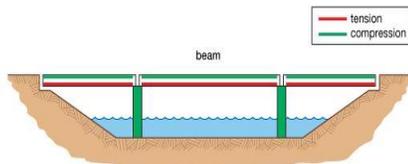




Human Structure & Function: Choices in Approach and Purpose

Alignment or Coordinating-Suspension Model: The Alignment model and the Coordinating-Suspension model are both presented with the best intentions. The premise underlying each model determines how the model is applied in life, in choir. Currently the Alignment model is prevalent because the Coordinating-Suspension model is relatively unknown.



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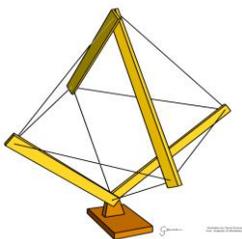
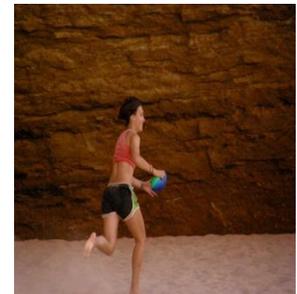


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Alignment Model • The basic premise of alignment is that consciously aligning our body helps singing and many other functions. We do something with our body to get ready to sing like standing straight and tall. The instructor says: stand with feet shoulder width apart, head tall, shoulders loose. The students attempt to do the instructions, even if they feel uncomfortable. Power is with instructor. While not explicitly stated, the strategy of this approach is to consciously manipulate our body to improve it.

Coordinating-Suspension System Model • The premise of the Coordinating-Suspension model is the system is already perfectly designed to sing. Consciously you can create the conditions that allow the suspension to work without interference, but you can't put your body in suspension. The activation of our suspension is the property of our other-than-conscious processes. The Coordinating-Suspension System model gives a framework to ignite healthy stature without the rigidity and struggle of the alignment model. It is so simple; at first it doesn't seem like enough. But when you teach closer to how things work many issues just fall away. What you can explore and teach is:



- The basic principles of human design.
- Ways to determine what is and isn't working for you from the information you get from your sensations.
- Ways to more accurately interpret your sensations.
- Ways to set up conditions to allow the system to coordinate action freely, which is the job of the other-than-conscious processes.

If alignment is NOT how we are made, it explains why on one hand 'good posture' is so allusive and a struggle and on the other hand why, when 'good posture' becomes habituated there is often rigidity. The tension required to hold alignment makes all functions harder. It will be harder to breath, move and be expressive when aligned or positioned compared to being in buoyant suspension. When the system is in a coordination that interferes with a function like singing, the Coordinating-Suspension approach looks at why the system would be in that interfering coordination. Change the cause of the postural coordination and the system will come back to healthy homeostasis. The "bad" coordination is a perfect coordination of what the singer is attending to at the moment, whether that is trying to be in a good position to sing or making sure not to make a mistake. **The beauty of this approach is after getting the ground work in place, you spend much less time addressing the body and voice and more time on the music.** (for more information on this see: www.lightnermethod.com/resources.html)



If the Coordinating-Suspension System is a more accurate model for human design than the alignment model, what do I do? Where do I start?

The first place to start is with yourself. When you have explored the two approaches and if you decide the Coordinating-Suspension model is more effective for your purposes then begin to explore the approach with others.

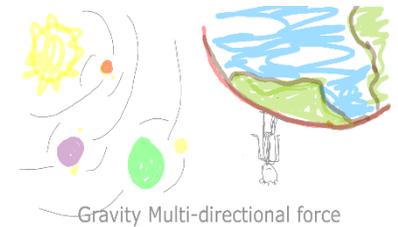
Coordinating-Suspension System Pedagogy • Self-Assessment, Self-Knowledge and Personal Choice:

(Please note that all the questions below can be used for curriculum building and external assessment. You could teach on area a week. Students could write answers out, demonstrate in partners, draw diagrams, and apply to singing?)

Gravity and Suspension Conceptual Basics:

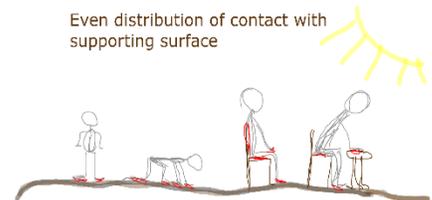
(compare by doing and describing the feeling of a and b in each comparative question below)

- What is the difference between thinking of yourself:
 1. a. supported by the planet, the planet coming up to meet you equally to you coming to meet the planet and b. gravity as a downward force against which you have to hold yourself up?
 2. a. sprung in tensegrity and b. aligned?
 3. a. already on the ground and b. needing to ground yourself?



Comparative Self-assessments:

- Can you tell when you are in *even distribution of contact* with the supporting surface (*in support*) and when you are not (*out of support*)? Do this in sitting, standing, crawling.
- Can you tell when you are leaning and not leaning?
- Describe the difference of being *in support* and *out of support* on your torso organization, your singing, your breath flow, the focus of force on different parts of your body.
- Can you tell when you are moving from your joints (hip socket-head to spine joint/A/O joint) or moving from middle of spine (neck, waist)?
- Can you tell when you have full volume of your cylinder/torso or when you are compressing either in the front (slumping) or back (opening front at expense of back).
- Can you tell when your diaphragms are coming together in the front, back or side and when they are parallel?
- Can you tell when you have gained height at expense of freedom of movement/elasticity?
- Can you tell the difference between being shut down/collapsed/unengaged/heavy and stiff/lifted/gripped and free/balanced/buoyant/available/lively?
- Can you tell if you initiated movement from the shoulder or from fingers?
- Can you tell when your attention is *internal* on ideas and thoughts, *external* - out ahead of yourself in what is next or *inclusive* - here in the world as it is, where you are in this moment?
- Describe the difference in your stature in the different locus of attention.





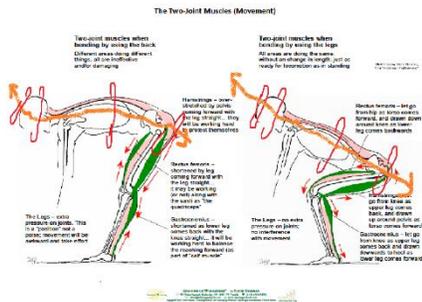
Functional Assessments between 2 or more options: (Use these when you say start to sing or conduct or in a comparison activity.)

- Can I move in any direction easily?
- Am I more or less mobile?
- Do I feel more or less human?
- Can I throw a ball?
- On a scale of 1 to Joy which is more joyful? (The Moir Joy Scale)

What questions can you ask yourself or others to help develop understanding of how the system is designed to move and functioning fully. How it is already designed to sing/conduct?

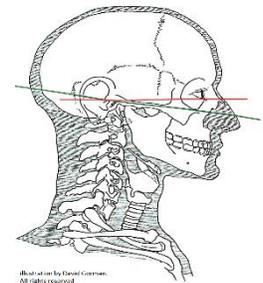
Body Mapping - know thyself:

- Explore the Horizontal dimension of torso - diaphragms: pelvic floor, thoracic diaphragm, vocal folds, base of brain, crown of head.
- Understand the elastic nature of spine and torso.
- Understand the sequential nature of movement, particularly related to arm-structure
- Understand bending and how it is an action of counter balance and movement of thigh is back from lower leg.



Locate:

- Hip-socket-nearer pelvic floor than waist.
- Sitbones
- Joint for head on spine joint (atlanto-occipital joint/A/O joint) between ears, behind nose, near roof of mouth.
- Legs versus torso
- Joints for the arm including the sternoclavicular joint, (where collar bone meets your sternum)



An Interlude for Beauty • The Virtuous Cycle

Fundamentally this work is about developing your own authority in understanding how you work. The key to this kind of empowerment is gaining the information to help you determine for yourself what does and doesn't work for you. This is different than focusing on trying to get someone else's perspective, right. Instead of trying to be generically 'right' you are being right for you in a particular moment and particular circumstance. Right for yourself by your criteria as determined by your task at the moment.

The beauty is that embedded in the Coordinating Suspension model pedagogy are tools for self-knowledge, clarity, consequences of choices, the experience of the brilliance of the system, a personal compass or value register. As your student learns to detect balance and strain she also learns the foundation of compassionate empowerment. To make artistic choices she has to have access to her own compass. The process creates a virtuous circle where learning about stature and function ignites the roots for well-being and creativity, the foundation for healthy skill development. There is curriculum in this. You can assess outcomes to satisfy school systems. **You are also much less likely to do harm since the student stays in charge of her own body.**



Some help to Set-up Coordinating Pre-sprung Elastic Suspension System Explorations

Moving from one paradigm to another often demands new language. Naming the subject area in curriculum can pose a problem. If it isn't posture, what can you call it? Here some possibilities: Stature or Structure and Singing or The Suspension System. Verbally articulating the topic can be a hurdle too. The words just aren't on our lips. This first sentence to say "Today we are going to look at _____" can stump people when the old framework was "Today we are going to look at posture or alignment." Here are a few alternative suggestions to finish the topic sentence that starts: "Today we are going to look at:

- Your structure or your architecture."
- What is useful to understand about yourself to sing easily."
- Your elastic suspension system."

Topic	Result	Implied POV	Descriptors - words
Posture Alignment Stature Stance Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tends to result in fixed positions, limits flexibility, tends to create self-judgement. •Can actually injure your student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Belief implied in this is you can consciously position or direct your body into an optimum organization and it will stay there. •The goal is some kind of good body use. That is considered good. 	Tall, straight, string on head, grounded, lengthen, and words like: keep, or any words suggesting some 'position' to remember or right place to be in.
Stature Architecture/structure What is useful to understand about how you work to sing. Coordinating Suspension system Poise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tend to result in greater understanding of self. •Choice remains with individual based on sensory information. •Less likely to cause injury, more like to feel empowered and truly flexible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Implied belief is that stature is property of the other-than-conscious system. •Accurately interpreting sensations, clear mapping and remaining fully responsive is the goal to support making art. 	Buoyant, available, mobile, lively, springy, free, can you move in every direction? Lots of comparisons to ignite sensations – am I more or less strained? Am I on or off support? Earth comes up to support me – already on the ground. Voluminous torso, full volume, cylinder or torso, Relationship of diaphragms



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Being clear for yourself of your purpose is important step in setting up a learning process. Is your purpose:

1. To get everyone in the “right” or “good’ position to sing? (Right or good for whom? By what criteria? Putting you in charge of another’s body.)
2. To set up a situation so your students can learn about how they work and have the information they need to choose for themselves how they want to be in the world. (Empowering them. Developing their own criteria from which to assess – they become cooperative collaborators rather than obedient collaborators).

Framework and language of the two models. Top is Alignment model. Bottom is Suspension Model.