

WILD PSOAS



Eco-Messenger for Thriving

By Liz Koch

Shaped by personal, social, and global flows of information, the psoas responds to not only stress signals but also impulses that stir our hearts and resonate deep within our bones. By having respect and support for our biological intelligence, the psoas emerges as a messenger that reveals deeply moving stories about compromise and sourcing as well as depletion and nourishment.

Recognizing the wild psoas as an eco-messenger for not only survival but also thriving offers the opportunity to be in collaboration with an ever-fluctuating process of expression deep within our own core. Doing so challenges the status quo, requiring dogmatic beliefs to be dissolved and inviting our story of body to undergo transformation.

CORE INTEGRITY

I explore psoas and core integrity very differently than most people in the health and wellness field, as most professionals have been taught biomechanical approaches to improve function and/or to remedy injuries. The biomechanical approach, however, does not address the fundamental aspects of an expressive psoas, which are vital for thriving as human organisms. Mechanistic forms of exercise, for example, which focus on imitating and cueing to stabilize and control the core, will disrupt biological expression.

In contrast, employing a biomorphic approach recognizes and works with biological explorations that enhance and support our core expression. The results are not intended to be cathartic but to improve overall function,

movement, and health. Turning toward, rather than overriding, our internal sensory system allows our innate intelligence to dissolve strictures, change processes, and innovate new ways of being. This process frees our attention to move from a narrow focus to a wide field of receptivity.

BIOMORPHIC EXPRESSION

Exploring biomorphic expression is a process of attuning our self to a different mode of perception. Rather than focusing on accomplishment it requires fostering a softening of control. Both personal and universal, biomorphic movements share similarity in form and gesture. The curling of a leaf, caterpillar, spine, rivulet, embryo, horn, pinecone, hair follicle, and galaxy reveal expressions shared by all living processes. These biomorphic expressions are found throughout nature in diverse species and within every micro or macro scale of the universe and are synonymous with the expressions of living water. Playful and delicious, water is life's hidden creative force. Sensed as undulations and spirals echoing through our living tissue, all life is touched by the planetary rhythms of vibrating water.

DYNAMIC CORE

When perceived through an embryological and biomorphic paradigm, our spine is no longer perceived as a column; rather it is the nexus of our being, the source from which all aspects of *self* flow—a life-shaping central channel of fluid embodiment. Whether referred to as a channel, midline, primitive streak, notochord, or central nervous system, the spine has oceanic and cosmic origins.

Envisioning our dynamic core as a living, fluid, and expressive channel takes us back over 3,000 years to a system of health that mirrors rivers of flowing energy. Orbiting through the core, two essential channels reflect balance and the complementary flow of polarities referred to as yin and yang. “The duality of these two medial lines joins at the extremities (the head and perineum), forming one complete circle of energetic current.”¹ Within Eastern philosophy, the psoas may well be housed in what is referred to as the governing and conception vessels.² These two opposite but complementary flows connect within the soft palate, through the tongue, to form a harmonious flow creating what is said to be a *microcosmic*

orbit. Rather than a segmented structure, the spine is recognized as a multidimensional life form.

PRIMAL MOVEMENT

Humans are a biologically spine-based organism with all aspects, functions, and expressions emerging from a central channel of intelligence. From one end to the other, all core movement is an expression of wholeness. Like a fish, or for that matter a caterpillar, our head to our tail moves as one. Stabilizing one end of the caterpillar by pressing down your finger only makes the other end of the caterpillar flail. The same is true for the head and pelvis. When one end of the spine is overstabilized (or unstable), the other end will become disorganized. To either end, our psoas messages all core disruptions. By returning the core to its fluid primal origins, compensatory behaviors involving the psoas often find resolution.

Intentionally starting a small-wave motion in either direction will elicit an undulating response all along the midline. Moving toward the direction expressed in our system acknowledges a bio-intelligence that may already be in process. Curling, freezing, and arcing are three primary gestures of safety that appear when threatened. Similar to the curling inward of a caterpillar, curling protects and provides resiliency. If I fall through space, it is my curling spine that helps me survive the fall. Without the curling response, I would splat on the

ground when I landed. When a client comes into my studio and is curling or collapsed, I encourage following this gesture by rolling into a fetal curl, going into a child's pose, or by hanging over a large fitness ball. Doing so provides completion of a biological expression that can support our capacity to self-organize. Whether our core expressions originate in prenatal birth stories, childhood conditioning, or everyday activities, when understood as an intelligent process, these gestures as expressions have the power to resolve and restore our living spine.

FLUID CONNECTIVITY

Bone as living tissue is part of a dynamic neural-network of communication known as proprioception. Floating within a supportive biotensegrity, a dynamic web of tension and integrity, bone provides our sense of orientation and support. Disrupted proprioception is always received and messaged by the psoas. Nurturing proprioception is thus fundamental for aligning with the axis of the earth as well as sustaining a healthy core psoas. Coherency and organization of self is specifically found in the proprioceptors signaling within centered joints. The relationship of one bone to the next is signaled through each joint's neuroreceptors strung together like oceanic pearls in a vibrating song of wholeness.

The oceanic journey of reimagining the fluid midline is not complete without re-envisioning and re-languaging diaphragms. Neither a shelf nor a roof, a diaphragm is pulsating and buoyant tissue. Buoyancy is our

birthright, as foot, pelvis, respiratory, mouth, skull, armpit, and hand all have resilient dome-shaped tissue capable of providing a dynamic support that is not only responsive but also adaptable. Our respiratory diaphragm as a fluid bell-shaped tissue with jellyfish-like movement blossoms in multiple directions, opening up internal spaciousness and volume while simultaneously opening down, to root deep into the belly core. Diaphragms are naturally resilient and rebound with our every movement.

Through fluid connective tissue and vibrating tensegrity, ground reaction force is sensed in our floating bone, supple psoas, and buoyant diaphragms, supporting movement and lifting our spirits. It is therefore the very essence of expression that is key to finding an ever-responsive rebound. A sense of self and integrity that manifests from within the core of our being as a dynamic reciprocal call and response with the earth. Embodiment, therefore, does not require correction but connection.

CORE EMBODIMENT

Our arrival as newborns is a landing on earth felt deep in our bone that continues to shape our flourishing gestures. Like a tuning fork produces a pure tone, the psoas is in resonance with the wisdom of our bone, vibrating the very essence of life and putting a bounce in our step. Bone offers a lightness of being—a call of support



from the living earth. As a core messenger, the psoas always signals skeletal issues such as bone loss, joint dysfunction, proprioceptive interruptions, torn ligaments, and imbalances between pelvis and skull. The psoas also speaks to the exhausted, undeveloped, overwhelmed, and unresilient nervous system. Whether overwhelmed by fear or willfully recruited, the psoas will compensate for injured or lax ligaments, bone deficiencies, and neurological and proprioceptive disruptions.

Attending to the disconnect, imbalance or deficiencies allow the psoas to let down its signal of distress and stop messaging. The psoas reveals the truth about our relationship with the earth; as messenger, the psoas is therefore rarely the problem. When assaults do happen to the psoas, it is from intentional surgical cutting and slashing. The psoas only becomes a problem when torn or indirect damage results from tumors and cysts, scar tissue adhesions, inflammation, or bruising caused by direct palpation.

FLOURISHING PSOAS

Growing out of the *axis mundi*, referred to as the navel of the earth, the psoas emerges through the pelvic

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bowl into the lesser trochanter of the leg appendages. As a diagonal moving pendulum eliciting free swing of the leg, the psoas energetically connects heart to foot. Receptive, supple, fluid, and juicy, our psoas speaks to safety and coherency.

By slowing down, softening, and simply pausing, natural rhythms make their re-appearance, recalibrating our system toward resolution and increasing coherency. In these slow pauses, a trough within a wave provides an opportunity to increase our consciousness. Making sound offers a vibrational resonance that can move tissue, dissolve density, and soften conditioned inhibitors. These nourishing vibrations are carried through wave motion into far-reaching terrains of being, awakening a cellular dance—a gesture of longing and interconductivity. Just as the snake sheds its skin, these cyclical rhythms

are biological expressions that refresh our being and invigorate our awareness of self and other.

Slowing down also affords more presence in a world that inextricably exhibits an array of ecological and global reactions. The psoas as both personal and global speaks to distress calls from our species as well as all other living beings. Staying close to the earth is one of the many ways to maintain co-regulation. In order to educate people about their psoas, my psoas must stay connected to core intelligence—as every psoas knows psoas. No amount of comforting words or hyperbole will do what showing up and holding space can do for the human species.

RE-WILDING PSOAS

Decolonizing our static, mechanistic perspective of body is an important step in regaining biological coherency. It includes not only a cognitive process requiring the re-evaluation of language, assumptions, and intentions, but also a sensory process requiring a shift in our awareness toward subtle impressions that evoke new experiences of self. A curiosity to forage our own physicality is necessary if we wish to develop and mature our somatic awareness and awaken consciousness. Thoughts, after all, are literally shaped by movement. If movements are repetitive, redundant, controlled, or militaristic,



how is it possible for diverse rivulets of perception to meander or new inspirations to spring forth? Ultimately, it is our core intelligence that can support not only the functional psoas but also our curiosity, innovation, and creative play. Play in all its many forms—specifically intuitive, instinctive play—is the creative force that nourishes and strengthens both our inner and internetworking relationships with all life forms.

Directly experiencing our aliveness by way of our somatic sensory system enables a conscious participation in a universal intelligence that dissolves mind/body dualism along with its fixation on reductionist constructs, perceptions, and language. Old terms begin to lose their vitality and fall away while a new language burgeons, blossoms, and thrives. The wild psoas begins to reappear as a different critter than the psoas objectified as muscle. Liminal and orbital, the wild psoas appears as a 360-degree receiver, transmitter, and inner communicator. Embodying the wild psoas is not a task to achieve but an adventure requiring childlike play. Rewilding the psoas—reclaiming what is felt deep inside and bringing it into the world—is not work but a creative expression: a flourishing.

Turning toward direct perception with heartfelt open attention is a powerful way of waking up not only

a dynamic core but also to the fullness of life. Ask yourself what does my heart desire? What do I long for? This can be the beginning of listening in awe to the wilderness within. Our heart, like our wild psoas, is tuned to the rhythms of planetary and universal longing. When we follow the circuitous rhythms of longing, our kind, curious heart is present to each moment of unfolding. There is no blind following or obedience necessary to become whole. No “right” action is required. Wholeness is our birthright; the urging of these profound longings is ultimately an act of becoming as each and every one of us has the potential to bear witness to the fulfillment of our individual and planetary destiny. **m&b**

*Excerpted and adapted from
Stalking Wild Psoas: Embodying
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Notes

1. “Governing and Conception Vessels.”
2. Personal communication with Bob Cooley, 2018, specifying the relationship of the psoas to the governing and conception vessels as understood through the framework of Resistance Flexibility: “The psoas major rarely has accumulated dense fascia and scar tissue but often carries chronic tenseness. Because one of the main balancing muscles for the psoas includes the brain meridian muscle group (MMG): semitendinosus, which almost always has accumulated dense fascia and scar tissue, it is essential to resistance flexibility to train the hamstring to increase its flexibility so that it can shorten sufficiently when stretching the psoas. The psoas also requires the lateral hip girdle muscles—the gall bladder MMG, the IT band, and

gluteus medius—to be resistance-flexibility trained. The sexual MMG—psoas muscles, rectus femoris, etc.—have psychological concomitant with intimacy, self-worth, ecstasy, and good looks, and physiologically with the health of the endocrine system, which highly determines body weight.” Cooley is an international expert on biomechanical flexibility and strength, and its relation to physiological and psychological health. See Bob Cooley, *The Genius of Flexibility: The Smart Way to Stretch and Strengthen Your Body* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005); Bob Cooley, *Resistance Flexibility 1.0: Becoming Flexible in All Ways* (Dublin, OH: Telemachus Press, 2016); The Genius in Flexibility, www.thegeniusofflexibility.com; and Bob Cooley, “Transfiguration of Accumulated Dense Fascia and Scar Tissue (ADFST) by Resistance Flexibility,” Fourth International Fascia Research Congress, Washington, DC, September 18–20, 2015, <http://goo.gl/QJeKFf>.

6 Liz Koch is an international teacher and author with 42 years of experience, focusing on kinesthetic intelligence and somatic awareness for developing human potential. The creator of Core Awareness, Koch is dedicated to educating both laypersons and professionals about the core psoas. She is the author of *The Psoas Book*, *Unraveling Scoliosis CD*, *The Psoas & Back Pain CD*, *Core Awareness: Enhancing Yoga, Pilates, Exercise and Dance*, a contributing author of *Maiden, Mother, Crone: Our Pleasure Play List and Stalking Wild Psoas: Embodying Your Core Intelligence*. Koch is an NCBTMB-approved continuing education provider. Her website www.coreawareness.com offers free podcasts, articles, videos, and online courses.