

EUROPE'S LEADING YOGA MAGAZINE

APRIL 2002

£2.50

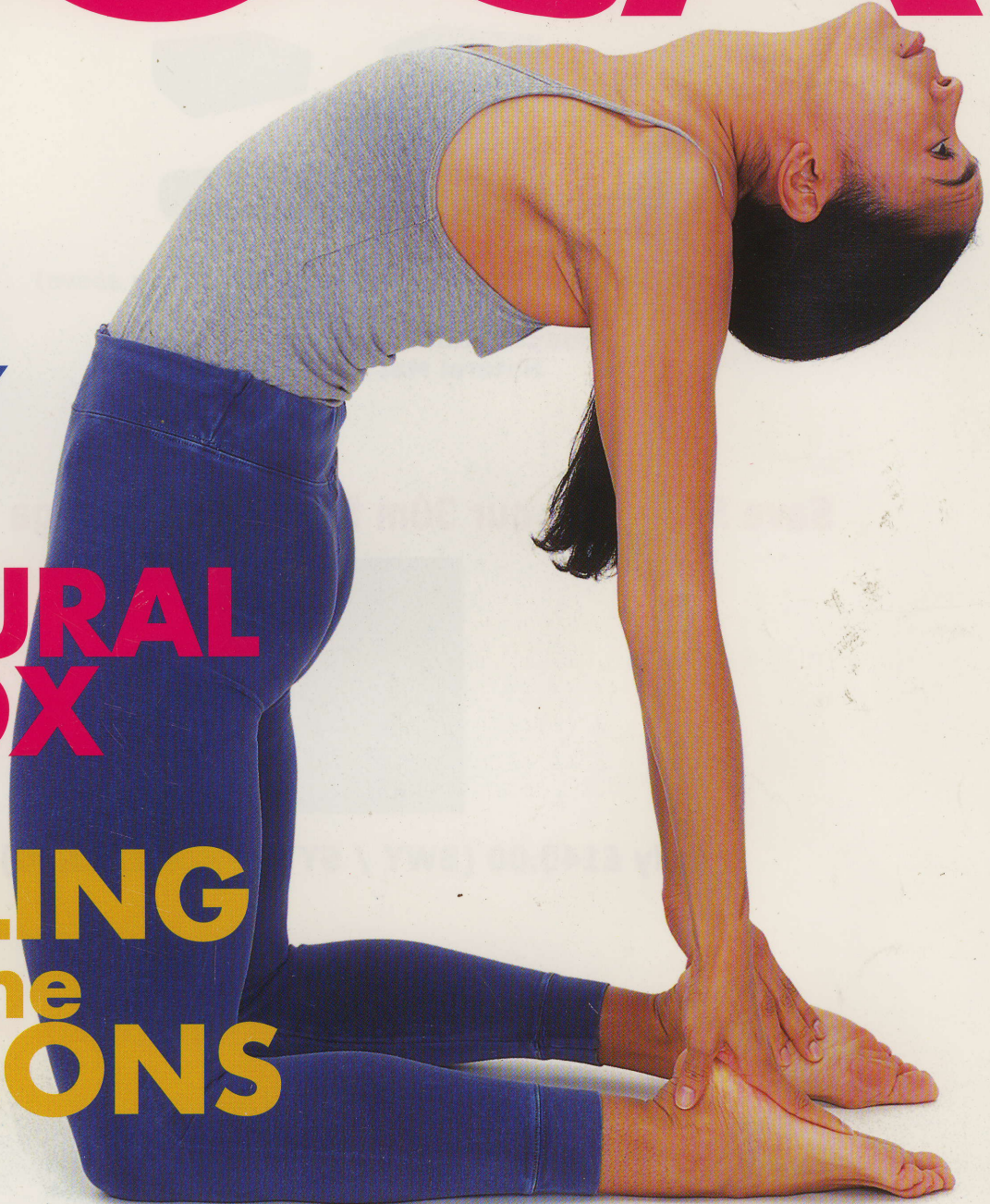
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ISSN 0953-2161



THE GENTLE APPROACH TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

How to help children develop core awareness and avoid chronic pain

By Liz Koch



Everyone knows that mother's milk is the best food for an infant and that children grow when given love and attention. Emotions blossom in direct proportion to self-esteem and curious minds expand when provided stimulation. But what helps nourish a child's physical awareness? How can we best facilitate a strong healthy kinesthetic maturity that results in an adult life free of somatic pain and tension? With over 65% of people statistically expected to have hip socket problems, what can we do for our children to change our cultural patterns of dis-ease? Is it possible to prevent chronic problems like neck and lower back pain, TMJ, hip and knee problems?

The answer is YES! There are decisions and choices made throughout a child's formative years that impact the rest of his or her life. Whether it is in choosing an infant carrier, a baby's first shoe or a child's trike you can support a child's developing somatic awareness.

Here are 7 simple ways to keep a child growing a lifetime of good posture.

1 Holding

The best place for a young infant is to be held in the arms. The growth of somatic awareness and ultimately a mature kinesthetic body is based on our relationship with the earth's



electromagnetic field. A relationship with gravity begins as soon as we are born and continues throughout our life. Aligning with the force of gravity and experiencing it as an ally, not an enemy helps insure a child's somatic potential will flourish.

Physical contact not only comforts a baby emotionally; it roots them in their physical core. Your body awareness directly translates into a baby's energy field. The more grounded, centred and rooted within your own core, the more your infant will sense a direct contact with the earth. Offer your baby somatic support by developing your own core awareness. Yoga, movement and bodywork are great ways to get in touch

with your kinesthetic centre. Use a baby wrap designed to tie your infant directly on to your body. Traditional wraps are preferable to bag type carriers where the baby hangs off your chest. Wrapping a baby directly on to your body transfers their weight through your skeletal core into the earth.

Avoid plastic carriers. When physically attached, a baby senses your every breath and movement. The beating of your heart, organ functioning and sway of your body stimulates and massages an infant, keeping them in contact with the rhythm of life. Bodies are responsive, hard plastic is not. Offering no give and take, plastic carriers impose a shape on an infant's growing skeletal, muscular and neurological systems. If you choose to use one, limit the time and better still use a resilient cloth style that moves and gently bounces as baby squirms. When using a car seat, take your baby out once you have reached your destination and hold them rather than transport them from one place to another in the car seat. By taking the time to transfer the baby from a car seat to a baby wrap, you slow down and discover a more life-affirming rhythm for yourself and your child.

2 Sitting

The pelvis is the keystone of good posture. Providing support for pelvic integrity entails distributing weight evenly by sitting on a flat surface.

Proper positioning of the pelvis calls for sitting in front of the sitting bones (tuberosities) and only happens if the baby can sense his or her bones in contact with a solid support. Bulky or uneven padding from diapers and blankets frustrate and curtail the neurological impulses necessary for finding skeletal support. The sensation of spinal support is in direct proportion to a sense of weight passing through the bones. Like a ball bouncing, weight falls towards the earth and moves back up when it has made contact with a firm surface. So too, our body organises and aligns itself when our weight transfers through the bones towards earth's centre.

Avoid bucket seats and uneven or very soft surfaces. Provide a smooth, flat surface for



baby to sit on: a carpeted or wood floor and a highchair with a flat seat. And remember, young toddlers need their own chair - one that has a flat seat, and a leg height where both feet can sit flat and in contact with the floor.



3 Crawling

The ability for the body to correct itself in space is dependent upon the development of the proprioceptive system. A self-corrective system, the proprioceptive receptors are located in the joints and are stimulated by skeletal weight. Movement stimulates nerve growth. Crawling is essential for neurological development and an important step in the maturation of the proprioceptive system. Crawling provides stimulation to the 4 ball and socket joints so vital for all rotational movement. Only within the ball and socket joints can a baby experience moving in each gravitational plane. When a child does not crawl or their crawling is stifled, somatic awareness in the hip sockets is curtailed. Slipped, herniated discs and lower back pain are common problems associated with tight and dysfunctional hip sockets. When rotational movement is not taking place in the ball and socket joint, substitution will be initiated in the lower back and/or in the knee. A hinge joint, the knee like a door simply opens and closes. Unlike the ball and socket joint capable of a 160-degree rotation the knee and the lower back do not handle torsion.

Provide a safe space and the time for crawling. Offer the opportunity to crawl without diapers. If a child is precocious and prefers standing to crawling, let the baby know you enjoy and value his world - get on the floor with him. Along with having fun, playing hide and seek and crawling games crawling after your baby offers you an opportunity to continue developing your hip sockets.

Avoid jumpers, walkers, and playpens. Confining a child's movements encourages them to move erect for continued stimulation. Being upright neglects not only the need to move horizontally in space, it improperly engages the core muscle of the body, the ilio-psoas. When a baby is standing on bones that are not fully developed or weight bearing they must engage the ilio-psoas muscle for skeletal support. Engaging the core muscle as a structural support

prevents the muscle from functioning properly. Lost is a supple muscular shelf flowing through the abdominal core. The ilio-psoas best functions as a muscle supporting and massaging the internal organs and spine with every walking step. Using the ilio-psoas as a structural support, a child unknowingly begins to limit their range of motion. Over time, lack of movement may shorten the muscle and eventually curtail hip socket mobility.

Jumpers, in particular, create structural problems. Not only do jumpers prevent proper neurological development, they over-develop the femur which may contribute to pelvic hip socket dysfunction. The largest bone in the body, the femur (upper leg bone), develops in response to weight bearing movements. Putting an infant in a jumper prematurely, stimulates bone growth along the femur shaft. Over-stimulating bone growth over-develops the head of the femur, which must fit into the pelvic bowl socket perfectly for proper rotation.

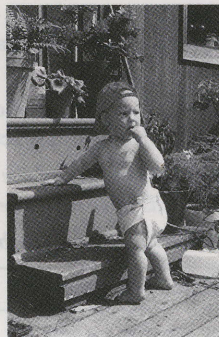
The pelvic girdle is central to the complex neurological communication that transfers weight from the spine into each leg and foot. Because organisational righting reflexes are located in the pelvic girdle, disruption between core and leg will disturb the body's natural ability to organise itself in space. This disruption leads to unnecessary muscular tension and muscular compensations that make for awkward unco-ordinated movements. Any instability in the pelvis will result in a loss of skeletal articulation. When the pelvis is not somatically separate from the leg (due to a faulty ball and socket joint articulation), jaw (TMJ) and skull problems, as well as various skeletal curvatures, may manifest. Postural organisation is dependent upon a balanced stable and well functioning pelvis and a centred articulated pelvic/leg joint.

4 Walking

When a young child is ready to walk, they stand up unassisted. Assisted walking is not a sign of maturity, it is a sign of rushing a child's natural somatic development. Avoid premature walking by taking the time to play with your child

on the floor. Do not hold their arms over their head to support them in walking. This pulls the centre of gravity up and out of their belly core. It does not provide them with the essential sensation of falling and catching so crucial to a well functioning ilio-psoas muscle and proper proprioceptive development.

Pay attention to your choice of shoes. Shoes play an important role in defining how a child can walk. The proprioceptive



receptors are located in every joint of the body. The foot with 28 bones has a wealth of nerve receptors responsible for organising and orientating a child in space. Allowing the whole foot to roll, stimulates these receptors informing the body to right itself in space. In other words, a child need not learn to stand up straight through muscular control, rather the body in contact with earth's forces knows instinctively how to organise and rights itself. Faulty posture exposes conditioning, imposition and interference with the body's natural righting ability.

Choose a shoe that bends in half, is soft and very flexible, just enough to protect the foot from uncomfortable temperatures and sharp objects. Once a child is running and playing, continue to choose a flexible shoe. Bend the shoe in half to discover how flexible it is. Turn the shoe over and see if the bottom of the shoe has a neutral bottom and whether or not it defines the foot. Choose as neutral a shoe as you can find rather than one that is shaped to control how the foot can pattern. Choose a neutral or slightly positive heel. Negative heels control where the weight will pass into the earth. When a child is put into a negative heel they must rely on their ilio-psoas muscle instead of their skeletal bones for support. Walking as a falling and catching motion gets lost. A motion that matures into a pendulum motion as the supple ilio-psoas muscle swings through the belly core is the ideal.

5 Body awareness



Enhance and awaken an infant and child's hip sockets with somatic play. From 3-6 months on, while changing a baby's diapers, gently wiggle their legs. Doing so releases their ilio-psoas muscle and awakens their belly core. Acupressure, no force chiropractics, myofascial massage, cranial sacral all offer modalities for enhancing our internal experience. Enjoy massaging your baby.

When a child is experiencing a difficulty, it is possible to witness it within the body. Every action needs support to grow. Before higher intuitive centres can open, a child needs to be centred within their own body core. The more they trust the information that is available in their physical core, the more assured they are that life on earth is worthy of their trust. Ask them what they sense. Rather than tell them they are cold, hot, tired,

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hungry ask more sensorial questions. Encourage them to be aware of their sensation and listen to their feedback.

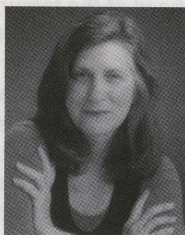
6 Trikes & bikes equipment:

Choose toys that are designed to support skeletal a child's growing body. It will go a long way in helping the body to grow strong and straight. Adjusting the seat on a trike so that your child's hip sockets are slightly higher than their knee, keeps the hip socket open. The same applies to the handlebars. The idea is to sit on a trike in front of the sitting bones within easy reach of the handlebars. Choosing the right size bike allows the leg to go through a full muscular extension and flexion movement that keeps muscular growth in balance.

7 Nourishment

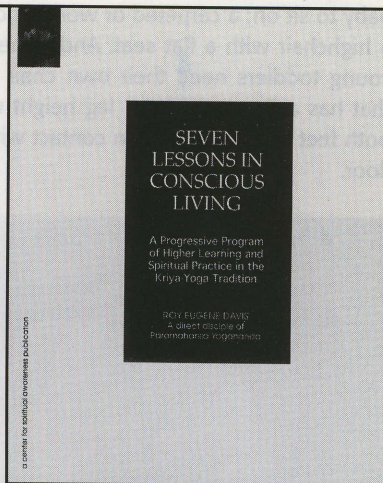
To keep a child's body growing strong and flexible, feed them seasonal, locally grown, whole organic foods. Avoid processed, de-natured products. Protein is vital to bone growth and so are enzymes. Refined sugars and flours rob the body of enzymes. Seaweeds, Celtic salt, bone broth soups and enzyme rich foods (naturally fermented foods) all help nourish strong bones and blood.

Liz Koch is the author of 'The Psoas Book' a comprehensive guide to the ilio-psoas muscle and its profound influence on the body/mind/emotions. Her book is available on line at www.guineapigpub.com. Liz has over 25 years experience teaching workshops on the ilio-psoas complex. She will be conducting two workshops in the UK in June 2002. For more information please contact her at liz@coreawareness.com. Or write @ of Guinea Pig Publications PO Box 1226 Felton CA 95018 or telephone 0141 884 1811.



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May 13th - 16th	LONDON RETREAT. Contact Ian Stuart, tel. 0208 455 4084, stuartian@talk21.com .
May 17th - 19th	CAMBRIDGE. Contact Dan and Amy Ellis, tel. 01223 354 310, dan@pod51.demon.co.uk .
May 24th - 26th	MANCHESTER. Contact Ken Morgan, tel. 0161 226 7519, ken@yogaforanybody.evesham.net .

"Don't propagate your faith asserting that it is the best and the last word. Find out if your faith can reduce conflict in yourself, in your family, in your society, in your country and also among nations. Don't convert your faith into a fetter, make it an instrument of freedom." (Shibendu Lahiri).

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