

Movement Education

Wellness in Motion

Lara Evans Bracciante

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

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



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

Learning New Patterns

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

Alexander Technique

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

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*What happens
in our lives is
not as
important as
how we deal
with it.*

-Anonymous

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

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

Feldenkrais Method

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

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

Hellerwork

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

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

Trager Approach

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

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

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

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

Are You Aware?

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



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

Soothe Your Skin's Winter Ailments

Kayla Fioravanti

The drying effects of winter are upon us. Here are some at-home ideas to help soothe your skin through this challenging season.

Cleanse

Put away your foaming gels and soaps and stock up on creamy products. Cleansing creams, lotions, and milks are great winter choices, because they don't contain the harsh, oil-stripping detergents found in most cleansing gels.

Tone

Shelve your astringents and switch to a toner. In the cold months, your skin needs to be soothed and balanced, not dried out further.

Moisturize

Choose heavier creams than you would in summer months. You can even use your heavy eye cream on your lips and face. If your skin itches, the dry air is causing the moisture in the top layer of your skin to evaporate quickly. Slather those areas with extra moisture until you feel relief, and never be afraid of using

pure oils on your skin--a bottle of jojoba or olive oil is great to have on hand.

Exfoliate

Exfoliate twice a week to remove dead skin cells and help your skin absorb the extra moisture you are using. Because central heating systems reduce the amount of sebum our skin secretes, contributing to dryness, exfoliation will free this natural regulating agent. Use a cream-based exfoliant with jojoba beads, so your body can soak up the rich oils.

Hydrate

For a simple in-home hydrotherapy treatment, start your day with a steamy shower. Just as you are finishing, switch the water to cold for about 15 seconds and then back to warm for 15 seconds. Repeat the process for two minutes.

Shower and Bathe with Oils

Did you know you can apply body oil, lotion, or cream during your shower or bath? The heat and steam help your skin to thoroughly absorb the moisture.

Exercise Myths

Fiction Vs. Fact

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

FICTION: You will burn more fat if you exercise longer at a lower intensity.

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

FICTION: If you're not going to work out hard and often, exercise is a waste of time.

FACT: Any exercise is better than none. For example, regular walking or gardening for as little as an hour a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

FICTION: If you exercise long and hard enough, you will always get the results you want.

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

FICTION: The health and fitness benefits of mind-body exercise like t'ai chi and yoga are questionable.

FACT: The benefits abound! T'ai Chi,

for example, has been shown to help treat low-back pain and fibromyalgia. Improved flexibility, strength, and stress management are just some of the benefits.

FICTION: Home workouts are fine, but going to a gym is the best way to get fit.

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

This information was provided by IDEA, www.ideafit.com.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.

-Lao Tzu

It's never too late to re-energize your personal care regimen. Make a list of the things you do each day to maintain your vitality. If you're already eating healthy, are there any healthy foods that you can add to your diet to boost the healthful benefits? Do you have an exercise plan in place? If so, is there anything you can do to push yourself a little harder or add an element to keep your program interesting? Are you making time in your schedule for fun or using meditation to ease stress? And don't forget the benefits of massage therapy and reflexology to ease those aches and pains and rejuvenate yourself. It's always a good time to add or adjust elements in our personal care tool kit. Remember, it's all about living our best life.

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