

Topic this week: Cervical Column and Posture

Working with the Cervical Column/Neck is impossible to cover in one class but some highlights were discussed and we will continue to work with this subject in 2017 through a longer workshop which will be offered.

A most important aspect of this subject is to improve and maintain '**good posture**'.

While observing the posture of others as a reminder, think about your '**beacon**' of light at your heart center and its direction according to your posture.

Visualize the **invisible line** running from the crown of your head and being lifted up as your chin gentle releases to neutral (as a fish is reeled in or a marionette manipulates its puppet) creating an elongated and spacious spine with our '**bowling ball of a head**' sitting properly on the Atlas.

Asana #1:

Standing Posture reminder:

Heels (feet hip width apart), buttocks and head on the wall (shoulder blades released into their pockets and down), inhale and reach with the arms overhead (palms facing forward and keeping the shoulder blades down) continue through 6 deep diaphragmatic breaths. Being mindful that you are not reaching the chin upward, view is where the sky meets the ocean.

Difficult to do in the beginning, as the arms will become weary about a breath or two in the posture, don't worry and do often to work up strength.

Possibly difficult for many to place the head on the wall and still keep the chin level, this is often due to forward head syndrome and if still muscular can be improved with self-care.

Asana #2:

Standing/Supported/Wall Squat and Turtle:

Taking only a few minutes to work on posture and breath while building stamina and strengthening.

While you are there at the wall and if you want to also strengthen the thighs then walk the feet forward and slowly slide down the wall, just far enough where you can remain for multiple breaths and work up to 2 minutes. Be mindful of posture and tracking of the knees, also have your toes/at least in view. This is a process of building up stamina through time.

While doing this squat you can also breath through some rounds of Turtle strengthening the neck muscles or just be there and if you must, read a book.

Asana #3: Neck Strengthening and Stamina Building

1. Lie on your back with knees bent and feet close to hips. Place your arms in external shoulder rotation, elbows directly out from shoulders and at right angles (cactus or airplane beginning where you can). Draw your shoulder

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blades together and down toward your pelvis to contract your middle and lower trapezius muscle, think of them slipping into their own pockets lining your back.

2. Exhale and lift your head up, tucking your chin down toward your collarbone. Inhale as you lower your head. Relax all facial and neck muscles completely before you repeat. Repeat the motion gently, stopping when you feel fatigue and shaking. Optimal strength is twelve repetitions.
3. Turn your head to the left. Keeping your arms on the floor, exhale as you lift your head and watch your left elbow. Inhale as you lower your head. Optimal strength is six repetitions. Repeat the motions for your right side.
4. When the optimal level is reached, you may perform the more **complex series**.

Combine the motions, exhaling while lifting your head to center. Keeping your head lifted, rotate to the right, then again to center. Repeat the movement to the left, back to center, and lower slowly while gazing down at your breastbone. Optimum is six slow repetitions with pauses between movements.

Benefits:

This exercise isolates the sternocleidomastoid (SCM) muscles. These muscles rotate the head and flex the neck. They are commonly weak, due to the stress that accumulates in their neighboring muscle, the trapezius.

Variation for Stabilizing Misaligned Vertebrae:

Often, people experience their neck going out of alignment. What is occurring is a strong pull on one side of the vertebral column, accompanied by a relaxation of the antagonist muscles on the opposite side. This can result in a slipping, or subluxation, of the vertebrae from adjacent bones. The motion can be lateral, or elevated and lateral combined. In the former case, the individual may experience their head leaning off to the side. When one is prone, it may be more comfortable to turn the head to one side. In the latter case, the head will be tilted, in addition to being off center.

(We also laid on our bellies prone with arms crossed under the head and lying on one cheek, I didn't say which one it was your choice, after a minute or two then switching to the other side and feeling the difference. We are creatures of habit and usually go to the same side each time but over a long period of time this can create an imbalance in muscles. This is just small example of how our habits create certain situations in the body and our goal is to establish new habits (Samskaras) for better and improved range of motion and health of the body,)

Asana #4:

Test for Weakened Muscles:

Test the lateral rotators by lying supine and lifting your head not more than six inches, then rotating it to test the comparative strength of each side of the neck. The weaker side may tremble when you attempt to hold it still, and/or your chin may lift in an exaggerated fashion. These are signs of a weakness in the sternocleidomastoid on the elevated side of the neck.

Realignment and Stamina Building:

Once the position is achieved, hold your head up while it is turned to the side. Keep your shoulder blades back and down, with your arms at your sides. Hold the position as motionless as possible, while taking full deep breaths extending from your chest to your lower abdomen. After a few moments, muscle stamina will be exhausted and you will need to exert sheer willpower to hold your head up. Once this point is reached, you will likely experience trembling. Begin to take deeper breaths for three rounds, then slowly lower your head to center position, and relax, with full breathing, for several moments. Gently roll your head from side to side 3 times. Retest both neck rotators. The goal is to bring muscle tone into a greater balance on both sides. This is often accompanied by a spontaneous realignment of the vertebral column-without the normal cracking sounds associated with a chiropractic neck adjustment. The improved muscle tone can gently slide the vertebrae back into alignment.

Precaution:

Holding the stamina-building position for an excessive length of time can create trembling or even muscle spasm. Only hold as long as this doesn't occur, and until there is also full deep breathing. When either quality is compromised, relax and lower your head.

Asana #5:

Restorative Savasana with a slight inversion:

Supine, rolled blanket under waist for support and block under buttocks, arms slightly away from body/palms up, legs either bend or straight on mat depending upon how comfortable this is and becomes. Take a few moments to find the correct positioning and do change if it becomes uncomfortable, listen to the body and work up to 10-15 minutes. Precautions would be heart/eye conditions which suggest not to engage in any type of inversion because in this asana the head is lower than the heart.

Music: Deuter: Illumination

Essential Oil: Pep Talk: Peppermint and Sweet Orange

Available oils here in OWV at The Living Temple, a retail shop specializing in products for healthy living, ask for Robin. <http://www.thelivingtemple.com/>

Quote:

It's not the load that breaks us down, it's how we carry it". -Lena Horn

Miscellaneous:

Happy Thanksgiving and don't forget about **your burp!** I know it will come and we will have a tendency to swallow it, just note that this is your stomach telling you it is 3/4 full and that is enough. If you ignore it, the brain will not receive the "enough food" message for 20 minutes and by then you will be stuffed! It is not necessarily healthy to come to the point where you could not eat another bite.

Enjoy, travel safely and looking forward to seeing everyone after the holiday. There will be NO classes in either of my teaching locations during the holiday week.

The Posture Vest, which I spoke about (thank you Judi) is from SpinalQ (Neuroband Tension Level III) by www.alignmed.com located in Santa Ana. See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kd-xrYvGoY0>

It is an expensive version of the strap usage for better posture but it's looks very functional and I was told that MediCare covers the expense if prescribed by an Orthopedic Doctor.

I have no personal experience or review on this product, but just want to pass on the information.

Important Disclaimer

The news, suggestions, information, exercises and other items in this list are intended for informational purposes only. Not all exercise is suitable for everyone. To reduce the risk of injury, please consult your Doctor before engaging in any physical and/or therapeutic exercise program. Nothing is intended to be a substitute for professional medical care.

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