The Lightner Method™
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Thriving/Surviving a desk job or Desk Job Tips – Full Article

The adjustable work area:

- **Sit, Perch and Stand •** Be able to switch orientation between sitting, perching and standing with ease. Sit on a chair or ball or other support. Perch on a stool. Stand. Get chairs and stools that fit you. Many people find it feels better to have a chair high enough so that the knees are lower than hips. You decide what works for you. I use an air cushion on my chair.

Adjust the following to accommodate your changing orientations to the work area. Adjust to where you feel easy, comfortable, free:

- **Line of Sight** • Be able to move what you are looking at so your line of sight is easy and comfortable in all 3 orientations. (Check you vision-many people have neck and head aches because they are straining to see. Get the right glasses, put screen at distance that lets you see without strain and adjust font size)
- **Orientation of your hands •** Be able to move the surface on which you use your hands, like the key board or desk top, in all 3 orientations. Generally, you'll be more comfortable if your hands are lower than elbows – but you need to figure out what feels good to you.
- **Freedom of movement/support •** Be able to move freely on the supporting surface whether it is a chair, stool or the ground. This means being able to stand up easily and moving on the chair. I call this the first joint – the joint between you and the planet, you and the chair. Be able to slide and turn on the chair rather than at your waist.
- **Set-up situations that force movement •** Put your water across the room, have your files behind you or your phone far away. GET UP OFTEN!

There is no perfect or right ergonomic set-up. Change things up. Move. Recollect some other tasks you do that don't cause strain and use same principles for your desk work.

Check out this informative and interesting book: The Chair- Rethinking Culture, Body, and Design by Galen Cranz

Your Body:

When sitting, perching or standing being able to tell when you are balanced and freely mobile at your joints. When you are in balanced relationship with the support and have spring in your torso, allowing all the joints to move easily, the system is: more comfortable and easy, forces are distributed, there is movement so the discs of the spine are nourished and mental activity stays energized. Here are some principles to know about your body so that you have the information to allow yourself to adjust with ease:

Center of Support • Can you clearly identify when you are in the center of support? This is the same as being able to tell if you are in even-distribution-of-contact with the supporting surfaces in any given orientation. Possible contact points in **seating**: feet with floor, sit-bone/thighs with chair seat, possibly your back with back of chair. **perching**: feet with floor, sit-bones/back of upper thighs with stool seat. **Standing**: feet with floor.
(For a fuller explanation and exercises about the principle of center of support see The Lightner Method – resources page and the article on balance and support and exploratorium.)

Moving at Joints or 3 Useful Physical Landmarks:

1. **Hip-joints/sit-bones or what is my bottom?** – To be able to move freely at your hip-joints contact the seat of the chair with your sit-bone area or the actual bottom of your pelvis, (like horseback riding). This is much further forward than most people think. In sitting lean forward and put your hands under you where you think the top your thighs are. Push up in that area until you feel the big pointy bones of your pelvis, we call sit-bones. Keeping one hand on a sit-bone, put the other hand on you lowest back, the sacrum area. Take a moment to feel the difference between what faces down, bottom of you/sit-bones and what faces back/back of you-sacrum. Many chairs tend to slump people back on to their lower sacrum. This is sitting on your back not the bottom of you. Compare the difference between 1. contacting the chair with the back of your upper thighs and sit-bones and 2. contacting the chair with your lower sacrum. Notice the effect of each on: the shape of your torso, your ease of mobility, the freedom to move at you hip joints, and your comfort.

2. **Where is my head? or the Atlanto-occipital joint** – To be able to see and orient visually with ease it is helpful to know about the freely mobile joint where your head meets your spine. The joint is called the atlanto-occipital joint. It is much higher and central than most people realize. Put your index fingers on each side of your ears, just above and in front of the ear hole. Imagine a line through your head at that level. Now put one finger on the bridge or you nose and the other on the back of your head at bottom of occiput (bumpy bit at back). Imagine a line through your head at this level. Where these two lines cross is roughly the location of the joint. There are many ways to locate this joint. Another is to point your tongue backward and just behind and above where it can point back is the joint area. It is high and forward – closer to the roof of your mouth than the back of your head. Draw tiny circles with your nose, you can feel the location of the head way up there. Feel the difference when your draw a bigger circle and your neck comes along.

3. **Length and depth of my Torso** – Put one hand on a sit-bone and another at the front of an ear at level of A/O joint. Squish down, arch up and back, wiggle around and then come to gentle ease, not squished or lifted. Take-in the dimension of your length……………….take-in your width and depth, the volume of your torso. Explore rocking forward to work at the computer or tilt when standing and sense the volume of your torso, the tilt of your torso at the sit-bones, the length of your neck and the buoyant nodding of you head at the A/O joint. (If you do Lightner Movement with me this is like the two headed dragon movement in the crawl.)

There is no perfect posture for sitting, there is no one right way to be in your body so you won't hurt. Listen to your sensations, move, change, follow your body not some book or this article:). You may have legs crossed on the chair one moment, then perched on a stool, then hunched over your work….allow change – no right or wrong/ just lively or shut down/ comfortable or strained.

Your Mind, Well-Being or State of Being

The primary determining factor of your comfort at a desk job is your moment by moment state-of-being. You can have the most ergonomic work area and knowledge of your physical structure but if you are in a strained, rushed, frustrated or other negative feeling state than the physical structure will reflect this

state-of-being. *Your body is always in the coordination of your state of being and focus of attention.* This is an important fact to observe. Is this true in your experience?

What is essential in The Lightner Method™ is that this understanding of your experience and your design is NOT ABOUT TRYING TO CONTROL OR MANIPULATE YOUR STATE-OF-BEING! It is about SEEING YOUR STATE OF BEING AS YOUR INTERNAL COMPASS AND LEARNING TO USE IT.
(See Internal Compass – Patterns of Joy Article)

Do you ever experience:
- Too much to do in the time allocated
- Co-workers not doing work the way you hope – frustration
- Communication snarls – frustration to anger to depression
- Not understanding, trying to problem solve, learning – can lead to narrowed attention and efforting

The scope of this article cannot unravel these and other common workplace factors that cause physical discomfort. (A LearningMethods™ class or sessions can.) But here are a few ideas of ways to use your state-of-being to make productive and enjoyable change.

1. **Recognize that your state-of-being is useful information**, even if it feels negative and all you want to do is change it.
2. **Take a moment to feel the sensations of your feeling**: like all crunched up, tight jaw, tension and short breath. This speeds up your ability to wake-up to your state-of-being.
3. **Ask why this makes state makes sense?** What were you just up to? In the above crunched example it might be because you are suddenly struck by something you are reading on the computer. You want something to be different. For example: you wish you understood what was being said or you suddenly realize you don't have enough time to finish this but are trying to anyway. When you find yourself squeezed forward and crunched it is usually when you are narrowing your attention right into the computer screen. It is almost as if you could just climb in there and make the change you want.
   Narrowed attention whether it is into a computer or over into another person is often the coordination of wanting to make change where you can't at the moment. It can be helpful to ask how will this change happen?
4. **Ask a clarifying** question like: How will I learn this? How much time will it take? How will the other person do the task or will they? Are my expectations accurate to the situation? What happens is I adjust my expectation to the reality of the situation versus continuing to wish reality would fit my expectations? If reality is as it is, not pleasant to me, what is a useful strategy to gain my goal? The list of clarifying questions is endless.
5. **Experiment with different strategies and notice the effect of each on your state-of-being.**

As you explore the relationship between your state-of-being and what you are doing or paying attention to you become more facile making useful choices and getting out of ruts of thinking/feeling. The best part is you experience how trust worthy your system is to guide you. Discomfort or "negative" sensations are designed to

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get your attention. They are wake-up calls. They are perfect. Don't cover the symptom by trying to relax, or be present or let go or such. Pause, get clear and your system will change because you changed.

A life changing article about this territory is by David Gorman called [The Rounder We Go, The Stucker We Get.](#)

Happy exploring!