



Living with Balance by Dr Craig Weiner

Living with balance is the focus of this article. Balance may be defined as being in a state of bodily equilibrium or being at a state of rest given opposing forces. It also can be defined as a state of mental steadiness or emotional stability, but that we shall save for another article. In this article I will investigate why we should seek ways to enhance our physical equilibrium, and offer ways to improve yours.

Let's get personal right from the start. Stand up right now, and see if you can stand on one leg for 30 seconds without holding on to anything (but please stand near a wall that you can help yourself if you feel that you might be falling). Try this first with your eyes open and then try it with them closed. If you cannot do this for at least 15 seconds on either leg without falling, you really should keep reading and begin taking some steps towards improving your balance.

Body balance is important for being able to walk and play, and engage in activities and sports without losing balance and falling. Falling is a significant medical issue. In general, balance starts deteriorating after age 40 and over 40% people over the age of 65 fall each year. Only motor vehicle accidents surpass falls as the leading cause of accidental death. Nearly 700,000 bone fractures result from falls, and these certainly happen more readily with advancing age and increasing likelihood of osteoporosis.

Normal balance is an integration of three sources of information; Visual data (which can decrease with age related visual problems) Vestibular information (inner ear) and Somatosensory information from joint, tendons, muscles, etc. A decrease in the ability of any of these three arenas to send accurate information to the brain can result in a decreased ability to maintain proper and steady balance.

This is where chiropractic has its primary affect on balance. According to the classic Guyton's medical text, "By far the most important proprioceptive (positional) information needed for the maintenance of equilibrium is that deriving from the joint receptors in the neck." Spinal adjustment of the neck region can have a significant effect on improving balance, correcting forward head posture that can put abnormal postural stresses on the entire body and scientific research cites case of resolved cases of vertigo.

Your posture is how you balance your body, especially while standing. It is also a key player in balance. Hand in hand with poor posture, such as in standing with a rounded or slouched position, referred to as a kyphosis or kyphotic posture is the shifting of weight and compensations that are required to maintain balance.

So then what are things you can do to improve your posture and balance? Here are a few simple exercises that you can do at home to improve each of these:

1. To improve your posture, place your back against the wall, with your heels 2-3 inches away. Look forwards with your chin tucked straight back. Maintain a steady pressure against the wall with your buttocks, shoulder blades and the back of your head, without tipping your head up or downwards.
2. Stand near a wall, (so that you could reach out to stabilize yourself if you needed to) with your hands at your sides. First, with your eyes open and your body stiff like a plank of wood, shift your weight in several different directions, feeling your weight pressing on changing aspects of the bottom of your feet. Do this for 30 seconds.
3. Stand on 1 leg and work up to being able to do this for 60 seconds on both sides without teetering and wobbling with your eyes open. Then progress to doing it with eyes close. This helps to build your capability to have balance with less reliance on your visual clues.
4. Progress to standing on one leg and move and hold yourself in positions other than neutral standing, i.e. tilt your head to the side, swing your non-standing leg out or back, raise your arms above your head, etc and do this for 30 seconds each side.
5. Take a Tai Chi or Yoga class. Try it, they are wonderful and have a significant degree of excellent scientific research validating their efficacy in improving balance and reducing falls.

If you take just one of these steps today and continue it each day, you may very well be one of the people whose balance does not decline after the age of 40, but actually improves.

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Annapoorne Colangelo on BALANCE AND YOGA

The word Yoga, itself, means "Yoke" or balance! Yogic philosophy states that we must address the physical body, emotional and mental make up, and spiritual essence to maintain a healthy, balanced life. When dysfunction on each of these levels is recognized through meaningful exploration, it becomes understood and healed. We then return to our natural state of perfect balance and health on all levels. We become whole, or integrated. There are 8 branches of Yoga. Integral Yoga is a synthesis of various branches. It is a scientific system for the harmonious development of every aspect of the individual.

In this article, I will speak of only one branch of Yoga, which is Hatha Yoga. Whereas Hatha Yoga has become known throughout the world, it has also become gravely misunderstood. It is not a physical exercise and, it is not purely physical. True, ancient Yoga was designed to balance each aspect of a being. The Sanskrit word "Hatha" can be understood when broken into its parts - "Ha" means "Sun (male) and "tha" means moon (female). Thus, we balance the male and female aspects of the body, mind, and soul when practicing Hatha postures, known as asanas. In addition, Hatha is meant to be practiced in a meditative fashion, connecting the mind, body and soul aspects. Subtle energy centers in the body, known as chakras, are energized and balanced in Hatha. Each chakra is associated with a specific organ or endocrine gland, life lesson, emotion, body part and sense. Keeping them balanced, therefore, assists in balancing all these aspects.

Balancing postures in Hatha support us in regaining poise and grace, which accompanies a feeling of self- confidence. Concentration is fundamental to balancing in a posture. Concentration is the gateway to meditation, thus, we see more than physical balance once again. The sense of lightness which develops, as well, brings us back to living in our natural state of the soul, which is peace, awareness and understanding.

Annapoorne Colangelo

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Gina Ames LMP on Balance and Grounding

Spring Greetings!

Flowers are bursting! Animals are frolicking. The weather changes sporadically from balmy warmth, sun and fluffy clouds to dark cold grey, wind and rain. My personal experience of my moods this season can change as suddenly as the weather, from euphoria to gloom, from energetic happiness to deep utter exhaustion, from warm connectedness and relief to uncertainty, confusion and even bewilderment. The conversation I find having at this time of year with friends or clients is, what are we

doing to ground ourselves? How does one stay connected, calm, and in ones center when nature is so uproarious and inconsistent? I also have this conversation with clients when they come to see me and talk about how they carry their stress in their neck and their shoulders. How can we move that energy downward? Being a culture of “thinkers” and often” in our heads”, how can we carry ourselves in a way that is centered and balanced so that one part of our body doesn’t carry the bulk of the load?

“Grounding “, is a way to move our energy downward, bringing ourselves into our body and sending energy down to our feet or into the earth. Grounding can help us feel more connected with ourselves, calm, present and clear. There are many ways to work with grounding. Simply going for a walk, taking a hot bath, rubbing our hands down our legs towards our feet or sharing foot massages with a partner are great ways to ground!

One of my favorite practices is using a tennis ball under my feet. With shoes off and supporting your self with a chair or a wall for balance if you need to, put a tennis ball under one foot while balancing on the other foot. Slowly and gently allow your non-weighted foot to settle onto the ball. Allow as much weight as is comfortable for you onto your foot as you move the ball around to different points. I am fairly confident that many of you will be saying “aaaaahhhh!” as you do this self foot massage!

Finally, if I am busy and don’t have much time for self-care, I simply take a few seconds to envision roots growing out of my feet into the earth. Growing deep and anchoring. I take a deep breath and allow any discomfort or stress to drain down through my body and out through my feet, dispersing through all the rooty tendrils and dissipating. By taking a moment to sink into my feet, I feel a growing calm and can move with greater consciousness and care.

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DEFINITIONS: An electrical device is "grounded" when it is connected to the ground in a way that allows excess energy to leave the system. We are

- **PHYSICALLY GROUNDED** when we can feel our connection with the Earth and carry ourselves (posture, movement, awareness) in a manner that is in harmony with the Earth’s gravitational pull.
- **EMOTIONALLY GROUNDED** when our energies and emotions move through our physically-grounded body freely and are wholesomely discharged through our cells, our breath, our thoughts, & our actions.

Wishing you a lovely May! Enjoy the beauty!

Gina

Dr Craig is now offering NEW Monday Back Fitness Classes!

On Mondays at noon, beginning May 17, you might wish to check out Dr.Craig's Best Back Exercises Weekly Class. After teaching patients core strengthening and stretching exercises for 20 years, I decided to finally offer an ongoing weekly class, designed to provide personalized instruction and attention for those who have had back problems or are working to avoid having them. Beginning to advanced students are welcome as progressive exercises will be taught. My hope is that individuals will come away with a way to incorporate a series of exercises that they can use every day, and not ONLY perform them at the class. Drop-ins are welcome, though first -timers must register in advance. Classes will be held at the Sears House from 12-1 and will be \$20/class with monthly discounts available.

UPDATE! The ChiroYoga Classes will begin a new series on May 19 and will be expanded 75 minute classes; 12:00 - 1:15 on Thursdays

Anapoorne has been doing fabulously in creating a nurturing and safe space for many patients and community members to begin or advance their yoga practice here at The Chiropractic Zone. We have progressed to being able to now allow for drop-in students and hope that you can come and check it out this month. This is a rare opportunity to check out yoga with one of Whidbey Island's best yoga teachers easily, affordably and conveniently. [CLICK HERE](#) to register. Cost is \$15 with a package of 6 classes

The Heart of Health Care: Our New Series of Transformational Dialogues in 2010?

With all the changes going on around here, I have intuitively felt the need to pause this wonderful series of gatherings that I and others have enjoyed so much. So after taking the opportunity to take a deep breath, I am ready to start up a very exciting new series that I am calling **The Heart of Health Care**. I will be hosting monthly events that will be a co-exploration, dialogue and discussion with other primary care providers from our community that asks that I feel so need to be asked right now as our society and community transitions from an outdated model of healthcare to a more self-reliant and resilient one.

Our first Dialogue will be with **Toni Marthaller, ARNP** from Whidbey General South in Clinton, and will be called **Exploring Intentional and Intuitive Medicine**. Toni is a dear friend and respected colleague and we will explore what the role is how as a provider we balance clinical decision making with our gut feelings...how what we think or believe can have a profound impact on the patients we work with...and can we improve on the use of these skills. This is an event you should not miss. [Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund](#) will be the beneficiary of this event.

"Where Health, Inspiration and Play Join Hands" Exploring the Practice of Intuitive and Intentional Medicine

Transformational Dialogue May 25th 2010

What IS at the heart of healthcare? Arrrrghhhh!!! These days that is a topic unto itself! Optimally, at the heart of healthcare is an authentic and dynamic process of relationship. That relationship begins with the healthcare provider's capacity to be present with oneself, and then with one's patients, families, co-workers and community. It is within these relationship interactions that the foundation for intentional medicine is created. And with a need to adapt to the business and bus-i-ness of daily clinic life, the ability to maintain an intentional medicine focus is a challenging, yet supremely rich and at times draining, energetic process. Deepening inside this dynamic process space, is where intuition grows as the provider increases their experience base derived from the look, listening, and feeling of patient interactions combined with the expected and unexpected outcomes of evidence based and sometimes not so evidenced based clinical protocols and interventions.

I am also happy to announce that on June 29, the dialogue will be with Dr. Tom Harris, DO who will also be in the midst of opening his new practice in downtown Freeland. In next month's issue I will provide more details of this event.

All Dialogues are offered via voluntary contribution at a suggested offering of \$10-\$15 at the downstairs of the Sears House and all net proceeds benefit local Whidbey Island charities.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Daytime Classes:

Single Events:

Monday, May 3, 12:30 - 1:30 **Life in the Balance** \$10 Bayview Senior Center

Monday, May 10, 12:30 -1:30 **Show Some Backbone!**

At the Bayview Senior Center, \$10, designed to offer tips and insights on improving your posture and re-thinking how you use and abuse your spine in every day tasks.

Ongoing Classes:

Dr Craig's Best Back Exercise Class, (see above) Mondays beginning May 17, 12-1 PM at The Chiropractic Zone, Cost is \$15/class when purchased as a 6 class series and \$20 drop in rate.

ChiroYoga with Annapoorne Colangelo and Dr. Craig

An ongoing class with a new 6 week series beginning May 20. Classes are being changed due to request to begin at 12:00 AND on May 20 will be expanded to be 1 and 1/4 hour

long. Cost \$15/class when purchased as a 6 weeks series (with make-ups available) or \$20 drop in fee.

Evening Events:

Tuesday, May 25, 6 - 7:30 PM, The First Transformational Dialogue of 2010: **Exploring the Practice of Intuitive and Intentional Medicine" with Toni Marthaller, ARNP.** \$10-\$15 suggested contribution with proceeds benefiting Friend of Friends.

Weekend Workshops:

EFT Level 1: Saturday, May 15, 10-4, Led by Alina Frank CERT 1 and Dr Craig