

Jeff (not his real name) was a world-renowned concert pianist. For his 60th birthday, he was invited to conduct one of the world's top orchestras. When Jeff began rehearsing with the orchestra, he discovered that he repeatedly came close to losing his balance. He was concerned that he might fall off the podium. He also realized that his ability to conduct freely was hampered by this concern.

When I asked Jeff to pretend to conduct for me, I immediately saw the problem. Jeff was very aware of his arm and hands, something he had developed from an early age playing the piano. However, while standing and moving his arms in front of him, there was no movement in his pelvis or his lower back. There was no counterbalance to the weight of the arms moving forward.

I guided Jeff through a series of movements that brought his attention to his back and pelvis, which helped differentiate them in his brain. Within 30 minutes, Jeff's brain began spontaneously coordinating his back and pelvis movements with

In this second part of our series on NeuroMovements, Anat Baniel shows you how to wake up a lazy pelvis

Powering up the middle

the movements of his arms. While conducting, Jeff now was able to move his arms freely and safely in all directions, and was no longer limited in his ability to express his artistry. The concert was a big success.

As Jeff's story demonstrates, the brain is responsible for every movement of our body by creating billions of connections that gradually map the various parts of the body. These connections integrate into patterns—what some call 'neural networks'. Through these neural networks, the brain organizes and controls all of our movements.

When we want to be able to do something new, or improve on what we already can do, we need to provide the brain with new information with which it can create additional connections and patterns that move us beyond our current limitations.

These patterns, as they become grooved in, are what we know ourselves to be—our self-image, or body image.

Every person's body image is different. For example, a concert pianist will have dense brain maps associated with the wrists, hands and fingers, whereas a belly dancer will



have a much fuller self-image of her pelvis than most of us have.

I call this the ‘Swiss cheese effect’. The areas of our bodies that are less mapped in our brains are like the holes in the cheese.

Over the years I have come to realize that, often, the experience of pain, limitation or feeling of being stuck are the result of areas of ourselves that we have underdeveloped and are less aware of. And that’s the good news, because the human brain is built to respond to its experiences and change at any age.

The brain is always at the ready to wake up and resume creating the new. There’s no limit that we know of in the brain’s ability to continue to differentiate, learn and improve, even in areas where we already excel. One area for which many people could use greater differentiation and representation in the brain is the pelvis, where the most powerful muscles in the body are attached.

In any movement that we do, when performed well, the pelvis needs to proportionally generate more power than any other part. Yet, for so many people, the pelvis is asleep.

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She is also offering readers a 20 per cent discount on all NeuroMovement DVD programmes by using the coupon SAVE20OFF.

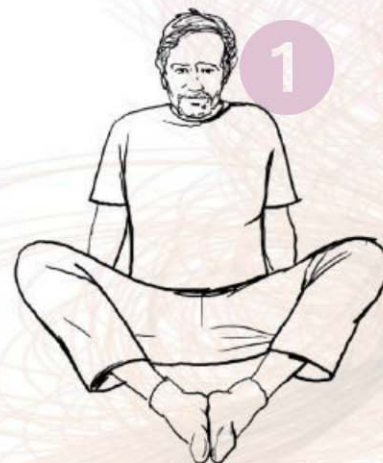
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NeuroMovement lesson for the pelvis

The following lesson helps to increase representation of the pelvis in the brain, and so improve the movement of the pelvis itself and the many other movements associated with it. Remember to do the movements slowly, with as little force as you can, and pay close attention to what you feel as you move. These are three of what I call the Nine Essentials—the conditions demonstrated by science to help the brain powerfully change for the better (see WDDTY May 2016).

1 Sitting on the floor, bend your knees and spread them out to the sides with the soles of your feet touching each other. Place your hands on the floor behind you, so you can lean on them comfortably. Look at your knees and note how close or far they are from the floor. You might notice that one of your knees is closer to the floor than the other. Bring your hands forward and, gently, push down on the insides of your knees as you try to bring them closer to the floor. Let go and see if this made any difference—but most likely not.

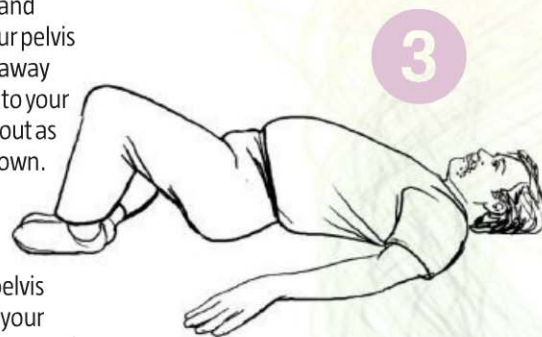


2 Lie on your back with your arms at your sides. Bend your knees and spread them out to the sides, and put the soles of your feet together as before. Feel how your pelvis contacts the floor. Now pull your belly in—contract your abdominal muscles—while rounding your back and rolling your pelvis up a bit. You will feel your lower back pressing more into the floor and your tailbone lifting a bit off the floor. Now stop and let go of your belly muscles, allowing your pelvis to roll back down. Do this movement slowly back and forth six to eight times.



Each time you do this movement, feel how your knees tend to lift away from the floor when you pull your belly in, and drop closer to the floor when you let your belly go. Stop. Slowly lengthen your legs to rest for a moment. Feel how your body is lying on the floor.

3 Lie on your back again with your knees bent out to the sides and soles of the feet touching each other. This time, slowly and gently arch your lower back and roll your pelvis downward, so your lower back moves away from the floor and the pressure moves to your tailbone. Make sure to push your belly out as you arch your back and roll the pelvis down. Then come back to the middle.



Repeat this movement six to eight times, slowly and comfortably. Can you feel that each time you roll your pelvis down, your chin moves a bit closer to your chest, your spine and ribs begin to move, and your knees open to the sides a bit more?

Stop, straighten your legs and rest for a moment. Feel how your body is contacting the floor. Are any parts of your body touching the floor more fully?

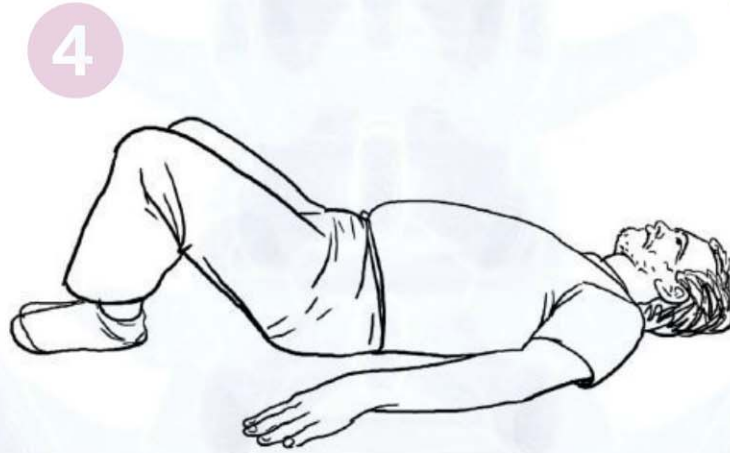
4 Lying on your back, resume the same position with your knees out and soles of your feet together, but this time combine the two movements—pull your belly in and roll your pelvis up, then arch your back, push your belly out and roll your pelvis down. Rock your pelvis this way back and forth in a continuous movement four or five times. Rest, straighten your legs, and feel how you are lying on the floor. Can you feel any further changes in the contact your body makes with the floor? Are you breathing differently, perhaps more fully than before?

5 Lie on your back with your knees to the sides and soles of the feet together. This time, arch only the left side of your lower back and roll your pelvis to the right, moving the pressure to your right hip. Your right knee will now come a bit closer to the floor. Make sure to do the movement with your back and pelvis, not by lifting your left knee up towards the ceiling. Each time you do the movement, think of pushing your belly out to the right. Do the movement four or five times. Stop and rest for a moment.

6 Lie flat on your back with your knees to the sides and soles of your feet together, this time arching only the right side of your lower back, and roll your pelvis to the left to move the pressure onto your left hip so that your left knee comes closer to the floor. Make sure to do the movement with your back and pelvis, not by lifting your right knee up towards the ceiling. Each time you do this movement, make sure to push your belly out to the left. Do the movement four or five times. Stop, extend your legs, and rest for a moment. Note if there are any other changes in the way you feel or lie on the floor.

7 Lie on your back with your knees to the sides and soles of the feet together. Combine the two movements above, rocking your pelvis right and left with one knee coming closer to the floor than the other. Use a light, easy movement back and forth, five or six times. Stop, extend your legs and rest for a moment.

8 Lie on your back with your knees to the sides and soles of the feet together. Resume the movements you did in step 4, rolling the pelvis up and down while pulling



the belly in, then pushing it out. Is the movement different from before? Is it any easier and with a larger, smoother range? Do your knees open sideways more than they did a few minutes ago?

9 Sit up once again with the soles of your feet touching, your knees spread out sideways and leaning on your hands behind you as in the beginning of this exercise. Roll your pelvis forward, push your belly out and look at your knees. Are they closer to the floor than before? Get up onto your feet and just stand for a moment. Notice if you feel different from usual. You might feel taller, maybe lighter or more grounded. Now walk around. Do your hips feel freer? Is there a bit more bounce and life in your step?

You may have noticed, when doing this first NeuroMovement lesson, that as you progressed, more and more parts of your body began participating in the movement of your pelvis. Any movement

we do is a whole-body movement. When we lift an arm, it's not only the arm that the brain has to organize. The brain has to account for every part of ourselves. It has to know where every part of the body is in space, and the dynamic relationships between the different parts of the body at all times. Without this, we couldn't have successful and continuous movement.

Turn over for my lesson for the upper body

NeuroMovement lesson for the upper body

The next lesson helps to differentiate and increase the representation of your spine, ribs and sternum (breastbone) in your brain. It will also help create a fuller and freer dynamic relationship between your torso and your pelvis.

1 Sit on the edge of a chair with both feet flat on the floor a comfortable distance apart—about the width of your pelvis. Rest your hands, palms and fingers down, on the tops of your thighs. Call this your neutral position. Turn your head to look to the right. Do so easily, always within your comfort range, without forcing anything, straining nothing. Note how far you turn your head. You may want to spot a visual reference point to measure changes as you go along. Now turn your head to the left and find a similar reference point. Note: In the rest of this lesson, I am only giving you instructions for the right side. But when you have finished, you simply do the left side by reversing right and left.

2 While still sitting on the edge of the chair, place your right hand a few inches behind you on the seat of the chair and lean back on it so that it's bearing some of your weight. Turn your head to the right, then bring it back to look straight ahead of you. Make sure you move easily within your comfortable range of motion and note how far to the right you can see. As you move, do you feel a shifting of weight on your pelvis? On the soles of your feet? Do you feel movement in your ribs? Repeat this movement four to six times. Then come back to the middle, placing both hands back on your thighs, and stop and rest for a moment.

3 Again, sit on the edge of your chair, and place your right hand behind you and lean on it as before. Now lift your left arm, bend your elbow and rest your chin on the back of your hand. Gently turn your head and arm together, as one unit, to the right and then come back to centre. As you turn, make sure your chin is in contact with the back of your left hand throughout. Can you feel a clearer movement in your spine and rib cage now? Do this movement very gently and slowly, four to six times, while paying attention to what you feel in your



back and pelvis as you move. Stop, come back to the neutral position and rest for a moment. Note if there are any changes in the way you're sitting or feeling.

4 Using the same position as above and with your chin on the back of your left hand, turn to the right as far as is comfortable for you and hold that position. Now gently move only your eyes to the right and to the left. Make sure to breathe freely. Repeat the movement four to six times, then stop and rest in neutral position.

5 In the same position as step 4, turn as far as you comfortably can to the right and stay there. Now lift your left buttock off the chair an inch or so, using the lower back muscles on your left side and pushing the belly out (what you learned to do in the previous lesson), then put it back down and repeat four or five times. Feel how your ribs move on your left side, coming closer together and then moving farther apart as you lift and lower your left buttock. Stop, come back to neutral, and notice if you're sitting differently on your right buttock compared with the left.

6 Again, lean on your right hand behind you and turn your head to the right. Notice if your spine, back and ribs move more fully, resulting in freer neck movement. Go back to your neutral position, with both hands palms down on the tops of your thighs. Gently turn your



head to the right, then to the left. Note whether you turn your head more easily to the right than to the left.

You have just experienced the power of fuller mapping of your body in your brain to improve performance and wellbeing. You can now do this exercise on the other side, but before you do, let yourself experience the differences between your right and left sides as you move.

Any time you wish to improve on your performance, feel a difficulty or limitation in your movement, or experience pain, look for ways to enrich the underlying neural networks in an area of your body that you normally do not pay much attention to, or do not think relevant to what you are trying to accomplish and note if this leads to significant improvements and increased wellbeing.