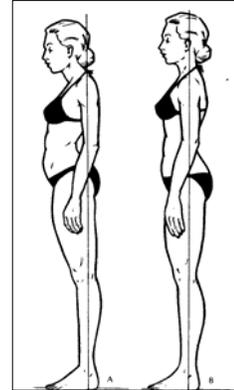


# A NEW RESPONSE TO ANTI-AGING

Hellerwork Structural Integration - Compiled by Linda McClure

## OUR PRIMAL RESPONSES TO GRAVITY & TRAUMA

The Human body is always looking for its “true position” that is to say the position in space that allows us to optimally maintain balance and equilibrium (Homeostasis). This allows us to defend ourselves feed, work, reproduce, etc. When the body moves off this ‘true position’ and into a compensated position through trauma either psychologically or physically, a series of adaptations take place within the postural system of the body. These adaptations occur because we are responding to ‘righting reflexes’. These primal reflexes, through nerve receptors in the inner ear (the internal fluid must be level) attempt to bring the body back to its ‘true position’, one of the defining primal factors being that the eyes must look horizontal. The body, using the muscles and connective tissue attempts to bring itself back to its true position within space and gravity, by creating a series of compensated patterns or postural adaptations.



Of course gravity is the ultimate form of stress on the human frame at 33.5 psi. This combined with the body’s attempts to deal with past traumas is often too much for the ‘righting reflexes’ and in their attempt to accommodate the stress create further distortions above or below the original trauma. This often feels like old age coming on. The consequence of this compensated body position is that the muscle starts to behave more like a structural support (like a bone) and gives up some of its movement and flexibility in order to carry out the additional weight bearing responsibility. This soft tissue compensation distorts our posture and alignment and often creates pain

## MUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN

Musculoskeletal pain affects more than three quarters of us during our lifetime. It is second to childbirth for hospital admittance and second to the common cold for doctors visits. In the UK approx. 7.5 million people per year seek help for musculoskeletal disorders. This equates fo 44 million working days lost per year. Musculoskeletal disorders also cause a high proportion of chronic disability.

A recent 5 years study in the US concluded that traditional approaches of bed rest, traction and surgery were in general ineffective and overused. The British Medical Association agrees with Canadian and US research, that mainstream medical methods tend to treat symptoms and not the cause.

They further concur that:-

Between 70-90% of all back pain is caused by muscle spasm.

1. A slipped disk, the traditional explanation for back pain accounts for “less than 5%”.
2. Only about 1% of those with back pain require surgery.
3. 90% of back pain

is not caused by damage to the spine and vertebrae  
is not caused by bulging, slipped or herniated discs  
is not caused by tumours or any other dire diagnosis  
**but simply by muscles in spasm.**

## SO WHAT GOES WRONG

Even as you read this, you are shaping your body to fit your world. Our bodies are inherently malleable. The mother continually carrying her child on the same hip will re-adjust the balance in her hip and spine. Hunching over a work station will develop in time a thickening and curvature in the upper back, and the head will tend to jut forward.

Body shaping starts in childhood from the steady stream of emotionally laden demands from parents, culture and life in general. Each of us falls unconsciously into convenient patterns of body use creating postures that reflect our occupations our thoughts and feelings. As life goes on these patterns can become embedded in the very tissues of our body. As new born we are soft and pliable, as we mature we are moulded into certain patterns by habitual usage. Through the stressful effects of unbalanced movement patterning, emotional or physical injuryour bodies can become rigid and tense. Through repetitive movement the muscles, ligaments and tendons that make up part of the connective tissue system of the body begin to glue together and the body adjusts accordingly.

## THE BODYMIND CONNECTION

Our attitudes and beliefs impact on us through our body expression. For example when we have a certain belief like “life is hard”, over time a person could succumb to a stooped posture and be prone to bouts of depression. Or someone with a belief like “you don’t get anywhere without hard work” is often prone to pushing themselves hard in their life, work and relationships. This type of belief system can bring with it general systemic breakdown and in particular back problems as the body responds to the physical and emotional stress of having to rise to the impossible schedules put upon it.

The latter is endemic in our western society and is lauded as a good attitude, unfortunately we also have a very high rate of breakdown, burnout and in some cases early death with this belief system. The addiction society has with bigger better faster puts many burnt out individuals on the scrap heap and people in their forties feeling “old” before their time.



## HELLERWORK STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION, A DIFFERENT APPROACH

People are becoming more demanding and more sophisticated in their approach to health and what was considered fringe medicine and alternative practice is now being considered a complimentary approach to health and anti-aging. Bowen Therapy, Rolfing, Hellerwork Structural Integration, Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais are some of the complimentary therapies that readers may have already heard of and that are becoming more widely used in healthcare and rehabilitation. Mainstream medicine is accepting more and more of the so called alternative therapies as

being complimentary to conventional care. In the United States where healthcare is picked up largely by insurance, members are offered a range of these complimentary approaches to support their health and rehabilitation programs. It seems that preventative care is considered an investment in the US where health and wellbeing is sought after, in particular by the baby boomer generation where most are in their middle age now and looking for the anti aging elixir. One such program is Hellerwork. Looking at this therapy we find that Hellerwork is based on the guiding principle that by rebalancing our structure and



freeing natural movement, an individual's optimum performance is revealed. A wide range of touch techniques from deep tissue myofascial release to the more superficial blending strokes are used to release the glued up fascia that enwraps the muscles ligaments and tendons in our body.

Surprisingly fascia composes the majority of the body's connective tissue. It wraps every organ, nerve blood vessel, joint, muscle and bone. Every part of the body is connected to every other part by this three dimensional network. The makeup of fascia means that it is self adaptive and self organising. It is these qualities that allow it to remodel constantly in response to the body's changing demands. It is therefore fascia that determines

the length and function of muscle. In its optimal state fascia is fluid and mobile. However, as fascia responds to injury, stress, tension and misuse, it becomes denser, more viscous and fibrous, compressing joints, and restricting mobility, causing inefficient muscular use, poor posture and movement dysfunction - a common comment is that “I feel like I’m walking around with my hand brake on”.



Unlike other classic massage methods where the client is usually more a passive receiver, the Hellerwork client is involved in the process. Sessions may be done with the client lying on the table, standing or being seated depending on the objective. The aim of each session is to guide clients towards discovering any limiting postural or movement patterns they may have through deep tissue release techniques, movement/ergonomic re- education and dialogue. Practitioners encourage and facilitate awareness around any limiting belief systems that could be leading to stress and dysfunction. In general sessions are organised around an 11 session series with each session working on a different part and aspect of the bodymind. However, specialised sessions can be devised to deal with specific concerns the client has.

Although Hellerwork does not hold out to “cure” people, clients experience as a result of doing Hellerwork, **more energy, fluidity and flexibility, better relaxation and sleep patterns, improved sporting performance and fitness levels, enhanced immune system function from better posture i.e. improved bowel function, breathing patterns, and more efficient movement**, in short it is an empowering modern day approach to anti-aging, where preventative care is the key to a long and happy life and where so called aging is not associated with a breakdown in the body systems. Hellerwork is primarily an educational approach providing a path to self healing, self care, and self knowledge.

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