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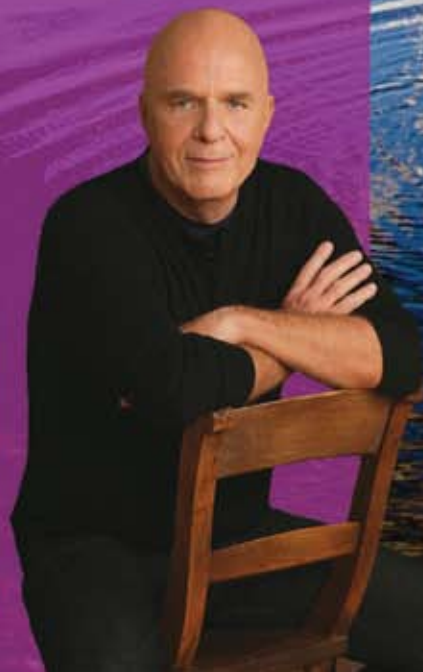
humanity's journey to wellness

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How to Easily Live Pain-Free

by Michaelle Edwards, LMT, ERYT



Did you know that many fitness positions reinforce bad posture and go against our natural curves? Chronic pain is directly related to poor posture; in fact 95 percent of pain is a result of dysfunctional alignment. Many a sore back is blamed on too much time sitting at a desk, but just as harmful are exercises that put our body in right angle positions that simulate the chair shape.

Eliminate physical pain with the right information

With a little bit of awareness, we can avoid distorting our natural shape and instead move with the curves of our body. Two simple tests to determine whether an exercise or yoga pose serves the human design: it should allow the spine to have its natural curves, and it should not cause restricted breathing.

Positions and exercises that distort our natural alignment, creating more pain and joint destabilization:

- Sitting in chairs with poor posture. Spine in a “C” shape with natural curves reversed.
- Toe touching with knees straight from standing or sitting, like the yoga forward bend. Try walking around without bending your knees; it’s like driving with your parking brake on.
- Forced abdominal exercises that direct us to keep the navel drawn in to tighten the six-pack. Chronically tight short abs can inhibit movement and distort posture, breathing, and digestion.
- Positions that create a right angle such as the yoga staff pose, straight leg forward bending, and yoga plow. These are non-functional body positions that can overstretch nerves and ligaments as well as compress spinal discs.
- Cycling, paddling and spinning with your spine in a C shape. Why would you want to strengthen poor posture habits?
- Tucking the tailbone and flattening the lumbar spine to stand up straight or strengthen abdominals. Tuck your tailbone and try running a marathon.

There are no straight lines in nature

The human spine is curved to provide shock absorption, protect our nerves and joints and also allow us to move with fluidity. When we do exercises that flatten our spine, we are over-riding our natural design. Because man likes to build in straight lines and right angles, we have begun to think the body is flat as well.

We have built chairs, but everyone hates to sit for a long time because our trunk is not designed to stay static in a right angle shape, so we fall into a supported slouch. This pushes our head forward, and we strain our upper neck and shoulder muscles to support the weight which culminates in chronic pain, headaches and countless other maladies.

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This right angle position drains our energy as muscles are engaged to perform functions they are not designed to do. Many of us get very dysfunctional upper shoulder breathing habits when we sit or exercise this way.

There is hidden danger in right-angle poses because they reverse our natural spinal curves

Many yoga poses and fitness exercises put us in a similar poor postural alignment, and then we work hard to train our body to hold the abnormal tension of the positions. Yoga and stretching injuries are on the rise because many of the poses go against our natural shape and curves. This leads to abnormal levels of flexibility and joint destabilization especially in the lumbar/sacral region.

The “Six Pack” is highly overrated and can lead to more pain

Popular abdominal exercises are designed to make our belly strong, sexy, and tight. Culture places heavy focus on our outer belly – our “six pack.” Toning the six pack to be flat however can inadvertently create an unnatural shortened tension that brings our breastbone towards our pubic bone and draws our head and shoulders forward in misalignment. Forward head carriage is a national epidemic; a bad posture habit that leads to chronic pain.

To be pain-free, one can use breathing exercises to strengthen the “KEG” or rib cage muscles which has far more functional value.

Good posture is a natural result of doing exercises and poses that simulate your body’s innate curving shape

Good posture is imperative in the daily movements in which we “live” in our bodies. When alignment is not balanced, the whole body suffers from pain, tension and eventually the deterioration of the joints.

To be pain-free, you need to learn to engage your body in natural design, sit with active curved spine engagement, but also make sure that your exercise supports good posture and not good poses. 🙏

Michaëlle Edwards is a licensed massage therapist, yoga teacher, musician, and postural therapist living on Kauai. She invented a new painless way to do Yoga, fitness, self-massage and stretching called YogAlign that incorporates natural spine alignment and breath work to create good posture from the inside out. She is devoted to giving people the tools to heal themselves. Michaëlle’s book/DVD combo called YogAlign – Pain-free Yoga From Your Inner Core is available at her website – YogAlign.com



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