

Our Peaceful Times

ISSUE #12: FROM PEACEFUL HEALING THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE 860-349-HEAL

Be the change you want to see in the world.

--Mahatma Gandhi



THINKING POSITIVELY ABOUT POSTURE

When most of us think about "good posture", we picture soldiers standing ramrod-straight, backs rigid and arms and legs locked tightly. However, the true meaning of "good posture" is much more flexible than that. Yes, we all need to straighten our spines--we tend to slouch forward most of the time since our work requires us to be looking down and moving our arms in the space roughly level with our waist--but walking around like we have poles for spines is not the healthiest posture for your body either.

Our bodies are moving machines, meant to be in action. Our lifestyle, however, tends to keep us in one position for many long hours with very infrequent breaks to stretch muscles and stir our circulation whether we are at our desks, on the computer, or lying on the couch watching TV or playing video games. Stasis means stagnation for our muscles and circulatory system, which leads to poor muscle, bone, and organ health.

Unhealthy sitting postures are most prevalent. One of the most common happens at work: you tackle a project, and the next thing you know, you are hunched over your desk and your neck hurts from holding your head in this forward-tilted position for the past couple hours. Another instance occurs when you are watching TV sitting upright on the couch and by the end of the show you find your back curved into a "C" because you slid down. Usually, this means your low back hurts because it has been holding your spine steady over the gap which has opened up between your hips and the back of the couch.

Sleeping postures or any other reclining postures can also be hard on our bodies. As described above, we often put unintentional strain on our muscles--most commonly experienced as soreness in our low backs, shoulders, and necks--by not providing the proper support for them.

Repetitive motion is also a part of posture and is a common cause of muscle strain. Repetitive motions can occur while clicking on your computer mouse, weeding the garden, raking the yard, shoveling snow (and we know how much of that everyone had to do this past winter!), or many other similar tasks where you use the same muscles over and over again for a long period of time.

Maintain the best possible posture for your bodies by minimizing the amount of time you spend in one position doing one thing. Take frequent breaks in your work (or relaxation) to get up and walk around, stretch, get a drink of water or a bite to eat, and wiggle your fingers and toes. Even though more awkward at first, oftentimes, you can

switch your hands to give the harder-working hand a break.

You can also provide your body with the proper amount of support it needs to stay healthy. **While sitting** on the couch to watch TV, put a small pillow behind your low back to support it during that inevitable slide. Also scoot your hips against the back of the couch when you find yourself slipping down. **If you are lying down** with your head and upper body elevated, keep your spine properly supported, from your neck all the way to your low back to minimize the amount of unhealthy curvature. We often put pillows directly beneath our skull or pile them in such a way as to leave our necks and sections of our backs unsupported or bent at odd angles. Instead of stacking pillows one directly on top of another, tier them so they overlap and form a gradual incline which will more healthfully support your spine. **While lying on your back**, put a pillow beneath your knees. Doing so minimizes the amount of strain you put on your low back and also prevents your knees from hyper-extending. **If you are lying on your side**, place pillows between your legs, under your upper torso (waist and ribs), and beneath your head and neck (enough to keep your neck as straight as possible). This reduces strain on your hips, low back, shoulders, and neck. The pillow beneath your upper torso also provides space for your shoulder so it is not crushed into an awkward position beneath you. Gently hugging a pillow supports your chest and upper back muscles while sleeping on your side. **When lying on your stomach**, position pillows beneath your abdomen and hips, and your shins. The abdominal pillow supports your low back and the lower leg pillow prevents your knees from hyper-extending.

If you have any questions about healthy posture, please feel free to contact us and we will be more than happy to talk to you!

INSURANCE COVERAGE CLARIFICATION

In our last issue, we listed a couple insurance plans with whom we are listed. However, it came to our attention that these were parent companies and not the companies listed on your insurance cards. If you would like to know if your massage therapy sessions are covered either completely or if you receive a discount off your session fee, please feel free to contact us. Some of the larger insurance companies with whom we are participating providers include Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Cigna, HealthNet, and Connecticare. However, this is by no means a complete list. For more information, please contact our office or talk to your therapist the next time you come into our office.

Peace, Love, Health, and Happiness to all.

Jenn & Jamie