

BONE VS. MUSCLE: WHAT IS THE ANSWER TO PAIN-FREE MOVEMENT?

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When trying to eliminate back and joint pain, most modalities prescribe muscle-based exercises or stretches to feel better. But, there is a century-old modality where you'll see the skeleton as the perfect model for better health – at the office of a certified Alexander Technique teacher.

What is the Alexander Technique? The Alexander Technique teaches better body awareness, anti-aging posture and improved movement. And, research has shown the Alexander Technique can reduce chronic low back pain by 86% in the British Medical Journal. Last year, a follow-up study in the U.S. journal, Human Movement Science, showed the Alexander Technique also reduced stiffness in low back pain patients.

So, what does the skeleton have to do with the Alexander Technique? The skeleton is certainly not as glamorous as the rippling muscles and six-pack abs ubiquitous in American pop culture today. But, then again, the Alexander Technique is a British-based modality that's over 100 years old. And, it's long been known for its emphasis on proper skeletal alignment not on trendy ripped-muscle fads.

In fact, in America's pursuit to stop back and joint pain, too much emphasis is on muscle "strength" and not enough on aligned bones. The Alexander Technique teaches the intrinsic power of aligned bones to support the body. Bone is

one of the strongest materials found in nature. One cubic inch of bone can withstand loads of at least 19,000 pounds, which is approximately the weight of five standard-size pickup trucks. This is roughly four times the strength of concrete. Ounce for ounce, bone is stronger than steel.

This poses two provocative questions. Does proper skeletal alignment trump superficial muscle strength? Has skeletal alignment been a “blind spot” in America’s fitness-crazed culture?

The American approach to back pain is not working. Studies show that 90% of Americans will experience back pain. Back pain is second only to the common cold for missed workdays at the job. As more and more injuries arise for America’s gym-obsessed – we ask: are sets and reps the definition of true strength and fitness?

Many victims of back pain work to "hold" up their body with excess muscle tension in an effort to protect their backs. However, when muscles release, pain-free movement can occur naturally in accordance with our innate skeletal design, the architecture of the body. Most overuse muscle tension to hold the body up instead of simply stacking the bones in the correct, natural manner. Worse, the overwhelming advice back pain victims receive is to perform muscle contraction exercises, often with heavy weights, further tensing muscles that are likely already in a state of chronic muscle contraction. This intensifies and embeds the body’s default habit of creating excess muscle tension.

This ingrained habit of body armoring, bracing, gripping, and tensing muscle only works to add stress, pressure, and load

to an already-aggravated back. Therefore, it may come as a relief to hear a different point of view from the Alexander Technique. The technique teaches to release muscle tension in order to ease pain. And, instead, learn to align the bones on the “plumb line” of gravity, the central axis that is your birthright. Through a sophisticated process of neuromuscular re-education, the Alexander Technique can help eliminate the underlying habits that cause postural distortion and excess muscle tension. In turn, it allows the skeleton, when aligned properly, to provide the sturdy foundation necessary for pain-free movement.

True strength and fitness may be easier than all those hours in the gym after all.

BIO

Matt Pressman, M.AmSAT, M.ATI, RSME, is now offering the Alexander Technique in South Florida. Body awareness, anti-aging posture and pain-free movement can be yours with this proven holistic approach. For more information, website: www.decompressbackpain.com, email: info@decompressbackpain.com, or, call direct: 917-692-3425.