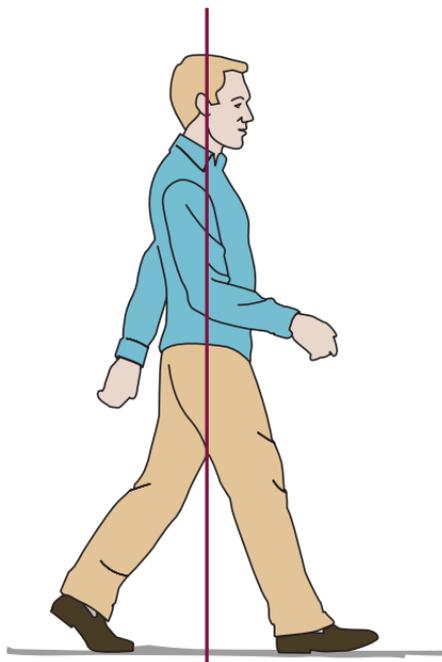


CoreWalking: First Steps To A New You



by Jonathan FitzGordon

CoreWalking: First Steps To A New You

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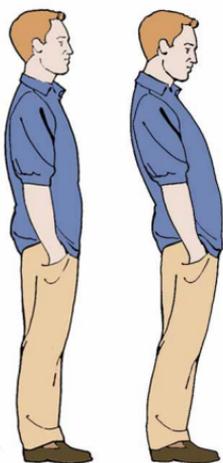
INTRODUCTION

Change is the name of the game. And people resist change in a big way. The Buddha, one of my favorite players from history, was disenchanted with life so he went up a mountain and meditated under a bodhi tree for forty days and forty nights. When he was done he was enlightened and making his way down the mountain he ran into a group of friends. Right there he delivered his first talk/sermon to them, known as the four noble truths, and they too became enlightened. If I might paraphrase the Buddha—he said, “Life is suffering. And suffering is due to an unbearable resistance to change.” But then he threw in, “If you want to sit and meditate like me you might be able to transcend this suffering and become enlightened.” Pretty good advice if you ask me.

Yet here we are thousands of years later still stuck in a cycle of craving permanence in an impermanent world. We resist change of any sort, good or bad simply because we fear the unknown or something like that.

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In the work I do, the hardest part to deal with is a resistance to changing things that are profoundly fundamental to our health and well-being, simply because we have a skewed vision of ourselves. If you knew how poorly you walk and stand there would be a greater incentive to change.



I start all of my initial session by asking clients to stand up straight and then tell me if, when standing in their version of straight, their shoulders line up with, are forward of, or behind their pelvis. Ninety nine in one hundred tell me that their shoulders are rounded forward of their pelvis and ninety nine in one hundred are wrong. Almost every person that stands before me for the first time is leaning backwards with their shoulders falling behind their pelvis.

This is still an amazing concept for me. You would think that hundreds if not thousands of clients later I wouldn't be surprised by someone's confusion about their body's place in space and yet I am—every time. And this brings up a crazy point.

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Not only is everyone standing poorly, but they think they are standing correctly, and consequently their perception of themselves is incorrect. It is a triple whammy.

And then I offer the ability to change. But that change has to happen from within themselves because while I am a handy guide to help you along on the journey, the journey of change is a profoundly personal one and you are the only person who can make it happen.

Nancy A. called me not long after I had a feature article written about my program in the New York Times. In the course of a five minute call, I learned that Nancy had flat feet, poor posture and a weak core.

“Fair enough, come on in”, I told her and soon I was confronted in person with a tall lean woman with decent posture, feet that weren’t flat and a somewhat toned core based solely on observing her feet and posture and determining that couldn’t be all that weak.

When I asked her why she thought all of those negative things about herself when I saw someone

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different standing before me she replied, “because my Mother told me that my whole life.” No big shock but what do you do with that information? In this case I had good news to offer Nancy. She wasn’t as bad off as she thought; in fact, she was very easy to help—all it took was making some minor adjustments to alleviate some neck pain.

A surprising upside to relearning how to walk for Nancy was that she was soon able to wear the closet full of shoes that ordinarily ruined her feet after just a few hours of wearing them about. Once Nancy started walking better it didn’t matter what shoes she wore, she felt fine at the end of the day.

In most cases I have a different message to deliver to my clients: “You have poor posture and your see yourself incorrectly in space, and that is why you have chronic back pain. Are you willing to change to be free of such a painful burden?”

This book offers you an easy way to make some physical changes. And you might find that making simple physical changes can put you on the road for some emotional changes as well.

LESSON 1 - WALKING



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Changing the way you walk is the opportunity of a lifetime. Most people take between 3000-5000 steps a day and don't think about any of them. For the most part, how you walk is how you walk. It is simply something that you do.

The odds are no one taught you how to walk. With great anticipation your parents waited for you to take your first steps, and then when you finally did, they screamed and clapped for joy. After that, you were on your own.

You learned to walk because it is instinctual and imitative. Your walking patterns derive from numerous factors but imitating your parents who imitated their parents who were never taught the correct way to walk either is a vicious cycle that won't be interrupted until walking lessons become as popular as I hope they will be.

Visit the Anatomy Lab to Meet the Psoas

Learning to walk correctly isn't all that hard it just takes will power and repetition. Lots and lots of repetition. But it is something you are already

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doing at least 3000-5000 times a day. You simply need to start paying attention to the way you do it.

If you pay attention for a short period of time (short is relative and the time frame differs for everyone. Some people change quickly and others can take way more time), you will be walking with a new pattern that will better serve your lifestyle no matter what it is.

People change the way they walk many times through life without even realizing it. First, most of us develop with excellent posture in our first three years. We almost all start walking well. Go to any playground and watch most kids younger than four or five. Invariably the transition from standing to walking happens because they lean their upper bodies forward to turn on the engine and take off. This is what we all need to get back to.

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The Trouble with Standing

Welcome to the CoreWalking Program. What you are about to learn is the first of five lessons. Be patient as you learn because the changes you are about to try and make in your body will take time to implement.

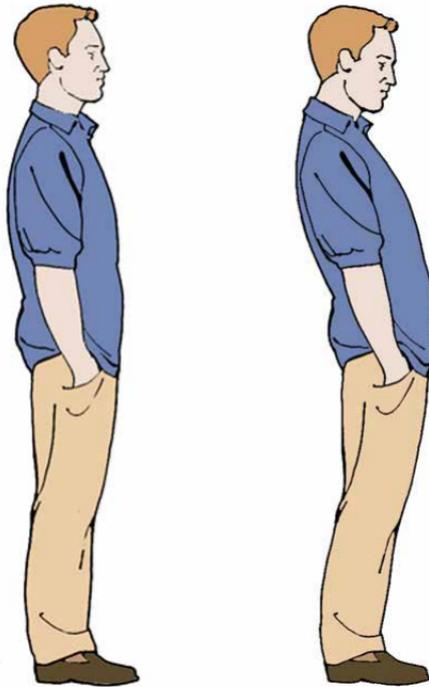
This is pretty basic stuff at its core but changing conditioned patterns requires a great deal of repetition. The more you can think about the essential cues that we offer in each lesson; develop the proper muscles you need for better movement, and then learn more about the body and how it operates with the anatomy lectures, the easier it will be to bring permanent change to your current patterns.

In large part this is a standing program; but standing is hard— harder than walking in many ways.

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GET OVER YOURSELF

There is an old you and now we are going to find a way to create a new you.



Which one of these images do you resemble? Ask someone to take a photo or check in a mirror but try to get an honest assessment of what your posture really is. Most people don't realize that they are almost always leaning backwards.

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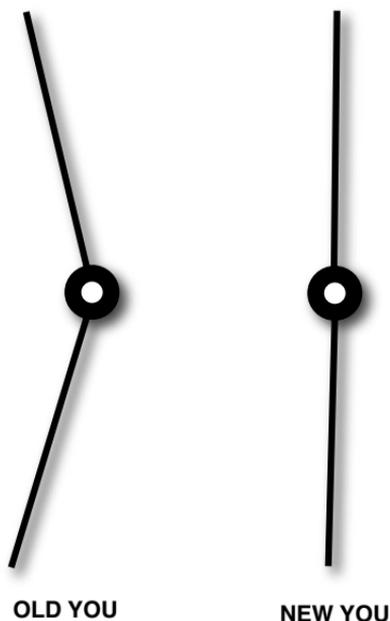
Most people don't realize that they are almost always leaning backwards.



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Learning to stand up straight can be as easy as taking the legs back and the upper body forward thinking of the body as a hinge with the pelvis as the pin.

THE BODY IS A HINGE AND THE PELVIS IS THE PIN

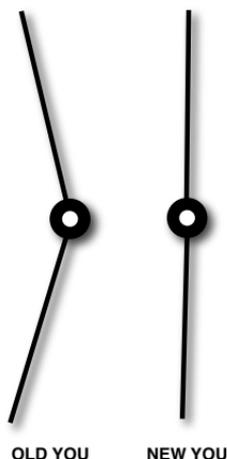


At the CoreWalking Program we believe that most people are leaning backwards when they think they are straight, and are standing up straight when they think they are leaning forward.

What a conundrum! But now it our is job to help you go from OLD YOU to NEW YOU... so stop leaning backwards and get over yourself.

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Visit the Anatomy Lab to learn about Three Positions of the Pelvis



How are we going to accomplish this feat? Let's look at three ways to know you are standing better. If any of these images resonate with you, stick with that and you can be well on your way to a NEW YOU.

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Cue #1—Relax Your Butt

We are a tight assed people and we must learn to relax! Our big butt muscle, gluteus maximus should do nothing when you are standing, and it doesn't do much when walking. It only really needs to engage when you are walking uphill, or doing squats.



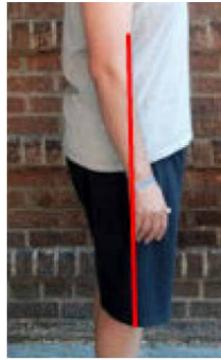
So we want to learn to let it go when we are standing because when the butt is gripped tight, deeper pelvic muscles that are intrinsic to standing can't really work.

Move to new you by taking the thighs back under the hips, rotating the pelvis slightly out of what is likely your habitual tuck. This should release the big gluteus maximus, and free up the deeper gluteal muscles to do their jobs.

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OLD YOU



NEW YOU

Go back to old you and feel the difference. The learning is in the feeling. Transit again to new you and allow gluteus maximus to relax.

You can't do this too many times in the process of learning how your body works.

Before long you won't want to go back to old you but for now moving between old you and new you can help you understand the changes you are making.

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Cue #2—Let the Belly Initiate the Breath



Cue #2 is to let the belly initiate the breath on the inhale and should give you an idea of how to bring your upper body to its new alignment. A tiny shift in your rib cage can have deep implications but is often deceptively hard to ingrain.

If you believe me that you lean backwards when standing, it is likely that you are using the muscles of the rib cage, chest, and even the neck to do most of the work when you are breathing.

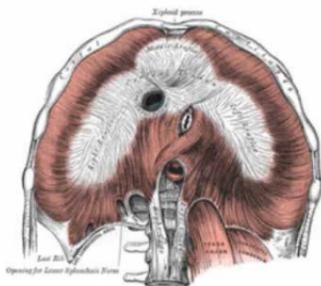
The tendency of old you posture is for the lower back muscles to be short and tight, pulling the back of the ribcage down and splaying the front of the rib cage up and opened a bit. When that happens the upper body does too much work on the inhale.



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Now, move from old you to new you turning down the front of the rib cage a little (as if you were beginning to do a crunch), allowing room for the back ribs to open.

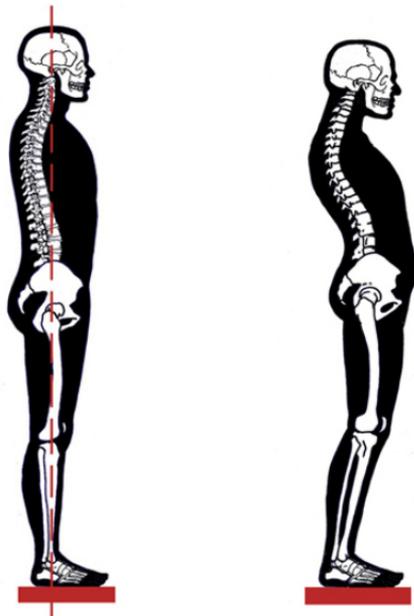
Feel what is happening to your breath. Ideally the breath moves down more easily into the belly and the whole trunk becomes involved in breathing not just the chest.



We are designed very specifically. When we breathe in, the diaphragm muscle—the main muscle of breathing housed at the base of the rib cage—is supposed to lower down a little which actually creates a vacuum that pulls the air from outside into the lungs.

We need to have good posture for this to happen successfully. In OLD YOU feel what happens when you inhale. If the front ribs are elevated the back of the body will shorten in opposition and the diaphragm which should lower straight down, basically gets stuck at the middle spine and can't descend.

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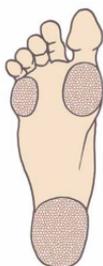
There is room for the diaphragm to descend in the picture on the left but not on the right.

Let the front ribs lower, allow the middle back to broaden and feel how you have created an environment where the diaphragm can descend on the inhale and belly can move out to make room for the abdominal contents.

It's not that the chest isn't involved in breathing—it is, especially in athletics — but the diaphragm and the belly should always initiate the breath.

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Cue #3- Ground Through All Four Corners Of The Feet



When you relax your Butt and let the belly initiate the breath it will be a lot easier to find a body with its weight distributed through all four corners of the feet.

Visit the Anatomy Lab To
View Hip Joint Or Knee Joint

Ideally, our bones hold us up so that the muscles can move us. But for many of us the misalignment of the bones forces our muscles to hold us up instead.

We want stack our bones to bear as much weight as much as possible so that our muscles are free to do what they are designed to do.

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Instead, we tend toward a number of misalignments the begin in the feet and ankles that put a great deal of strain on our muscles. These include:

- Hyperextension
- Pronation
- Supination

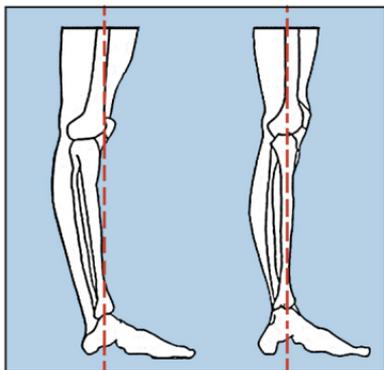
We can see this in the weight distribution on the feet.

We have a tendency to either hyperextend the knees or to sink the thighs forward which messes with our ability to feel the whole foot.

One way that we know our bones are holding us up better is if we feel an even weight distribution across all four corners of the feet.

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Hyperextension Anatomy



If you hyperextend your knees or if your thighs are forward as we spoke of earlier, the shin is out of line with the ankle and foot, and the thigh

bone, is out of line with your shin.

Putting all of the standing cues together

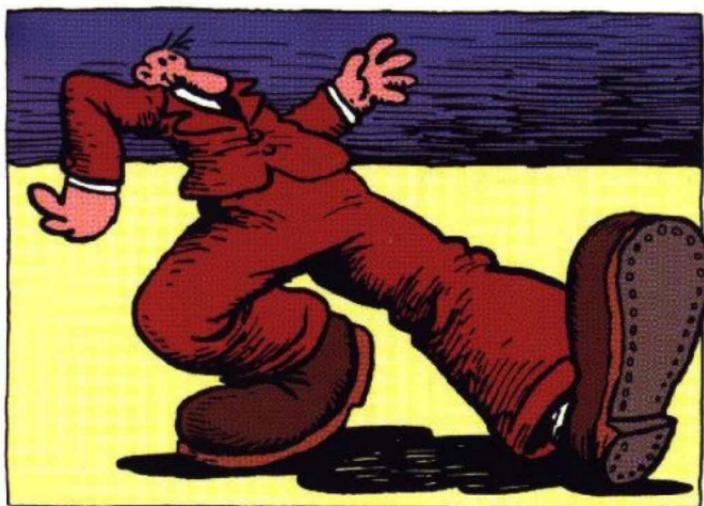
- If you bring the shin bone to a right angle to the floor
- And get your thigh bones back so they are also at a right angle to the floor
- releasing your butt, and
- allowing the belly to initiate the breath by turning the front ribs down slightly...

...Will enable you to feel Cue #3 as the weight of the body spread through all four corners of the feet evenly.

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THE TROUBLE WITH WALKING

We need to move forward through life literally and symbolically. Instead, most of lean backwards to move forwards. It might sound strange but it is true.

Keep On Truckin'



Do you know this iconic image by Robert Crumb from the 1960's. I am beginning to date myself with this picture but just the same it is really how most people walk and stand. Leading with the legs the feet tend to turn out, pulling the trunk backwards against gravity. If the legs go first it is hard not to compensate by leaning the upper body backwards.

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But it doesn't have to be this way. Notice though, how the two gentlemen in the picture above have the same patterns as our Keep on Truckin' dude. I think most people have these patterns. I can't guarantee that this is how you walk but I change. I have a lot of empirical evidence to back up what I am saying. You need to pay some attention and truly analyze your walking patterns. Remember that your perception of straight and forward might be skewed so be patient and observe your tendencies. If you look closely and find that maybe you do walk like this it isn't hard to change.

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Hinge The Body To Walk (Cue #1)



Walk around and try to feel the way you move and see if it resembles our Keep on Truckin' friend. While the genius of Robert Crumb lies in exaggeration, you are probably doing a subtler form of the same pattern.

Now, take your legs back and the upper body forward thinking of the body as a hinge with the pelvis as the pin. Try and feel the shift from old you to new you.

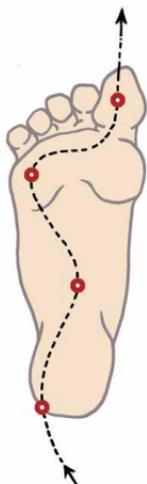
Think of the five year old on the playground who leans forward before they begin to move.

Walk forward.

In many ways it is as simple as that. Over and over and over again.

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Use The Whole Foot (Cue # 2)



One key to this first lesson is to getting to know what your feet are doing when you're walking or more specifically, how do your feet land on the floor. You might know already but a quick check of your shoes would tell.

It is most likely that you are wearing your shoes down on the outside of the sole, from the heel to the pinky toe.

Walk in old you and feel what happens from your heel to your toes. Listen to the sound your heel makes. Think back to the Keep on Trucking Image and see if you are also reaching out with your foot to walk.

Take your thighs back and upper body forward and you should feel and hear the heel land differently. Your step should start on the outer heel and then you would like to transfer weight to the inside of the foot as you complete the footfall. But for now try and feel that you are moving through the whole foot instead of only the outside.

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As you change your walk your feet want to fall more towards parallel but it is key that they do this because the pelvis rotates to neutral rather than you turning the feet in.



When you take your thighs back and walk forward your feet turn naturally towards parallel. This is a great thing but it is important to note that this positive realignment of the feet happened from the shift of your legs and pelvis, not from turning your feet.

Start to bring your legs under your pelvis when you walk as well as when you stand. The third cue in this lesson will hopefully make it easy still to facilitate these changes.

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Short Strides (Cue #3)

I always ask people what they think will make them go faster- long strides or short strides? Invariably people think long strides but it isn't the case. Mechanical efficiency calls for short strides while long strides invariably lead to us hyperextending the knees to move forward.



Too Long



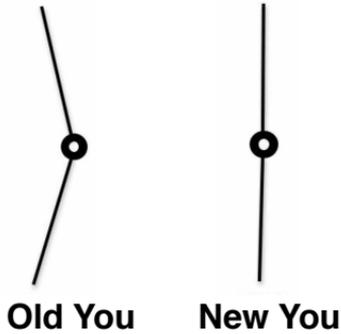
Just Right

Move from old you to new you and start walking. You should feel that the stride shortens naturally as you take the thighs back, move the upper body forward and get walking.

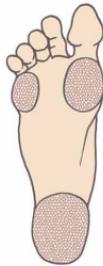
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To Recap:

- Cue #1 – Hinge the Body to Walk



- Cue #2 – Use the Whole Foot



- Cue#3 – Short Strides



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Next Steps or

A Step In The Right Direction

You've now stepped on the path toward better walking and freedom from pain and injury. Now you have an opportunity to continue the journey. [CoreWalking](#) is a comprehensive program that teaches you how to move in your body the way it was designed to move. By simply and accessibly demonstrating body mechanics and the proper way to walk the [CoreWalking](#) Program is an incredibly easy way to change your life.

Whether you're suffering from chronic pain, a seasoned practitioner who works with people in pain, or someone who's looking to improve athletic performance, [CoreWalking](#) can make a difference.

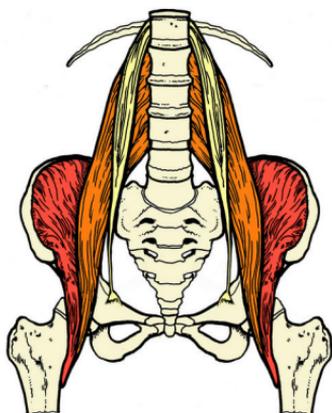
Take some time to work with the concepts in this book and when you're ready for more, the whole program is available to you. We're offering it to anyone who's purchased this book for \$99—that's \$50 off the regular price. Use the code "**chapter1**" at checkout to receive the discount.

Change your walk, change your life with [CoreWalking](#).

What follows now are the anatomy lectures and exercises. Enjoy!

LESSON 1 - ANATOMY

Meet The Psoas Major

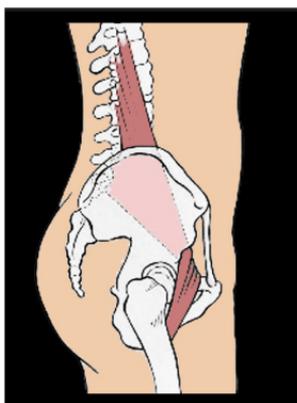


The psoas is the body's most important muscle for a number of reasons. The most obvious reason for our purposes is that the psoas is the main muscle for walking. But, on a deeper level, it is also the main muscle for bearing and processing trauma because of its role as a hip flexor.

The psoas major is the body's main hip flexor and one of only three muscles connecting the lower and upper body. When healthy, the psoas major in front and the piriformis across the back (gluteus maximus is the third) help us stand upright in a perfect state of balance.

The psoas attaches along the lower spine and comes down to cross over the rim of the pelvis before it moves backward again to insert on the back half of the inner thigh.

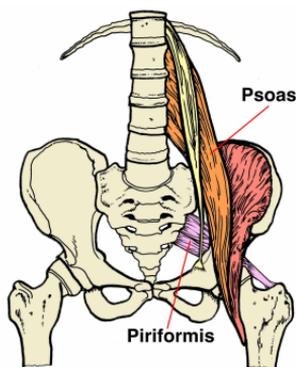
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The tension that the psoas creates across the rim of the pelvis as it moves backward at its top and bottom is critical to healthy upright posture. If the psoas and piriformis are well aligned they help to stabilize the spine on top of the legs allowing the pelvis to live in a neutral or correct position and the spine to stack vertically on top of it.

The psoas major connects at six points—it attaches at the base of the rib cage and the top of the lower back. It to the out edge of the first four vertebrae of the lumbar spine, which is the lower back, and to the front of these vertebrae as well as the front of the 12th thoracic vertebra, which is at the base of the rib cage, and it crosses over the front of the pelvis and goes backward to attach on the back half of the inner thigh, on a bony projection called the lesser trochanter. As a result the psoas spans and affects many joints.

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The piriformis attaches the leg to the sacrum. The psoas connects the body across the front and the piriformis at the back. These two muscles, when working well, perform a balancing act that allows for successful upright posture. A problem with one of these muscles always involves a problem with the other as well.

The troubling part is when the pelvis does not live in a neutral position. We are a society of tuckers, most of us living with our pelvis' falling down at the back and this by nature pulls the psoas out of its proper alignment.

The psoas is the main muscle of walking because of its role as a flexor of the leg. The lift of the leg in walking is initiated by the psoas.

The psoas is also the main muscle of trauma because of its role as a hip flexor. The body is always trying to maintain an emotional balance in our nervous system between excitation and relaxation. All excitation involves flexion. Any time our fear

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reflex is initiated we flex. An imbalance between the systems of relaxation and excitation often involve problems with the psoas and as a result impact our movement and posture as well.

The more you learn about the psoas and its ability to affect us both structurally and emotionally the more likely this program will be effective for you.

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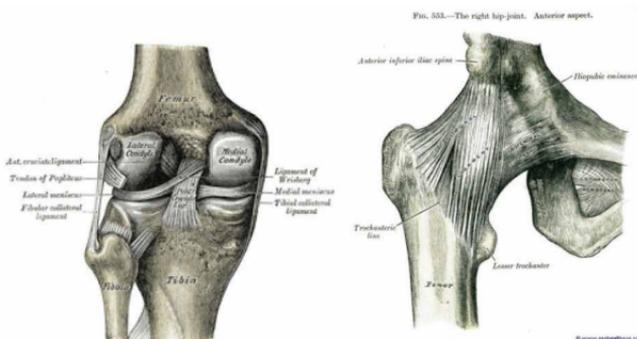
Hip Joint Or Knee Joint?



Do either of these images resemble your posture? The image on the left is sinking the thigh forward and the image on the right in hyperextending the knees.

If one of these (or both) images is similar to how you stand, what exactly is holding you up? If your bones aren't stacking on top of each other for good weight transfer what is bearing your weight in standing?

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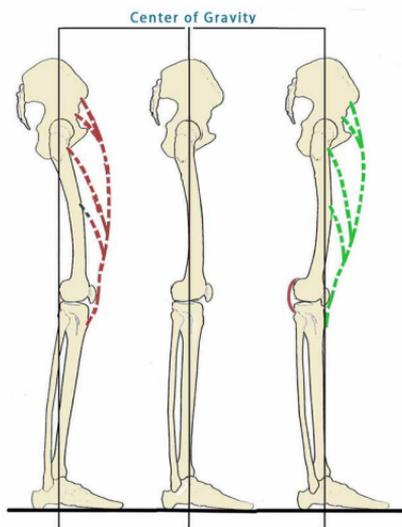


Ligaments connect bone to bone. But bones that are misaligned put a great deal of stress on the ligaments connecting them. The pictures above show the ligaments at the back of the knee (posterior cruciate ligament) and the ligament connecting the leg to the hip (iliofemoral ligament). These two ligaments often bear the burden of poor posture.

Both of these patterns—hyperextended knees and forward leaning thighs—wreak havoc on the natural relationship that the leg muscles ought to have. If the bones aren't aligned the muscles can't be balanced.

If we align our bones like the middle set of legs in the image above we allow the bones to stack on top of one another and allow weight to transfer through the body freeing the muscles, ligaments and tendons to do what they are supposed to do.

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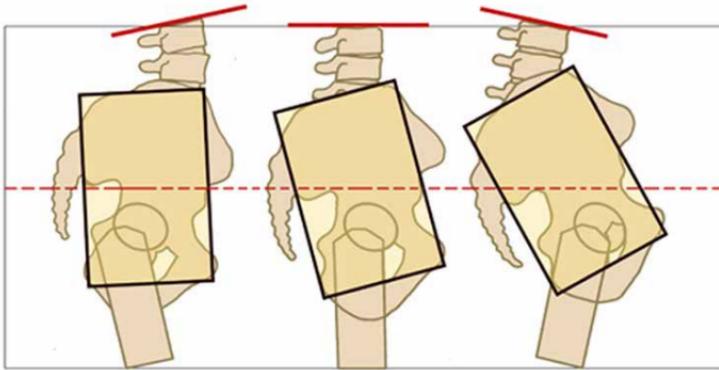


Learning to take the thighs back and the pelvis into its correct position allows our ligaments to align properly and shrink back to their natural tension. This will make standing and walking with the pelvis in the correct position much much easier.

The big muscle at the front of the thigh, the quadriceps, particularly the rectus femoris, joins the ligaments in bearing a great deal of the weight bearing load when we stand like this creating or adding to the hip flexor issues that so many people, are afflicted with.

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Pelvic Positions

Here we are looking at three positions of the pelvis and the affect on the surrounding area. The middle image of these three represents a happy pelvis from my perspective. The pelvis on the right represents a pelvis that is tucked under. This is the default position for most of the human race and I think it is the single largest contributor to back pain. The tucked pelvis flattens the lower back, tightens our butt muscles, and generally jams the joints of the pelvis. The pelvis on the left is rotated too far back brings to great of an arch to the lower back, what we refer to as a lordosis. The pelvis in the middle lives in a neutral postion, neither stuck out back or tucked under. This neutral position allows

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the middle of the lower back to sit directly on top of the femur or leg bone. This is the optimal weight bearing position.

There are three ways you can tell if your pelvis is in the right position.

Stand in old you and feel if your butt is turned on. If it is tilt pelvis forward and let the thighs move under the hips only enough to turn the big butt muscle, gluteus maximus, off. Experiment with tucking and untucking the pelvis until you can feel what I mean by turning the butt on and off. Once you have a feeling for that action rotate the pelvis as little as it takes to shut the butt off completely and feel where your pelvis is positioned. That's one way you can tell if your pelvis is in the right place.

Go back to old you. In my way of thinking the big butt muscle should have a place of its own to live. In old you posture I am guessing that your butt muscle is kind of falling down against the hamstring or the back of the thigh. Rotate your pelvis as little as you can to give the muscle of home of its own in space. That's cue #2.

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The final way to feel the correct position of the pelvis is with kegel exercises. The strength of our pelvic floor is of the utmost importance when it comes to having a balanced core. Kegels are great exercises but as with all exercises when you don't do them correctly they aren't particularly effective or useful. In fact, they can be detrimental. Many women have done their share of kegels and sadly most men have never even heard of them but pelvic floor exercises are key to our core and more importantly they are key to the really important things like remaining continent and aging well.

We feel that teaching the correct way to do or feel these pelvic exercises are also an excellent aid to learning correct posture.

You are going to try and keep your butt out of these exercises as we discussed earlier.

Stand up straight at tuck under more than usual and lift the floor of the pelvis. In this tucked position I hope you will be able to feel that the action of the lifting the pelvic floor stops at the pubic bone at the front of the pelvis. Now stick your butt out too far,

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without hurting yourself, and do the same pelvic lift and this time I think that your sacrum will interrupt the lift. Now, split the difference and find the position of the pelvis where the lift is straight up the central channel with no interference.

I think that this is the correct placement of the pelvis and what you will hopefully note is that this is the same exact position where the butt is relaxed and it has a room of its own.

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Hyperextension Of The Knees

We are going to look at hyperextension of the knees. One of our main themes is that the body is the balance of flexion and extension. Today we are looking at hyperextension. Let's look at my knee for example.

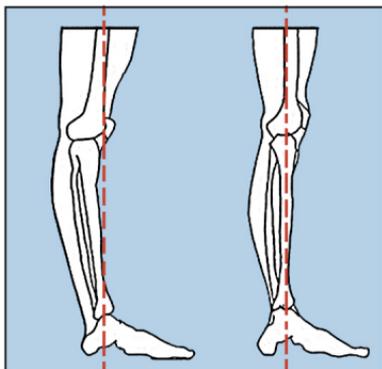


When I am standing I have learned over time to know that this is a straight leg. But where do I want to go? That is a hyperextended leg. What I seem to



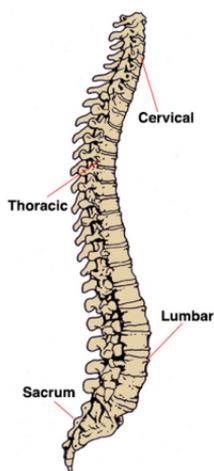
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know that it is in hyperextension is that the ankle and shin should form a right angle



Anytime the lower leg moves past its normal range of motion, the knee in particular, that is called hyperextension. And you should be able to see how weight is not going to transfer nearly as well through a hyperextended leg as it would if the bones of the upper and lower leg were stacked directly on top of one another.

Four Curves Of The Spine



Let's get a sense of how the spine should be ordered. The sacrum curves out; the lumbar spine curves in; the thoracic spine curves out and the cervical spine curves in again.

A key thing to note is that the cervical spine and the lumbar spine are designed to be mirror images of each other with the exact same degree of curve. The upper back rounds backwards slightly and the sacrum rounds backwards slightly as well.

What we are hope to do is learn how to lengthen the spine and minimize the curves in extension as we try to bring balance to the four curves of the spine, especially the lumbar and cervical curves.

There is a very interesting detail in our shift from the lumbar to the thoracic spine. In that shift a major change occurs. The bones of the lumbar spine are large weight bearing bones with little to no rotational ability.

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And there is a slight twist in the shift from the lumbar to the thoracic vertebrae which are smaller and have a great deal of twisting capabilities. This juncture which we refer to as T12 (base of the ribcage) and L1 (top of the lumbar spine), or the thoracolumbar joint is a key spot where I see a great deal of postural collapse in many of my clients.

We are trying to bring adequate space and muscle tone to this area of the spine to facilitate good and proper posture.

LESSON 1 - EXERCISES

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These exercises are designed to bring your body into balance. If a particular muscle is already well aligned you no longer need to strengthen or balance it.

One of my students is a young athlete. When we first started working together it took about four seconds to get one of his core muscles to burn. One year later it took a minute to get that same burn. If he wanted to get stronger he had to go to that place of burn. But for me personally, I don't need to keep getting stronger. I like strong enough.

Again, these exercises are designed to bring the body into balance. If you try an exercise and it seems to be easy, you might choose to focus on one that is harder for you. I will offer a lot of exercises in these videos. You want to do the ones that you need. You might find that you need to do twenty of them to get where you want to go. You might only need three. Everyone is different.

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The Core Four

At the CoreWalking Program it is all about the psoas. And when we talk about the core we refer to the muscles groups that we feel support the psoas. The first four exercises which we refer to as the core four are the most important building blocks for rebuilding the body and creating new movement patterns.

Constructive rest is a psoas release that we put on a pedestal above all other exercises. The other three exercises refer to the muscles groups, inner thighs, pelvic floor, and abdominals that require proper tone in order for the psoas.

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Constructive Rest Position (CRP)

This is the main psoas release that we work with. It is a gravitational release of the psoas that allows the force of gravity to have its way with the contents of the trunk and the deep core.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your heels situated 12 to 16 inches away from your pelvis, in line with your sit bones.
- You can tie a belt around the middle of the thighs. This is a good thing to do, especially if you are weak in the inner thighs. You want to be able to really let go here and not have to think too much about the position of your legs.
- Then do nothing. You want to allow the body to let whatever happens to it come and go. Discomfort arises from conditioned muscular patterns. Try to allow the body to release rather than shift or move when unpleasant sensations arise.

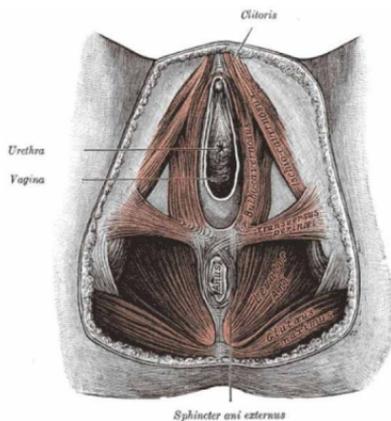
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- You are hoping to feel sensation that is something you can sit with and allow it to pass.
- Try to do this for 15 minutes a day, twice a day—in the morning and at night. If you have time, longer sessions are advisable.

But we are not here to suffer. If sensations come up and you feel that you just have to move, feel free to move, then come back to where you were and try again. It's possible that you'll do this exercise and not feel anything; that is fine also.

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Pelvic Floor/ Kegels



The pelvic floor is a large sling, or hammock, of muscles stretching from side to side across the floor of the pelvis. It is attached to your pubic bone in front, and to the coccyx (the tail end of the spine) in back. Make sure not to use your butt muscles in any of these exercises.

Doing these exercises correctly will help you find the correct placement of the pelvis which is key to all of the work we are trying to do.

When you tone or lift the pelvic floor the energetic quality should be a free lift up the central channel of the spine. If your pelvis is tucked under it is likely that your pubic bone will interrupt or

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stop the lift of the pelvic floor. Likewise, if your pelvis is rotated too far backwards you might feel that the sacrum or the back of the pelvis stops the upward flow of the pelvic floor. You know your pelvis is in the right place if the lift of the pelvic floor goes straight up the front of the spine.

There are three layers to the pelvic floor. You are trying to find the top layer, just slightly above holding in your pee (it can be very subtle).

- Tone your pelvic floor muscles, hold for a count of five. Do in sets of ten.
- Tone and lift your pelvic floor slowly, trying to stop and start as you go up, like an elevator stopping on several floors.
- If that seems easy enough try doing the opposite, lifting the pelvic floor, holding it at the top and lowering it incrementally.
- Practice quick contractions, drawing in the pelvic floor and holding for just one second before releasing the muscles. Do these in a steady manner aiming for a strong contraction each time building up to a count of fifty.

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Feet 3 Inches off the Floor



This exercise works the deep low belly muscle called the transverse abdominus. First, we're going to show how this muscle works and how another abdominal muscle, the rectus abdominus, works as well.

- Lie on your back on your mat. Bend your knees so that your feet are resting on the floor beneath your knees. Bring your hands onto the lower belly. Inhale and exhale. Inhale again and exhale but this time push the exhale at the end and see if you feel that your navel moves down to the spine and the muscle engagement is a feeling that wraps from the back to the front. Let that go.

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- Now lift your head and shoulders and look at your knees. Here you should feel how when you lift the head and look at the knees, the belly pushes up into the fingers. Let the head release.
- The first muscle that we engaged was called the transverse abdominus, a muscle that supports the lower back and wraps from the back to the front. The second muscle we engaged is called the rectus abdominus and connects the pelvis to the ribcage and moves in a direction straight up and down. We're going to try to isolate and engage only the deeper transverse muscle.
- Lift your right foot three inches off the floor and try to stabilize the spine as you lift the left foot three inches to meet it. Did the spine move up and the belly push up? Or did the spine actually stabilize and stay still? Release your feet.
- Starting with the second foot, lift the left foot three inches off the floor and lift the right foot three inches to meet it. Feel if the two sides were different.
- When lifting the feet without any movement in the belly or the spine becomes effortless and you can sustain it easily, bring the feet up to the height of the knees and parallel to the floor.
- When this becomes easy extend your knees forward two or three inches.

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Block Between the Thighs on the Floor



- Lay on your back with the knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- Place a block between your inner thighs. Engaging the inner thigh muscles against the block try to isolate them and use the quadriceps, and outer thighs, as little as possible.
- Don't grip your buttocks.
- Lift the hips up and continue to squeeze the block, drawing the low belly in to stabilize the spine.

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- Make sure you are lifting the hips up with a neutral spine and not by tucking under.
- Hold for a count of 10 breaths. Try to hold longer as you feel stronger. Hold for less if you need to. See if you can build up staying for three minutes.