

# Natural Step Tai Chi for Health & Conscious Living

## Newsletter 22.5

A very very good day everyone,

In Tai Chi as in life its very clear that the alignment of the energetic spine is extremely significant.

In the West we tend to believe the 'S' shape spine is the way it should but are the majority of back issues in Westerners directly related to poor postural alignment? I'd take it a step further and suggest many other disharmonies in the body & mind are created because of irregular postural alignment.

If we view the energetic spine as key component in our energy system the flow of energy around the 'system' will be restricted in some cases 'blocked off' if the spine is misaligned.

Interestingly indigenous people don't have the 'back issues' which are so commonplace in the West because their spines are more of a 'J' shape.

Anyway its worth some thought & attention and please ask in class if you want to have your posture checked out.

If you want to use the exercises below try them and let me know if they make a difference.

There's also a book titled Somatics by Thomas Hanna which I'd recommend.

With good wishes, love & a happier back, Colin.

**1. Do a shoulder roll:** Westerners tend to scrunch their shoulders forward, so our arms are in front of our bodies. That's not how people in indigenous cultures carry their arms.

To fix that, gently pull your shoulders up, push them back and then let them drop — like a shoulder roll. Now your arms should dangle by your side, with your thumbs pointing out. This is the way all your ancestors parked their shoulders. This is the natural architecture for our species.

**2. Lengthen your spine:** Adding extra length to your spine is easy. Being careful not to arch your back, take a deep breath in and grow tall. Then maintain that height as you exhale. Repeat: Breathe in, grow even taller and maintain that new height as you exhale. It takes some effort, but it really strengthens your abdominal muscles.

**3. Squeeze, squeeze your glute muscles when you walk:** In many indigenous cultures, people squeeze their gluteus medius muscles every time they take a step. That's one reason they have such shapely buttocks muscles that support their lower

backs. You can start developing the same type of derrière by tightening the buttocks muscles when you take each step. The gluteus medius is the one you're after here. It's the one high up on your bum, It's the muscle that keeps you perky, at any age.

**4. Don't put your chin up:** Instead, add length to your neck by taking a lightweight object, like a bean bag or folded washcloth, and balance it on the top of your crown. Try to push your head against the object. This will lengthen the back of your neck and allow your chin to angle down — not in an exaggerated way, but in a relaxed manner.

**5. Don't sit up straight!** That's just arching your back and getting you into all sorts of trouble. Instead do a shoulder roll to open up the chest and take a deep breath to stretch and lengthen the spine.