” connective tissue the energy can flow more easily.

The important thing is that in all postures and movements, you open the skeleton naturally: horizontally, vertically and diagonally — as you dance from one position to another.

Healthy flexible joints

Skeletal awareness allows us to open the joints so that the synovial fluid can circulate more easily, and the joints themselves can move more freely. In order to be able to open your joints, you need to experience them all, including those of the spinal column.

Blocks in the skeleton become conscious

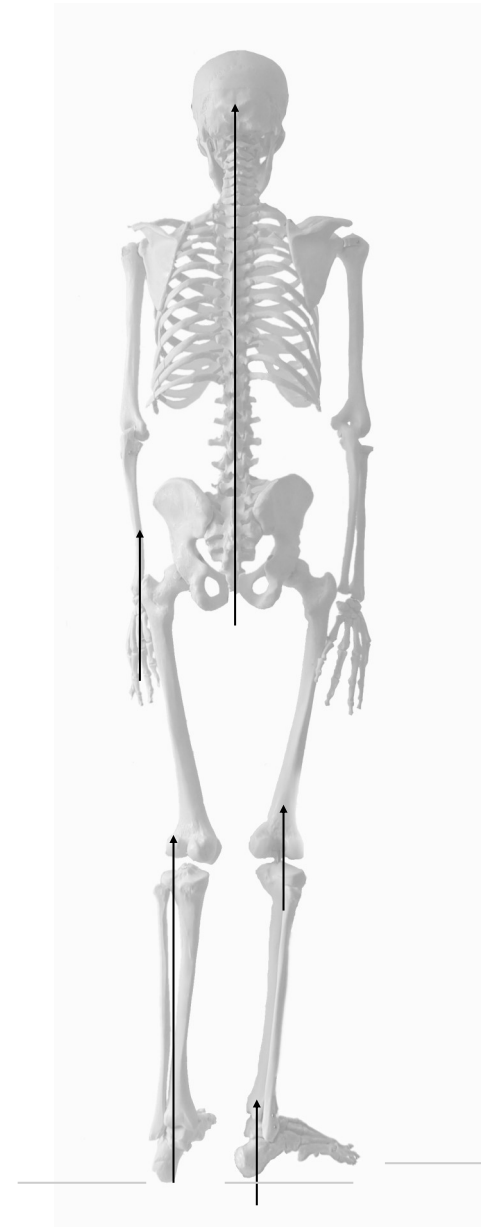
We also need skeletal-awareness if we are to be able to feel and resolve the blockages in our posture which are linked to the skeleton. This happens automatically when we allow our movements to flow through the skeleton. See also the chapter on blockages.

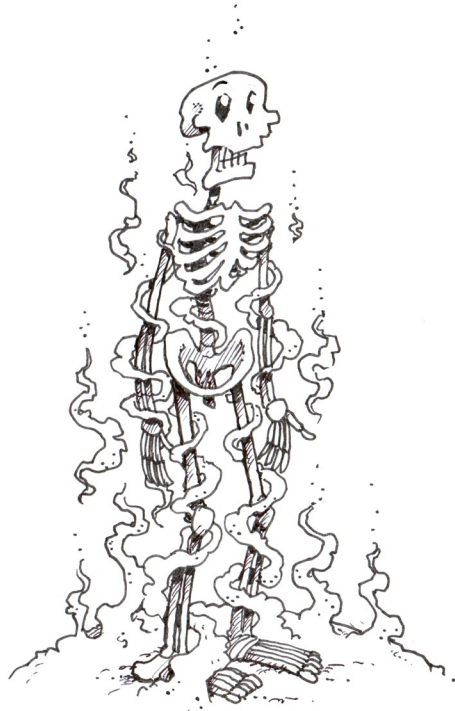
The skeleton starts to transmit power

When you slide your bones apart so that the joints open, you can feel power flowing through your skeleton. Supposing your skeleton has no blockages, then this force will travel through the whole skeleton. If this force comes up from the earth and flows through the thigh bones into the pelvis, then the pelvis will automatically assume a position that makes it possible for this flow to be as smooth as possible.

The same happens with the lumbar, thoracic and cervical vertebrae, both in the length and the breadth. The energy will flow whichever way it can. We help this process by opening our skeleton.

The fewer blockages we have in our skeleton, the better a conductor of both the heavenly and earthly energies we become. You experience this as extra energy in yourself. If you are in nature, then you also exchange energy much more easily with trees, plants, the sea, etc.





Sensing bone by bone

We keep moving

When the energy can move through the whole skeleton, the movements naturally flow into each other. We no longer have a posture or any rigidity. We no longer stand still; one body movement flows into the next, be this be a large or very miniscule movement.

The One Point is easier to find

Skeletal-awareness is also important in being able to feel your One Point as it lies inside your pelvis at the height of the heads of the femora.

Bone-awareness – how to do it?

We have already seen that the muscles need to be relaxed to be able to feel the bone and allow the energy to flow through. You have already been able to feel something of the bones in your contact with the outside world (a table, for example, or a hand). The intention is to feel the skeleton as a whole inside ourselves along with as the bones of which it is comprised, better and better as time goes by. Do not expect that you can do this right away; see it as part of your development.

In a thick coat...

The tissues around the skeleton can be seen as a thick coat, surfing suit or a wetsuit within which the skeleton moves. Can you get a sense of the skeleton moving easily inside that suit?

Sensing bone by bone – from the One Point

If you put your relaxed left hand on your right forearm, the hand will form itself to your arm.

Can you imagine your hand as a sensing organ?

Feel how it longs to make deep contact with that which it senses.

Stay there, stay there, stay there.

Now see if you can encircle the outline of your right forearm even more with your relaxed sensing hand.

Do you feel the bones of your contact hand and fingers moving within the muscles and tissues of that hand?

Suppose you squeeze your arm with that hand:
are you aware that you are now only feeling the muscles
of the hand that is squeezing – no bones!

Can you feel the bones of your forearm underneath your hand?
Do you notice that you can feel these bones better
if the joints of your hand and your fingers are open?
(See the "[cat's claw](#)" exercise.)

Now we will try something else:

Can you slide the bones of your forearm
through the surrounding tissue?
And... even if you only partially encircle your forearm bones,
can you feel both bones in their totality as you work?
Can you expand your feeling-awareness of the two forearm bones
to include the wrist and elbow?

You have probably already noticed that you can feel the bones of your arm
much better when you open the encircling left hand from the One Point.
Conversely, the bones of your right arm can also feel your left hand more
easily if you have “opened” all the joints of that hand while in your One
Point. You can open your hand in every posture, and you can also practise
in every posture.

In this way you can explore the whole skeleton,
for example, when you are lying awake in your bed.
While you are practising this, you can also feel in reverse:
the bones to which you are bringing your conscious awareness
are now feeling your hand.

This is also a whole process which is fun to do. Each time you discover a
different part of the skeleton from the inside out in this way. Feeling your
entire skeleton when you are standing, lying down or sitting becomes easi-
er after this.

The back of the skeleton – with a buddy

For the entire back side of your skeleton, in particular, the pelvis, verte-
brae, ribs and shoulder blades – a buddy is almost indispensable.

The back of the skeleton

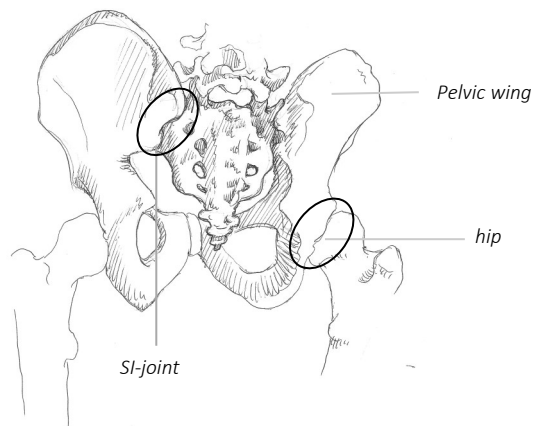
Bone awareness in the pelvis

Some bones are easier to feel than others. We're now going to look more specifically at quite a difficult part of the skeleton: the pelvis.

The sacrum, the iliac wings, the pubic bone and the Sitz bones together form the pelvis. The hip joints (hips) are formed where the thigh bones and the pelvis come together.

The hips are not to be confused with the iliac wings, which are often called that. Thus, a woman carrying her child on the "hip" is an anatomically incorrect expression. It is important that the difference between hip and pelvis is clear.

Feeling the pelvis



Feeling the pelvis

An exercise that we already know...

With your hand under your Sitz bone, gently move your fingers.

Can you sit behind your Sitz bone? In the middle of it? And in front of it?

Can you feel the size of the Sitz bone? How round it is?

And how wide?

Can your Sitz bone feel the fingers?

And can you roll over them with the Sitz bone itself?

If you take your hand away now,
and you move your Sitz bones over the chair,
do you feel your pelvis moving in the "coat" of all the tissue
around it?

Or are you only feeling the tissue between the Sitz bone and the
chair?

If so, continue to move in a relaxed manner for a while,
until the whole pelvis can be felt inside the coat.

And maybe you feel your thigh bone too?

The most important thing here is that you learn to move the skeleton inside the coat.

Are there any other skeletal movements possible while you are sitting on your chair?
Can you push your Sitz bone into the chair, for instance?
Let your imagination go, minimal movements are enough, but always start in the skeleton.
Feel what these movements do with your hip joint and with your SI-joint, between pelvis and spinal column.

Continuing the pelvic exploration

It is nice to do the following exercises on the floor, on a rug or thin mat.

Sitting on the floor, use your fingers to make contact with and follow the top of your pubic bone.
Now "walk" sideways, first along one side, then along the other...
This is easier if you bend forwards a little.

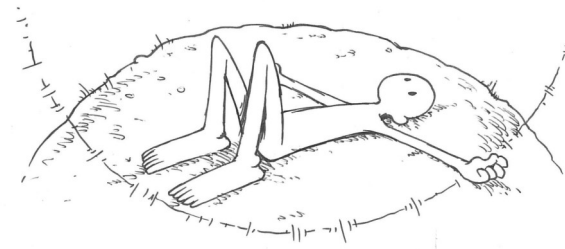
If you continue to feel along the sloping sides of the ilium you will come to the inner edges of the pelvic wings.
Now, with your hands, follow the iliac crest; it is really hard to feel where the sacrum starts here; being in your One Point helps...

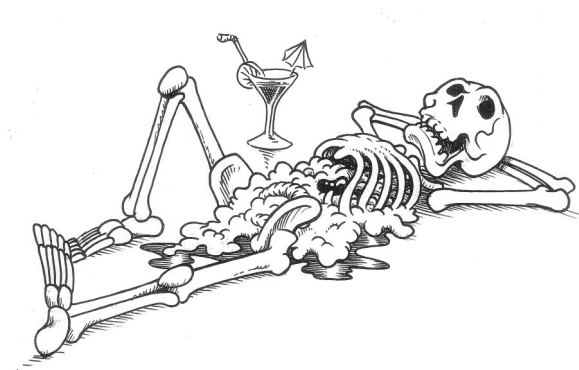
You can also slide downwards with your fingers from the bottom of the pubic bone to feel the transition to one of your sit bones.
This is easiest to feel while you are sitting or lying on the floor.

In the constructive resting position

Now we are going to take a look at what you can move while you are lying on the ground, feet on the floor, knees bent.
Here it is important that the supporting parts of your pelvis on the floor remain in contact with the floor throughout and that they continue to exert the same pressure. The movements start from the pelvic bone and can only be felt and seen within the tissues.

Continuing the pelvic exploration





Opening and sliding out the spine

Place your hands flat, palms down,
under your sacrum
and make small gentle movements to the left and right,
and in the direction of the spine...
Can you feel how much movement is possible
between your pelvic wings and your sacrum?
Can you also make (half) turns
over the floor either with your pelvis,
or with your sacrum as starting point?

What you feel is the SI joint, the sacroiliac joint from the previous page.

Now place your hands a little higher,
with the wrists under the pelvic rim.
Again, make movements with the pelvis.
You may now be able to feel the changeover from pelvis
to sacrum.

Next put your hands on the sides of your pelvis
and move so that your pelvis feels your hands.

Now without hands...

To get a three-dimensional feeling of your pelvis,
you can also move from the "content" of your pelvis.
Gently relax the contents of your pelvis
by moving them from top to bottom,
from left to right and diagonally.

This is very good for your bowels, bladder and sexual organs.
See if you can become aware of the inside of your pelvic bone?

Opening and sliding out the spine

The next step is the connection of pelvis and spine: to see how we can
move both of these in relation to each other in such a way that the whole
spine opens up.

In this the curves of the back regain their natural shape and the more pro-
nounced lordoses (the too-hollow lower backs) and kyphoses (the too-

rounded upper backs) disappear.

This is something that happens automatically when all the joints open up.

We will first experience this lying down.

We lie on our backs with our feet against the wall, in such a way that upper and lower legs form a right angle of around 90°.

From your One Point, try to slide the upper and lower leg bones out in the direction of the wall.

Do you feel them slide a little through the coat without your legs actually extending any further?

First with a pumping movement...

Then, with your inner smile, slide your thigh bones inside the coat

– the thigh bones towards the knees,
the lower leg bones towards the wall –
and release, slide out and release again.

You'll may notice that your skin & back muscles remain motionless while your spine slides within the tissue.

But deeper down you may also notice that all your vertebrae are constantly changing their position.

Letting go down along the skeleton of the back

In this sliding and relaxing movement you release all the tissues along your back in the direction of the tailbone.

What you have then is:

the vertebrae open upwards, the tissues letting go downwards, very specifically along the skeleton of your back towards the pelvis.

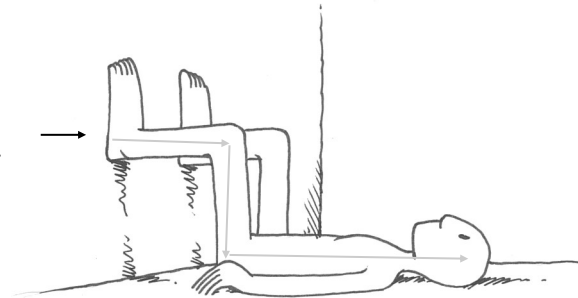
Pelvis and spine seek connection

Notice that even before you start to feel the movement in the vertebrae, the pelvis tilts effortlessly of its own accord.

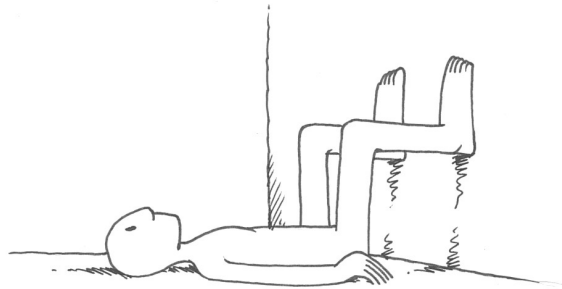
Can you feel that?

This pelvic tilt also now makes it possible to open the lumbar vertebrae followed by the thoracic and the cervical vertebrae.

Opening and sliding out the spine... cont.



Opening and sliding out the spine... cont.



Letting the power ripple through your skeleton

Up to now we have been making a rhythmic movement of sliding... relaxing... sliding... relaxing... In the end, the idea is that you just keep on sliding to enable the vertebrae to open further and further upwards. Without actively retracting the bones of the skeleton, continue to smoothly and steadily slide open, as you gently breathe in and out independently of the sliding movement.

At first you feel only the lumbar vertebrae, but as you "slide" more and more, your thoracic vertebrae will also be stimulated to move and ultimately your cervical vertebrae as well.

Do you feel how the rounding inwards (lordosis) in your lumbar vertebrae is decreased and so too the rounding outwards (kyphosis) in your thoracic vertebrae? Furthermore, the position of your skull has changed.

If you continue to slide your leg bones out for a while, you will feel the elasticity of the tissues around the skeleton increasing more and more.

The whole skeleton now assumes a position in which the blockages gradually disappear and circulation becomes possible.

Very strange... you go downwards to open the skeleton upwards.

So the movement goes via your leg bones towards the wall; but this reverses itself because you cannot go beyond the wall even as you continue to slide outwards.

First of all, the pelvis now assumes its correct position so that the power can continue from the leg bones up into the spinal column – lumbar vertebrae, thoracic vertebrae, cervical vertebrae... and right up into the skull.

The above is a simple way to open up the connections between the vertebrae themselves as well as the connection between the spine & the pelvis.

Further upwards, through shoulder blades and shoulders

Stay lying on the floor while sliding the bones out towards the feet as described above,
but now switch your awareness to your neck vertebrae & your head.
If you continue the sliding motion of the bones in this way
the joints of the legs, pelvis, sacrum
and vertebrae will gradually open up,
while maintaining their connection with one another.
Can you feel your head taking on a different position after a while?

The following is an exercise that can clear up many back and neck problems if you do it for a longer stretch of time and repeat it often. It is especially important here to release the tension in the tissues along the back of the skeleton, parallel to the floor, in the direction of the pelvis.

By tissues we mean: everything between the skeleton and the floor.

Feeling, internalising and owning

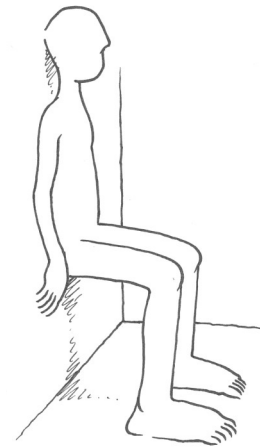
You can feel the structure of your skeleton best
while relaxed and quietly reminiscing; enjoying
the awareness of your being in the structure of your skeleton.

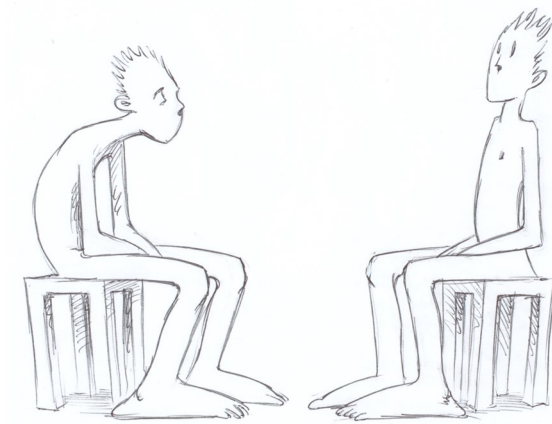
Would you be able to experience the same feeling while exploring other postures in a similar manner?

Imagine first of all:
yourself sitting on the floor and feeling the internal dance of your skeleton,
then feeling this while sitting on a chair,
and also while standing, walking or doing something you like doing...

If you can internalise what you feel in this way, you will increasingly experience an open and conscious skeleton in your day-to-day life.

Opening and sliding out the spine... cont.





Sitting

*Becoming less dependent on your surroundings
- in this case, the model of the chair*

We have already made a start with relaxing along the skeleton of your back. Feel again for a moment, as you sit in a chair, how you do it. Does your body already know how to do it? Or is your lower back curved inwards (lumbar lordosis) or are you sitting rigidly upright? The muscles of your back will then tense and pull the vertebrae together.

Another possibility is that you are hanging forward in the muscles of your back with a curved spine, which happens when you relax towards the front, closing off your heart.

On the other hand, when you relax along the back side, you ground the skeleton, the solid structure of your body. The earth now has the opportunity to respond in the form of an upward movement through the spine.

Lying down and sitting

In the previous exercise *Lying down with your feet against the wall*, you already felt deep inside what happens in your skeleton when you slide your leg bones out towards the wall. In principle, the same thing happens when you sit on a chair, only now your back does not have the support of the floor; when lying down, you feel your skeleton sliding inside you, while the skin and all other tissues remain stuck to the floor. On the other hand, when sitting on a chair, you can also feel your skeleton sliding within the tissue and the position of your pelvis changing relative to your back. The difference with sitting is that your feet are on the floor and your spine in mid-air. This in itself requires more skeletal awareness.

And again... relaxing down along the back

If you now slide the bones of your legs out towards the floor, opening the spine upwards you can, at the same time, feel the coat gravitating down the back of your skeleton.

Pelvic and hip movement

To understand how sitting works, it is necessary to feel the difference between pelvic and hip movement. See if you can get hold of a hard chair with a straight back and a horizontal seat. As you sit on it, check whether your upper legs are horizontal.

Sockets around balls and balls in sockets

You can move the hip joint in several ways:

First of all, you can move the balls of the thigh bones in the sockets of the pelvis. For example, when you raise your upper leg while sitting.

In addition, you can also move the sockets of the pelvis around the balls of the thigh bones. In this case, you move the pelvis together with your spine – as a single unit – forwards or backwards in the hip joint (the socket around the ball).

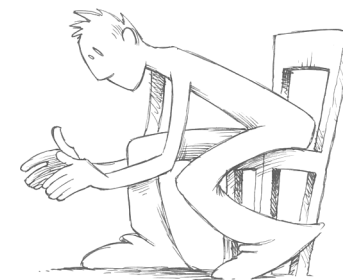
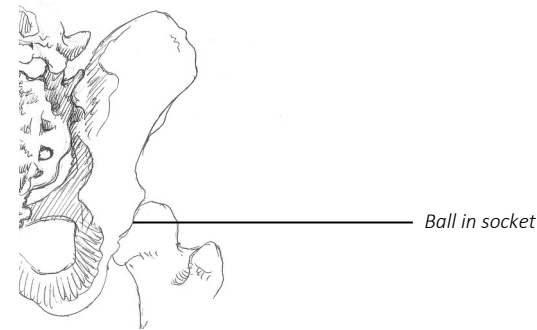
The idea is *not* to tilt your pelvis in such a way that you create a lumbar lordosis; nor to start the movement from your head (nose pointing forwards) which makes the upper back bulge (kyphosis).

In the first case (lordosis), you initiate the movement in the pelvis which causes it to tilt. This can be very subtle. But even with a subtle tilt, you still pull the lumbar vertebrae closer together. This is difficult to feel within yourself, but it is important that you notice it. Your whole pattern of movement, the way in which the movements flow through your skeleton, depends on where you initiate the movement.

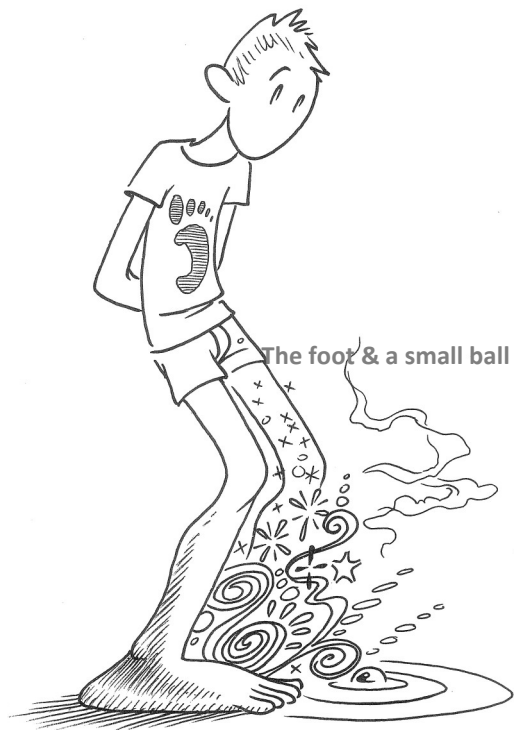
With a buddy?

Actually, you can best observe this together with a buddy while clothed in a tight-fitting T-shirt. Firstly, as you sit on the chair, bend forward in an exaggerated manner with a lumbar lordosis (lower back curved inwards) and then try to initiate the movement in your hip joint.

Do you feel how you do not have to pull the lumbar vertebrae in (lordosis) when you move your whole torso forward, not even just a little bit?



Rocking your hip joint



The foot & a small ball

In the second example, your nose forms the starting point of the movement which causes your upper back to bulge. This is a common error because we are used to doing things from our head.

Thus, you see that it is crucial where you initiate the movement.

The idea is that you notice from inside out how you move the whole of your pelvis and spine forward at the same time in a relaxed way. Being in your One Point makes this easier.

Rocking your hip joint

Hopefully it is now clearer how you can move the sockets around the balls of the hip joint while sitting on your Sitz bones.

If you gently rock back and forth
in your hip joint (sockets around balls)
– the back and pelvis together form a single relaxed unit –
can you feel the front, centre & backs of your Sitz bones as you rock?
When you sit exactly centred on top of them
how do you then experience your back and pelvis?
Is it possible for any tension to drain away
along the back side of the skeleton?

To make it easier to slide the bones out while sitting on your chair, we will do a preliminary exercise to get the feet more in contact with the floor.

The foot and a small ball

You may have a small ball at home, a bouncy one of about three to four cm in diameter. Most toy shops have them.

If you find it more comfortable to maintain your balance
place your hand on the back of the chair or against
wall to support you.

Stand with one bare foot on the floor and the other on the ball.
Now you are going to explore the whole sole of your foot by rolling
the ball with your foot.

If you do this from your One Point, the ball will not roll away.

How does it feel when you sink your weight, a little at a time,
more into the ball?

And now, in your One Point, how does it feel when you slide the leg
of the foot which is on the ball out in the direction of the floor?

Be gentle on yourself with any pain you feel
– remember your soft gaze –
explore the whole of the sole of your foot in this way,
that is, sliding the leg out and opening it up.

As usual, when you have worked on one side, it is nice to compare that foot
with the other before continuing your exploration.

Do you feel a different sense of contact between foot & floor?
Has it changed colour? Has it become bigger?
More compact?
Do you also notice that this side of the body
feels different to the other?

You will probably be able to sit more easily now that you can feel your feet.

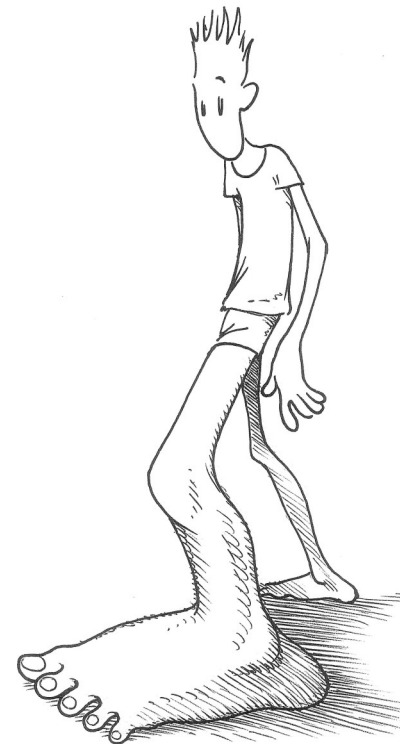
Running power through the skeleton while sitting

We are now finally going to sit down. What we are going to practise is sliding
the legs out in the direction of the floor, which is easier in your One Point.

Sitting on the middle of your Sitz bones, with a relaxed back and pelvis,
proceed to gently slide your legs out towards the floor.
The movement of your leg bones within the soft bundle of tissue
will continue upwards through your body
the more you slide your leg bones out in the direction of the floor.

Here is what you might feel from the inside out as you do this:
Your toes and metatarsals spread and slide out a little,
almost becoming suction cups on the floor.
Then the ankle joints open
and the movement continues up to the knee joints.

The foot & a small ball... cont.



Can you feel that the hip joints also open up?
Do you notice how your pelvis moves into a position
that allows the lumbar vertebrae to open up?
Can you let go enough to allow your skeleton to correct itself?

Like a snake out of the basket

As you continue to slide gently out and downwards
in the direction of the earth,
follow the movement of your spine as it opens further upward,
up between shoulder blades and the shoulders...
until eventually the skull too, moves into place by itself.
The whole of the skeleton can open up in this sliding movement.

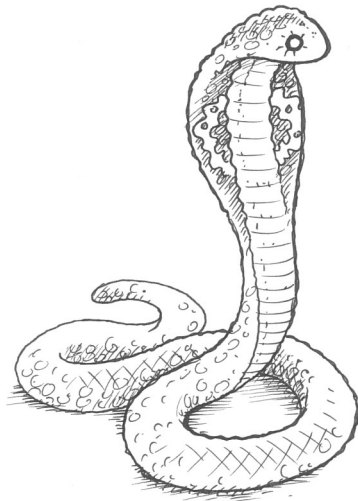
Now, from this "extremely" open skeleton
feel the stretching in the tissues of your back.
Consciously & gently let go of the tension down along your back.
You may now experience an alert openness in the whole skeleton.
How does that feel?

Then something wonderful happens...
If you hang on for a moment while you continue to sense
with your focus in your One Point,
you suddenly realise that the skeleton is moving from within!

These tiny, continuously changing movements come from the depths of
your original self. You experience them as movement in the stillness and
stillness in the movement.

Posture as a dance around balance - the natural posture

Our natural body posture is always in motion, it never stands still. This internal movement can be seen as the dance of your balance: there is stillness in movement, and movement in stillness. You never stand or sit stiff as a poker, but neither do you move actively – you are moved from within. This movement comes from within and is constantly changing direction and form. As soon as you hold onto any muscle tension this internal movement of the skeleton stops. This also happens when your movement meets a skeleton blockage.



Placing the feet parallel to each other

When sitting, standing or walking, it is preferable to have your feet parallel to each other. Otherwise, you create undue strain in your knees and hip joints, which can easily result in joint complaints.

If one has developed a more inward or outward stance, we will now look at a soft and natural way to correct that stance such that your feet become more parallel to each other.

Instead of creating enormous strain on the whole skeleton by using your hips to make feet the parallel, you can do the following:

When your feet are pointing outwards...

Sitting on a straight chair,
put two "loose" fists between your knees,
so that both thighs run parallel from the hip joints
and the lower legs are vertically parallel.
If the pressure is such that your fists are squeezed,
then you are not doing the following exercise properly.

Slide the big toes towards each other as much as possible & relax...
and now even more towards each other... and relax again...

And again!

What is important here is that you slide your feet inwards,
but not back out again,
and that you only move your ankles to make this happen.

After a while lift your foot off the floor, take hold of the lower leg,
and shake the foot gently and then let it loosely fall to the floor.
Has the lay of the foot changed? Not pointing outwards so much?

If your feet are more inward pointing, you could do the same exercise in reverse.

This is generally caused by people continually using the muscles on the inside of their feet more than those on the outside. Now they need to do the opposite (but in the correct manner) for the feet to become parallel.

Placing the feet parallel to each other

Standing up from sitting, sitting down from standing

For most people, sitting down and standing up is not a problem at all until... they notice that their back has become stiff or painful. Then it turns out that you have always sat down or stood up in a way that strained your back. You usually only notice this as you get older, have a weak back or when you are pregnant, etc.

The basic principle

We are going to learn now how you can stand up easily by moving your body weight forward. The forward movement of the trunk is made naturally from the hip joint, from which position you can stand up effortlessly. The description of the following exercise is somewhat exaggerated in order to make the principles clear. Again, the easiest way to master this is on a hard, upright chair.

From sitting to standing

From sitting to standing

You are sitting down and you want to stand up.
First move one foot considerably behind you
so that it rests on the ball of the foot;
If you can't put the foot under the chair, then put it next to it.

Next, move your whole torso forward in the hip joint,
forward so much that your belly just about touches your thighs.
Can you feel that your weight is now resting on your front leg?
Now, from your One Point, slide the back leg out into the floor,
and use the counter-pressure of the floor (the energy of the earth)
to stand up.
Your weight remains on the front leg even when you are standing
upright.
This makes it easier to let go of the pelvis
without creating a lumbar lordosis.
We use the same principle when sitting down, only now in reverse.

○

From standing, let's sit down

In fact, you should be able to sit down in such a way that someone can pull the chair out from under you without you falling.

At every moment in the process of "sitting down", you move your weight over both feet in such a way that your equilibrium is maintained. You do not look for support beyond your own body. How do you do this?

While standing, put one leg back against the seat of the chair,
but that can also be beside the chair.
The other leg stands more to the front.

Now again move your torso forward in the hip joint,
until it almost touches the front leg.
Next, shift your body weight towards your back leg
– while continuing to maintain a stable balance –
until you feel your thighs and buttocks touch the chair.
Now you can let your weight sink into the chair.

Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down... it's fun to alternate between one and the other for a time.

Lifting using the same principles

When you lift a heavy weight from the floor,
you first put one foot next to it,
and then move your torso forward in the hip joint,
grasp the weight,
and slide the front leg out into the earth.

It is great if you can feel through your skeleton that the earth is carrying the weight for you:

From your One Point, slide your skeleton down into the earth and feel the earth responding with the power to lift objects, both light and heavy.
The trick with lifting is to immediately walk forwards with that which you are carrying.

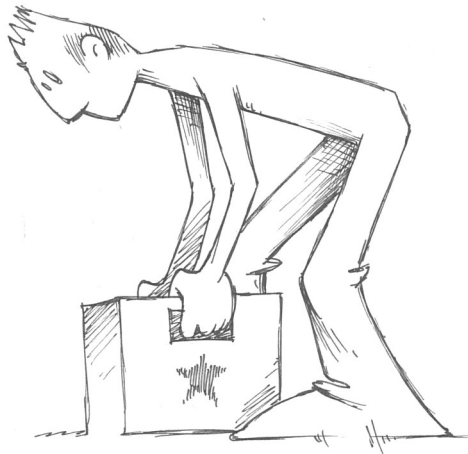
From standing, let's sit down

Lifting using the same principles

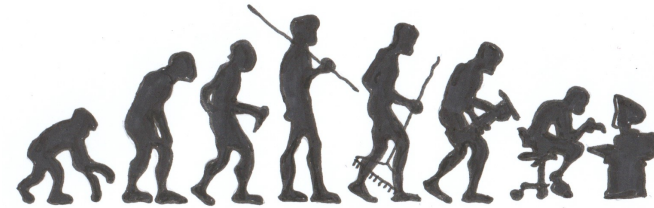
so that its weight is continually above the foremost leg.

As soon as the weight moves towards your back leg, the lumbar vertebrae become overloaded causing your lower back to have a strong inclination to curve inwards.

Another important point is that your leg should move forward from your hip joint in such a way that your pelvis stays under you. Suppose you are lifting something heavy, then this works best with vertebrae that are nicely open as they come into line. This happens when first the back leg slides out into the floor followed by the front leg.



Standing



Evolutionary perspective

At a certain point in our evolution, we went from having four legs to stand on, to two. We were used to being supported by the earth in four places and the spine had a horizontal function in our movements. Now that the spine has assumed a vertical position, its load balance has changed.

Because the weight of the body is transported to the feet via the vertebrae and the pelvis, the load has become much heavier. Our pelvis has also changed position. And obviously, our ligaments, muscles and tendons also had to start functioning in a different way.

As we became physically more vulnerable, the head took on an increasingly important function. The more we began to use our thinking, the further we moved away from our physical sense of conscious awareness and intuition. An animal can feel a natural disaster coming, but we cannot.

In the past few decades, we have become more and more preoccupied with the material world and with the outside world in general, including our own appearance. We also tend to focus more forwards. How does the other person see us? How do we control our surroundings?

From a very early age our thinking has been given the most emphasis in our education. As a result, our attention is not only directed forward and outward, but also upward.

Can you see that in somebody's posture?

Being inside yourself

What exactly is a natural posture? Your natural state is one of being present within yourself and having the earth as your base. In a naturally assumed posture – whether conscious or not – your One Point is the starting

point. This is primordial; you are born with it and, under normal circumstances, you act entirely from this point from your earliest moments. In a healthy baby, the combination of strength and relaxation is easy to experience; you can feel it for example, when a baby grasps your finger with its little fist.

Standing naturally – within yourself

The intention is to ultimately start every movement within the body – in the One Point. Then, by definition, you are already relaxed. From here, you can walk your own unique path. It all starts however, with Standing.

“Where” do you stand?



“Where” do you stand?

Stand as you normally would,
and feel into your body.

Where do you feel muscle tension?
And, if you relax this area, what happens?
Do you “lean” in a particular way? Forwards, backwards, sideways?
Do you feel what is happening in your skeleton?
And if you release the tissues down along your back
does anything change?

It is interesting to specifically feel
around which joint you experience muscle tension,
scanning everything from top to bottom or from bottom to top,
and especially the joints of the vertebrae with each other.

If, after all of this, you feel your whole skeleton again,
where do you experience the most tension now?

Even though we say this here, it is actually very difficult to feel within yourself those places which are tense and consequently blocked. This will certainly be true if you have had this tension for years and grown used to it. You don't experience it as such any more. So, when you stand in a relaxed manner, it is essential that you have an experienced person observe you.

Now from the One Point

Repeat the preceding exercise from your One Point. As you know, it is harder to be in the One Point if there is a great deal of muscle tension somewhere in your body. The same applies if you have the feeling that you are "holding on" to something.

Do you notice that your skeleton is constantly making very minimal movements? And that their direction changes all the time by itself. This is the same dance of your balance that you experienced earlier.

If, in your One Point, you move your focus from one joint to the next, you may even notice that they each create their own dance.

If you also experience this as such, you can conclude that your skeleton is never really at rest except when you want to "hold on" to something. Your skeleton is in constant motion, continually searching for the best position of each joint in relation to every other.

Landing low in the body

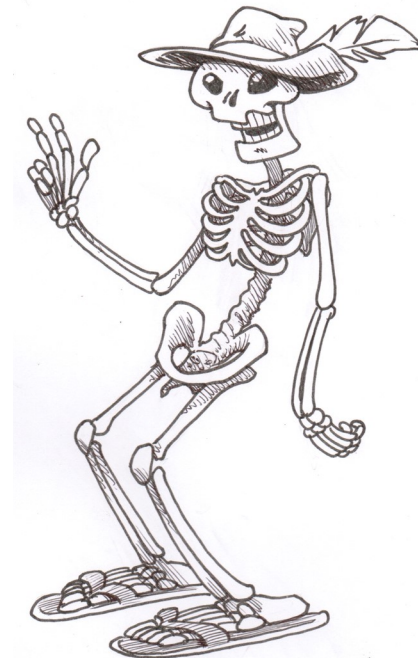
We assume that it is not easy for everyone to allow their pelvis to hang. Perhaps it is helpful to imagine that you are pregnant, even as a man, and carrying your child in your pelvis. Our pelvis in its natural state is relaxed, hangs at the bottom of your spinal column and assumes of its own accord its position under your child. Likewise, your intestines should be carried in your pelvis in the same way. With many people, however, neither the child nor the intestines "rest" in a supportive bedding, but instead hang in the abdominal muscles, which, in addition, may or may not be tense. Let us see if we can relax the back so that the pelvis can "sink" and feel its weight pulling downwards.

Letting go in the pelvis

What happens if you just relax the tailbone between your legs?

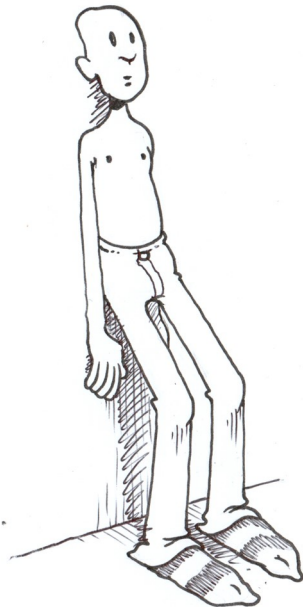
Do you experience this as pleasant for your lumbar vertebrae;

Now from the One Point



Letting go in the pelvis

The internal movement of the pelvis



can they relax a bit?
And what happens lower down?

The knees can move now,
without the pelvis really having to participate.
Your feet are receiving your full weight... grounding.

The internal movement of the pelvis while sliding the leg bones

We accept that it is not easy for everyone to relax their pelvis.
It is good to start with feeling what happens with the pelvis when you slide your leg bones out. When you do this, you will feel how beautifully and completely naturally your pelvis comes under you. The same thing happens if you just let go of your pelvis – sliding out towards the floor makes it easier to sense how it feels.

With your feet a small distance from the wall (a foot length)
and your knees bent,
feel the wall against your back –
without changing anything in how you stand,
feel how your skeleton has found its place inside you.

Now slide your leg bones out towards the floor.

Does the pelvis change its position?
And what happens in your spine?
Your neck? Your head?

It is important that you keep sliding the bones out,
and keep sliding and ... continue to keep on sliding.
Keep in mind that you slide ... and let go
independent of your breathing?

At the same time, relax along the whole of your back,
between your bony frame and the wall.
Now a lot is happening at the front side of the body too.
Perhaps your abdominal muscles are extending themselves

and acquiring a different kind of tone.

From ape to man

If you look back at the posture of monkeys and apes, you may notice that the pelvis is "in-line" with the back in both cases. Let us now see how we can align our pelvis and spine without having to tighten anything. And also without holding on to anything.

For our starting position, we revert somewhat to the monkey:
The knees are bent, the hands are loose on the thighs.
Can you feel your skeleton in this position?
How are the spine and pelvis positioned relative to each other?

Now we are going to slide the leg bones out.
What happens to your pelvis? Can you feel that?
You continue to slide out in a relaxed manner.
If you keep on sliding
the hands will automatically slip off the knees.

Notice that slowly but surely you come into a standing position—
that you are changing from a monkey into a human being.

Do you also feel how your pelvis tilts of its own accord?
And how the sockets rotate around the balls of your thigh bones?

Are you aware that the pelvis is now "hanging"
with the tailbone more downward too?

It may well be that you have to repeat this a number of times before you can stand up straight in a fully relaxed manner, with the pelvis "loose".
As we have seen, an internal movement is initiated when you continue to relax all the muscles along the length of your back and let what wants to happen – happen.

Movement in stillness, stillness in movement.

From ape to man



Walking

First sit and stand for a bit...

It is fun to look at the way a cat walks or a tiger. Can you see that they slide their paws out into the earth as they walk and that the movement travels through the whole of the skeleton?

We do the same when we move in a natural, more skeletal way. The skeleton then moves inside the coat. The coat reacts in such a way that skin, muscles, tendons, membranes – all connective tissue - lengthen and relax again. As we have seen, the result is that all joints open up. Just look at the cat. There you can observe this very well. Do you also notice that everything it does is from the One Point, even sleeping?

The movement of all the joints inside the coat is a subtle thing that you can practice every now and then, for example, while you are at work.

But first we are going to sit down for a bit.

The structure of your skeleton while sitting

Being aware of the structure of your skeleton while sitting

When you are sitting
you can experience every joint moving in your skeleton
if you shift your weight minimally
over and around your sit bones.

Every bit of muscle tension blocks the movement of the skeleton,
therefore... relax and embody your soft look.

The structure of your skeleton while standing

Being aware of the structure of your skeleton while standing

You can also feel the continuous movement in your skeleton while standing if you shift your weight over the soles of your feet.

If you do not feel your feet that well, then first do the exercise with the [small ball](#) under the soles of your feet. This will improve the contact sense of your foot considerably.

Even with shoes on, you will start to feel the ground beneath your feet more and more as the tactile sense of your feet improve. Irrespective of

the underlying structure, your feet love to touch the earth, be it asphalt, sand, wood, or pebbles, so that they can feel the earth even through the soles of your shoes.

When you stand,
do you feel that your weight is spread over the whole foot?

Now, with miniscule movements,
shift your weight in all directions while standing whereby
every single joint receives your attention for a brief moment.
In this way, your awareness of how the motion of your skeleton
travels upwards, grows...
and simultaneously how your weight moves downwards
and spreads out over the soles of your feet.

This is actually a muscle relaxation exercise which means that it can feel a little different every time you do it.

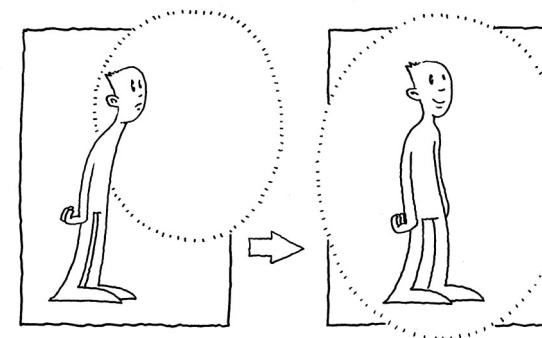
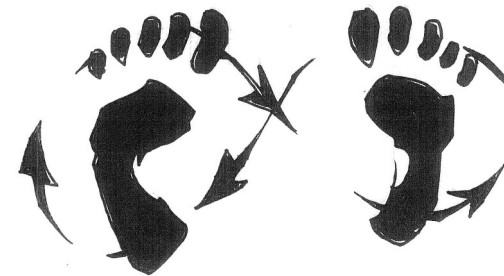
What happens when you walk?

Feeling, being present and moving from your One Point...

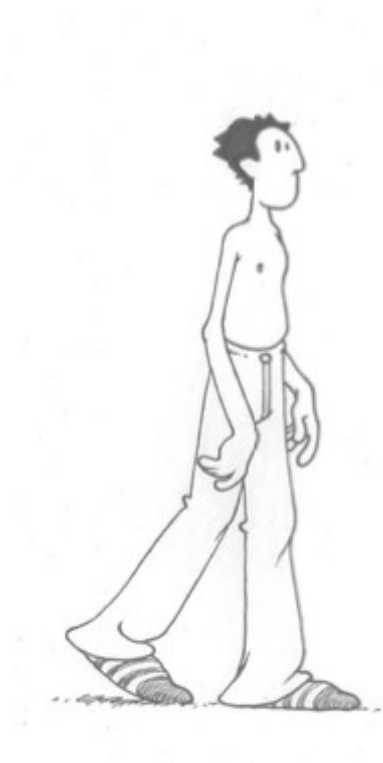
Walking is basically: transferring your weight over the soles of your feet, from heel to toes. If you shift your weight from the back of the foot to the front, your heel will lift off the ground and your foot will unfurl. The whole skeleton follows the movement and in order to maintain your balance, your other leg automatically steps forward. Your weight now comes onto your front foot.

As usual, your awareness is deep in the body. If the movement happens to start in your head, you will more or less fall forward. Your physical equilibrium is gone.

Walking will be even better for you if you can feel the whole skeleton adapting itself during the previous exercise. This makes it easier to avoid holding onto any undue muscle tension, for example in your lower back, while walking.



Step by step plan



Step-by-step plan for opening the joints as you walk

Step 1

While you are walking, feel the tissues relax downwards along your back.

Step 2

When everything is nicely relaxed, you can feel the whole skeleton moving. The joint surfaces are already getting more space; the muscles are not pulling the joints together.

Step 3

Suppose you start your walk while in your One Point, does something different happen? Do you feel that you are now not only more relaxed but also more open and experiencing more energy?

Step 4

Of course, you can also open up your skeleton even more if you use the earth to slide each leg open in turn as you walk. A pumping movement starts up in all your joints, initiated by the fact that you alternately open them in contact with the earth and release them as you land on your front foot. This opening and releasing promotes the circulation of the synovial fluid and can therefore have a healing effect on all the joints.

Step 5

Do you actually notice that the movement continues to go upwards? Do you now start walking faster of your own accord? And do you feel your weight is constantly being transferred to the front leg?

Step 6

You open all your joints with each step and never for an instant lose contact with the earth. The earth is walking you.

Initiating movement

Why is the start of every movement important?

The initiation of any movement, as we have already seen, originates in the skeleton. Where in the skeleton depends on the movement you want to make. Obviously, how well you are in your One Point forms the basis of everything.

Each joint has its own distinct capabilities. It is important that you make use of them. Starting a movement from an incorrect place in your skeleton creates a greater chance of wear and tear and pain in certain places.

Furthermore, it is also important to start a movement in the right place so that the rest of your body can maintain its open, relaxed state.

If you have become blocked

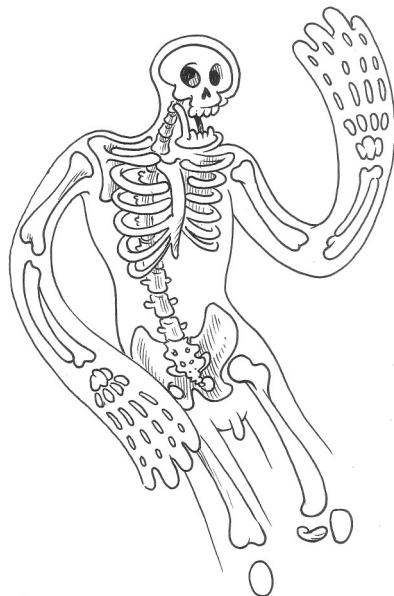
We will see that almost every human being is blocked somewhere in the skeleton, and consequently starts to develop specific unnatural movements. We often create these blocks when we want to avoid pain, or physical or emotional discomfort.

Suppose your hip joint is worn out and as a result certain movements have become painful; then you will often avoid all movement in that joint. You do this by bringing one side of your pelvis, together with your hip, forward as a single unit when you walk. The lower vertebrae are now put under undue strain by the constant rotation and can cause problems.

Such a way of walking can also be a habit; you find it attractive or sexy, or your father also walked like this, or you have shoes in which you cannot walk naturally.

If you were or are being corrected...

Another way to start moving with the focus from the outside in, is when, for instance, your mother says: "Child walk straight, don't hang in your chair like that." And you do your best, but not from the inside.



Which movements belong to which joint?

In physical exercise groups, you also tend to imitate the teacher as best you can, but he himself does not necessarily move from within either. Or you can't do exactly what is the teacher is demonstrating, you may then often force yourself to do it as best you can in order to fit in.

An extreme example: someone imitates what is being demonstrated, for instance, raising the arms up past the ears. To do this, the person pulls the shoulder blades and collarbones up, moves the neck forward in order to get the arms past the ears, and creates a lordosis in the lower back in order to have the feeling that the arms are pointing straight up. Now, from the outside, it looks "good" to him.

Elegance from the inside

Every now and then in the past you saw for example, someone from an African or Surinamese culture who was fully present in their body and moving from the inside out. In cultures where loads are carried on the head for example, one can observe a graceful opening of the spine movement coming up from the earth.

However, appearance has become so important today that it has begun to affect our movement pattern; we want to meet the beauty standards of the moment. Muscle tension to look slimmer, chest forward to look tough, pelvis wagging to look attractive, etc.

When moving from the inside to the outside, it is much easier to make natural movements in the appropriate joints. Coming from the inside out you don't need to react directly to what the outside world expects of you.

Which movements belong to which joint?

Let us look at the movement possibilities of each joint:

The toes
can be bent or straightened.

The metatarsals
can be spread out, which causes the toes to separate more.

The ankle
can be bent or straightened
turned inwards and outwards
and even make a rotating movement.

The knee
can be bent or straightened,
and in the bent position you can make a small turn.

From the hip joint
you can move your leg forwards or backwards,
outwards or inwards.
With a stretched leg, you can make a half-turn outwards
or inwards
and with a bent leg, make a complete turn.

The pelvis
can rotate around the ball of the thigh in all directions.
In addition it can move forwards or backwards,
and also "waggle".

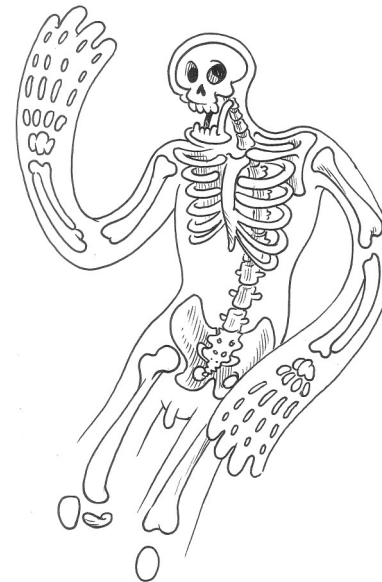
The coccyx
can move forwards or backwards
and you can wag it.

The sacroiliac joint (between the sacrum and the wings of the hip)
can move slightly forwards or backwards.

The vertebrae
can do all kinds of things:
bend forward or backward,
make half-turns
and waggle.

The ribs
can be moved under the shoulder blades.
You can turn them a little to the left and forward and vice versa;

Which movements... cont.



Which movements... cont.

You can also pull them inwards or extend them outwards.

The spinal column as a whole
can, in different vertebrae, bend forwards or backwards.
It can twist, bulge and hollow
and also bend sideways.

The shoulder blades
can be moved up and down over the rib cage,
towards and away from each other.
You can even move them in all directions over your ribcage
independently of each other.

From the shoulder joint
you can rotate your arm in all directions,
forwards, backwards, upwards,
sideways, and inwards or outwards.

The elbow
you can bend or straighten.
And with a bent elbow you can
wrap the forearm bones, the radius-ulna joint,
around each other.

The wrist joint
can be bent and straightened
and moved a bit from side to side or in circles.

The metacarpal bones
can be spread apart or pulled together.

The fingers
can be bent or straightened in the different phalanges.

And the thumb
can be articulated from the metacarpal and carpal bones

in order to be able to move close against your fingers.

This list only indicates the coarsest of all possible movements.

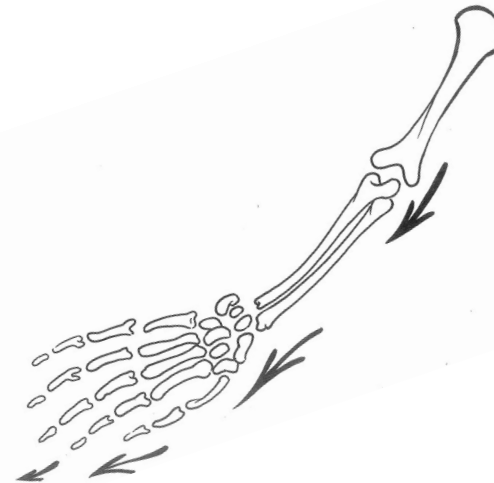
With every movement, first open the joint

Suppose you are really present in your skeleton, and you start a movement from the One Point, then your joints are already more open. This is sufficient for most movements. However, certain movements, for example if you are lifting something heavy or carrying a backpack, need more. By sliding out the bones of the joint or joints in question a little, you get more power to do this, the earth is helping you carry your backpack. In the last chapter called *Playing with the principles in daily life*, we will go deeper into this.

In the end, the idea is that "opening" and "sliding" the bones becomes a habit with every movement that requires it. This will not happen overnight, but every bit helps. It will give you a sense of freedom in all your movements.

Additional advantage

As you keep sliding the bones open, which causes your muscles to lengthen, you will notice a change in your energy. Everything starts to flow more easily and you become more powerful.



Blockages

When you block a part of your body, you block your whole body

A blockage is a limitation of your physical possibilities, irrespective of the severity. Blockages can be caused by tense muscles, skeletal deformations, habitual postures and compensatory postures to avoid pain.

It is good to realise that even if the pain is gone, the motor skills often continue to compensate for the prior condition. Such a change, however small, has an impact on the whole system.

Habits

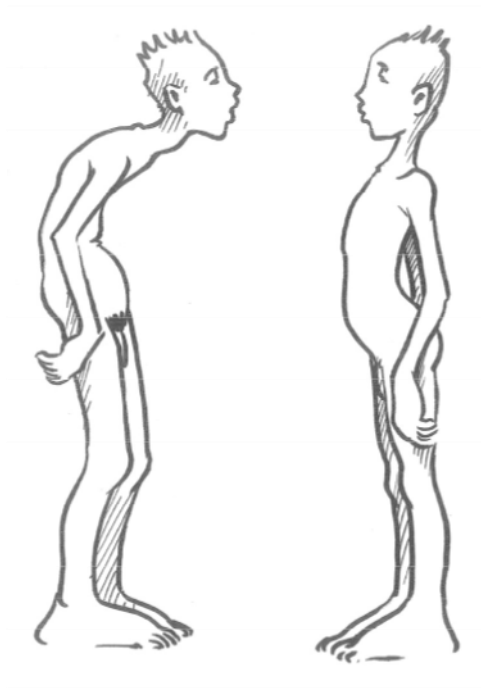
For example, a child who hangs for too long in a chair at school without its urge to move being adequately met, is already creating a habitual posture. Such postures are also engendered by people working behind computer screens, road workers, pregnant women, carers and so on. Baby bouncers or couches that are too soft in which people lie for long periods can also create habitual postures.

The more we are in a habitual position, the more certain ligaments will shrink or become flaccid in an unnatural way; some joints will stiffen, while others will perform tasks that are not within their scope, and therefore become overburdened. A consequence of this is that the muscles will react by creating undue tension or slackness in order to compensate for the discomfort felt.

Whether you stick your neck out or stand more on your heels, everything affects the whole body

It is important to realise that every habitual posture, even the smallest of restrictions, affect the whole skeleton.

Here is an example of someone whose habitual posture is such that their upper back is rounded (kyphosis), but who still wants to look another straight in the eye. He/she will probably move their neck forward and up,



create a lordosis in their lower back just below their rounded upper back and overstretch their knees. The person is responding to the outside world as best they can given their own capabilities and limitations, and will therefore twist their skeleton in such a way that – in their own eyes – they are standing upright. The impression they give to the outside world is their idea of being upright but in reality this is not the case.

Common skeletal blockages

It really does not matter which joint or joints you use incorrectly; the rest of your body always tries to compensate. In the following blockage exercises, we will feel what skeletal blocks are and what they induce in the body. In order to feel it clearly in the exercises, you have to exaggerate the block you create in your skeleton, and try, according to your idea, to stay standing upright and look the other straight in the eye.

It will not always be easy to allow all the changes this brings about in your skeleton to flow all the way from where the block originates right through to the extremities of your skeleton.

Let what happens happen and try to feel all those places where you induce muscle tension in the following blockage exercises. Remember not to force anything.

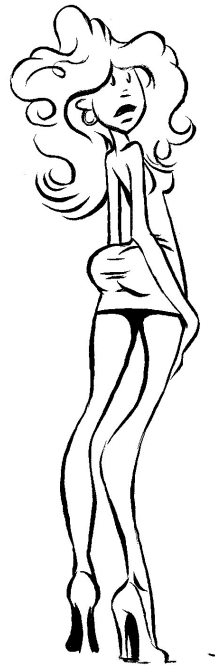
Feel the blockages yourself

With the nose pointing forwards

While standing, really stick your nose forward.
(Recall the adage: sticking your nose into someone else's business?)
Many things are now changing in your whole skeleton as a result.
Do you notice what happens in your spinal column,
in your shoulders, pelvis and knees...?
Where do you feel your weight on your feet?
Try to look to the left or upwards from this posture.
Do you notice how the range of motion



Feel the blockages yourself



of your cervical vertebrae is restricted?
And of course, other things are happening too:
in this case you're constricting the arteries to the head,
so that the brain gets less oxygen.
Not very handy if you are sitting behind the PC like this!

With shoulders forward

Now pull your shoulders forward and again check out all your joints.
Can you move your outstretched arms upwards past your ears
while you are in this position –
without arching your lower back, of course
or sticking your chin forwards?

Do you feel how the full range of motion of your shoulder joints
is restricted in this posture?

With your shoulders back

Pull your shoulders back
as if in a military style posture.
Can you feel what this does to your spine?
You can also notice that the range of motion
of your shoulder joints and your neck vertebrae is restricted
when you lift your arms up or try to look around you.
And if in this posture you try to walk, what happens?
Try to bend forwards; are you able to do it?

All your vertebrae are now restricted in their movements by the induced muscle tension.

With a lordosis - twice

Try to make an extreme lordosis.
This can be done in two ways:
You hollow your vertebrae inwards
by moving the upper body backwards
as if a little on the defensive.

Or:

you create a lumbar lordosis by tilting your pelvis.

In both cases, leaning the upper body backwards,
or the lumbar lordosis caused by the tilting of the pelvis,
you can feel what this does to your head and neck vertebrae...
and further down too.

What happens to your pelvis, your knees and the load on your feet?

The possibilities for movement of almost all joints
are yet again restricted;
even more so in the upper part of the skeleton and less in the lower.
Can you feel that too?

Tucking your pelvis strongly under you

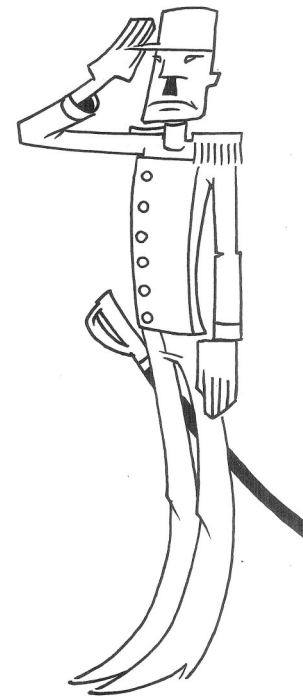
Now we are going to tilt the pelvis in the other direction –
just stand with your back to the wall
and tilt your pelvis so that the lordosis disappears.
Now while maintaining this posture come free from the wall —
what do you notice ?
Take a few steps forward – what do you feel?

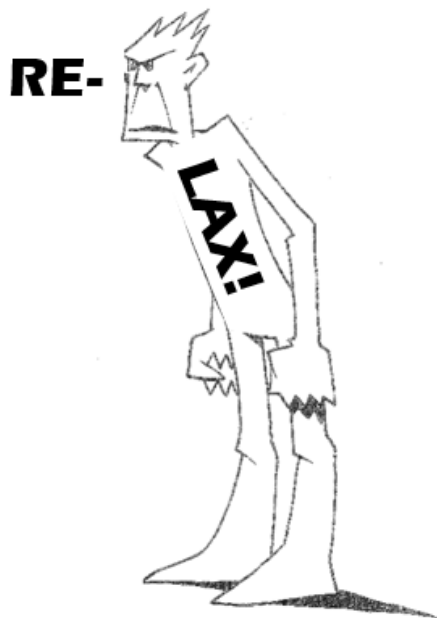
Both the hip joints as well as the knee joints, and even further down –
cannot easily be enticed to move.

With knees over stretched

You probably know the feeling – standing with overstretched knees.
Become aware what of this does in the different joints,
including the spinal column.

Now keep the knees bent.
Do you notice that this also causes rigidity in your skeleton?
Where exactly?





With your weight on your heels - or on your forefoot

If you stand with your weight firmly on your heels
while holding onto the impression that you are standing up straight,
can you feel all the changes that happen in your skeleton?

And with your weight on your forefoot –
what do you experience then?

Active correction

It is important to realise that when you actively correct your posture, you put on a kind of harness. You do this for example when you contract your muscles to keep your back straight, tilt your pelvis or pull in your chin. When you actively tilt your pelvis, for example, you rigidify your hip joints, which results in you walking from your lumbar vertebrae. This is really not so good for your back.

Keeping your back straight, pulling your shoulders back, pushing your chest forward and so on, is not only very tiring - it's actually not sustainable. It stiffens and tenses – and you compress your vertebrae. Because you want to move "normally", the vertebrae below or above the stiffness have to suffer and endure.

Which part of the sole of your foot bears your weight?

Now that you are aware of the common blockages, it is probably easier to feel that you can stand without blockages on the greater part of the sole of your foot.

How far you can shift your weight forwards onto your forefoot
and how far backwards
so that you can stand without being blocked?

Playing with the principles in everyday life

Given that it is quite difficult to apply everything at once in your daily life, we recommend you make a game out of it. You start to play with one principle and after a while you add something else.

The easiest way, it seems to us, is to apply the different principles to something that you do every day, or at least very regularly. The less complex you make it, the easier it is to learn.

Here are some examples of what you could do, but feel inspired to experiment on your own.

The principles one by one

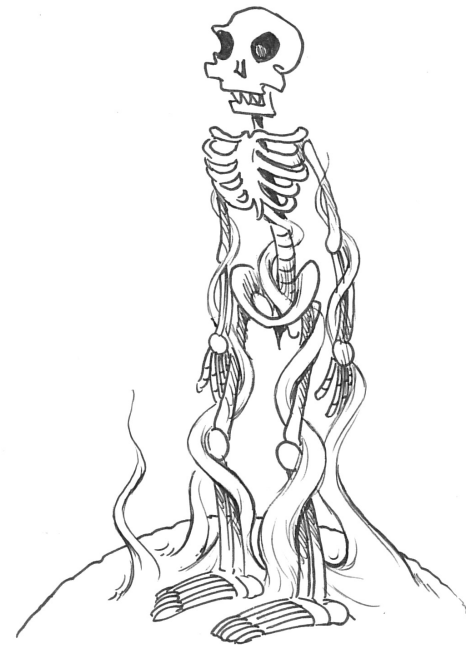
Relax the muscles.
Release all tissues along your **back**.
Be in the **One Point**.
Build **skeletal** awareness.
Initiate every movement in your skeleton.
Slide the bones out so that the joints open.

In the whole process of applying the principles in daily life, you will start to notice that if you only relax you can become drained.

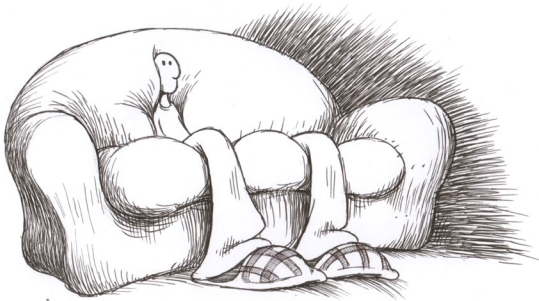
At that point you almost automatically go to your One Point. What happens then? Do you notice that you remain more open? That you feel your body even more? That more you are in your own power? More stable?

The skeleton can be experienced more consciously if the muscles are relaxed and you are in your One Point. All your movements become looser, lighter, easier.

And does the energy flow more easily if you open your joints by sliding the bones out?



Watching TV on a soft sofa



Behind your PC

Watching television on a soft sofa

Yeahhhh!

Where one can easily loose energy
and which is something many people like to do
is sitting-lying on a sofa watching tv.

When you are in the One Point
you will notice that you maintain a presence in your body,
even to the point of being alert to everything going on around you.

And if you don't much care for what you are watching,
you are more inclined (much more that you otherwise would be) to get up
go and get something
or do what you had originally planned to do.

Behind your PC

Working, gaming, reading, studying...

Check out the chapter on [sitting](#),
on how to sit in the most comfortable way in your chair.

You are usually sitting bent slightly forwards behind the PC;
make sure that you make the forward movement in your hip joints
with the spine loose, but still connected to head and pelvis.
You now stay flexible in the hip joints and the One Point.

Are you continually, or at least regularly,
able to let go of any possible muscle tension which arises
and let this sink downwards along the skeleton of your back?

You then stay relaxed, whatever you do.
Your inner smile, your soft gaze, will help you enormously
in absorbing new material, for example, when you are studying.

Sitting down and standing up... on the toilet

Easy to integrate into your daily life
is sitting down and standing up when you go to the toilet.
After a few weeks this becomes a natural movement.

Washing up

A good cook can do it too

Every time you wash the dishes feel the tension flowing down to the floor.
After a while you find yourself in your One Point in front of the sink;
And somewhat later you start the washing movements in your skeleton.

Lifting

Sometimes there is a heavy pan –
in that case you could already start opening your joints
from the kitchen floor upwards,
and in this way slide open the whole of your skeleton up to the arms
and then take hold of the pan.

Dishwasher

If you have a dishwasher,
you can continually feel the floor under your feet,
as you walk back and forth.

After a few weeks you can bring your One Point into your regime;
and later still, you can initiate all your movements in the skeleton.

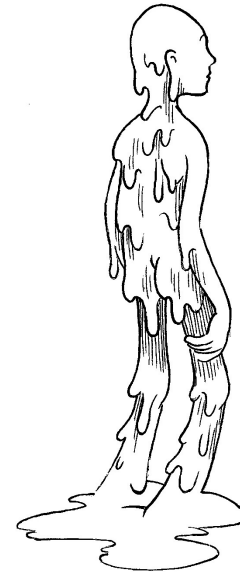
Every now and then you can pause and let all the tension you are aware of
flow down along your back and away.

Cycling

Nothing is as easy as cycling from the One Point;
against the wind, you can slide the legs out in the direction of the pedals.
Relaxing and letting go is easy when cycling with the wind behind you;

Sitting down and standing up... on the toilet

Washing up



Cycling

against the wind it will only work well after you have been doing it for a bit.
When cycling into the wind keep in mind that bending forward starts in the hip joints.

Climbing stairs

Climbing stairs

Up and down the stairs at home or perhaps visiting temples in China?

Going up...

As you are in your One Point slide your standing leg out, allowing the free leg to move easily to the step above. You lift one skeletal-leg from your One Point to the first step, place your foot on it, move your weight forwards over the sole of the foot and now slide this leg down into the step, which then automatically releases the back foot.

If you constantly relax your back, the joints will open up more easily.

Practice upwards first for a few weeks, then downwards...

And now down...

You slide the supporting leg out, not only for more stability, but also because when you bend this leg it briefly takes your full weight.
(Think of a weightlifter – they too need to open the joints first before lifting the weight; otherwise they will not be able to maintain healthy flexible joints.)

So:

You sink into the top leg, and even if the knee bends significantly, you continue to keep it open.
Meanwhile, your other skeletal-leg gently lands on the next step.
It becomes easier when you relax and let go along your back.

A challenge!

After you have done this for a while
and you feel that you are stable enough in yourself,
you can try doing the same thing without touching the banister.
This is a very good exercise to develop the tactile sense in your feet.

Driving

Driving in rush hour is no longer a problem

You will arrive much more relaxed at your destination
if you can allow everything to slip slide and away along your back
while sitting behind the steering wheel of your car.
At the same time, you are still in your One Point,
keeping a better overview and reacting faster.

Attention: for advanced students only!
Your foot is gently on the accelerator
and in order to more easily regulate your speed
you merely slide the bones of this leg out.

Long car journeys become less and less tiring
because the skeleton stays open and fluid.
Try it out.

Walking with a backpack

Actually, a somewhat longer and heavier backpack makes walking easier.
Your back is then more aware and feels more like an integral whole.

So...

Relax your back fully, including the lumbar vertebrae and pelvis in order to
be able, while you are in your One Point, to slide the leg bones out into
the earth with every step.

The feet unroll themselves, the earth walks you
and the skeleton keeps an agile openness.

Driving

Walking with a backpack

A difficult conversation



If you are emotional...

Looking becomes seeing...

A difficult conversation

You will experience it as very worthwhile to apply these principles in a difficult conversation, but there too you first need to be a little bit more practised.

If you are emotional...

This is a more advanced practice, but for some it is easy. The tension of the emotion wants to be felt first – physically, and then you can let it drain into the One Point, bringing a sense of relief.

But...

the feeling always needs to be acknowledged first, otherwise, it will not be able to move.

Looking becomes seeing – listening becomes hearing

Looking from the One Point means that you start to see differently. Your field of view becomes wider, gains more depth and colour; many people perceive other frequencies, such as auras of trees.

The same applies, of course, to listening.

You let the other's story come in through your One Point while you maintain your neutrality and your mind free of associations.

This changes the quality of listening, you often hear more than just the words. You hear what the other actually means, and you also get to hear the feelings of the other behind their words.