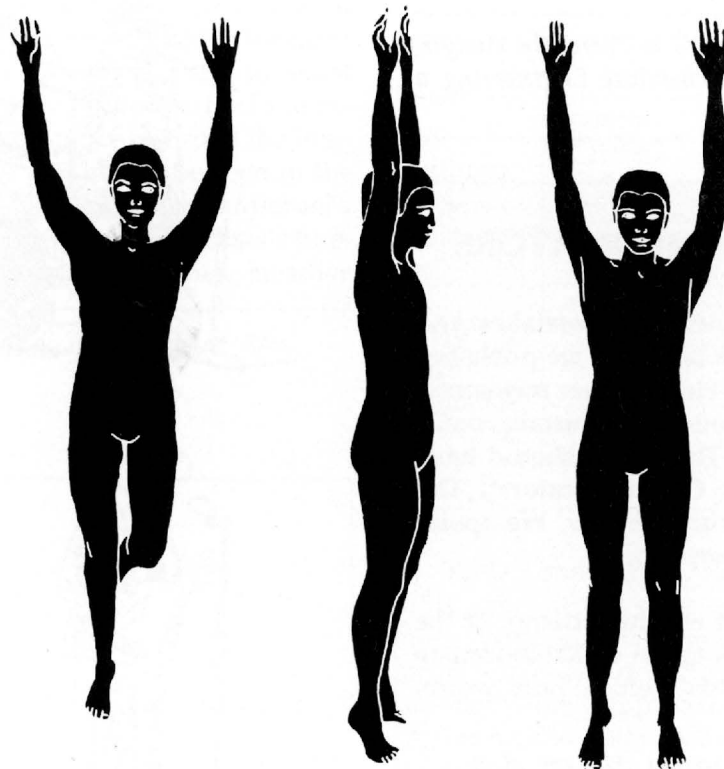


THE DART PROCEDURES

Professor Alex Murray

Illustrated by Gretchen Sommers

Dart was fascinated by the ancestral movement patterns apparent in motor damaged human beings. He explored them in the Makapansgat caves of South Africa with his disabled son Galen. Alex Murray, who has led the practical research, publishes for the first time a manual for experimentation with movement.



I N T R O D U C T I O N

Perhaps Professor Dart's best known writing is "Adventures with the Missing Link", describing the discovery and naming of *Australopithecus* and the implications for the story of human development. Dart's interest in the human story is a vital, living one, embodied in his interest in other human beings, regardless of their status.

The story of my meeting and friendship with Professor Dart will perhaps render further generalities unnecessary.

The first time I became aware of him was during the 1940's in South Africa. I was a wartime "evacuee" and went with my school to a science lecture at Witwatersrand University. The speaker, L'Abbe Breuil, was introduced by Professor Dart.

The next time Dart's name came to my attention was during a visit to Walter Carrington in London in the summer of 1967. My wife and I had returned from our first year at Michigan State University where I was a professor of music and she was teaching the Alexander Technique to students and colleagues.

I had been considering the dynamic role of the jaw in head balance. My comments to Walter elicited the question: "Have you been reading Dart?" I had not, but shortly after was at home with his paper "The Postural Aspects of Malocclusion" which I spent several days copying by hand. The description of the procedures through which he had worked with his spastic son led to a fascinating series of experiments on myself, initially on my own, later with help from my wife. This experience gave us both an insight into human movement quite new to us, and completely in line with what we had understood of Alexander's work with which we had been familiar for 12 years.

As luck would have it, Professor Dart was passing through London on his way from South Africa to Philadelphia at the start of his long connection with the Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential. We made telephone contact which led to an invitation to visit Philadelphia on our return to the USA.

This was an exciting time for all of us. After our initial meeting at which we demonstrated the connection we had made between his work and Alexander's we said goodbye and watched Dart running down the hill to his quarters, as he told us the following day, to read what it was he had written 25 years earlier!

That winter we spent a week as his guests at an Intensive Orientation Course. The work of the institutes seemed to reinforce what Dart had done. From then on, I became an avid collector of Dartiana.

The Dart Procedures have been circulating for some time in manuscript. They have been re-written and re-illustrated with the help of many willing collaborators, notably Gretchen Sommers. The Procedures have been tried out as part of the training of Alexander Teachers at the Urbana Center for the Alexander Technique for the past 8 years.

It is necessary to add that working with these Procedures will not teach one the Alexander Technique, but patient and intelligent investigation by one with no Alexander experience may still lead to a certain enlightenment by revealing inefficient patterns of movement and helping to discard them.

Undertaken with the guidance of a skilled Alexander teacher, they are a constant source of insight and a point of reference in one's patterns of behaviour. One can continually return to these as to Alexander's "positions of mechanical advantage" in which category they certainly belong.

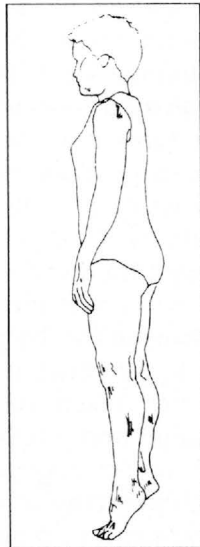
*"Man can only look ahead
as far as he can look back."*

Dart has often said "Man can only look ahead as far as he can look back." These patterns take us back to the origins of human movement and open up corresponding vistas for our future as mobile human beings.

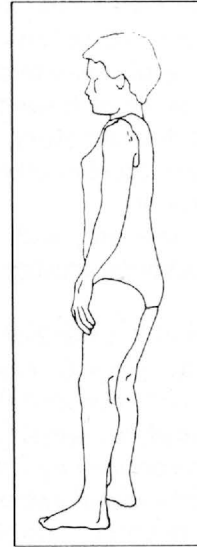
One of my life-long interests has been playing the flute — a very ancient human skill and currently a very popular one. Correcting and balancing the one-sided development ensuing from this is only one example of the benefits which have accrued to me from the stimulus of 18 years of friendship with this remarkable human being.

I hope that, whatever your skilled interests, you will have the patience to experiment with these patterns of movement, aided by an Alexander teacher if available, but if not, on your own, and that the results which come from reading these papers will carry you on to the development of ever greater, more rewarding human and humane skills.

STANDING TO FOETAL CROUCH



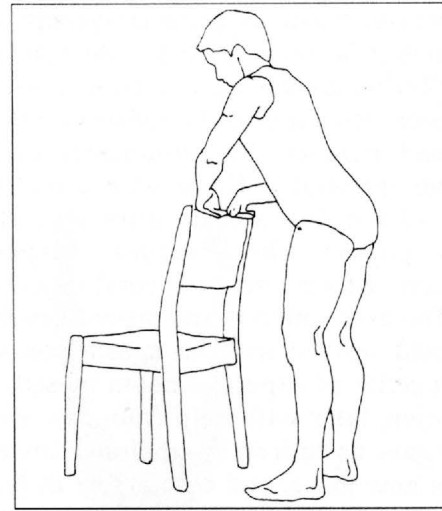
i. Standing on toes



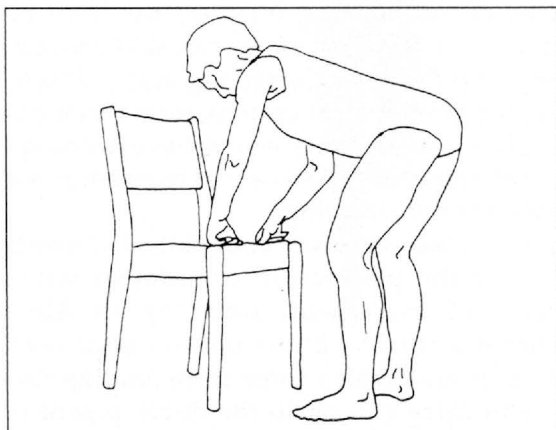
ii. Normal standing



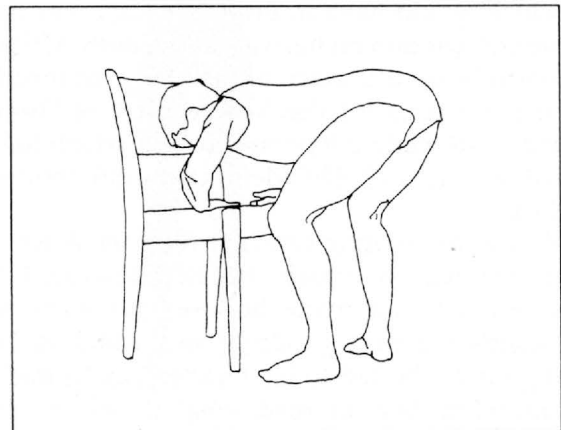
iii. Shallow monkey



iv. Anthropoidal (RAD) - knuckles on chair

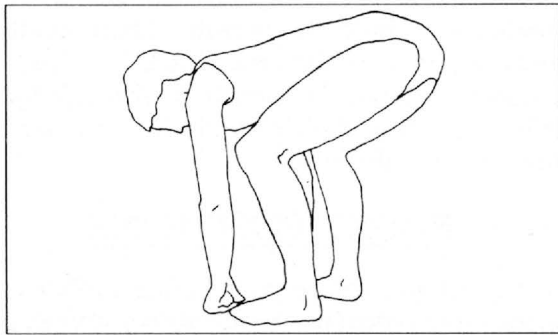


v. Deeper anthropoidal - knuckles on seat

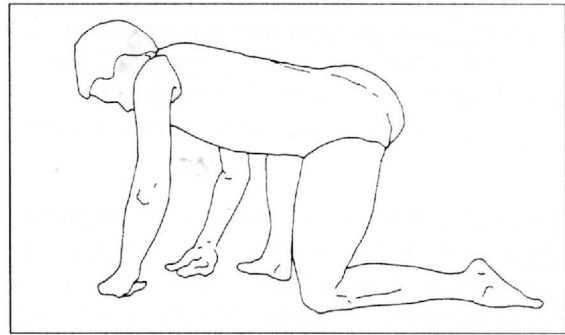


vi. Tarsoid - palms down on chair

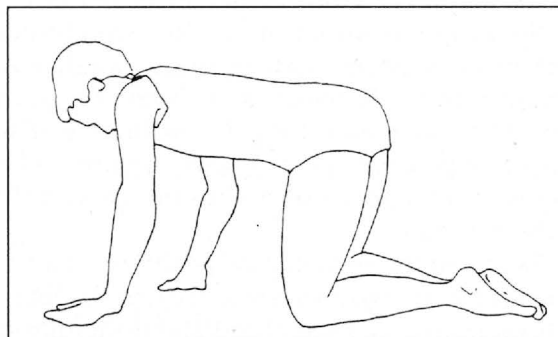
PRACTICAL PROCEDURES



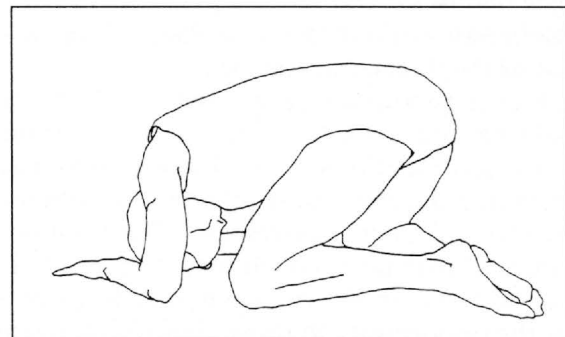
vii. Anthroipodal - knuckles on floor



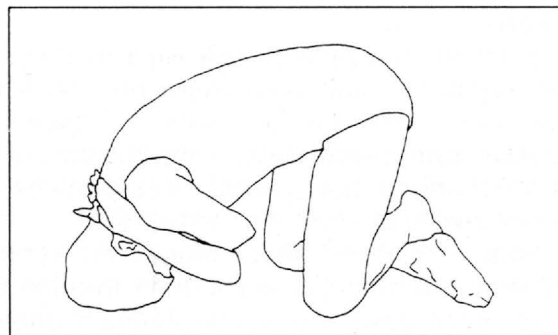
viii. Pre-creeping



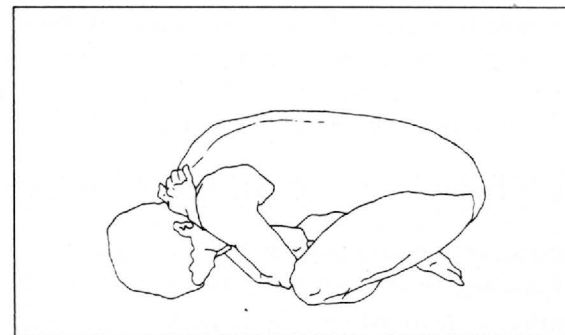
ix. Creeping - Quadrupedal



x. Pentapodal - Cranial-globe, elbows, knees



xi. Pre-foetal



xii. Foetal Crouch

Dart first began this kind of program a few years before he was 50 and continued intermittently for over 30 years. My own 20 years experience has been beneficial in the most unexpected directions.

These are not exercises. Though muscular work is being done in response to gravity, this is a process of self-examination. What is perceived in the way of aches and pains, disturbing or other emotional experiences, may be noted, which will enable the path of progress to be retraced in tranquillity.

The "procedures" as we presented them to Professor Dart in 1967 were habitually done in the following sequence (see illustrations on the previous pages):

1. Start on the toes - when this is done with the assistance of a skilled teacher, the primary control is activated and the whole system is tonified.
2. Shallow monkey positions. Hands on the back of the chair.
3. Knuckles on the back of the chair. This relates to what Dart calls "Anthropoid" progression in the "Postural Aspects of Malocclusion."
4. Knuckles on the seat of the chair. The limbs are gradually folding - approximating more nearly to a creeping position.

The continuation until the final Foetal Crouch is a reversal of the developmental sequence.

Each change should be guided by the teacher maintaining the activity of the primary control. These are all "positions of mechanical advantage" for improving the conditions present. As Alexander says in *Man's Supreme Inheritance*: "The Position of Mechanical Advantage, which may or may not be a normal position, is the position which gives the teacher the opportunity to bring about, with his own hands, a co-ordinated condition in the subject."

The "Procedures" are informative to anyone who will do them patiently and openly. When guided by a skilled teacher they are an invaluable addition to the repertoire of natural movements, the facilitation of which is part of the Alexander teacher's responsibility. Experience has shown the initial sequence - from the upright to the foetal - to be the most fruitful with the assistance of a teacher.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The conditions under which bodily mobility is explored should be as favourable as can be devised.

1. Choose a draught-free floor with a firm but soft covering (rug, carpet or large towel).

2. Wear comfortable clothing - or none at all.
3. Experiment daily (as frequently as desired) for short periods. Moderation is the byword. It is better to stop while interested than to continue compulsively when tired or bored.
4. Do not expect instant or remarkable changes. Though they may occur, a small, regular improvement over a long period is more likely.
5. BREATHING: If in any position you discover a tendency to hold the breath, exhale gently but audibly (in a whispered AAAH, a hiss, or a whistle) through the mouth, or through the nostrils, then close the lips and allow the air to return through the nose.

BASIC POSITIONS

In order to explore your bodily mobility, start from the basic positions: semi-supine, supine, prone, crouch. Move in step-wise progression from a position of absolute security and stability to one requiring some degree of skill in balancing and in which there is an initial sense of insecurity. The basic positions, when maintained for 10 or 15 minutes without strain, bring about a gradual alteration in the balance of the musculature, whether flexed or extended. By drawing attention to the weight-bearing parts of each bone, each position familiarizes us with them in a way which is or should be, devoid of fear. (The fear of falling is instinctive. Each of these basic positions is completely secure - when the body is in intimate contact with the ground there is nowhere to fall.)

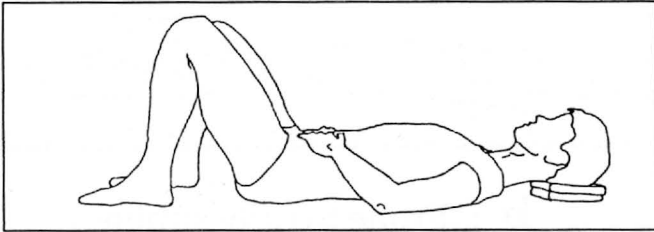
Begin in the semi-supine position. Read a magazine article or enjoy a record. Extend the legs, slide the book from under your head and from fully supine roll slowly over into the prone position. Five minutes in this posture can be followed by five in crouch, which can be smoothly attained by placing the hands close to the shoulders (in prone) and using head and hands to move the tail backwards over the knees.

Familiarize yourself with each of these positions, separately and then consecutively. Make a daily (preferably midday) habit of spending a half-hour resting your body, using the time in intelligent self-observation, noting what happens when you move some piece or other of yourself.

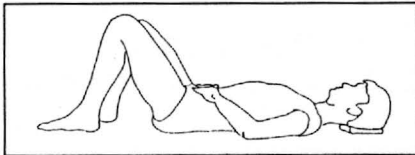
Note: To stand after lying in the supine or semi-supine position, first roll over into the prone position, then slowly rise up, beginning on the hands and knees (see the anti-gravity progression).

THE BASIC POSITIONS

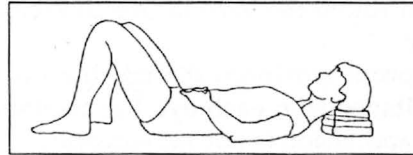
I : Semi Supine



Lie on the back, the feet drawn up towards the tail as closely as possible without strain. Rest the head on a pile of books to maintain a normal curvature of the neck. The hands rest palm downwards on the junction of ribs and abdomen.

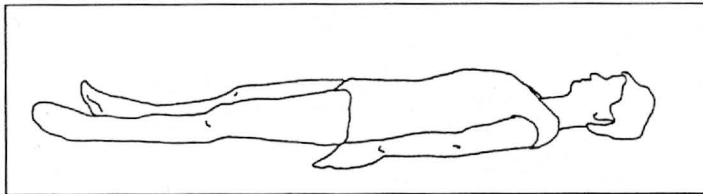


i) With too few books the head falls back and the lower back leaves the floor.



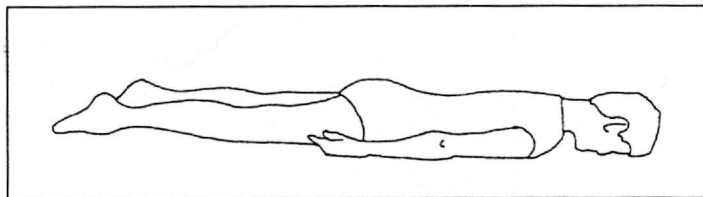
ii) With too many books the larynx is depressed.

Ia : Fully Supine (for rotational movement)



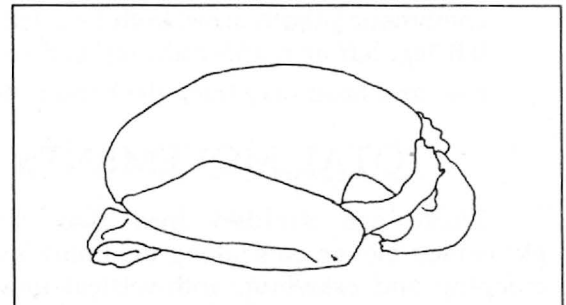
Start in semi-supine, remove books and align feet along the floor to straighten legs. The abdominal muscles should not tighten unduly if the weight of the leg is supported by the floor.

II : Fully Prone



Lie face downwards on the floor. A large book (telephone directory) or slim cushion may be placed under the chest if this is found to ease the strain on the head and neck. The legs extended, feet relaxed, arms by the sides with the backs of the hands on the floor. Limbs and body flexed.

III : Crouch



The body rests on the knees, elbows and head. The arms cross the chest and fingers intertwine around the neck. The ankles cross under the tail.

THE BASIC MOVEMENTS I :

Starting from the basic positions make the smallest possible movements, which gradually expand, until what begins as a movement of the eye becomes a movement of the whole body.

PARTIAL MOVEMENTS

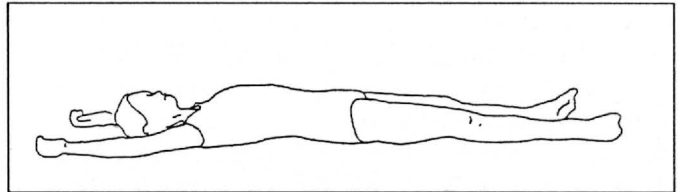
Explore the following according to your inclination and the time available.

1. **Eye movements:** Keep the head still but explore the field of vision closing one eye, then the other, then with both open. Look up, down, left and right, then rotate the eyes in one direction then the other.
Note: In the prone position, though the eyes may see simultaneously, each eye has its own field of vision and vision is not stereoscopic.
2. **Head movements:** Move the head on the neck in all directions, using the eyes to explore all corners of the room (vision may then be stereoscopic). Notice the effect of occluding one eye with the hand (or a shield). Movement of the head in the direction of the closed eye is then facilitated.
3. **Arm movements:** Keep the hand in contact with the floor and investigate all the possible movements of the fingers, wrist, forearm and whole arm.
4. **Leg movements:** Keep the foot (heel, toes or side of foot) in contact with the ground. The left foot may move along the right leg and vice versa. The increased tactile inflow from the skin of a passive limb assists smooth movement. Explore limb movements first singly, then in combination (both arms, both legs, left arm and left leg, left arm and right leg and so on). The eyes and head may track the hand or foot.

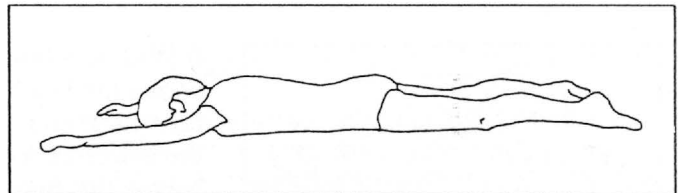
TOTAL MOVEMENTS

These are divided into two categories. Horizontal movements (along the floor) by rotation, creeping and crawling, and vertical movements (against gravity). The importance of rotational movements cannot be over-emphasized. Crawling (on the belly) and creeping (on all fours) have been extensively dealt with the writings of Delacato to which you should refer if these movements have not been part of your developmental experience.

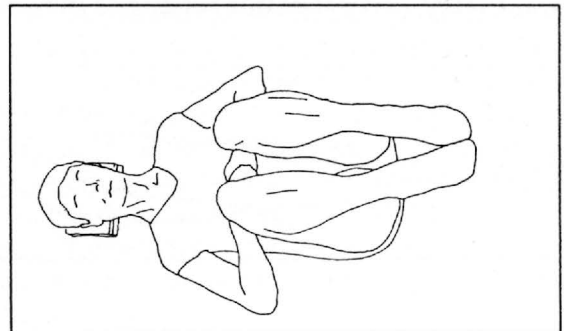
IV a : Fully supine to prone



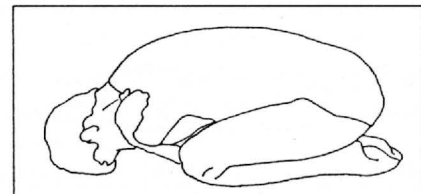
b : Prone to fully supine



c : From semi-supine to crouch

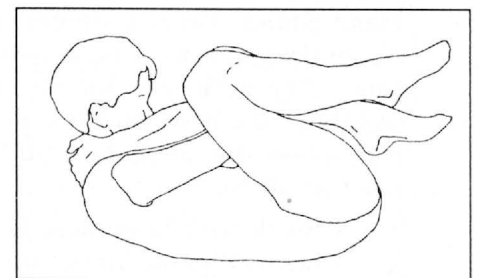
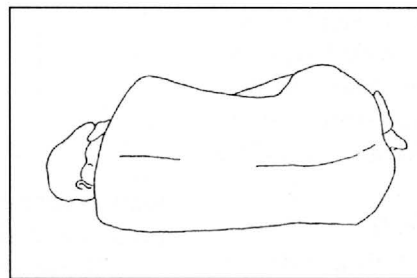
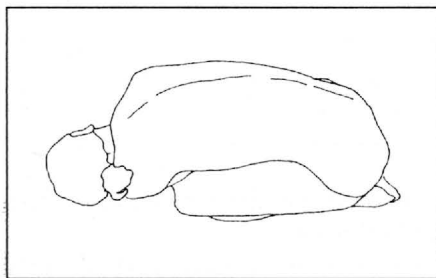
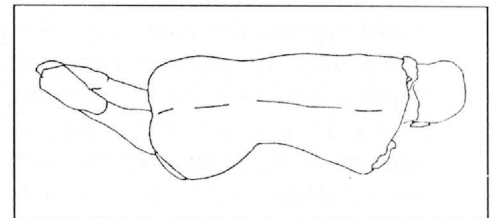
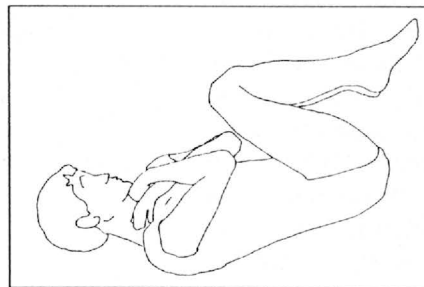
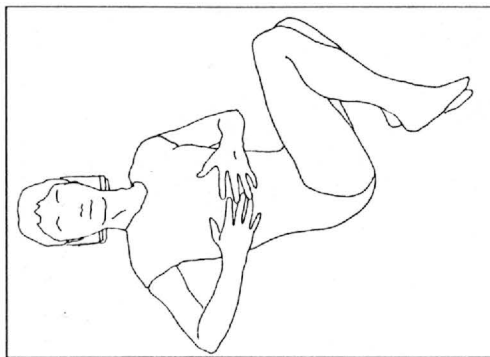
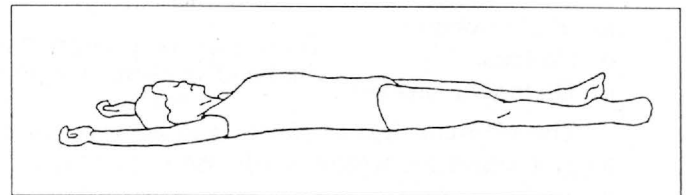
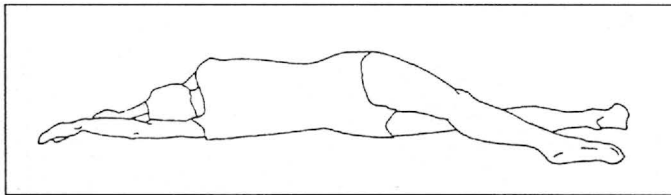
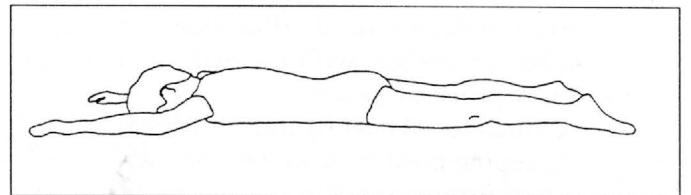
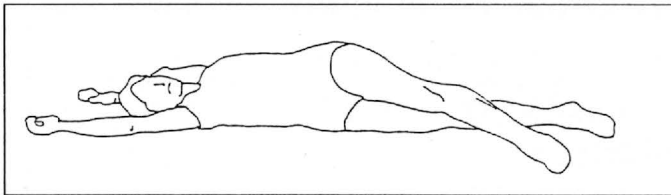


d : Crouch to semi-supine



Rotational movements: Try these in both directions, to the left and then the right. In particular, experiment in turning to the side which seems the least natural to you. When rolling over move as slowly as possible, pause when the body is poised ready to fall, and note any tendency to strain or hold the

ROTATIONAL MOVEMENTS



breath, which should then be exhaled as suggested with whispered aah.

a. Fully supine to prone.

b. Prone to fully supine.

These movements may be led by the head, an arm or a leg.

c. From semi-supine to crouch.

d. Crouch to semi-supine. Rolling over from this position can be done in a number of ways. Remember to do it as slowly as possible. Notice the difference between the moment of fall when the eyes are open and when they are closed.

THE BASIC MOVEMENTS II:

V. Anti-gravity movements: These movements begin on the floor and progress by degrees into the upright position (and ultimately, into the leap, when all contact with the earth is removed).

- a. Fully prone to crouch.
- b. Crouch to (i) heel haunch (ii) squat.
- c. Creeping position from heel haunch.
- d. Squat from creeping.
- e. Clambering (squat with knuckles or palms on chair).
- f. Semi-upright. Tail or head against corner.
- g. Fully upright.
- h. On toes. } These may be practised with
- i. On toes on one leg. } the head in contact with the wall.

The ultimate test of poise is to achieve the one-legged stand on tiptoe, with the eyes closed, and then to hop confidently. A true leap in the dark is the step without which nothing new can be learnt.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

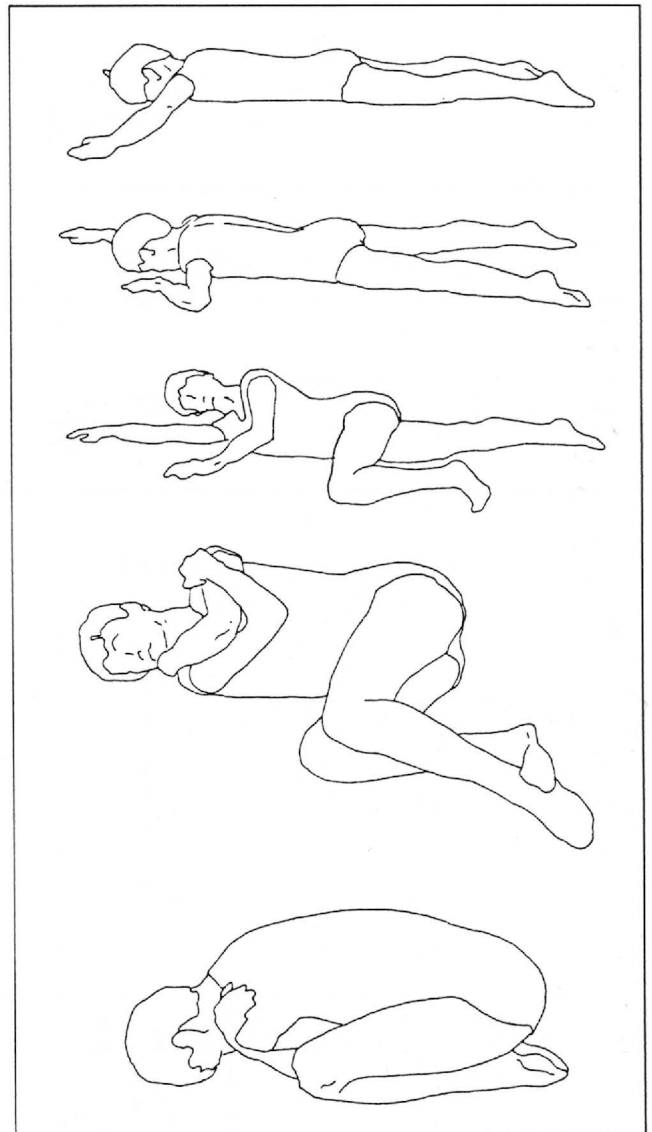
Some of the rotational movements carried out on the floor may be practised with advantage in the vertical plane. For example make contact with the head against the wall. Turn the body as far as possible until it becomes necessary to turn the head again. You will have spun full circle. When you work in contact with the wall, it represents a change of 90 degrees in the body relationship to the gravitation field, as compared with a similar movement made on the floor. A further change (180 degrees) can be made as follows.

Head Stand: Do not attempt this if it causes any discomfort and do not maintain it for any length of time. The neck was not intended to bear the full weight of the body and this posture is only beneficial when the weight is pulling away from the head at all times.

1. Crouch with head close to the wall.
2. Uncross legs and arms, turn toes to the ground, place arms near shoulders.
3. Straighten legs to raise tail.
4. Bring feet and back as close to wall as possible.
5. Flex legs and straighten to send tail against wall.
6. Flex legs in head-stand position.
7. Straighten legs against wall.

If this can be accomplished without strain and breath-holding, attempt the head-stand free of the

V a : Fully prone to crouch



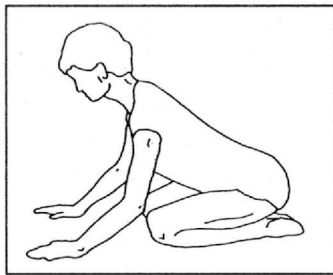
wall remembering that at no time must there be pressure on the head and neck.

These are but a few of the potential directions in which the student of poise may experiment. When each is part of a progressive sequence with a familiar beginning, you will find you can accomplish with ease and confidence movements which hitherto seemed impossible. What is possible is limited only by the imagination of your mind and the flexibility of your body, both of which cannot fail to benefit by repetition of the experiences outlined above.

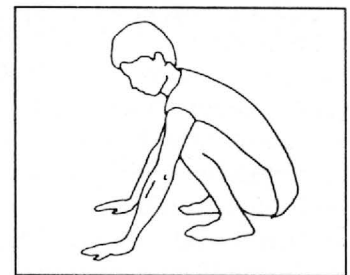
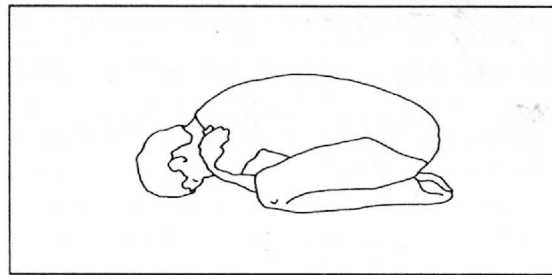
ANTI - GRAVITY MOVEMENTS

These are movements which begin on the floor and progress by degrees into the upright position.

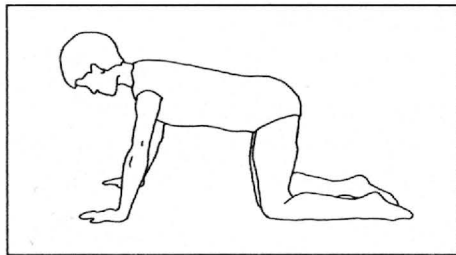
b : Crouch by movement of the tail over the feet



to i) heel haunch



or ii) squat

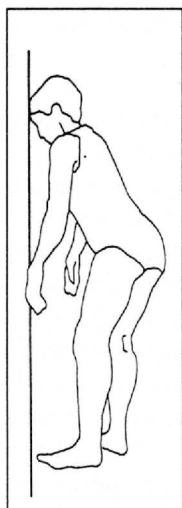


c : Creeping position from heel haunch

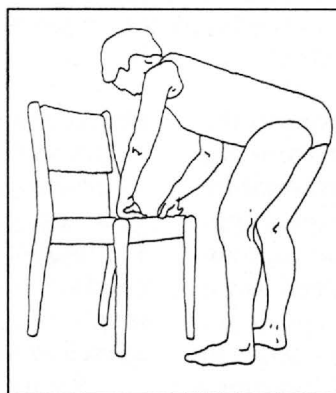
d : Squat from creeping



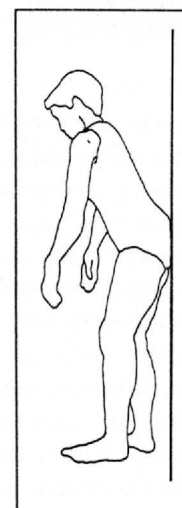
g : Fully Upright



f : Semi-upright. Head against corner



e : Clambering (squat with knuckles on chair)



f : Semi-upright. Tail against corner



g : Fully Upright