



Balance and Support and The Nature of Our System

WHAT IS BALANCE?

LEANING EXPLORATION: The purpose of this exploration is to demonstrate several key properties of how your system is designed as related to balance and support.

1. Come to standing.
2. While looking around the room can you tell if you are standing more on any part of your feet: more forward, back, more on one foot or another? If you can what area is it? (If you cannot, that is not a problem. We'll keep going).
3. Now purposely lean a little bit forward, not so much that you are off your heels.
 - Why aren't I falling over?
 - Where do I notice the activity in my body that keeps me from falling?
 - Describe it?
 - How much of my body do I feel is involved?
 - What would happen if I let go of the holding/tensions I feel?
4. Lean back and ask the same set of questions as above.
5. Come to standing where you aren't leaning in any direction.
6. Come to roughly an even distribution of contact with the floor.
 - Another way to say this is to come into the center of your support. (Center of Support is the concept; Even distribution of contact is the experience of the concept. These are useful phrases to have and understand).
 - The ground is the supporting surface. You, through the contact with your feet, are over the center of that support.
 - Is the activation of muscles the same when you are in the center of support as when you were leaning?
 - What is different?
 - Why is there a difference?

One exploration can be used to show many different things depending on what is your focus. Below are a few examples from the leaning exploration.

1: When you were leaning you didn't fall over?

The significance of the experience or What the experience shows you:

- Your system automatically activated exactly the response you needed to lean and not fall over. The key here is automatically. You didn't have to say, "Calf muscles hold." This simple activity demonstrates how naturally and automatically your whole system responds to your intentions both explicit (I want to lean) and implicit (I don't want to get hurt). Your system works as one whole web. It is a coordinating system.

2: When you are leaning you feel more tension than when you aren't. People describe the former as effortful and the latter as effortless.

Significance or What the experience shows you:



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- Many people confuse the sensation of effortless with less muscle work. They interpret the easy sensation by saying, “When I’m balanced I’m more relaxed.” This is an inaccurate interpretation of the sensation.
- When you are in balance there is much muscular activity but it is distributed throughout your system. Whereas when you are off balance fewer muscles do more work, effort. It is the difference between having 10 people moving 50 chairs and 1 person doing the same job.
- Efficient movement feels effortless, empty, light, floaty. There is activation it just isn’t designed to grab your attention.
- It is like a smoke alarm. If you felt a lot of sensation when you are functioning well it would be like having a smoke alarm go off to tell you there isn’t smoke in the room. Our system gives us signals of strain to get our attention.
- We can go a long way toward functioning well if we learned to hear them and not assume that is just the sensation of life.

SENSATIONS AS SIGNAL • AWAKENING AWARENESS

Misinterpreting sensation:

- The experience of the difference in effort when you are “on and off support” (not leaning/leaning) also shows you that your system has built right into it a means to signal you about what you are up to. The feeling of tension when you are off the center of support IS this signal telling you that you are off balance. **The key for you is to accurately interpret the meaning of the signal.**

Habituated misinterpretation:

- The interpretation of sensations/feelings/experiences is the area in which many of us get into trouble because we often ignore the signal or misinterpret it. The sensation of tension of the leaning for someone who has habituated a lean into his upright stature is sometimes interpreted as the feeling of standing up and that leads to an idea that standing is hard work. In this way a misinterpreted signal (feeling) can lead to a cascade of misconceptions about oneself and the world. **Learning to accurately interpret the ongoing flood of signals you are receiving is one of the core purposes of this work**

Awakening awareness:

- This kind of comparative exploration and **articulation of the significance of an experience (this latter step is often left out in teaching)** is key to bringing to your consciousness the details of experience your system may have previously designated as unimportant. Since you can’t be aware of everything in a particular moment your system has to prioritize what is and isn’t useful to bring to your attention. If something seems unimportant then it is easily ignored and not even registered by you. When you see “Oh that familiar feeling of strain is a sign I am moving in a way that may lead to pain” your system begins to bring it to your attention. In this way a previously ignored sensation gains significance to your system and you have a key tool for changing an interfering habit. More about this in the “Hot Cup Theory” of changing habits article.

THE NATURE OF THE SYSTEM

The purpose of these explorations is NOT to show you how to move in some “right” way. The purpose is to show you about the nature of your system so you can register, understand and respond to your experiences. If you



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take this information and simply try to stay in the center of support all the time you'll miss the point and easily go off into a whole realm of misinformation, corrections and side tracks.

It is important to go off support lots!

The key is that you recognize the sense of strain: "Amazing, I feel the strain. It is perfectly telling me I'm out ahead of myself."

Once you recognize the sensation then you can do with it what you will.

- A. You don't have to go around trying to be right to avoid injury or move optimally.
- B. All you have to do is be curious and awake to the meaning of the signals with which you are constantly being flooded.
- A. You don't have to be aware of your body or movement.
- B. You can just go about what you are doing how you are doing it.

You'll begin to notice that strain signals just arrive and wake you up. This happens as long as you periodically register that this signal has significance.

It is certainly true that one way of operating is less efficient and can cause damage and pain. The other way is generally efficient and prevents injury. The point isn't to try to operate one way and not another. That approach usually leads to endless correcting and not being ok where you are. This work offers another possible strategy which is to see that both ways happen for good reason. You have choice as long as you begin to investigate what your sensations are telling you. The "good" thing will do itself when you become alert to what is