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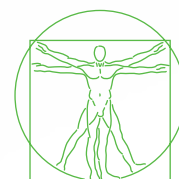
STEPS TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR OWN BODY

BY GARY WARD



AiM

WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER TAKING OWNERSHIP OF MY OWN BODY?



Having a body is something we have taken for granted forever! It's fine when it works well and when it doesn't... well, you probably know the feelings attached to that outcome.

When it works well, we are able to carry on regardless. When it doesn't, we are often stopped in our tracks, learn to push through and simply hope that someone else can put us right.... This sometimes also means that we carry on regardless!

What if your body has a very clever way of reorganising itself to overcome your ails and enable you to get on with your life? What if it is capable of just that? I'm not talking about you; I'm talking about it. It manages you. I know I can sound like a deranged schizophrenic for a moment but take a moment to consider the myriad of actions that are taking place every second to keep your body in balance. In a state of homeostasis. Actions that you are not in control of. Such things as heart beating, lungs breathing, food digestion, hormone creation, temperature control. You aren't "doing" any of these things, it is doing them for you. Sure, you can take over control of your breathing and there are many reasons for doing so and there are many schools of thought around that. Many other things though are simply happening under the radar. I want to talk about our physical body. Your pure musculo-skeletal body. Bones, ligament, cartilage, muscle etc.

I can move my arm to reach for something. I can choose to put one leg in front of the other. I can make the decision to walk to the bus or kick that ball. But are we in control of the minor movements that make up the bigger macro-movements? I, personally, don't think so... In the main we take the whole moving thing for granted, don't we?

When I go for a walk, despite my ability to manage temperature controls in my body and digest food at the same time, I can put one leg in front of the other, but I cannot control how my bones and joints articulate to actually complete a footstep. We have even had arguments (ahem, discussions) in class about what exactly is happening at the hip when you do swing that leg forward.

Like it or not, your walking footstep reverts to a state of learned habit, a learned way of moving that makes the goal of movement successful. Movement is an interesting concept and very difficult to draw the line between the bigger movements we do and the smaller movements that occur to enable the bigger movements to actually take place.

What if it's the quality of the smaller movements that make the bigger movements, not just possible, but efficient, effective and with less strain placed upon the whole system.

What if we could take control of those smaller movements?

Understand them?

Re-educate them?

Take Ownership of them...?

Too long have we been blind about the micro-movement potential within our system and for too long have we lived under the guise that when our body begins to break down that we can hand it over to someone else to fix. More on this later...

Most exercises that we do today can be broken down into a few categories:

- **Push**
- **Pull**
- **Twist**
- **Bend**
- **Lunge**
- **Squat**
- **Walk / run**

This is well known and countless versions and combinations of these movement opportunities have been created over the years for our fitness and wellbeing pursuits.

What is less known is the micro-movements inside each of these macro-movements that contribute to the quality and ease with which we can successfully achieve the action.

This is the movement at the individual joints, each of which have their own unique way of articulating. That is that the knee articulates differently from the ankle, but actually not so unique in that everybody's knee should in fact move in exactly the same way.

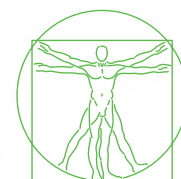
The individual joints of interest are:

- **Foot joints (x33)**
- **Ankle joint**
- **Knee joint**
- **Hip joint**
- **Pelvis (not a joint but an important structure)**
- **Inter-vertebral joints of the lumbar, thoracic and cervical spine**
- **Ribcage (not a joint but an important structure to help us with the spine)**
- **Skull (not a joint but an important structure to help us with the spine)**
- **Shoulder joint and girdle**
- **Elbow joint**
- **Wrist and hand joints**

Would it be of interest to you to know that the postural imbalances you are aware of, the way you walk and move and the discomforts that you might feel come mostly down to limitations of the micro-movements that contribute to your bigger macro-movements?

The macro-movements that we all do on our day to day basis (push, pull, twist etc) are not going to alter or improve our micro-movements. And yet, we can improve our micro-movements with a more focussed approach and intention.

SO WHAT IS TAKING OWNERSHIP OF YOUR OWN BODY?



To take ownership of your own body is to begin to become self-aware of the micro-movement limitations in your own body through a process of self-assessment and education that enables you to become responsible for it.

As long as I have been alive, the advice has always been external to internal. Do this. Heal that. Humans come to develop symptoms and anything that is a step away from the norm of feeling what you perceive to be 100%, anything... we tend to seek external help for. Visit the doctor for advice, a pharmacy, google even and if it's your own body, a physio, an osteopath, a chiropractor or other form of bodyworker.

You continuously hand yourself over to someone else for advice on your health and wellbeing.

When it comes to the human body, it really does come down to a handful of things:

- **What you eat**
- **What you drink**
- **How you sleep**
- **How you think**
- **Lifestyle factors - stress, love**

And I'll add this:

How your body moves

I think personally that this is way, way, way more important than many people give it credit for.

The human body, in particular, musculoskeletal biomechanics is my area to focus on in this area of wellbeing. It's very much misunderstood in my opinion and is an area that is challenging to get the right advice. This should add some level of concern to the idea that if you have a problem, then you are going to look externally for guidance... and yet I am suggesting that it is challenging to get the right advice. I feel sorry for people in general. You know the headlines: cabbage is bad for you. One week later; cabbage is good for you 😊

It's tough out there... and it's no different in the realm of human movement unfortunately.

So I wanted to offer this idea for you, certainly where your body is concerned, that you, being the captain of your own ship, can fully take ownership of your own body. You? Yes... you!

People ask me all the time about the countless syndromes and labels they have been given from their chosen port of external advice:

- I have plantar fasciitis.**
- I have shin splits.**
- I have disc problems**
- I have scoliosis**
- I have dysfunctional hips**
- I have one leg longer than the other**
- I have wear and tear in my (body part)**

Each time my brain immediately goes to what can't be moving or might be moving too much to create the outcome that the person is currently experiencing.

Human movement is an exercise in precision, and as that precision wanes, compromise enters into the human system, not always painful or uncomfortable but one might describe an accident waiting to happen if the ante is raised too much upon it in certain situations. Ever notice how you felt completely normal until you bent over to pick something up or raked the garden or went for that 'let's get fit' jog? You upped the ante and it went south, didn't it?

I often say that Injury = You + Rate of Change.

Your system, and by that I mean your human body, is working in less than a precise way coupled with an increase in some change that you bring to your life. Change can be anything from a new regime and going for a run, to increasing mileage within a run, to going from shod to barefoot or simply bending over (read: carried out a particular movement) in a way you haven't been doing for quite some time.

So when people ask me about their syndromes and labels and discomforts... I immediately think of what's moving well and what is not. What's moving too much and what's moving too little. For these little exchanges in possibility within the body simply add up to increasing tension in the muscles and compression between the bones. And that's ultimately why it hurts, regardless of what we choose to call it or label it.

For instance the above complaints make me think:

I have plantar fasciitis - limitations of movement on the underside of the foot / increase in weight bearing on this foot / spinal mechanics (meaning the potential for the spine to move well)

I have shin splits - increase in speed of foot pronation (arch lowering) in the walking cycle coupled with poor mechanics in the foot contributing to the timing changes

I have disc problems - compression in the spinal vertebrae caused by altered movement habits throughout the body overtime coupled with an off-centre posture

I have scoliosis - global organisation and movement of your bones and a deep dive into your life long injury history

I have dysfunctional hips - your hips are working in a way that is permissible given the organisation of the rest of your body. I hate that word dysfunctional, they continue to function as well as they can given the total sum of movement potential everywhere else in your body.

I have one leg longer than the other - compression and decompression in the hips in relation to foot function and upper body organisation - in the main this is unlikely to be a real bone length issue (even under x-ray).

I have wear and tear in my (body part) - you may have guessed by now, overuse of a body part to compensate for the lack of use in another body part. One again the "issue" is occurring elsewhere in relation to the problem.

When it comes then to taking ownership of your own body am I suggesting that YOU could place yourself in charge of this situation, even if you are suffering from such things as the above.... **Well YES that is exactly what I am suggesting.**

1 FIRST STEP IS TO KNOW DEEP DOWN THAT ONLY YOU CAN HEAL YOU



Here's the answer to the first problem. The reason you haven't yet taken ownership of your own body is because historically you have handed it over to everybody else to work on. It's a harsh truth, but no therapist owns the title of "healer". None. There is a healer though, that term does exist and that title actually belongs to *YOU*. I used to have written on my first Anatomy in Motion website, that when you cut yourself with a knife, you can physically watch it heal. There is a process and it takes time. Nobody else can do that for you. Someone else can simply put a plaster on it and give you guidance with what to do.

The rest is done by *YOU*. You know that though, and it seems quite innocuous perhaps, but what if it's no different for your disc pain? What if with guidance and some education you are able to create an environment within your own body that is able to let the body do the healing. Back to the knife conversation, if you keep running that blade over the cut, the cut will remain there for as long as you keep doing that, and that is *EXACTLY* what is happening in your own body right now. The way you move, the way you walk, the way you hold yourself, the habitual movement behaviours you have adopted over the years are metaphorically and continuously running the blade over the cut.

Disc pain for instance is often caused by a compression of the spinal bones onto the disc, like squeezing the jam out of a doughnut. To take the knife off the cut would be to take the compression out of the spine by realigning it, taking the pressure off the area is what creates the environment for the healing to take place. To carry on as you are and to continue to walk and move in such a way that the compression remains in the spine, is to keep the blade running over the cut and it can last for years. A disc for instance should right itself after a short period of time, usually around six weeks. So if it has been longer than that, there is a good chance, that the real cause of the problem has not been addressed.

The question is how do you begin to change your situation so that the pressure on the uncomfortable area is reduced enough to create an environment for healing?

Imagine your right foot is asymptomatic but has movement limitations in it that reach high up into the rest of the body. Your back and hip are painful as a result of this. You have your back and hip treated and it feels great. You walk out of the clinic on your asymptomatic foot which has movement limitations that reach high up into the rest of your body..... You are about to walk that hip and back problem right back into your system. Now the foot is the blade and the hip and back are the cuts. This is one solid reason as to why people return again and again to their therapist with the same problem (only to receive the same treatment).

2 START BY EDUCATING YOURSELF ON YOU



You are a complex machine, there is no denying it. The complexities of the human body should be left to the only 'thing' that understands it... that being, in my opinion, the human body itself. I think we really struggle to understand the human body, we struggle to appreciate what it does, why it does it but we do have a good idea of how it does what it does. Healing is a complex notion and we should simply leave that to the body to manage. We can stand back and recognise that if we are not healing then something is blocking the body from achieving it's goal and turn our attention to attempting to begin to understand that.

Once you have bought into the idea that you can trust your body and allow it to do the healing, education will be your second port of call. We need to be able to do the simple things well and begin to recognise and join the dots that enable us to take the pressure off of our ailing system.

The simple things:

- **Your foot pressures**
- **Your resting posture (how your body holds itself)**
- **Your potential for movement in individual structures within the body (How you use your body parts and move inside your resting posture)**
- **How one structure seamlessly communicates movement to the next structure and those beyond - this is integration**

Over time I can make you aware of these things, and educate you to make sense of your body in a way that enables you to reorganise it and take the pressure off as many structures as your body and time will allow.

3 ALLOCATE TIME AND RESOURCES



Rome was not built in a day!

Not only do we falsely carry the notion that somebody else is going to heal us... we also demand a quick fix for the most part with a condition attached to it (so that I can get back to running for instance). Imagine the poor therapist carrying all that pressure... "So, not only do you want me to heal you but you want me to do it in the next hour as well!?"

In order to take ownership of your body, you must consider that it will take time. Yes it's possible to experience a quick "fix" - this requires your body to be in a 'good enough' situation to be able to withstand taking the pressure off the actual problem so that pain is no longer the signal that is being carried to the brain - and more often than not, there is more of a process to go through whereby your body bounces around reorganising itself in response to the new movements and inputs until it finds it's new happy place. You have spent years getting it "into this mess", are you willing to take just as long to get out of it?

I personally have been working on my injuries and physical body incessantly for the past twelve years I would say. I have been pain free for the vast majority of it and have fully enjoyed re-righting all the wrongs I did to it over the years. Virtually ticking off each injury as it shows up in my physical timeline.

It has been well documented that it takes two years for anybody to get fully better; and by better I mean robust enough to tolerate further insult to the body without reverting to old habits, patterns and postures. My ten years have been made up of multiple two year windows relating to different body parts and injuries. I am happy to report that I feel stronger and more capable now than at any other point in my life... Getting younger as I get older? Let's hope so !

If you can give up on the quick fix, and begin to recognise that there are things you can be doing to take the pressure off your system and give yourself ample time - both to commit to your Self (and your body) and for the healing benefits you make space for to take place... I think you'll be happy that you began this process when you did.

4 SELF ASSESSMENT - BECOMING SELF AWARE



I mentioned the “Simple things” a short while back.

These are the things you will assess and continuously pay attention to in order to enhance your self-awareness. Gaining awareness of where you hold pressure in your feet, becoming aware of how you stand, and how your body parts move compared to how they could move is the first stage in recognising where you are physically at. If you have not done this before, it may be a surprise to you. As it is to many athletes (often physical specimens in themselves) who have not addressed their own body in this way before.

Your foot pressures tell us a huge amount about how you are holding (and moving) your body. By challenging the way you hold and move your body, you may notice that over time your foot pressures begin to change. This makes your foot pressures a perfect marker for change over time and is a very good reason to document them on a daily basis – even if you find it a challenge.

Your body posture is not just about being hunched over a desk and round shoulders, it is a whole body conversation, foot posture, pelvic posture, spinal posture etc, each of which have a three dimensionality to them as well. How you hold your body in these three dimensions begins to give huge clues as to where the tension and compression is taking place in your physical body and is likely to highlight some rationale for why you have discomfort where you do.

Becoming aware of how you move each of these structures (foot, pelvis, spine, neck, shoulder girdle, arms) inside what you now perceive to be your resting posture in each of the three dimensions of movement available to each structure will really and truly begin to give you a sense of what I call “What Is Missing?”

What is missing is a key question in this awareness piece. You may be able to walk to the bus, lift that heavy weight, play football every Thursday night and carry the kid all day long... but did you know that side bending and rotating your spine right without compensating for it was a real issue? When these movements are missing in your system, other parts of the body MUST begin to make up for this lack of movement by moving more or working harder. It's when you begin to notice that your hip is doing more than it should in the absence of this spinal motion. What if we could simply re-educate ourselves to re-access these ‘missing’ movements? Could it take the pressure off the system sufficiently to relieve that hip pain? It's worth a try isn't it...?

5 MOVE YOUR BODY TO PUT BACK “WHAT’S MISSING”



Once you are aware of your missing movements; what are essentially the real limitations in your human body, you may through the process of re-education, be able to make sense of your foot pressures, recognise how your resting posture is contributing to those limitations OR how your movement limitations leave you no option but to access the resting posture you currently do (fine line that one). If all of these together make sense by pointing a finger at your pain and discomfort, then it might make sense to you (you may have become aware) that to get these body parts moving again could well be a very simple thing to do to create a change in your body that will take the pressure off the system and contribute to the outcome you have long been looking for.

The movements at this stage will unlikely be much different to the assessment you carried out. Can you do movement X? If not, then let's do movement X (in the correct and guided way of course) in order to re-learn how to do movement X.

Even by way of doing the assessment well - even by simply becoming aware of the lack - and executing in some way this long lost movement, you are beginning to highlight to your brain the experience of carrying that movement out in your body. In your daily life, you will not be accessing these movements. At all. You will be bypassing them. Either because:

- a) you physically cannot do the movement
- b) you can do the movement but other body parts do not allow you to access it
- c) you avoid it due to previous injury / pain (fear of movement)
- d) you have never done it
- e) you have simply forgotten that you could and behavioural movement has lead to no longer needing to

So you simply do not do it in your day to day life, you have found a way to overcome that by using another body part and effectively cheat your way around that movement. So the way to move your body to put back those missing movements is to learn what specifically the movements are and how to carry them out properly, become aware of the compensations you use to achieve it and create an environment and an understanding that enables you to begin to access the movement with zero compensations in place. All of a sudden you are doing the movement, moving the joints and creating a new demand on the muscles. This new movement leads to a postural adjustment, new movement potential within the new resting posture which hopefully takes the pressure off the system or leads onto the next problem that via the same process will enable us to later achieve this and create an environment for the body to do the healing.

6 RE-ASSESS



As I mentioned earlier when discussing foot pressures, it will become essential to document everything! To know where you were and to compare to where you are now is the only way sometimes to see or notice change in your body over time. Change in the body does not mean that pain will go away, but it may well mean that you are a step closer to uncovering the problem that ultimately will. I have a human behavioural expert friend who describes working with the human body, not as “peeling layers of the onion” but as “lifting lids”. Lifting lids off pots to see what’s inside and deal with it. Peeling the layers of the onion has a linear feel to it, you go from outside to inside. Lifting lids can be random and often when you have a very rich injury history, you are working with one injury at a time, and not necessarily in the order they come. Any one can show up at any time and yes we must simply work through it. So to be constantly aware of where your body is, checking in with it on a regular basis, whether every day or once a week (I wouldn’t personally recommend any less frequent), is to be able to document the journey you are going on with your body. You are about to enter into a process of working WITH your body and not on it – in particular not necessarily having someone else work ON your body. The goal of working with any therapist is to have them facilitate your journey back to you, to shine a light on the dark areas that you did not know that you did not know about, to guide you and help you, perhaps to manually assist you into the movements, but never to fix you... but to simply help you create that ultimate environment for healing where the pressure has been taken off the system.

‘You are about to enter into a process of working WITH your body and not on it’

Through constant and continuous assessment and re-assessment, you take the guessing out of the game, you know what works and you know what doesn’t. What’s effective and what is not. You know where you have come from and where you are TODAY. It’s essential to always work on where you are TODAY, we don’t need to work on the person we were two weeks ago. As things change in the body, anything from foot pressures to posture, we might require different movements today than we required yesterday. Many times, a client has limped in on one leg only to be limping on the other one shortly after a movement input. This is due to the ‘bad’ leg now becoming the ‘good’ leg and is the body’s way of scaling up and inviting us to “lift another lid”. Assessment and re-assessment will be your guide to taking ownership of your body.

7 TRUST THE PROCESS (AND YOUR BODY)



Having spent years relying on others to fix you and in many cases (certainly not all) in the absence of any education, you may actually find it hard to trust your body. Many of you may want to distance yourself from it: “How can it possibly know best? If it did, surely I wouldn’t be in pain anymore?”. After many years of “managing chronic pain”, years of frustration and “time and money wasted”, how can you all of a sudden trust this new process?

Firstly I want you to know that pain is simply a messenger to your brain. It’s a warning signal that informs you that something somewhere is not right. It is not saying “my elbow hurts, treat my elbow”. It is an invitation for us to investigate further until we discover the cause of that problem. Now I am inviting you to take part in this task of investigation for yourselves in the process I have outlined above. Through education and self-awareness you may well be able to stumble upon a reason for your long term chronic suffering. Let’s say it’s a chronic neck... if you have had your neck treated countless times, there is a good chance that the problem is not in the neck. Let’s assume you have also had a rich life of activity, many jobs, wild parties and a history of sporting prowess and subsequent injury along the way. There is a good chance your body has adapted it’s way of moving around on this planet. A way that is not being so friendly to the neck. If you have had the neck treated for years, it might well be time to look elsewhere.

To trust the process is to truly recognise the innate wisdom of the human body and it’s ability to heal itself once the pressure or blockage has been removed from the system – by whatever means necessary. We choose to take the gentle approach, re-educating your body to move again using tailored and specific movements that you simply have not been accessing for a period of time. Once you remove the blockages your body will do the rest, it will allocate all the necessary resources to start you on your journey to better. With practice and repetition following the queues of the Wake Your Body Up / Wake Your Feet Up programmes, you will generate a brand new movement experience for your whole body. One that cannot be achieved on a table, one that cannot be fully achieved lying down and one that cannot be fully achieved in the hands of another. You are the captain of your own ship and it’s time to begin to take ownership of your own body.

CONCLUSION

Many people, I know, feel let down by the system. Left in the gutter by the healthcare system. Been left with no options and even told that we cannot help you anymore. Sad as it sounds, these are the stories we hear. These sad cases arise when your problem is not being addressed correctly. And it makes sense doesn't it? That if your current neck pain is a response to a 35 year old ankle sprain that is currently asymptomatic giving you no pain and all we do is treat your neck... you are going to run out of solutions eventually. This is why it's time to take the stand and take ownership of your own body. You know the score, you know the injury history, you can become aware of your foot pressures and how you hold yourself, you can pay attention to how you move and you can teach your body to move again in a seamlessly integrated way. You can create an experience for yourself that is unlike any other therapeutic experience you have had by simply following the steps and the guidance in these two programmes. Your body is ready and waiting for you to take the pressure off the system and give it the opportunity to do what it does best...

We use movement to create an environment
for the human body to heal itself

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Gay Ward'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

www.findingcentre.co.uk/wake-your-body-up

www.findingcentre.co.uk/wakeyourfeetup

If you would like to take the first steps in our online education programme please visit:

www.findingcentre.co.uk

COURSES YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN...



WAKE YOUR FEET UP

Further support for how to assess lower limb mechanics and an alternate insight into how to use the wedges from a self-assessment perspective is available in our WAKE YOUR FEET UP COURSE.

Wake Your Feet Up is available for only £14.99

[ACCESS WAKE YOUR FEET UP](#)



WAKE YOUR BODY UP

In addition to the LowerLimb insight you have attained from working through this programme, WAKE YOUR BODY UP is a self-assessment programme designed to introduce to you the integrated movements of the upper body in relation to your foot pressures, posture and injury history

Wake Your Body Up is available for £14.49

[ACCESS WAKE YOUR BODY UP](#)



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“Closed Chain Lower Limb Biomechanics” is a detailed look into the biomechanics of the lower limb... But not as you may already know it!

9 chapters, 60 videos and 600 minutes of education on lower limb movement from foot to pelvis

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AiM wedges can be purchased separately through this programme

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