

WHY YOGA AND STRETCHING EXERCISES DON'T CORRECT STRUCTURAL IMBALANCE, and How to Be More Effective in Your Stretching

Stretching definitely helps. But done alone, it rarely aligns structures, and for many people, doesn't even create much length. There are two general reasons why. One has to do with the body's condition. The other has to do with the stretching methods.

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In the body condition, when the fascia's hard, it doesn't stretch very easily, if at all. Or just the softer areas stretch and the harder spots stay just as short as before. Plus, some tight areas get what I call interlocked; a number of tight parts are keeping each other from lengthening. **Further**, when the **fascial sacks around adjacent muscles are stuck to each other**, the stretching doesn't spread them apart; it tries to lengthen a bunch of muscles that can't fully do so.

But I do recommend stretching, and it can be done much easier after these problems are corrected with the Bodywork. Yet, there are also a number of problems in the way most people stretch.

First of all, many people stretch only for joint mobility; it's so they feel "warmed up." This does not create much new fascial length between the joints where a tremendous amount of shortness remains. This method helps relieve "muscle tightness" but it doesn't improve the condition of "fascial shortness". They're two different things and I'll explain the difference in the upcoming section on the difference between this Bodywork and massage.

A second problem is that many people try to stretch long areas all at once. They'll feel a "give" and think they're done, but they've only gotten some of the softer tissue to give way along a whole line of muscles. There are also other parts that are being held by other, interconnected muscles located in another part of the body's "system."

If you modify your technique, more length can be created with stretching than with the usual methods. Fascia lengthens when we bring blood into the area to soften the tissue. And you can get the blood and warmth in there by stretching one little section at a time.

Here's a technique. You just keep your mind focused "inside" the area of the muscle tissue you're wanting to lengthen. You take your consciousness from your head and put it in the muscles. Pull the fascia from "inside" this area, and also keep the rest of your body from tensing up.

Then you move along step by step, pulling the fibers of collagen through the fluid of the fascia, a few inches of length at a time. Feel a spreading of the tissue, like bread dough or window putty, through each section lengthwise, and from one side of the arm, leg or torso to another.

Pull the length over a long section of the whole body, so each area that lengthens enables the other areas in that line to lengthen. It become like a long "taffy pull." After pulling a number of areas, go back to the earlier areas and notice how much more that can now go.

A third shortcoming in the way stretching is commonly done, is that lot of yoga, in particular, tries to create more spinal flexibility, but without doing *adequate* stretching for the legs, pelvis and arms. It's physically impossible to get the spine to lengthen fully, and easily, without lengthening the limbs. They have too many interconnections into the torso muscles. Some people even get pains in their backs when they try to do a stretch for the spine while their thighs and buttocks are still very bunched up.

This problem of interconnected shortness causes lots of other difficulties. Many stretching positions don't allow the fascia in between the joints to lengthen, again because the emphasis is just on stretching at the joints. The positions keep some muscles tight while trying to lengthen others. That will indeed create stretch at the joints. But that kind of tensing actually prevents the fascia in the other, interconnected areas from lengthening out. **To be most effective, we must lengthen the body in an interconnected way. And I explain this principle in my other books & articles. The technique just above can help you pull and spread fascia, inter-connectedly, in all your stretching and yoga positions.**

If you do stretch a lot, you can, of course reduce tension and avoid some injury. But all the athletic trainers I've seen have a lot of bunched-up tissue. And even senior yoga students and teachers I have seen, have misaligned structures. I've even treated six of them. **I've found that most stretching instructors don't know very much, if anything, about Structural Integration and lengthening fascia. So adding the Bodywork treatment, and this stretching information, can make your stretching better as well as improve your physical performance.**

After your fascia has been softened with the Bodywork manipulations and you've been Structurally Integrated, even partially, you'll most likely be able to stretch much better and even pull yourself back into proper alignment after you bunch-up from daily activities. Firm massage will also spread more tissue than it did before and move more fluids and waste products out of the muscles. So they'll do more for you.

In my work I show people ways to lengthen the fascia in all the parts, not just the ones that give easily. And I teach where to lengthen to get the body aligned, no matter what treatment you want to use. Then I teach Integrated Movement techniques that show you how to use your body in a new way, in your daily activities, to take advantage of the abilities of your improved structure. **You can obtain my Structural Stretching tape and booklet for your own use.**