

Veronika Wiethaler

Connecting pelvic floor
and postural exercises

For women and men

Translation by Tim Fritz

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Warning: the instructions presented in this book and DVD have a purely educative and informative scope and are not intended to substitute medical advice. Before undertaking any activity, we recommend consulting your doctor. The author does not assume responsibility for any damage or injury, caused directly or indirectly by the information contained in this manual.

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»»»»» Introduction

Pelvic floor exercises and vertebral exercises, put in relation to one another, carry a reciprocal advantage. The health of the back improves notably when an awareness of the body and the delicate pelvic floor exercises, attained through a course of pelvic exercise, are applied with knowledge.

Once awareness of the activation of the perineal muscles has been achieved, it becomes natural to integrate the muscle layers at the base of the pelvis in broader movements, as proposed by the vertebral exercises.

Those looking to take care of the back or the abdominals with vertebral exercises, or similar approaches, can find useful encouragement, new concepts and various prospects to render the exercises more efficient and curative. A conscious participation of the musculature of the pelvic floor helps to make the hips more mobile and acts as a container for the abdominal organs during abdominal exercises when mobility of the coccyx or tailbone is developed and the vertebral column returns to being used in its original length: from the top of the head to the tailbone.

The coccyx, or tailbone, is fundamental for developing pelvic floor tone. Important muscles that support the organs of the pelvis start from the tailbone. In contractions and extensions, a toned and flexible pelvic floor functions like a trampoline. Proper tone allows a flexible reaction to breathing, to coughs and to sneezing. It functions as a supporter of the body, letting the vertebral column return to carrying out its function as a flexible antenna, instead of being obligated to maintaining the posture. Its strength, which is expressed on a horizontal plane, makes the hips more flexible and lightens the work of the legs, which also starts from the pelvic floor. Walking gains security and it benefits the mobility of the hips.

With joy and satisfaction, I have worked in the last few years with the elderly, women, before and after giving birth, men after prostate surgery, obstetricians, students of motor sciences, yoga teachers, physiotherapists osteopaths, and Shiatsu practitioners.

Making this new awareness accessible through the anatomy and movement of a very confined part of the body, burdened with moral implication, connected to the sexual sphere of the individual, but incredibly useful for experiencing a more aware birth, preventing incontinence, reducing the risk of prolapses, relieving back ache, discovering new sensations in sexuality, has brought serenity and comfort, not to mention happiness, to those who have discovered this part of their body.

On every occasion, with both professional and amateur figures, the teaching of the exercises is preceded by the introduction of the anatomical structures involved. It is a precise method of learning anatomy, which includes images of anatomy, the use of elastic bands and touch. This creative approach allows one to start a positive relationship with the pelvic floor area. The objective of the initial lesson is to reach a clear and elementary vision of the architecture of the pelvic floor and of the pelvic bones that are involved with it.

Gaining awareness of one's anatomy and mastering one's body are fundamental when it comes to being precise in the starting of defined movements. For example, a movement that starts from the tailbone can have different paths defined in the surrounding space, with a consequent effect of the movement on the musculature. Although it seems difficult to start a movement from the tailbone at the beginning, even individuals of an advanced age have discovered this new, and in reality, ancient possibility with enthusiasm. We are mammals and nearly all mammals endowed with a tail, use it. In early childhood, the tailbone has a fundamental role in the conquest of the new world. Watching babies in the first years of life, the presence, usefulness and function of the "tail" becomes very obvious.

The anatomical terms will reappear continuously in the lessons. The exercises become a game in which the object is anatomy. This

stimulates the nervous system in two ways, the anatomical terms produce the effect of visualizing the position in the body and the point visualized like this, sends back proprioceptive *feedback*. The perception of the bodily structures will deepen and become more immediate. Coordination capacity comes about intrinsically and more quickly.

With knowledge of one's own anatomy, a confidence is reawakened in our body like that which we had as babies. It becomes ours again. The confidence that our body can function in the most natural way, becomes more and more real by exploring it.

The recreational aspect, that can be discovered in the numerous exercises with the two small *Sensyballs*, the soft medium large *Softgym Over ball* and the large *Gymnic Classic Plus BRQ ball*, frees us from the vision of exercise aimed at the realization of the "perfect" body. It promotes mobility and openness towards new and unexpected possibilities of movement.

After a cycle of ten lessons, people of any age or sex are able to identify and mobilize their coccyx, ischiopubic rami and the group of three muscle layers of the pelvic floor.

The text offers a brief introduction to the pelvic floor exercises, and then proceeds with their integration into the vertebral exercises.

»»»»» How muscle tone is developed

When we think about the vertebral column, many of us think of the back. If we have to straighten or align the back, we turn our attention towards the dorsal muscles, trying to pull the shoulders back and keeping ourselves straight with the strength of the posterior musculature. Proceeding in this way, we are using the superficial musculature of the back. Have you ever thought about the anterior or side parts of the vertebral column to achieve an erect position?

Observing small babies, we see a natural vivacity that keeps them aligned. The column moves because the baby is moved by curiosity about something, or someone. Its senses are always alert. While they are moving, babies are in a relationship with what is around them, or with themselves. The activity arises from a relationship.



When we adults take up an exercise course, the motivation to exercise often comes from an obligation, that is, from an internal pressure that is often linked to an ideal representation of what we would like to become.

Such an attitude prevents us from placing the exercise in a relationship with the space around us, because we are too occupied with ourselves and we remain prisoners of our limited intention for the body. So much exercise is recommended and followed without any real consideration of the space that surrounds us.

Feel the difference in movement

Try this exercise for a moment to feel the difference in your body doing the same movement in two different ways.

Get on your hands and knees with your head and tailbone projected towards the wall. Now, go back into a crouching position. Feel the strength used in the arms and the quality of the movement. Now, go back and repeat the movement in this way, extending your tailbone, and imagining a string attached to it. Someone is standing behind you and pulling your tailbone back. Now, start first from the tailbone and bring yourself into the same position as before, crouched. Compare these two methods a number of times, in order to feel the different sensations in the body. If you have the chance to watch another person, try to understand what difference there is between one movement and the other.



Starting position with the tailbone at rest



The tailbone extends towards the wall



Paul uses the coccyx to reach a new level of movement: on his hands and knees

Return to the upright position on your hands and knees pushing with the legs. Return to a crouching position. Now, imagine that a string is coming out of the top of your head and someone is pulling it forward, keep your glance upon the floor. Also here, feel the differences that you find between the two different approaches to the same kind of movement.



The head pulls, the inferior ischial rami move forward