

Posture and Its Relevance to Health

by Patt Stock

Posture may be termed as good or bad and is often relevant to good and bad postural habits. Posture may be defined as the ability to maintain the upright position against the force of gravity so that it prevents one falling over. However posture is also involved in sitting, lying, stooping, squatting as well as being erect. Habits are learned responses to the environment. The tall teenager, for example may develop rounded shoulders in the attempt to blend in with his/her peers instead of towering above them. It takes time to acquire a habit but once the habit is installed in the subconscious mind, it is difficult to shift.

Good posture suggests a balance and alignment between the muscular and skeletal structures, protecting our bodies from injury and degenerative changes. Muscles, ligaments, tendons, fascia and bony skeleton work together to keep us moving, sitting, standing, and lying down at our request. We have a whole team at our disposal waiting for instructions from above to set us into motion. Our muscular-skeletal system gives us shape, helping to keep the internal organs in place. A well-balanced body is one that feels energetic while a poorly balanced system often feels languid, generally out of sorts and less able to cope with the demands of everyday life. It often has less stamina and can be easily overwhelmed, which has the potential to lead to melt down (burn out). This in turn can affect the hormonal system.

Factors that can affect posture

Working arrangements. How we sit or stand and for how long. What type of work do you do? Is it sedentary or heavy, physical work? What is the temperature like? Hot, cold, air-conditioned, draughty conditions can affect the way we react to our environment. Is our work repetitive and maybe we use telephone, computer, carry shopping or schoolbags, laptops etc. Are we fit enough for the job and do we drink enough water during the day? Is our work stressful or does it make us tense and reactive to everyday situations? Constant deadlines, too much caffeine, driving, carrying a heavy handbag on one shoulder are some of the examples that can change us from that lovable, charming individual to a screaming, out of control colleague that is frankly best avoided.

Is your posture OK?

Imagine a line dropped from the middle of your ear down through the middle of your shoulder to the centre of your ankle. Does yours do that? Try checking it in a mirror. Our Victorian ancestors were sticklers for good posture. True for the ladies, at least, it may had something to do with their whalebone corsets, which were often pulled far too tight for any sort of comfort. The Victorians liked to sit ramrod straight often on very hard chairs.

Posture and appearance.

Today's society views matters differently. We tend to be more relaxed about posture and yet someone who carries themselves well often comes across as someone with confidence. If you are going for a job interview, your posture is often far more important than the clothes you are wearing. If you stand or sit upright, clothes look so much better and so too does the impression that you are creating. While looks play an important role, faulty posture has the potential to lead to pain and discomfort, which if ignored for long enough may lead to degenerative changes and disability. Mention the word posture and for many people they simply try to sit up straight but without a properly balanced underlying

structure, it is often very difficult to maintain. The brain has become used to instructing the body to move in a certain manner and it will resist change. Change is frightening and is something that people find hard to embrace. A case of the mind is willing but the flesh is weak.

How can we bring about change?

There are therapies available to help you make the most of your own personal resources. Bowen is one that particularly excels with rebalancing the muscular skeletal structures. It does it in a totally non-threatening way and works with the mind-body relationship as well as the structural entity. It is thought that the mind controls 80% of the body's health with the remaining 20% often emerging as a physical manifestation of, for example, pain. Whilst a single treatment can go a long way in the task of re-educating the working capability of the body, it generally requires a course of treatment to set it on the right track with a maintenance programme of usually a single follow-up treatment at regular intervals. The interval varies from individual to individual.

You may be wondering is it really that simple? Can this be true? The body likes to be in balance. It functions much more efficiently and has more energy. In other words you feel better. Even if your posture is not the greatest in the world, there are in many cases, great improvements to be made. With more energy, there are more resources to do more and to be more. There are fewer tendencies to injury and to maximise results. Net outcome happiness and fulfilment and for many people this is exactly what they want. Remember with a little help the body has its own resources to correct many postural deficiencies. Why don't you give it a try and find out for yourselves?