

© Henry Fagg 2015

- The ideas in this slideshow are copyright. Please do not copy, reproduce, imitate, wholly or in part, without written permission.

10 Ways the Alexander Technique will help your string playing and teaching

ESTA Workshop (November 2015)

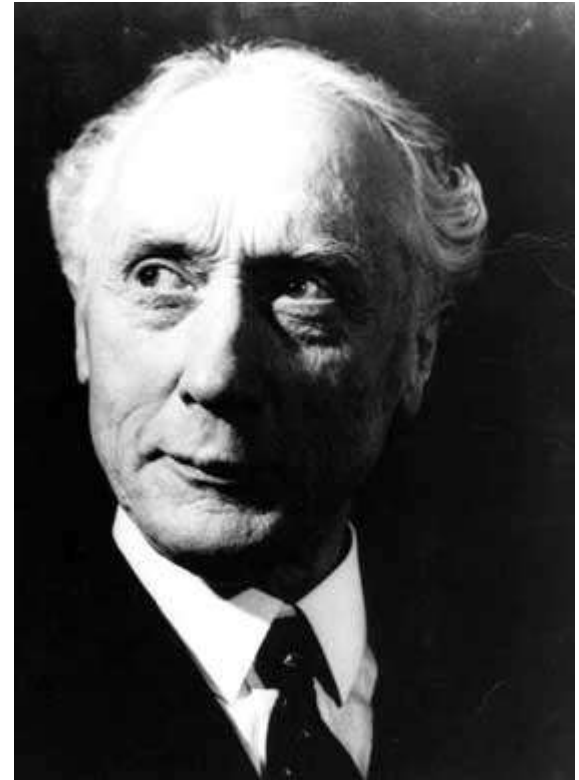
Presentation by Henry Fagg, mSTAT

Why might a musician use the Alexander Technique?



- Improved practice*: pain-free practice, increased sensitivity and greater technical accuracy in movement
- Improved performance*: better communication, help with performance anxiety
- Dealing with discomfort*: carrying instruments, unsuitable chairs, rehearsals involving long periods of sitting etc
- Dealing with emotional and psychological stress*
- Overall health benefits outside the music setting*: improved coordination, self esteem etc

- FM focused on: Use/ Misuse (like driving a car...)
- FM recognized the intimate connection between mind and body ('psychophysical unity')
- FM realised that the importance of attending to the whole self in activity



FM Alexander (1869-1955)

whole.self

performance
balance
freedom
self-organisation
equilibrium
entire.body
movement
ease
body
efficiency
accuracy
sensation
muscle.synergy
buoyancy
primary.control
avoid.injury
support
spring
body
flow
stop
ease
body
wide
attention
environment
elasticity
direction
presence
comfort
health
awareness
integration
natural.movement
spirals

‘Whole self’ awareness for health, balance, freedom, efficiency, power...

‘To become an integrated and healthy musician ... you need to bring together all your capabilities in a balanced whole, in which body parts are interconnected, body and mind are interconnected, player and instrument are interconnected ... and player and music become one’ (Pedro de Alcantara, *Indirect Procedures: A Musician’s Guide to the Alexander Technique*)

It seems more useful to us not to think any more in terms of a ‘right’ and ‘left’ hand but rather of an ‘entire body’ technique. (Frederick Polnauer, *The total body technique of violin playing*)

‘The basis of all playing must be balance and physical freedom. All too often we spend our practice time working on problems of the left-hand or right, when actually what we need to do first is to find a basic balance and freedom throughout our entire system. Then everything works much more easily in the first place.’ (Simon Fischer, *The Violin Lesson*)

[T]he primary source of your body's physical power is the natural shifting of weight, or the *balancing mechanism*. ... If your balancing mechanism is not restricted, your muscles perform efficiently and work only enough to accomplish the desired motions. This creates no tension (Victor Sazer, *New Directions in Cello Playing*)

All parts of the body must be free to move at any time

In order to organise the individual parts of the body into a complete and fluent movement all of them have to be ready to move at all times. If this readiness is lacking, corrections of the equilibrium will be taken care of by tensions, which in turn diminish control. (Gerhardt Mantel, *Cello technique: principles and forms of movement*)

Conventional string teaching is usually limited to the isolated movements of the fingers hands and arms without much concern for the attitude of the body as a whole. Total body action, including the fine, almost undetectable movements of the body which occur when the player is well balanced and relaxed, often escapes attention. ... Sustained immobility in any part of the body results in static tensions, which hamper natural movements. ... When all parts of the body are free to move, the player (at any level) acquires smoother bowing and shifting skills, gains endurance, and experiences a feeling of ease and comfort. (Paul Rolland, *The Teaching of Action in String Playing*)

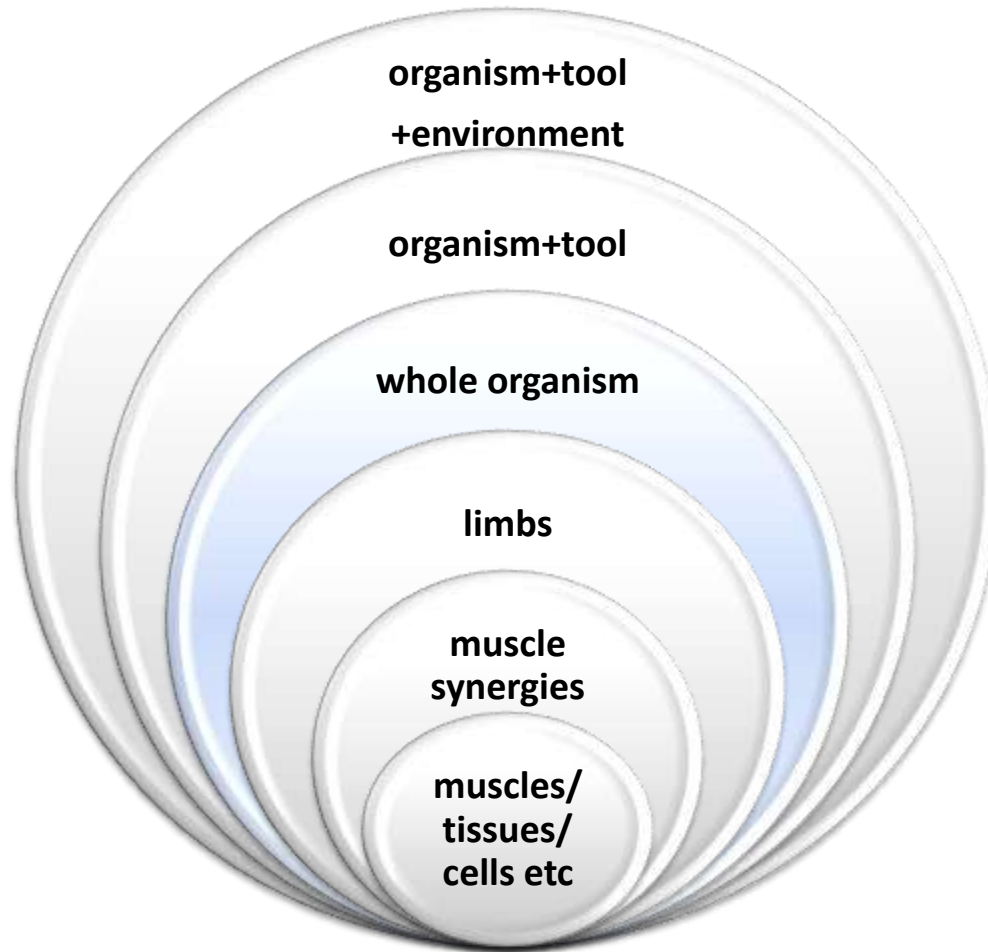
You can be absolutely *teeming* with minute movement, though it's hardly obvious on the surface... (Vivien Mackie, *Just Play Naturally*)

The body 'self-organises'

The body is wise - it would know what to do *if we were able to let it*. We have to let it teach us from the inside so that we become awake to its *sensation*. It has its own life, but can we let that operate without forcing ourselves upon it and putting it in irons? To make headway in this we have to change our approach from 'I do' to 'let it be done'. This change of concept is the key to bodily control. Let the movement happen. ... There is a world of difference between 'let the arm move' and 'I decide to move the arm'. (Herbert Whone, *The Integrated Violinist*)

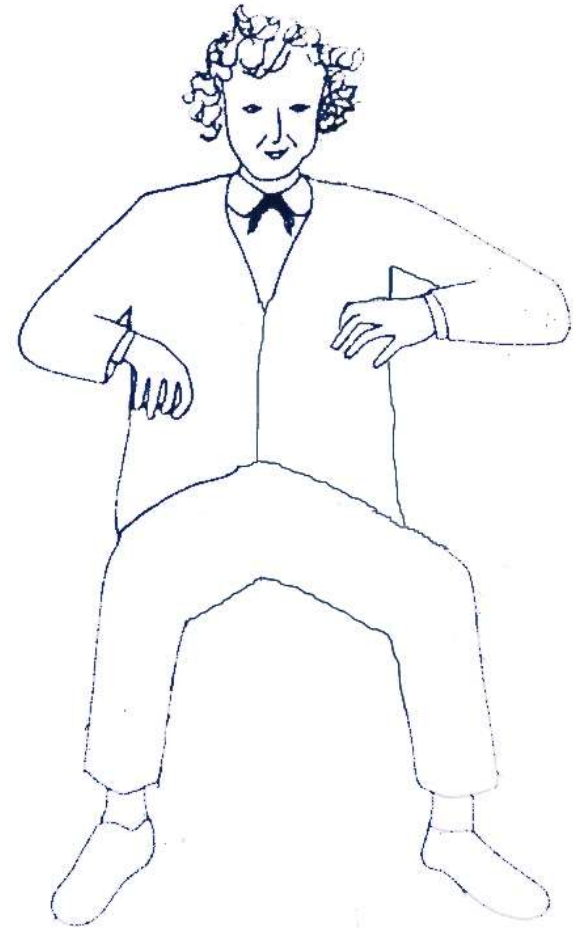
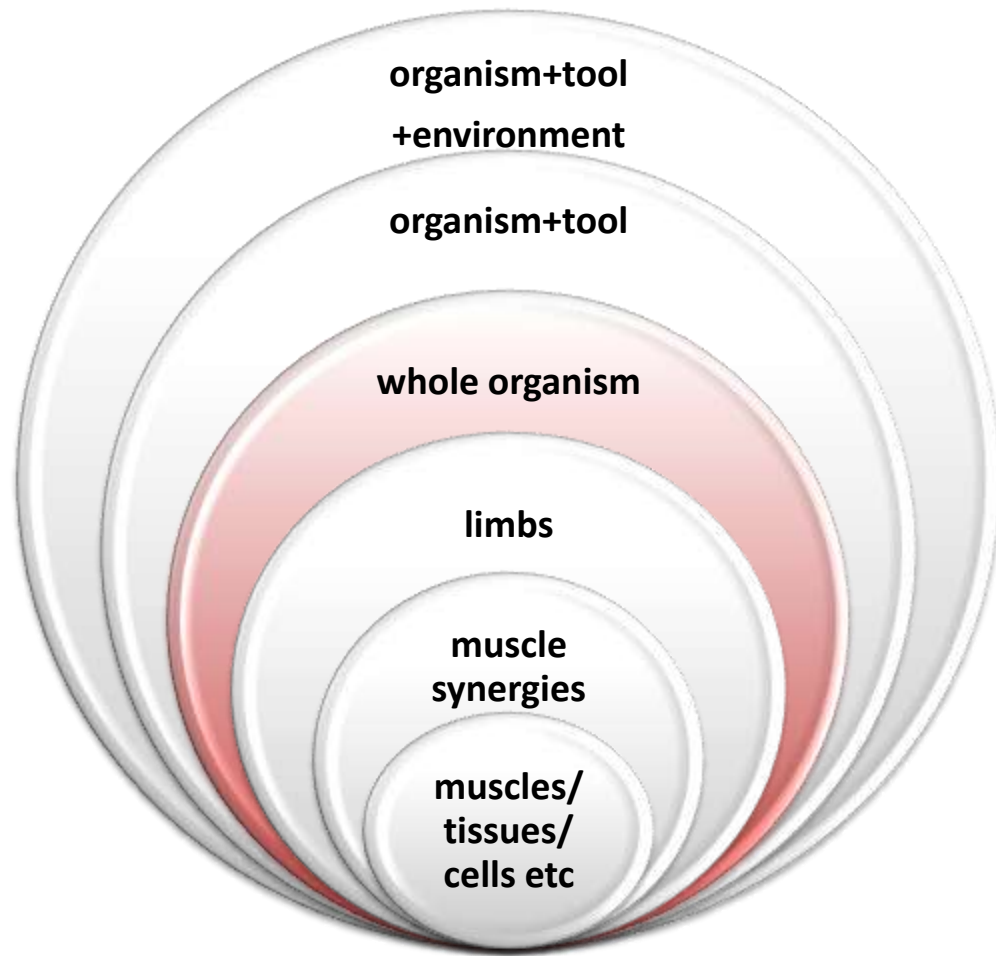
[Exercise]

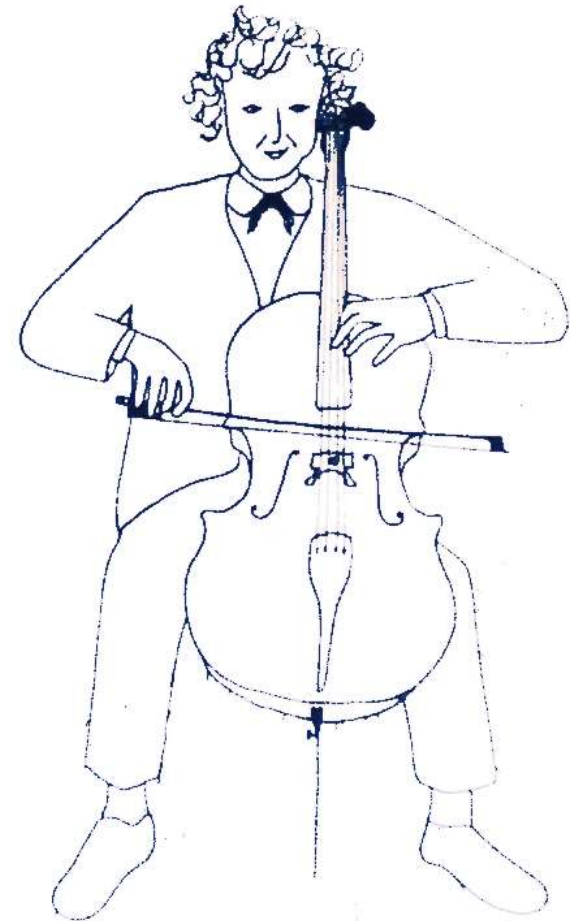
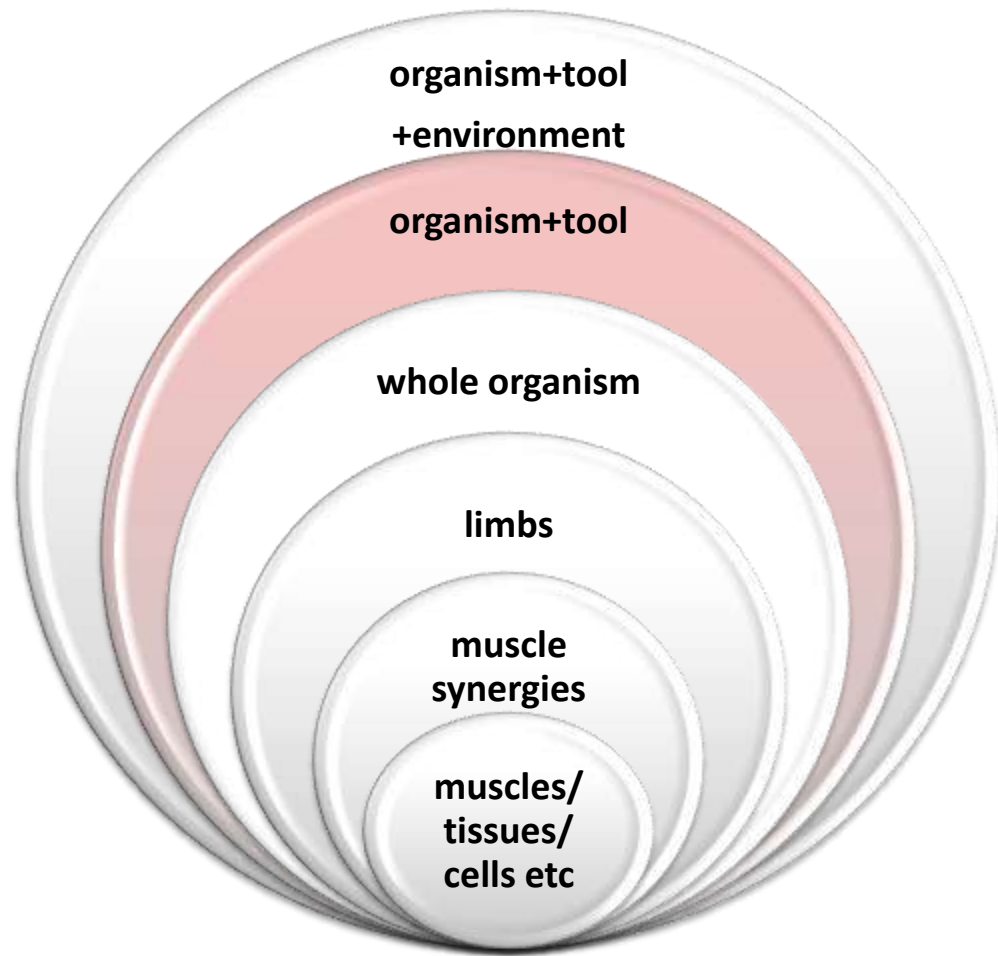
Areas we'll cover today

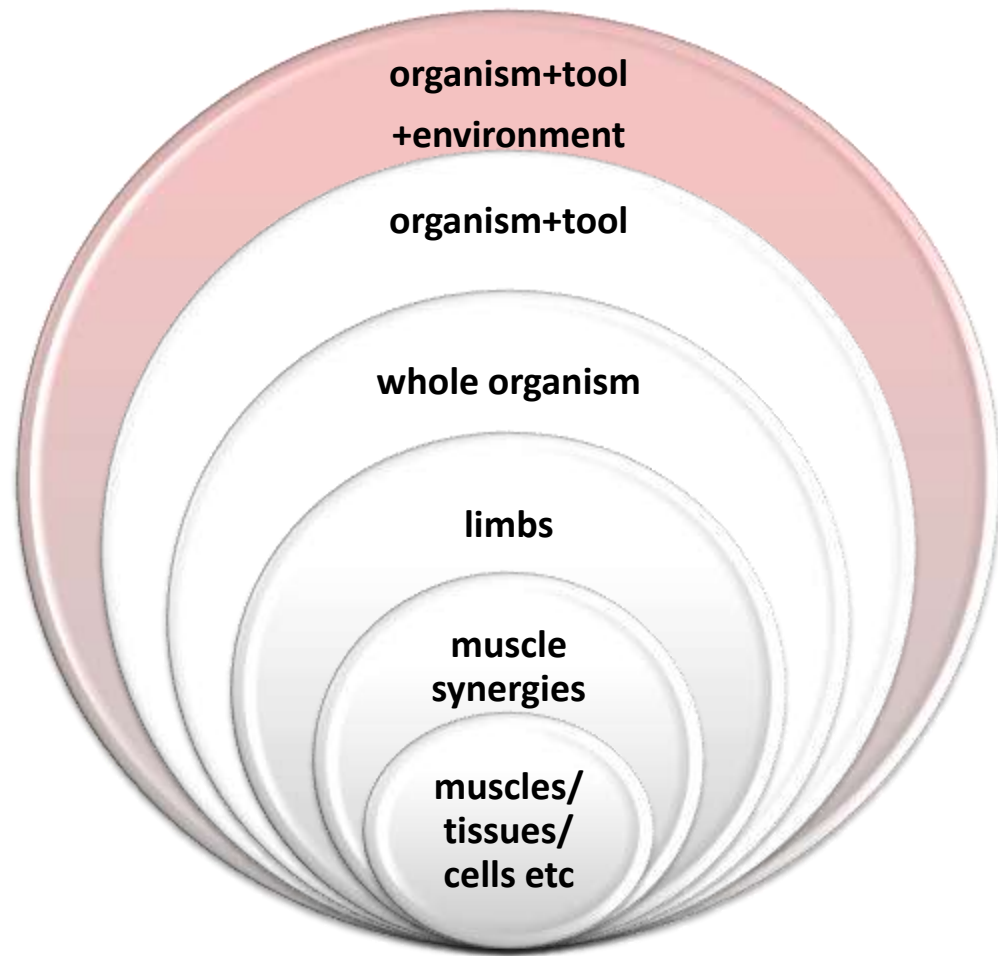


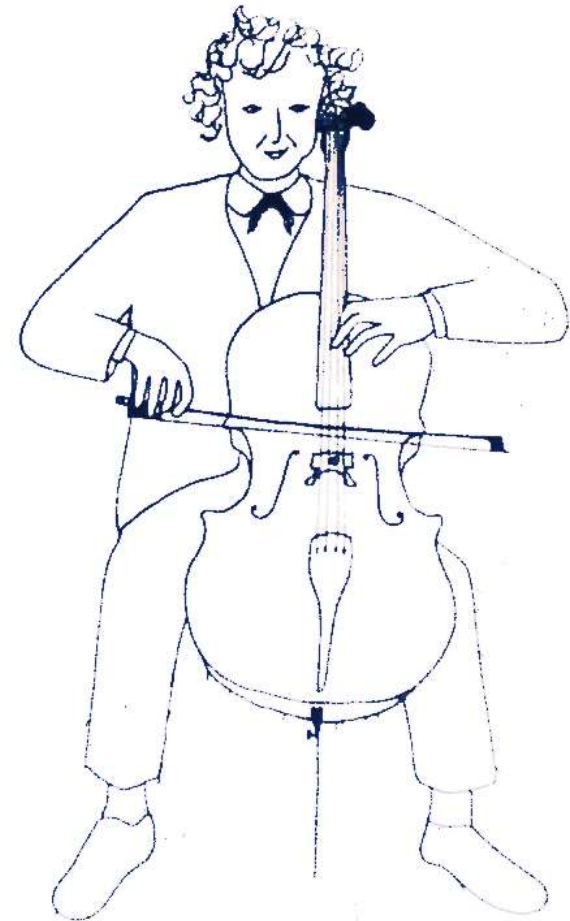
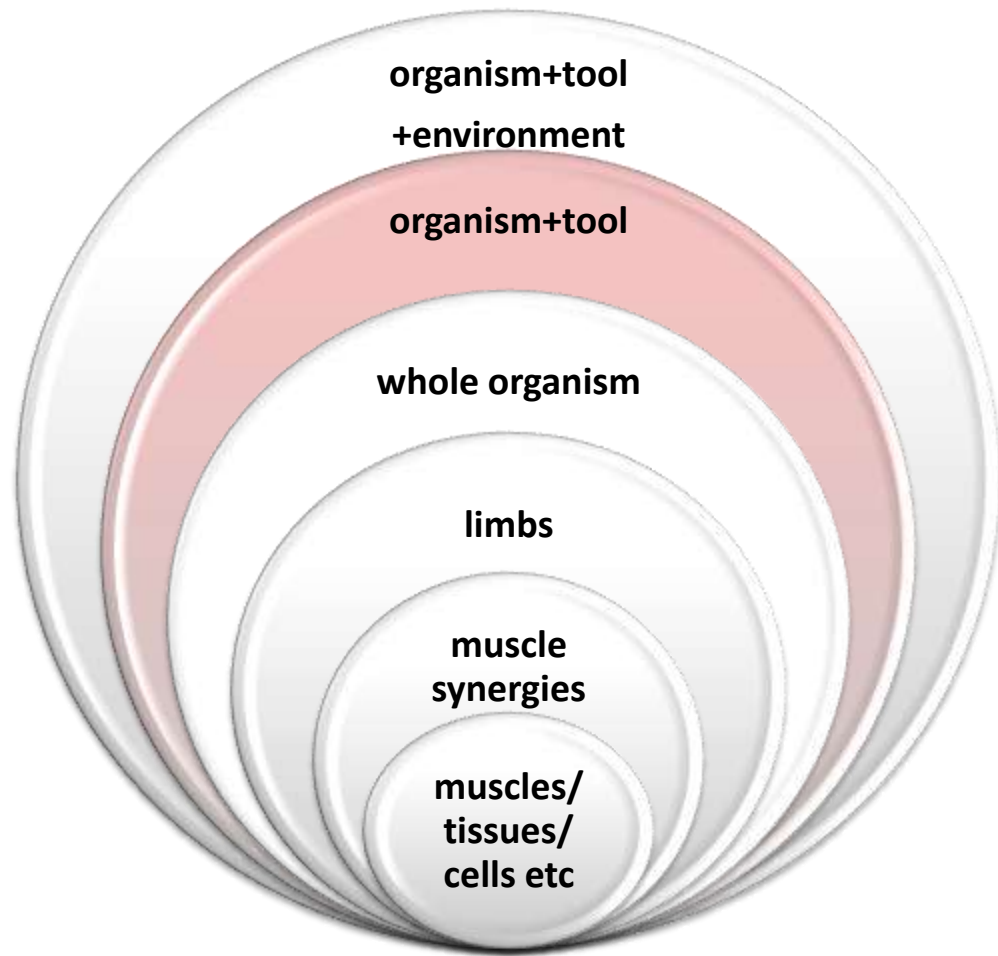
‘processes of self-organisation are attracted to patterns maximizing the stability and movement effectiveness of the system’ William Edwards, *An introduction to motor learning and motor control*

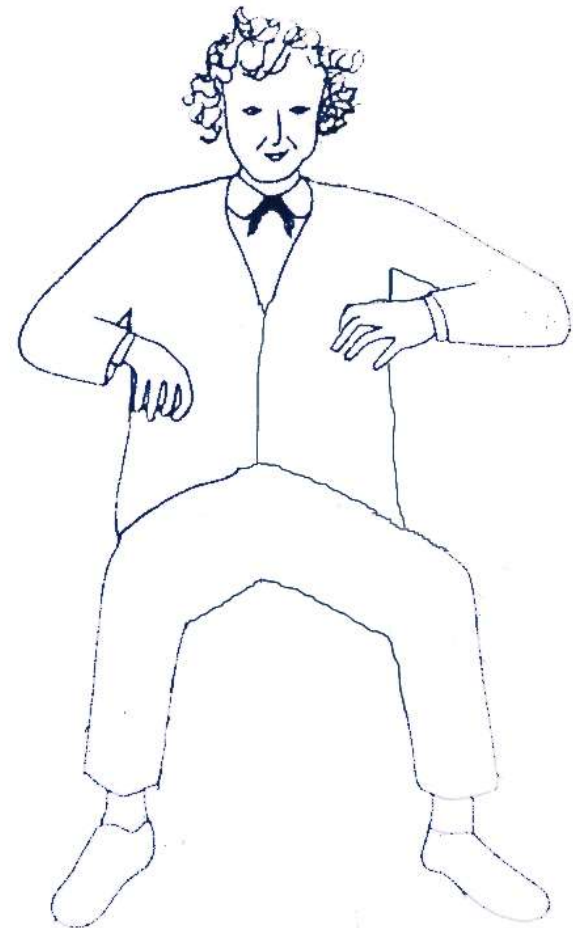
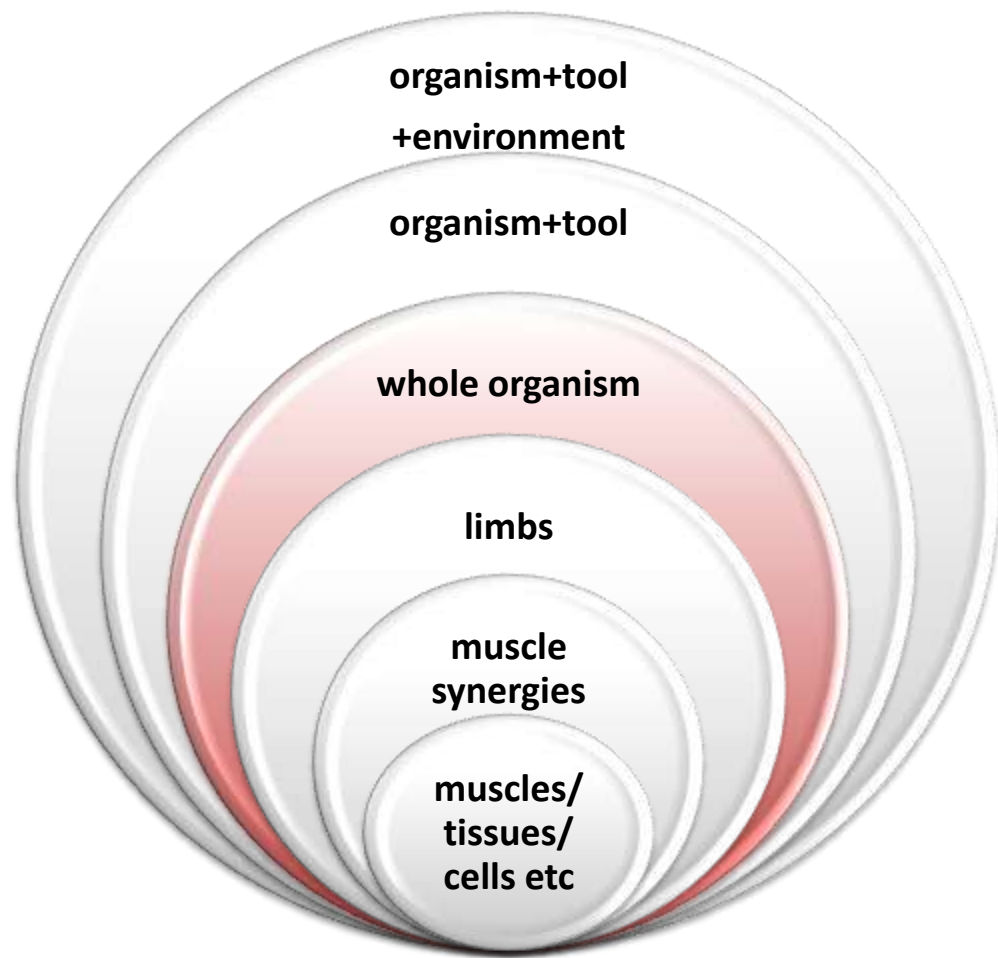
Topics

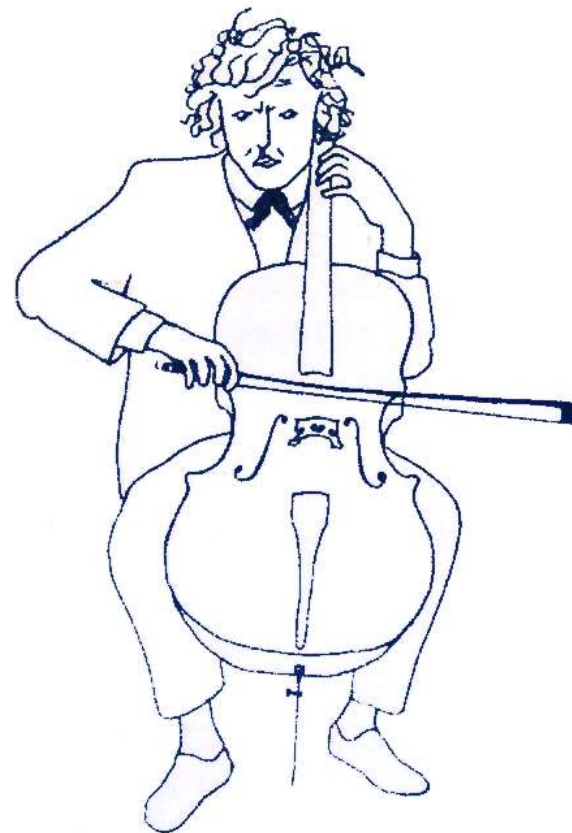
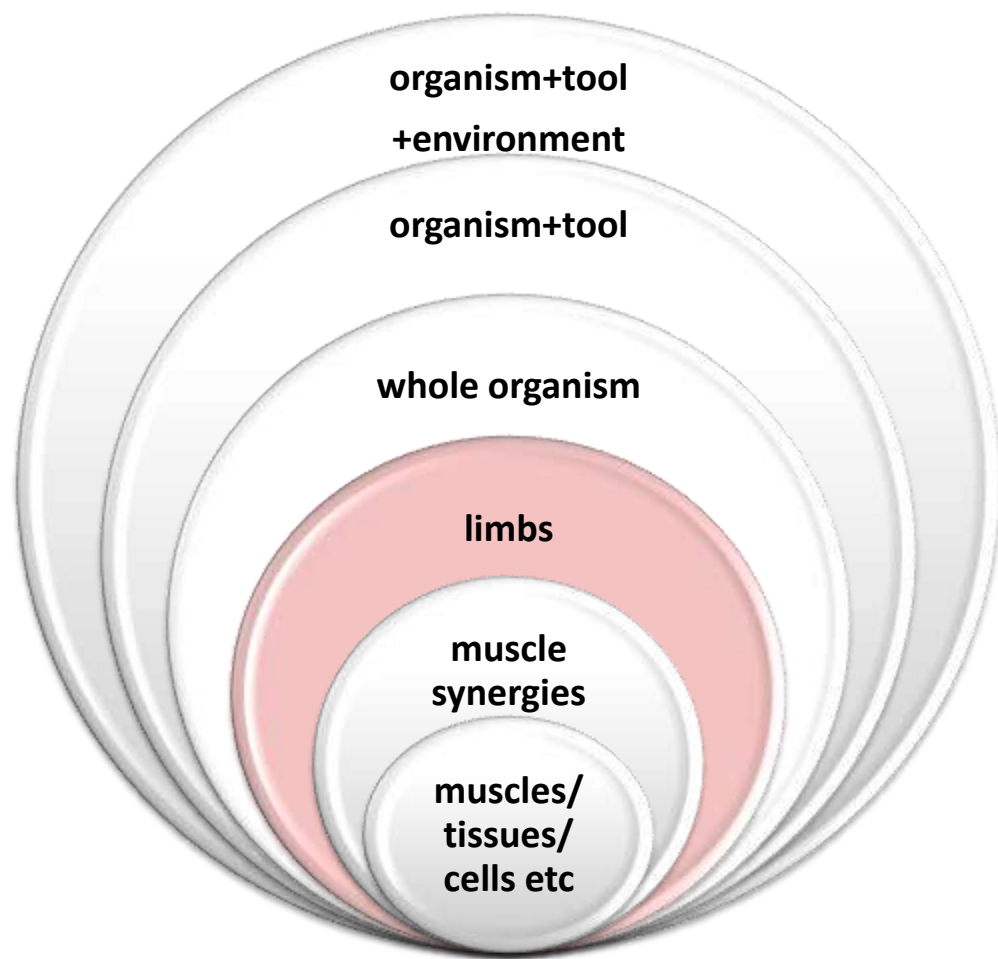


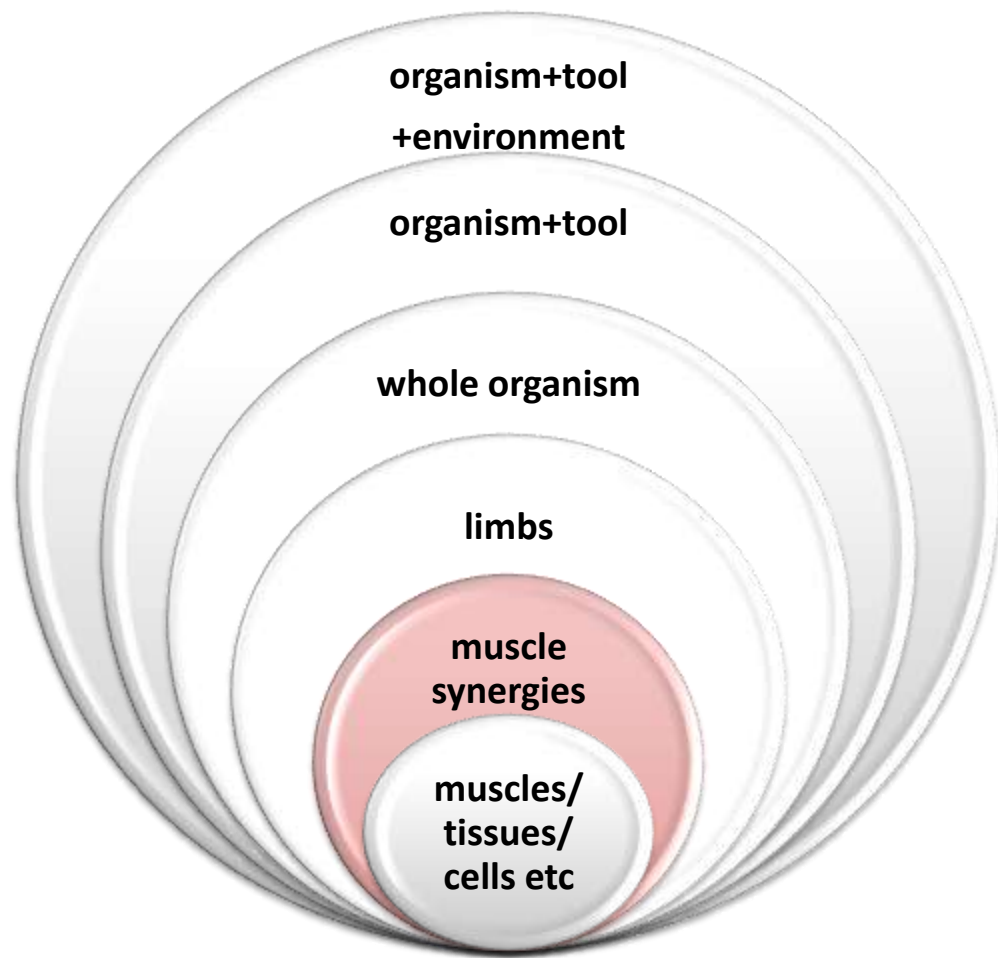




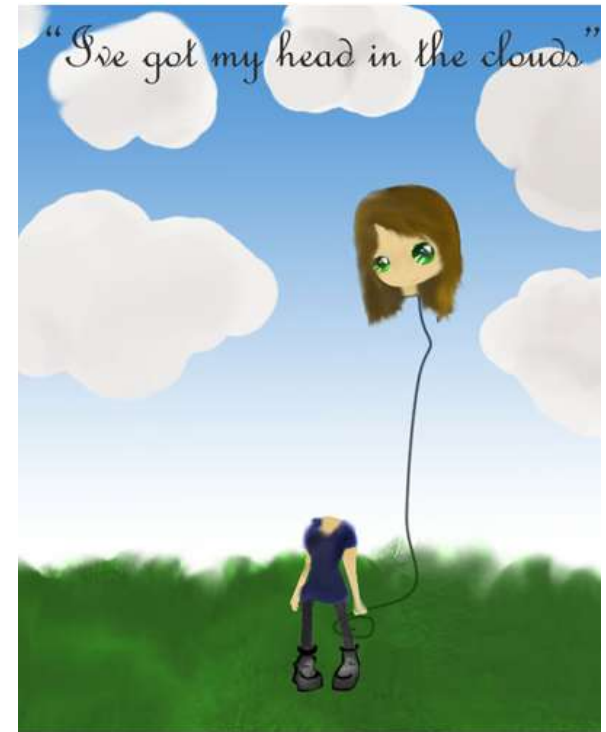






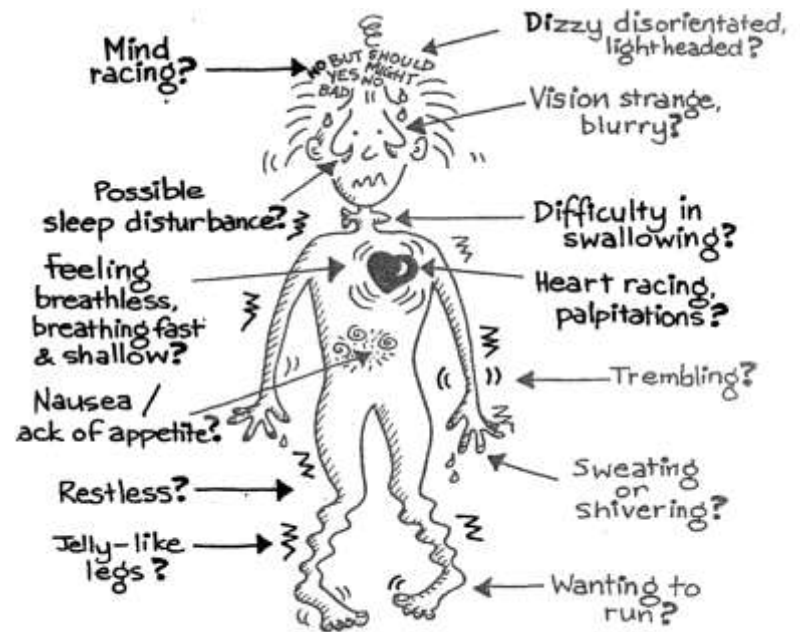


Habits interfere with holistic movement



Mind-wandering

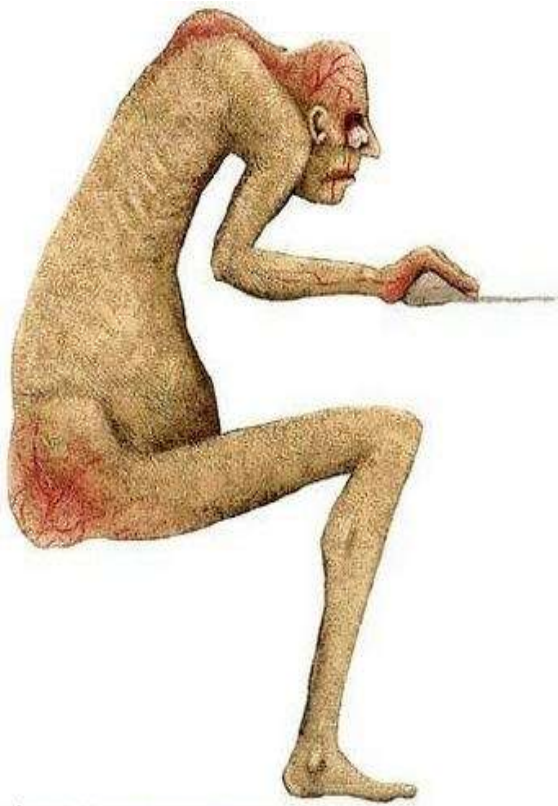
'We must cultivate... the deliberate habit of taking up every occupation with the whole mind... which necessitates bringing into play every faculty of the attention' (FM Alexander)



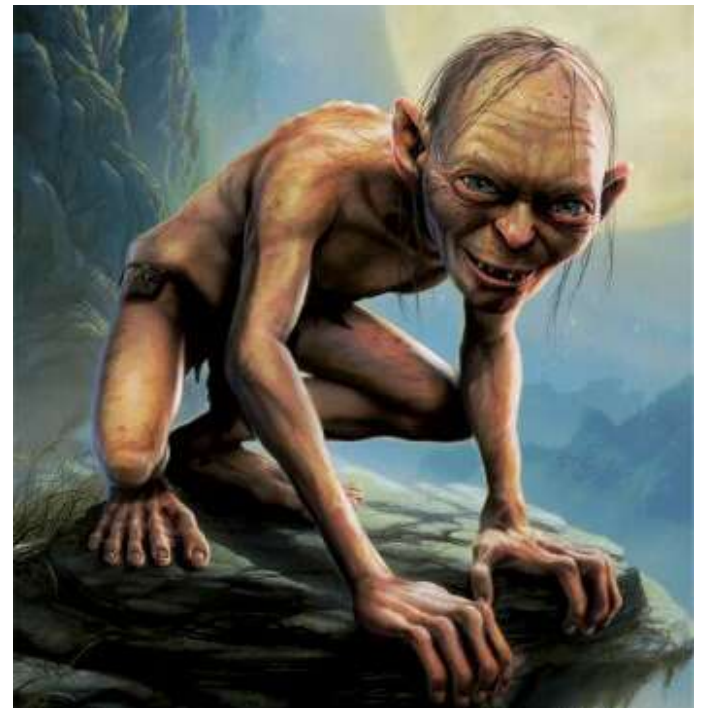
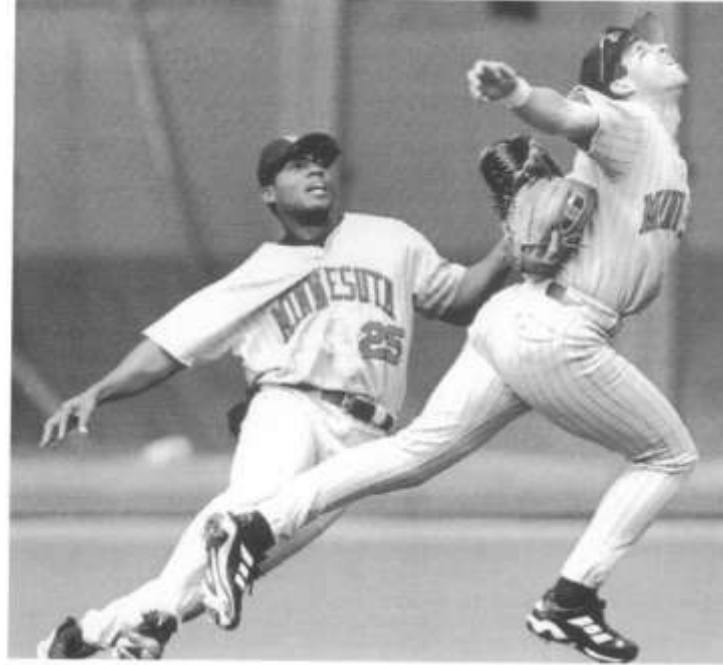
Startle Pattern

“It begins with an eye-blink; the head is then thrust forward; the shoulders are raised and the arms stiffened; abdominal muscles shorten; breathing stops and the knees are flexed. The pattern permits minor variations but its primary features are the same” (F.P. Jones)

1. classic – e.g. surprised by a loud noise
2. slow onset – e.g. nerves before a concert
3. chronic – a state of continuous startle pattern

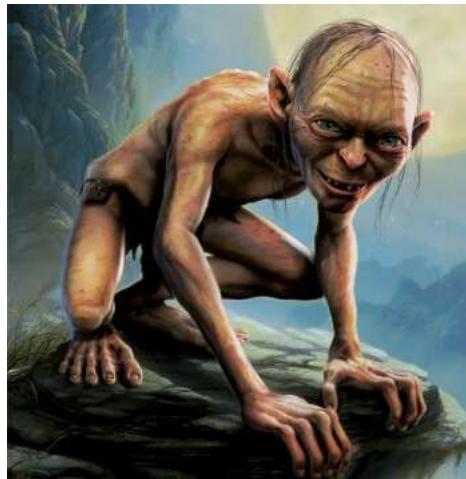


homo computerus



‘End-Gaining’ (1 of 2)

- “Grasping for results without thoughtful attention to process” (Michael Gelb).
- “When you are focused on the goal and not choosing how you do things” (Judith Kleinman and Peter Buckoke).
- “We are all, in Alexander’s phrase, ‘endgainers’. We have goals towards which we hasten without ever considering the means whereby we, as psychophysical organisms, can best achieve our purpose” (Aldous Huxley).



‘End-Gaining’ (2 of 2)

For musicians, it is important to realise that not only does end-gaining interfere with our co-ordination, it also brings about poor results (‘ends’).

end-gaining unnecessary muscle tension/
 → fixing in joints → degraded sensation, feedback and control

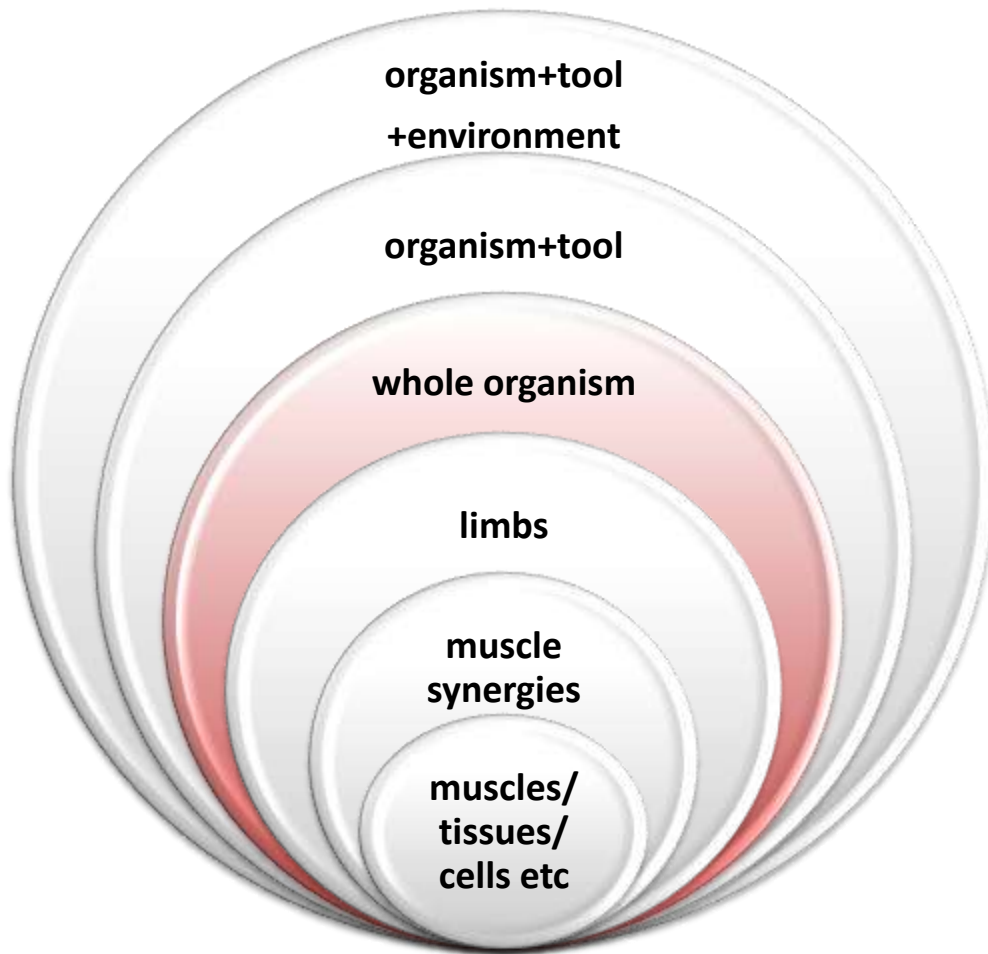
– Gerhardt Mantel, *Cello technique: principles and forms of movement*

‘Trying fails, awareness cures’

‘Permission to fail leads to success’

– Barry Green, *The Inner Game of Music*

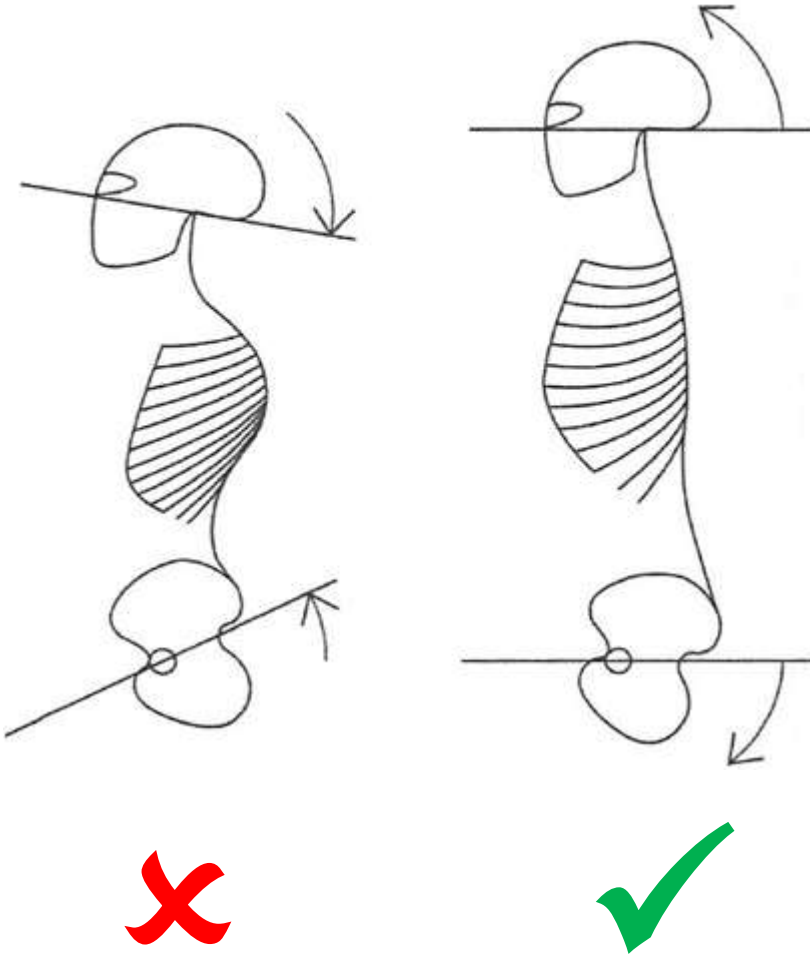
How can we return to functioning as an integrated, whole organism?



Alexander Technique in a nutshell

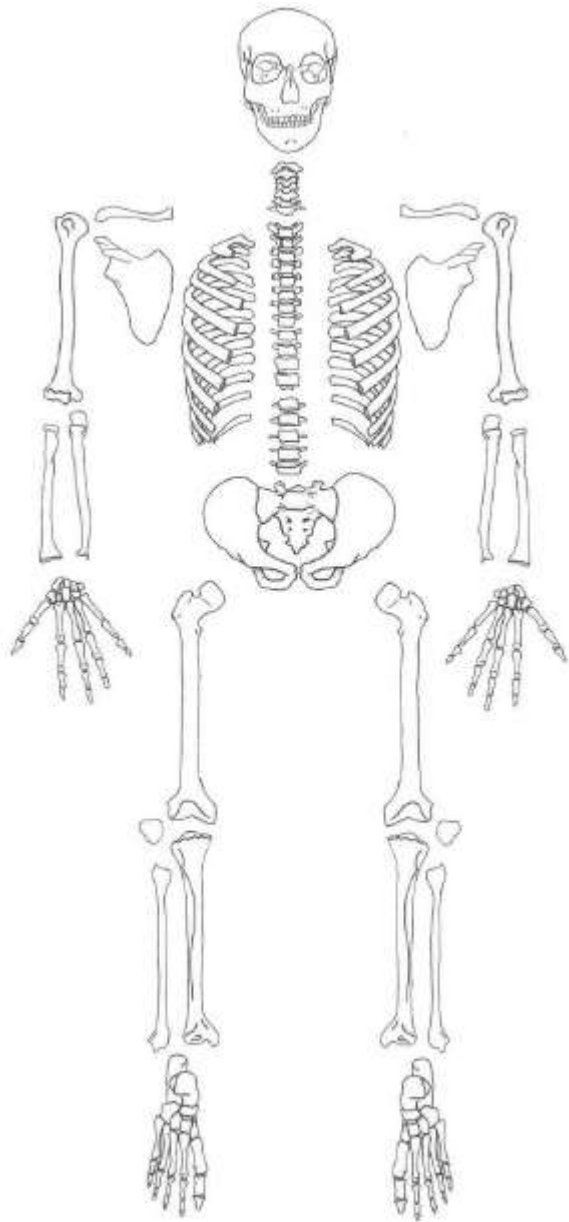
1. Primary Control
2. Inhibition
3. Direction

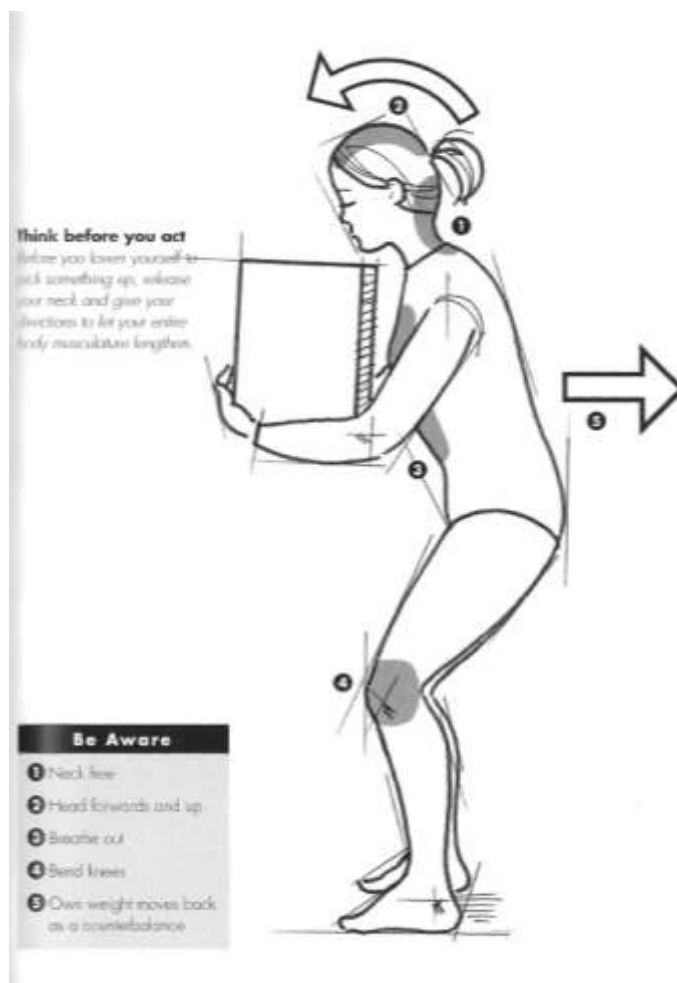
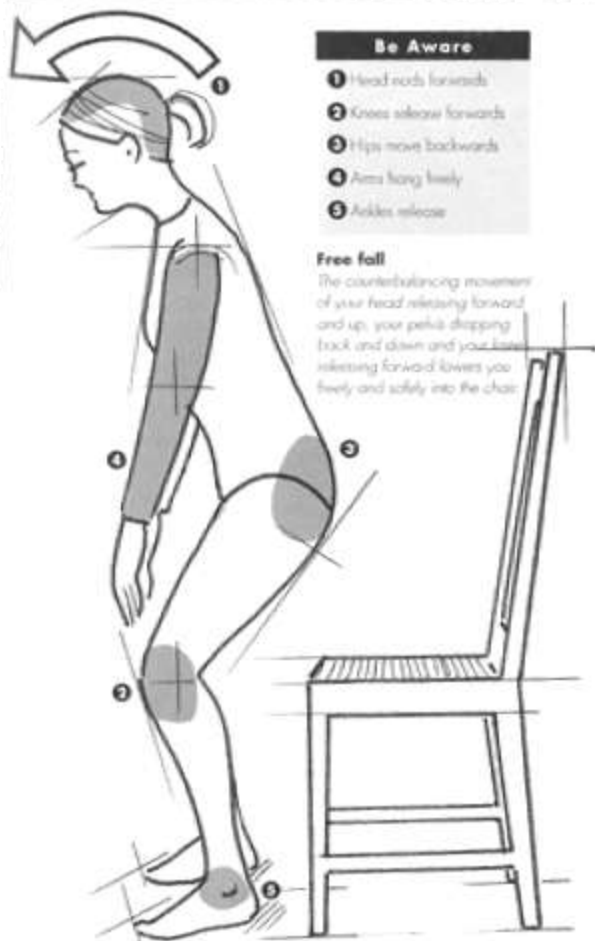
‘Primary Control’: relationship between the head, neck and back



- The quality of freedom in the Primary Control affects the whole self.
- Definition: An expansive relationship between body segments, *particularly the head, neck and back.*
- This relationship improves coordination *at any time, and in any situation.*
- The ‘master key’

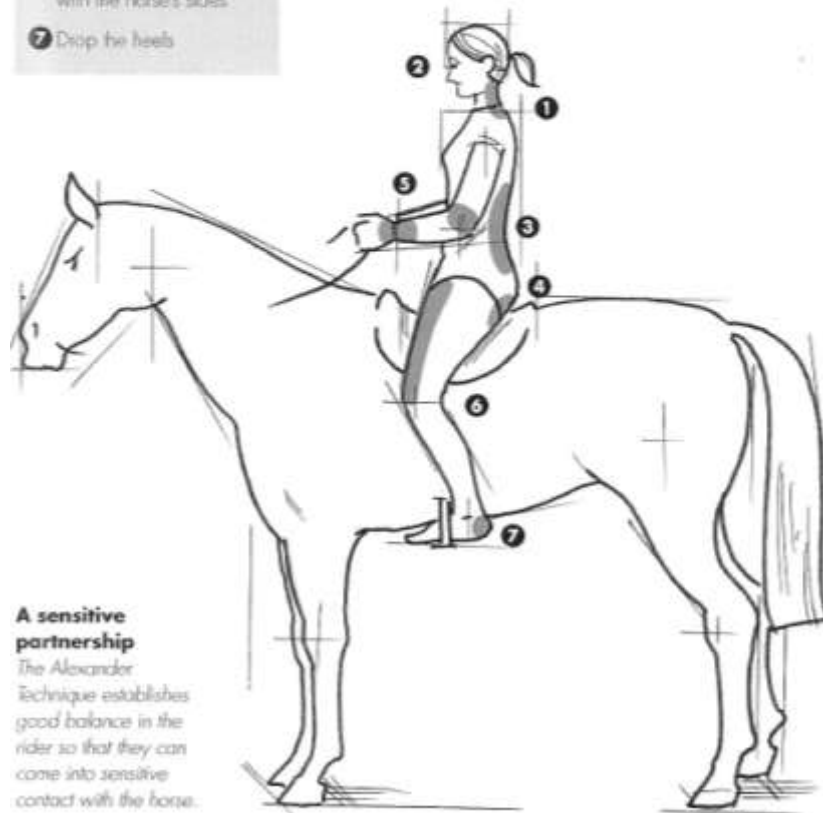






Be aware

- ❶ Neck free
- ❷ Eyes look forwards
- ❸ Release the lower back
- ❹ Sitting bones in contact with the saddle
- ❺ Wrists and elbows free
- ❻ Legs in gentle contact with the horse's sides
- ❼ Drop the heels



A sensitive partnership

The Alexander Technique establishes good balance in the rider so that they can come into sensitive contact with the horse.

‘Inhibition’

“My technique is based on inhibition, the inhibition of undesirable, unwanted responses to stimuli, and hence it is primarily a technique for the development of the control of human reaction”

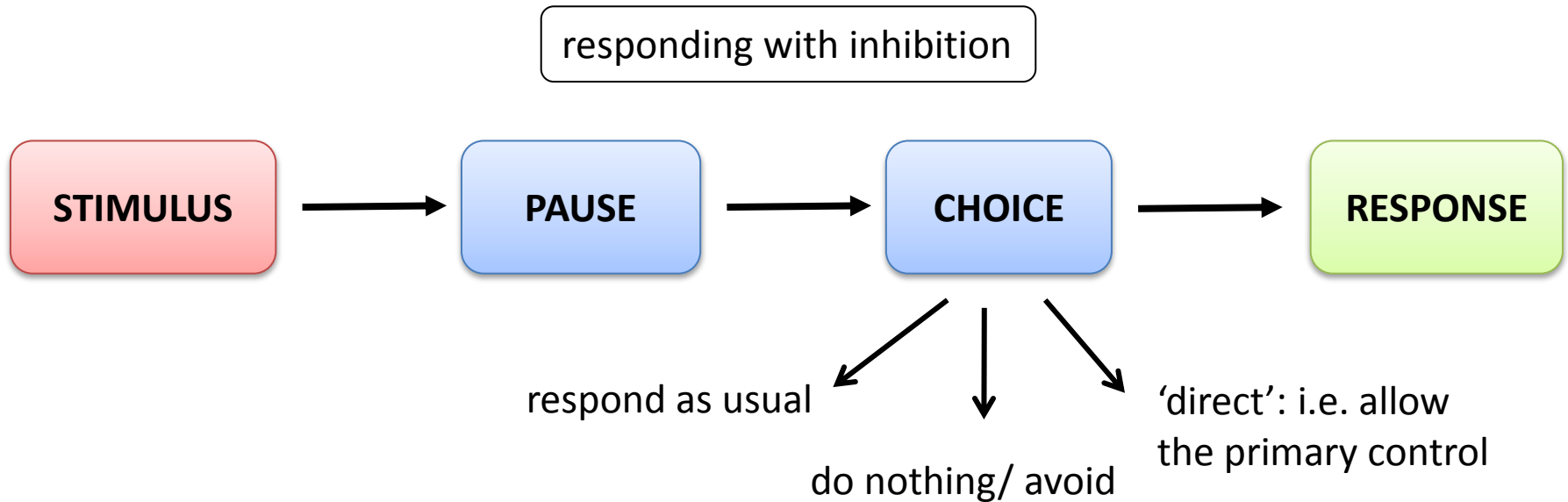
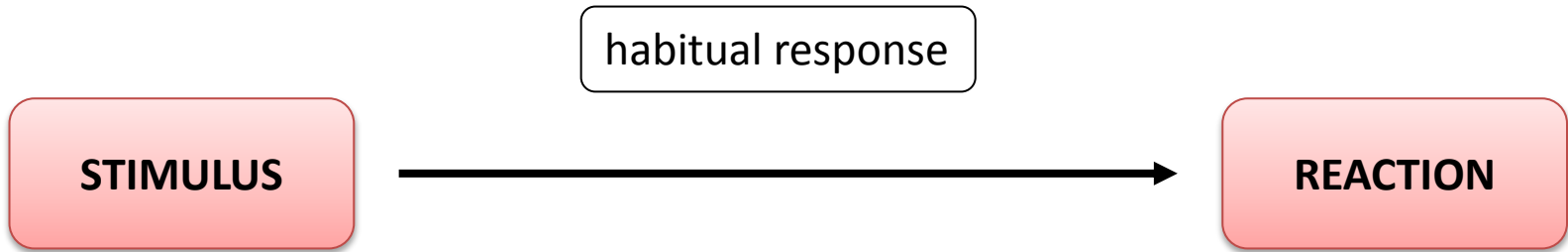




— INHIBITION —







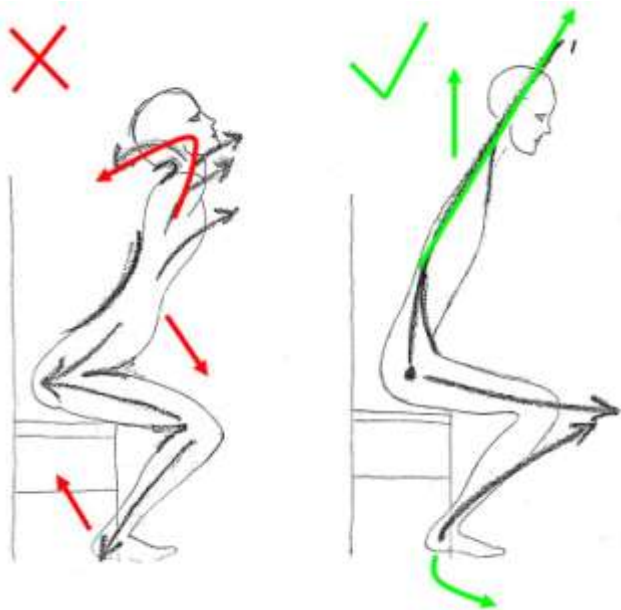
[volunteer]

'Direction' -

How to nurture the primary control

What is Direction?

- 'Directing is having the wish, the intention, the aspiration, to be going in those directions that are expansive rather than contractive, but the wish must be expressed through muscular release rather than tension and effort'.
(Nicholls and Carey)



Primary Directions

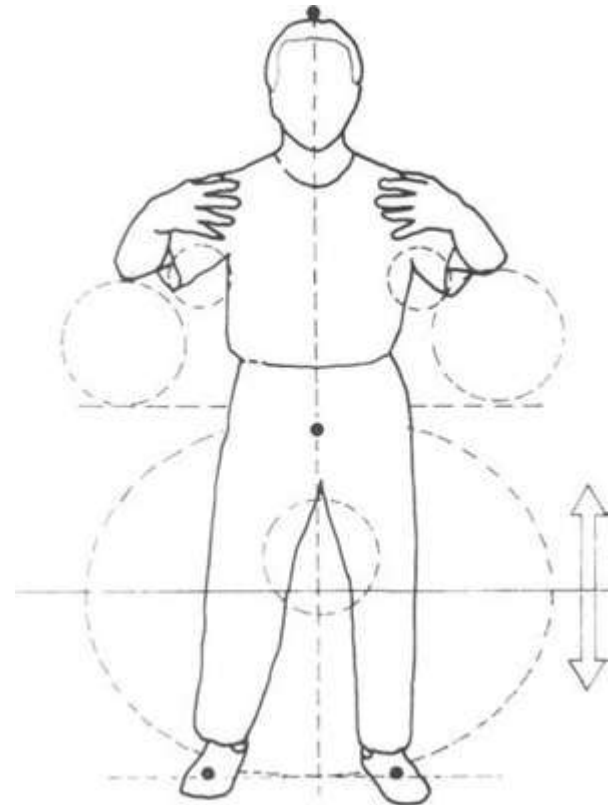
- Allow the neck to be free
- To let the head go forward and up
- In such a way that the back lengthens and widens
- (send the knees away from the hip joints)
- (allow the feet to spread on the floor)

Direction: Two Exercises

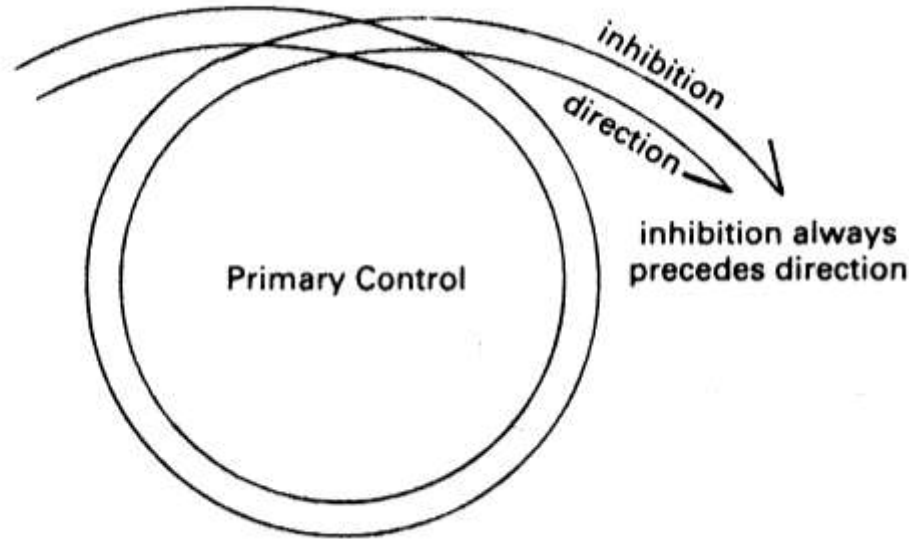
1. Direction is a distinct activity, and is different to movement and position



2. Chi Kung Direction



Inhibition and Direction together



Affectionately known as the SOD principle:

Stop (inhibit)

Organise (Direct)

Do (carry out the activity)

Inhibition and direction game



"You are not here to do exercises or to learn to do something right, but to get able to meet a stimulus that always puts you wrong and to learn to deal with it." F.M. Alexander

Inhibition and direction game

Questioner

1. choose someone to point to;
2. ask any question you like, e.g.
 - What day of the week is it?
 - What instrument do you play?
 - Do you like performing?
 - How do you cope under pressure?
 - Can you recall a difficult piece you've played?
 - Is teaching stressful?
 - How old are you?
 - Do you like this game?

Recipient

PAUSE, BREATHE, DIRECT THE PRIMARY CONTROL* AND....

(options)

1. do absolutely nothing
2. reply truthfully
3. tell a lie
4. play a note on your virtual instrument

THEN, POINT TO SOMEONE ELSE
AND ASK A QUESTION

*'Neck free, head forward and up, back to
lengthen and widen'

Inhibiting – musical examples

Inhibition in preparation and movement. Keep hands soft and pliable before you pick up the instrument; keep them like that as you go to pick up the violin and bow; then keep them soft and pliable as you move your fingers around the fingerboard and manipulate the bow ... Tightening in preparation for an action is something to guard against consciously all the time. Even an imperceptible amount of preparatory tightening has a disabling effect.

Finding the moment of balance. In the fraction of a second before beginning a stroke - whether before attacking the string from the air, or before placing the bow on the string - there must be a moment of complete balance.

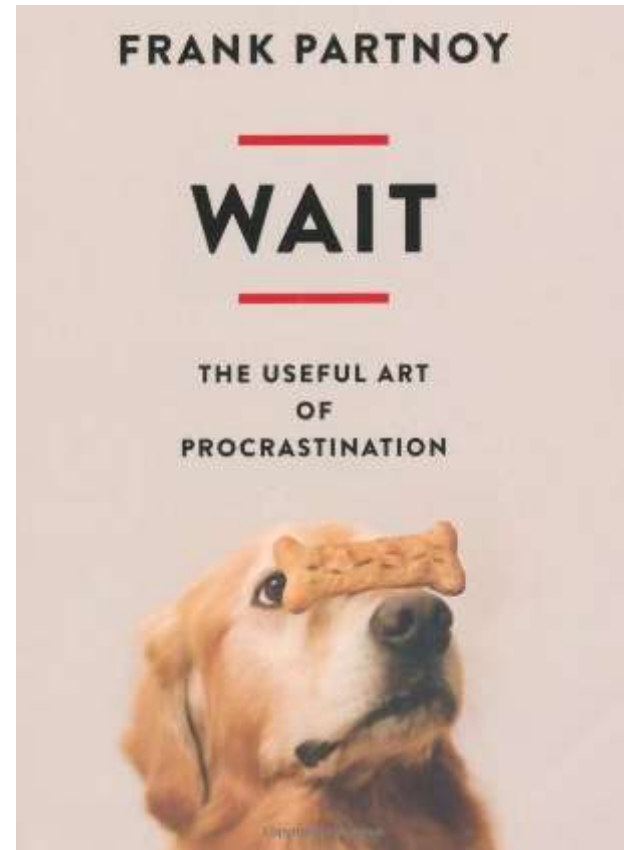
(Simon Fischer, *The Violin Lesson*)

“[Casals asked:] ‘What can you do about the next note while you are playing this one?’ And when I considered it, I saw that there was nothing that could be done, not without a diminution of attention to this note, now; so I learned to wait and wait and wait and wait until – ‘Now!’. You know when it’s time. I call that ‘inhibition,’ in Alexander terms”

“As I saw it, Casals was a conduit for the music, and he had to clear out the rubbish and encrustations to allow it to flow through cleanly. ... All those ‘undesirable habits’ that are clinging to the inside of the pipe. These things have to go.’ (Vivien Mackie, *Just Play Naturally*)

Inhibiting – in sport

Tim Henman on playing Federer. "I can watch when I'm playing him and there are certain times where I will hit a shot, I will be at the net and it almost looks he's got a split second longer than most other players... Sometimes he comes across to hit a backhand pass when you feel like you've hit a good approach and it's like he has got a bit longer to hit it [Tennis News, Jan 15, 2005]."



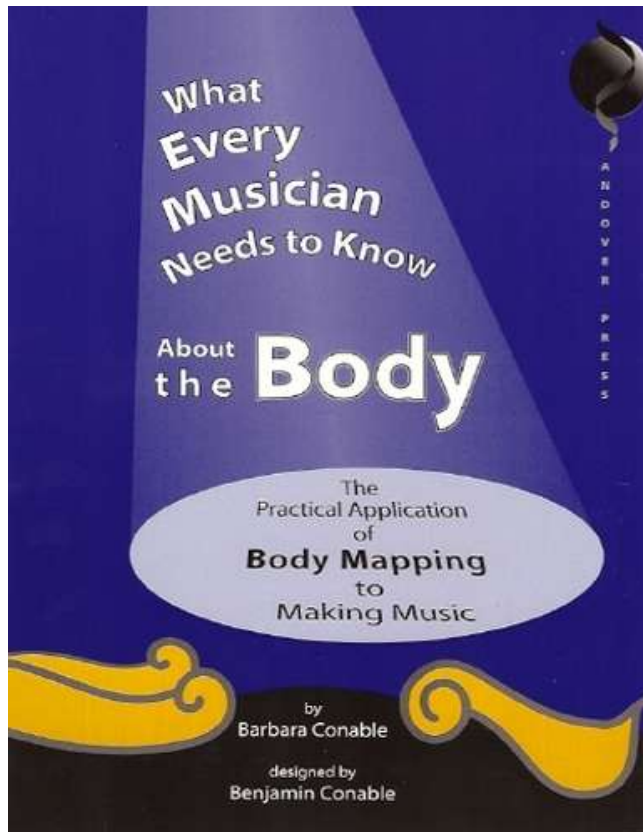
***from* The Elegance of the Hedgehog by Muriel Barbery (probably a description of the recently deceased NZ rugby player Jonah Lomu)**

“Motionless movement”. Then when the New Zealand players began their haka, I got it. In their midst was this very tall Maori player, really young. I’d had my eye on him right from the start, probably because of his height to begin with but then because of the way he was moving. A really odd sort of movement, very fluid but above all very focused, I mean very focused within himself. Most people, when they move, well they just move depending on whatever’s around them ... Maman just went by in the direction of the front door, she’s going out shopping and in fact she already is out, her movement anticipating itself. I don’t really know how to explain it, but when we move, we are in a way de-structured by our movement toward something: we are both here and at the same time not here because we’re already in the process of going elsewhere, if you see what I mean. To stop de-structuring yourself, you have to stop moving altogether. Either you move and you’re no longer whole, or you’re whole and you can’t move. But that player, when I saw him go out onto the field, I could tell there was something different about him. I got the impression that he was moving, yes, but by staying in one place. Crazy, no? When the haka began, I concentrated on him. It was obvious he wasn’t like the others...

Everyone was enthralled by him but no one seemed to know why. Yet it became obvious in the haka: he was moving and making the same gestures as the other players (slapping the palms of his hands on his thighs, rhythmically drumming his feet on the ground, touching his elbows, and all the while looking the adversary in the eyes like a mad warrior) but while the others’ gestures went toward their adversaries and the entire stadium who were watching, this player’s gestures stayed inside him, stayed focused upon him, and that gave him an unbelievable presence and intensity... That Maori player was like a tree, a great indestructible oak with deep roots and a powerful radiance—everyone could feel it. And yet you also got the impression that the great oak could fly, that it would be as quick as the wind, despite, or perhaps because of, its deep roots. ...

The commentators were sort of hungover but they couldn’t hide the fact that they’d seen something really beautiful: a player who was running without moving, leaving everyone else behind him. And the others, who seemed by comparison to move with frenzied and awkward gestures, were incapable of catching up with him. So I said to myself: There, I have managed to witness motionless movement in the world: is that something worth carrying on for?

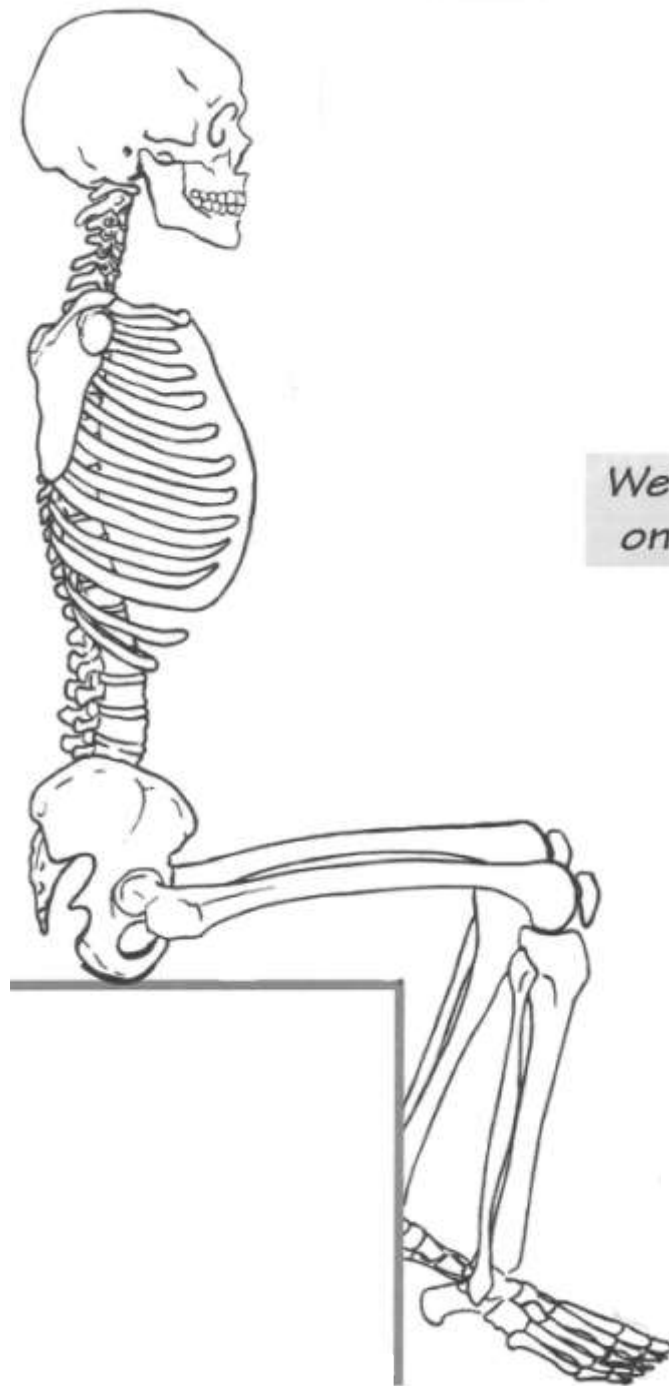
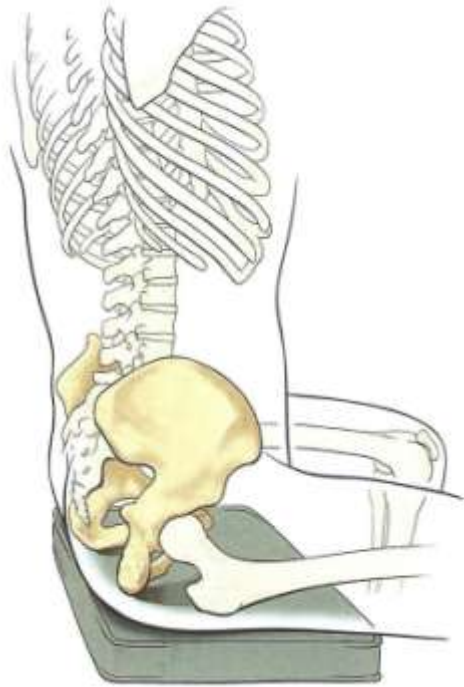
Use of Body mapping



‘The Body Map is one’s self-representation in one’s own brain. If the body map is accurate, movement is good. If the body map is inaccurate or inadequate, movement is inefficient and injury producing.’

Barbara Conable, *What Every Musician Needs to Know about the Body*.





*We don't sit
on our legs!*



Two Exercises for mapping hip joints:

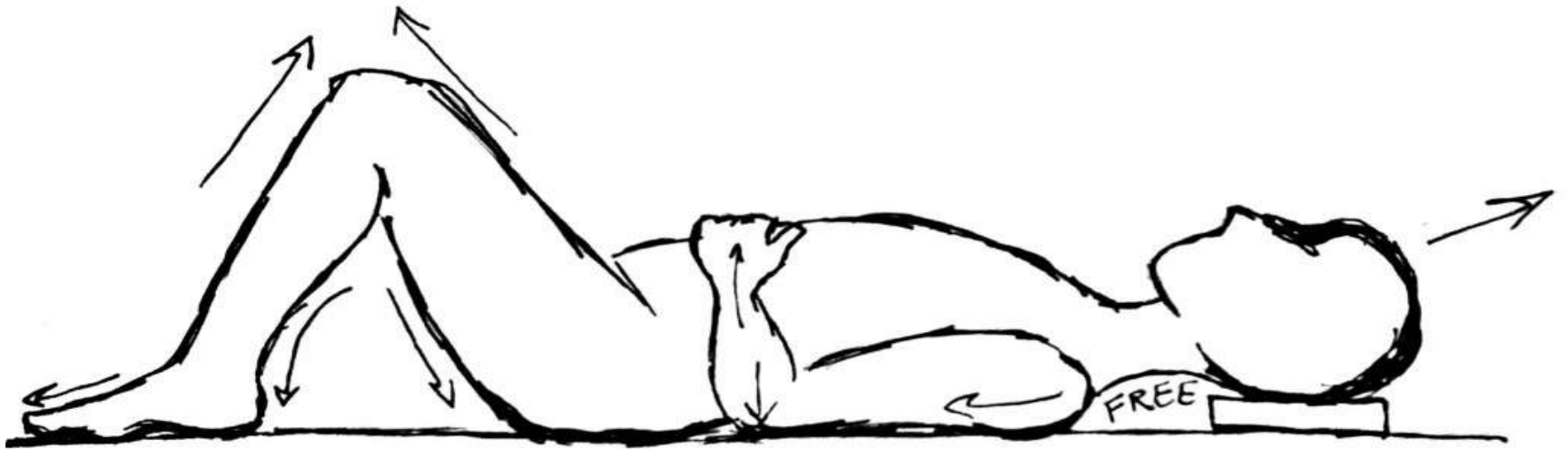
Painting the ceiling



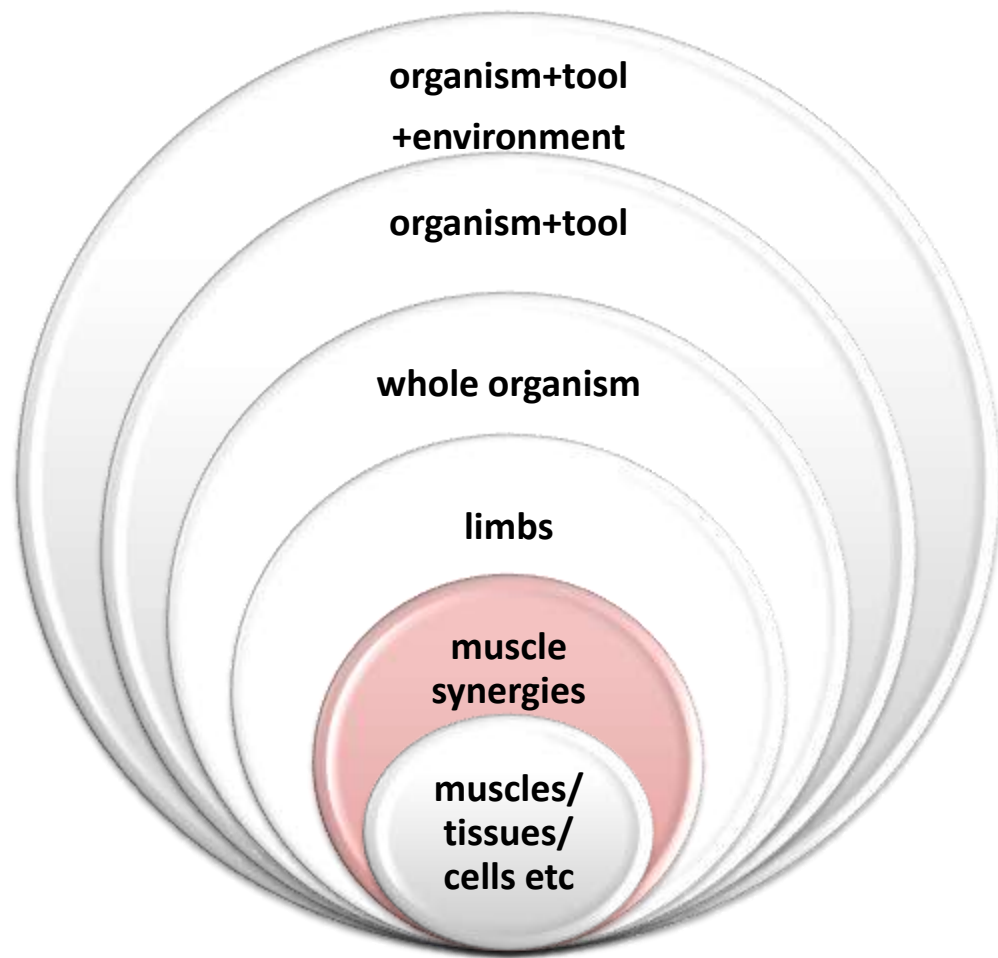
'Wall work'



Constructive rest / Semi-supine



Part 2

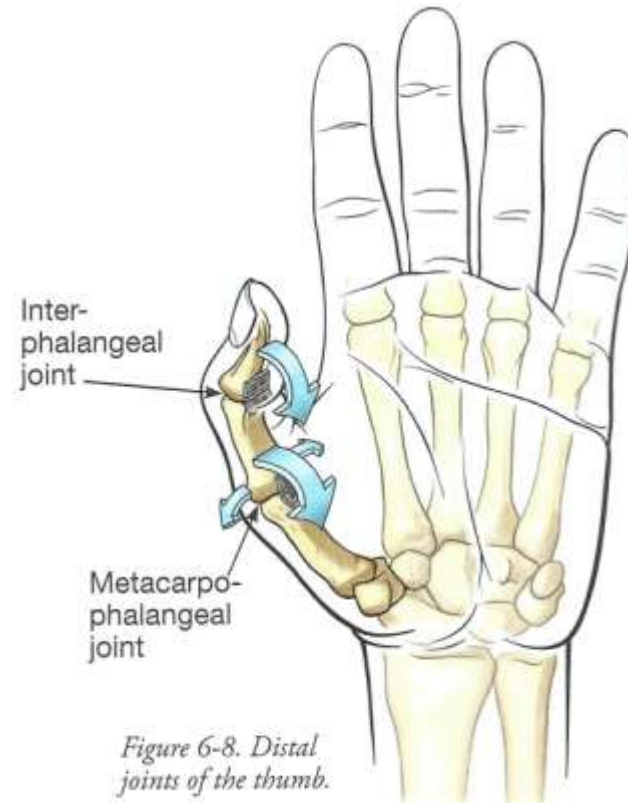


‘Localizing: the key to mastery’

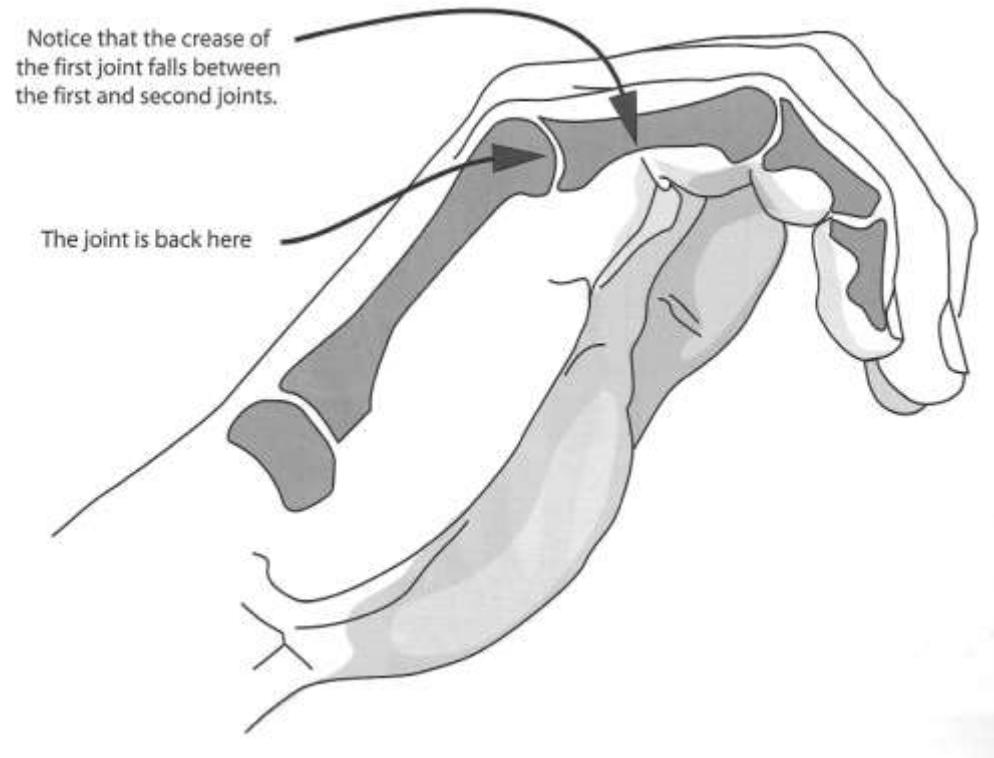
The key to absolute mastery of the violin is in not allowing unwanted extra physical movements to occur as a knock-on effect, or by-product, of the actions that actually necessary. Every action must occur in isolation as a focused, economical, minimalised movement that uses the least energy or effort. ...

Suppose you want to drop a finger onto the string and then lift it off again. The only thing that must happen is that the finger moves down, and then moves up again. What you do not want to do is push your wrist out, straighten the other fingers, squeeze with the thumb, clench your left upper arm, grip the violin more tightly between the chin and the shoulder, make a face, tighten the right shoulder, press harder with the bow, hold your breath, and so on. (Simon Fischer, *The Violin Lesson*)

Moving from the base joints (1 of 4)



Moving from the base joints (2 of 4)



Moving from the base joints (3 of 4)



forearm flexors

VS.

curling



cupping



wrist



Moving from the base joints (4 of 4)

Heifetz exercise



(a) Begin with the fingers in a neutral, middle position



(b) Pulling back uses all the lift-off muscles



(c) Pushing forwards uses all the drop muscles

Neutral wrist vs Ulna deviation

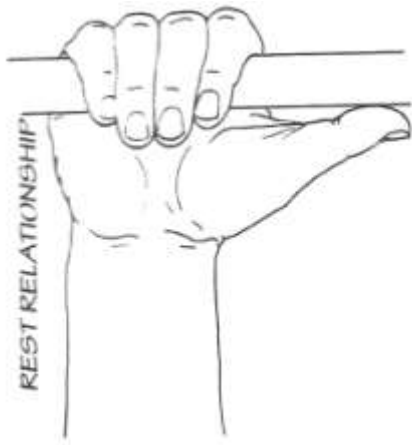


Figure 13.29. Aligned wrists.

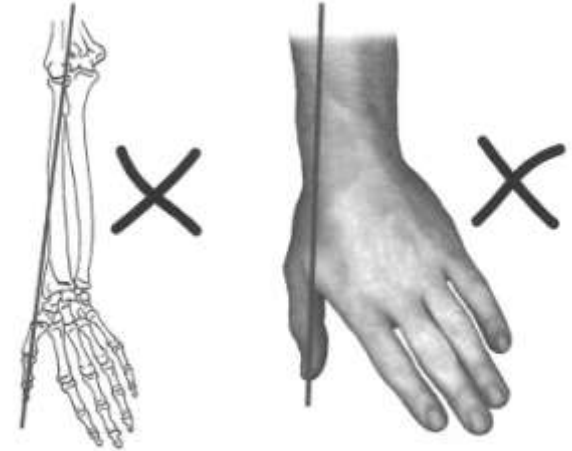


Figure 13.28. Misaligned wrists.



Figure 13.26. Misaligned wrist.

Forearm bending/ rotation (1 of 2)

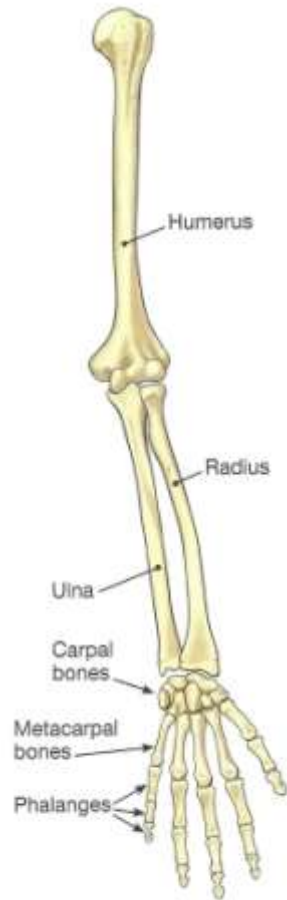


Figure 6-1. Bones of the left upper limb.

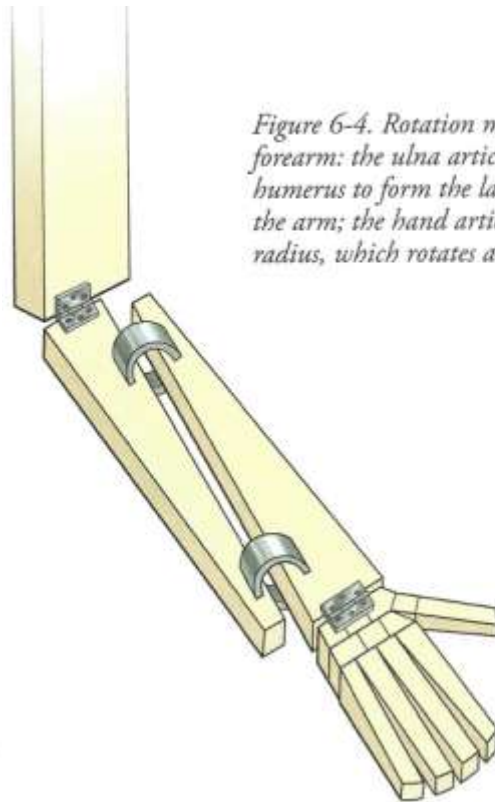
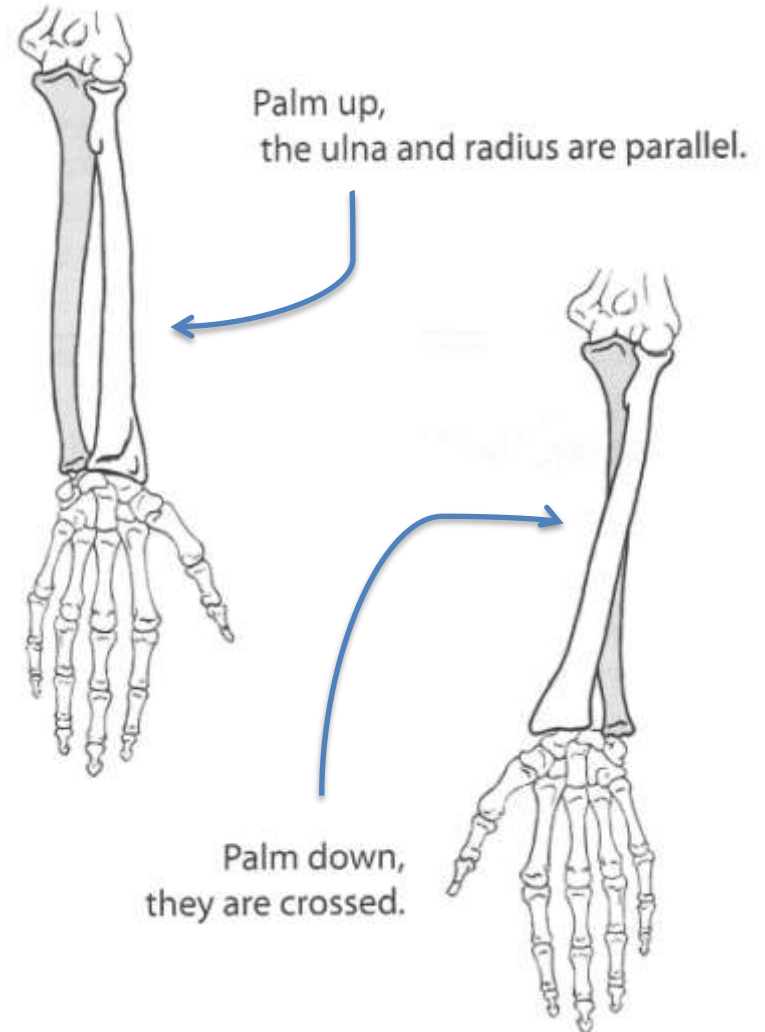


Figure 6-4. Rotation mechanism of the forearm: the ulna articulates with the humerus to form the large lever system of the arm; the hand articulates with the radius, which rotates around the ulna.



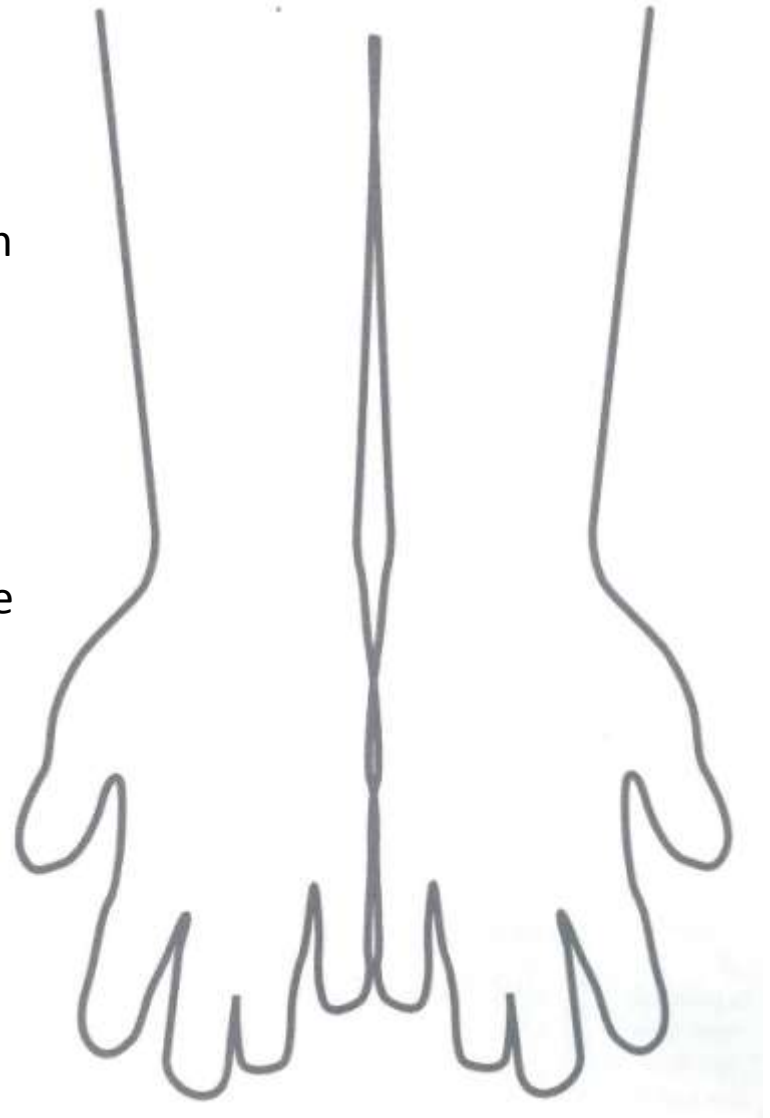
Forearm rotation (2 of 2)

“When the pinkie finger is lined up with the ulna in neutral, the pinkie feels strong and is in no way the ‘weakest’ finger on the hand ...

“Violinists who suffer from tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome need to remap the functions of the two lower arm bones and re-learn how to rotate the forearm by moving the radius over the stationary ulna in order to regain full freedom in the elbow, wrist and hand”

- Jennifer Johnson, *What every violinist needs to know about the body*

[exercise]



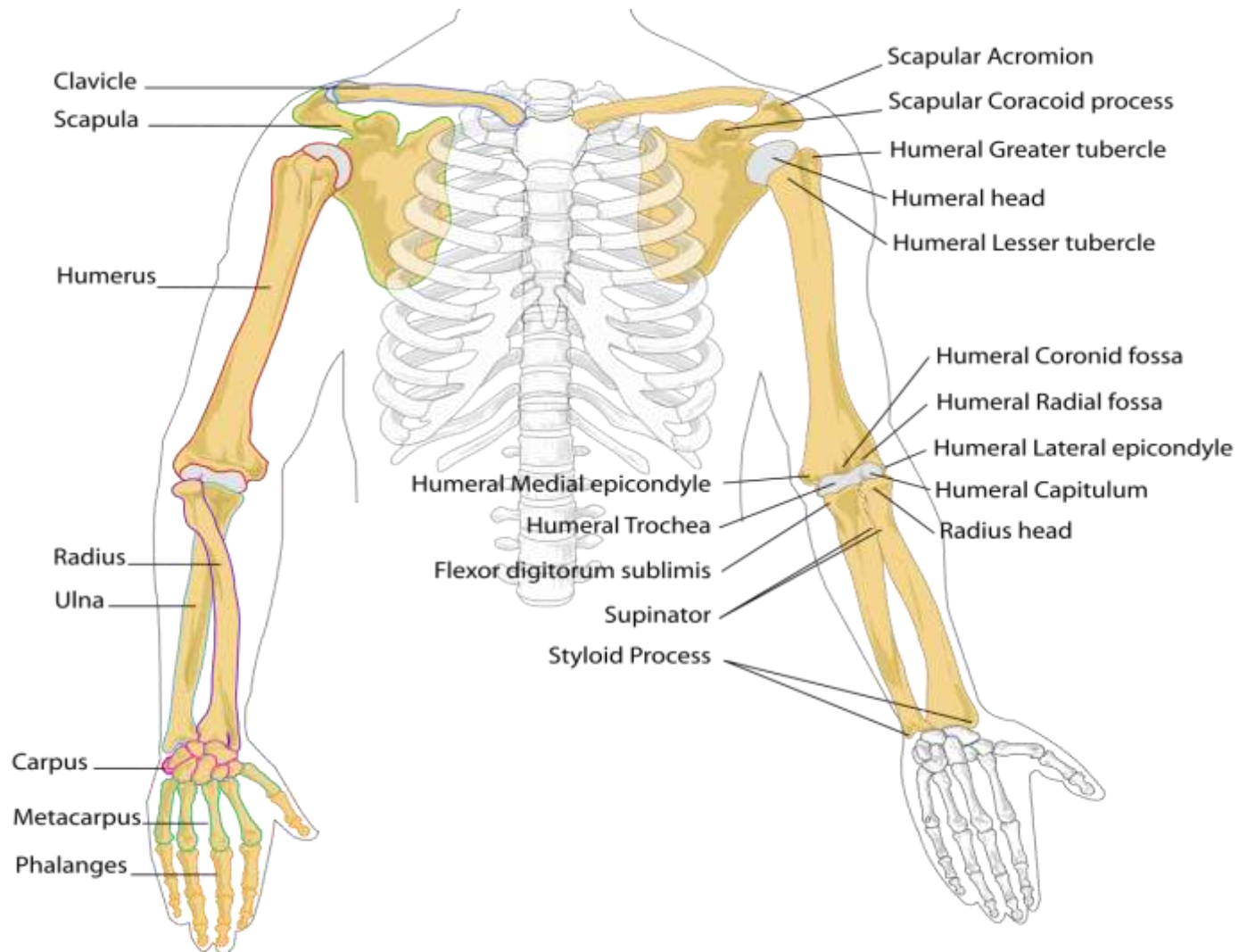


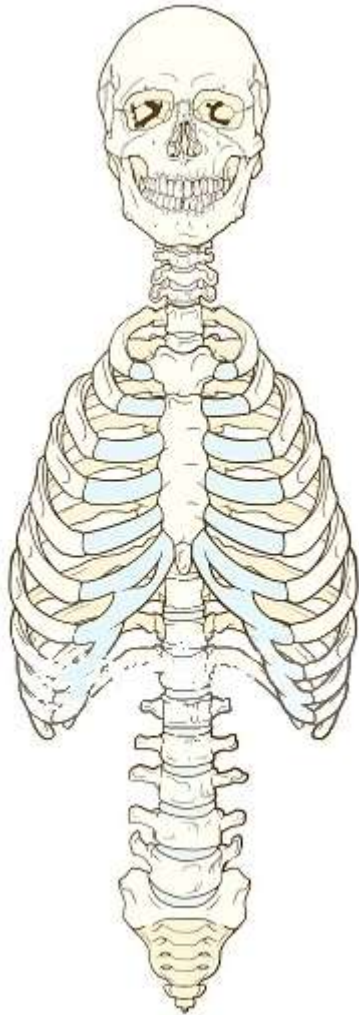
Can you suspend your arm without using any muscles in it?

‘You can suspend your arm in the air using those muscles in the shoulder, upper back and upper chest, without a single muscle in the arm being active. This gives the arm a feeling of ‘floating’ or being suspended in the air rather than of being held ... Once you are holding the bow you need to use certain muscles; but when the basic condition of the arm is one of floating rather than of being held, everything feels lighter and more responsive.’ Simon Fischer, *The Violin Lesson*

[exercise]

Where does the upper arm meet the shoulder girdle? (1 of 4)





Where does the shoulder girdle attach to the axial (main) skeleton? (2 of 4)

Shoulder girdle (3 of 4)

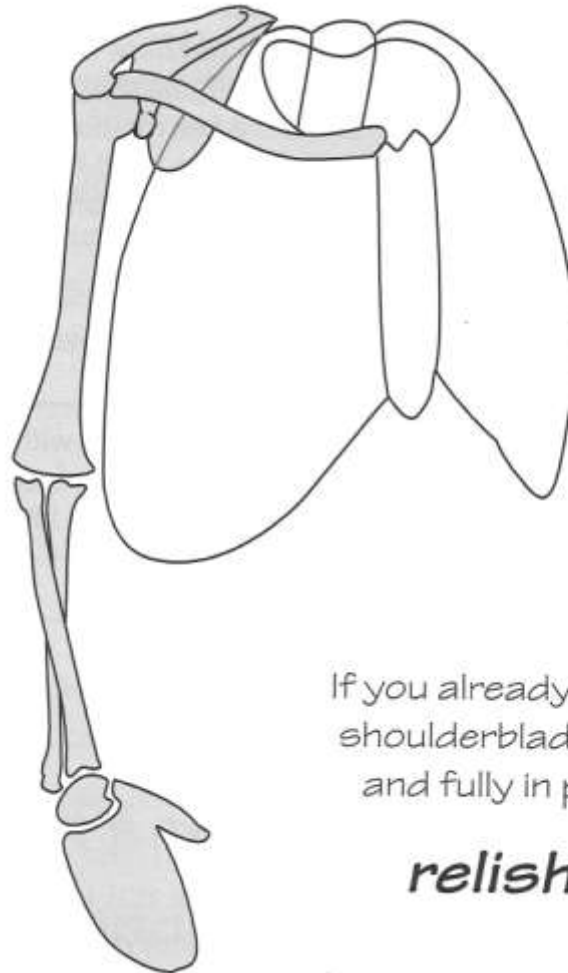
*Shoulderblades are not
attached to the ribs!*

Or the spine!

Or the skull!

Or each other!

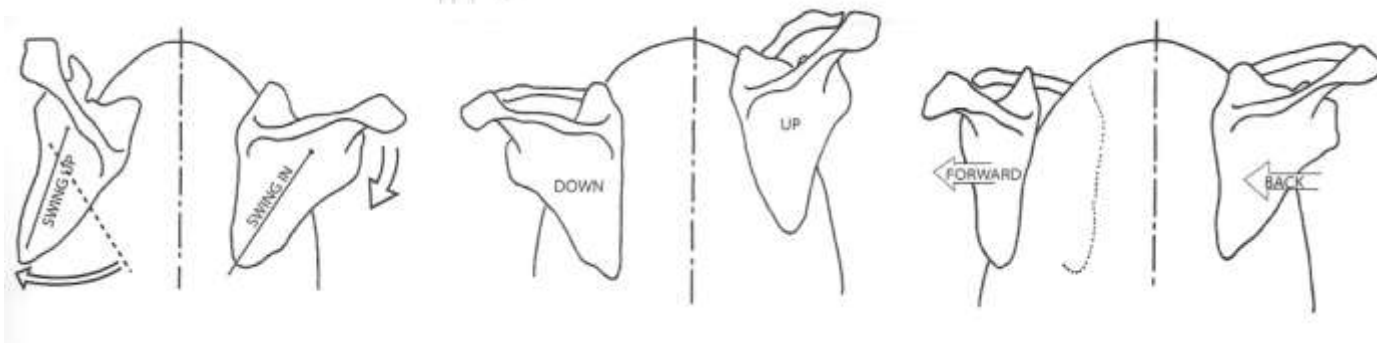
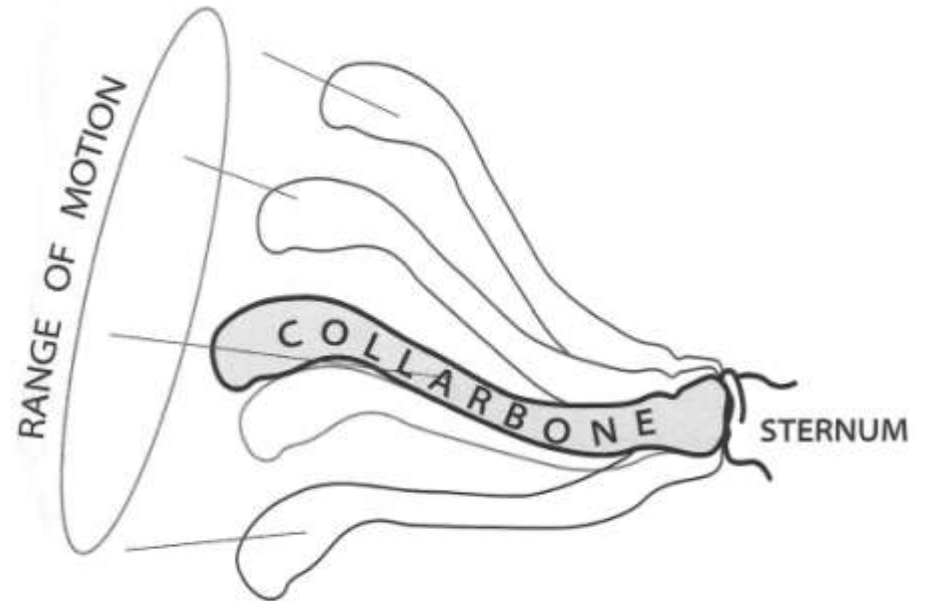
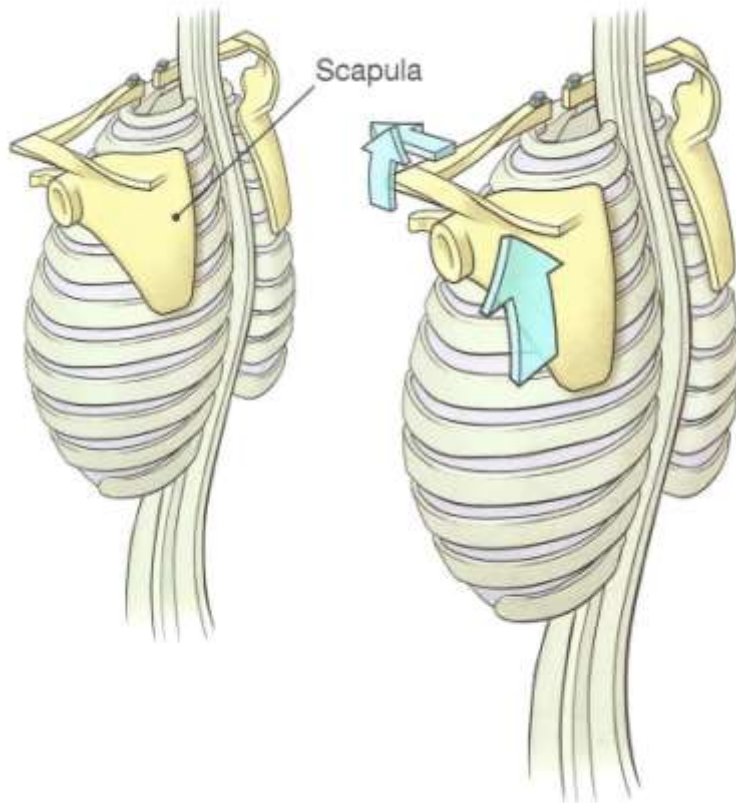
*So they can go
all over the place!*



If you already use your
shoulderblades freely
and fully in playing,

relish it!

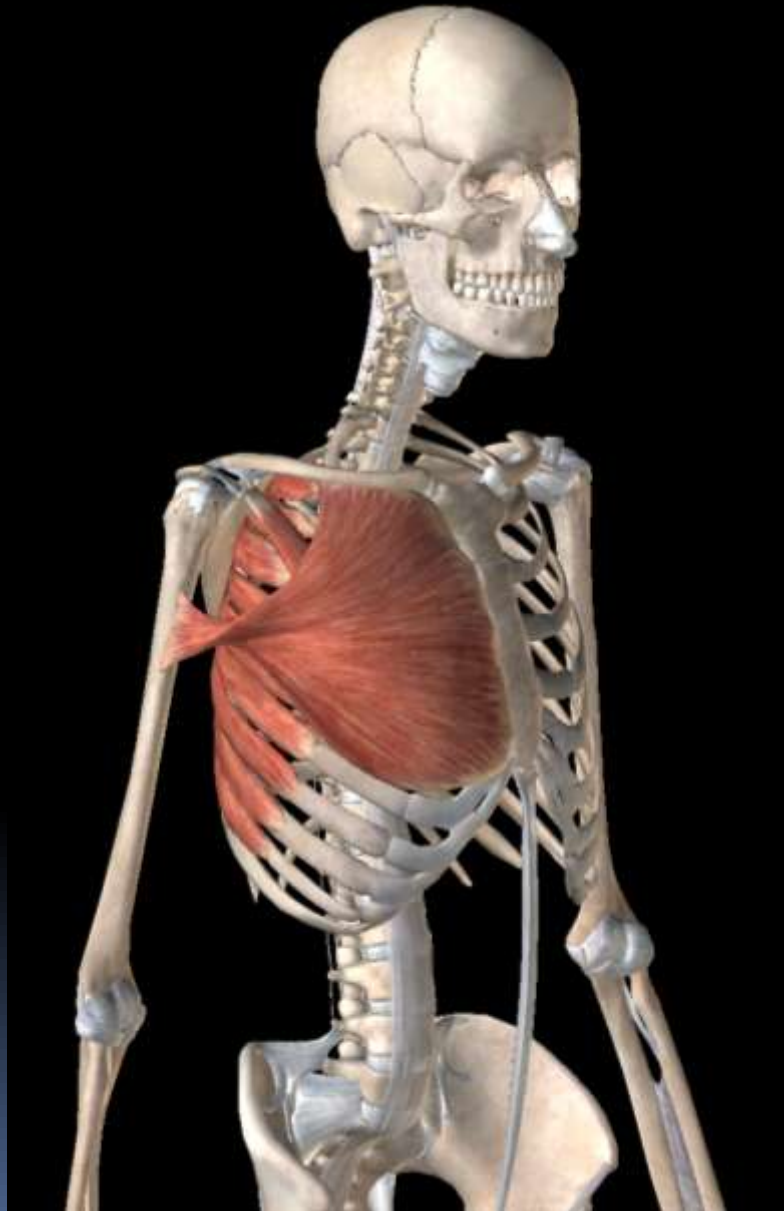
Shoulder girdle (4 of 4)



Misuse

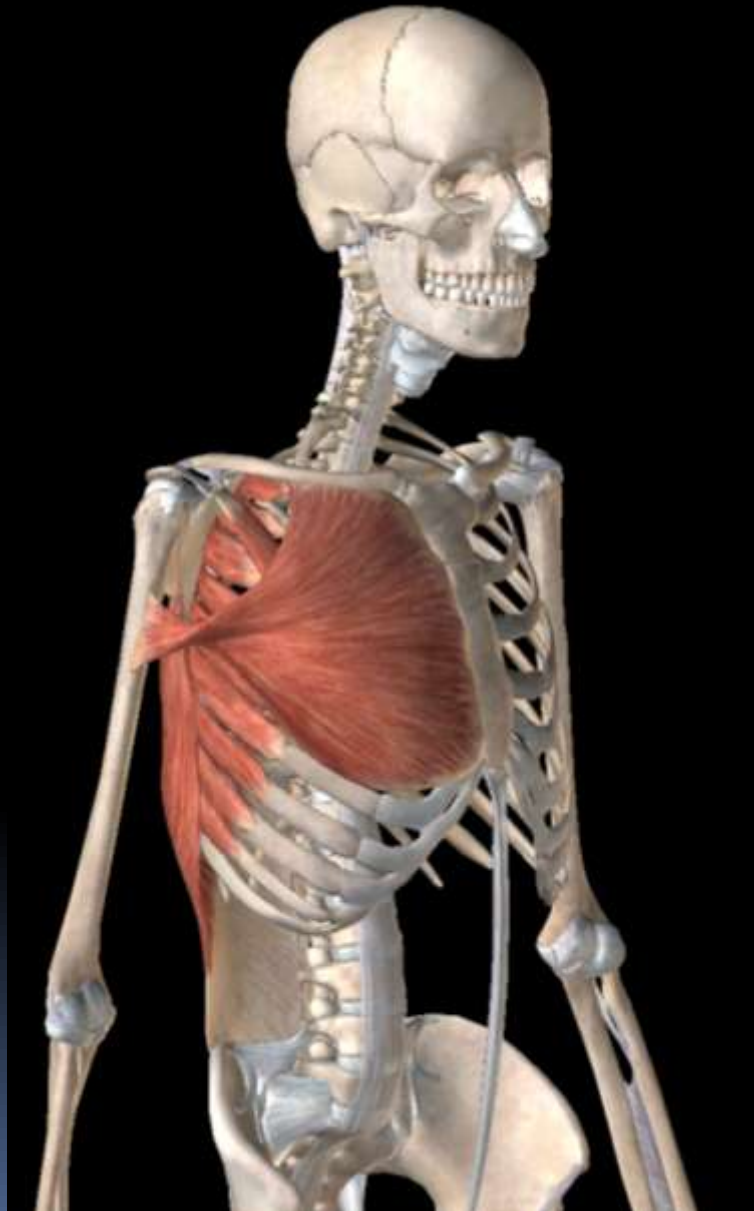


Misuse



[exercise]

Misuse



Misuse



Arm lift



Arm lift



Arm lift



Shoulder girdle support



Shoulder girdle support



Shoulder girdle support



Shoulder girdle support



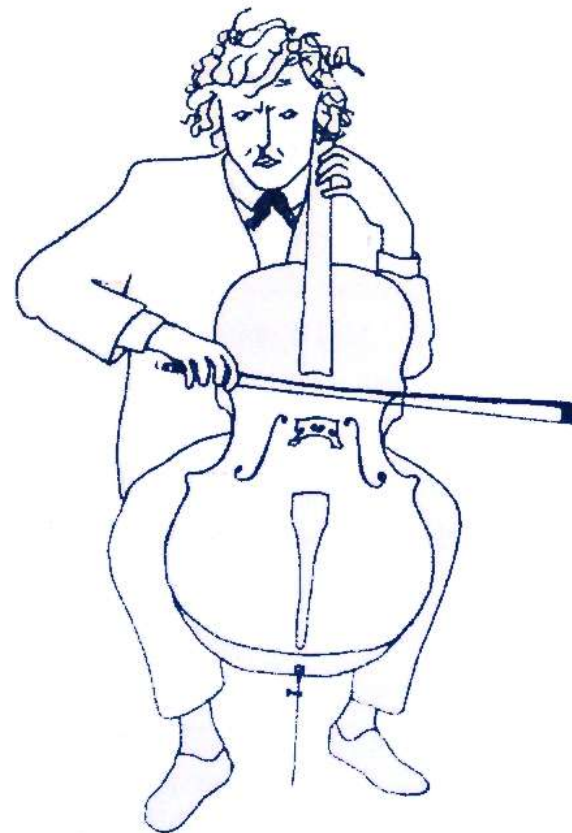
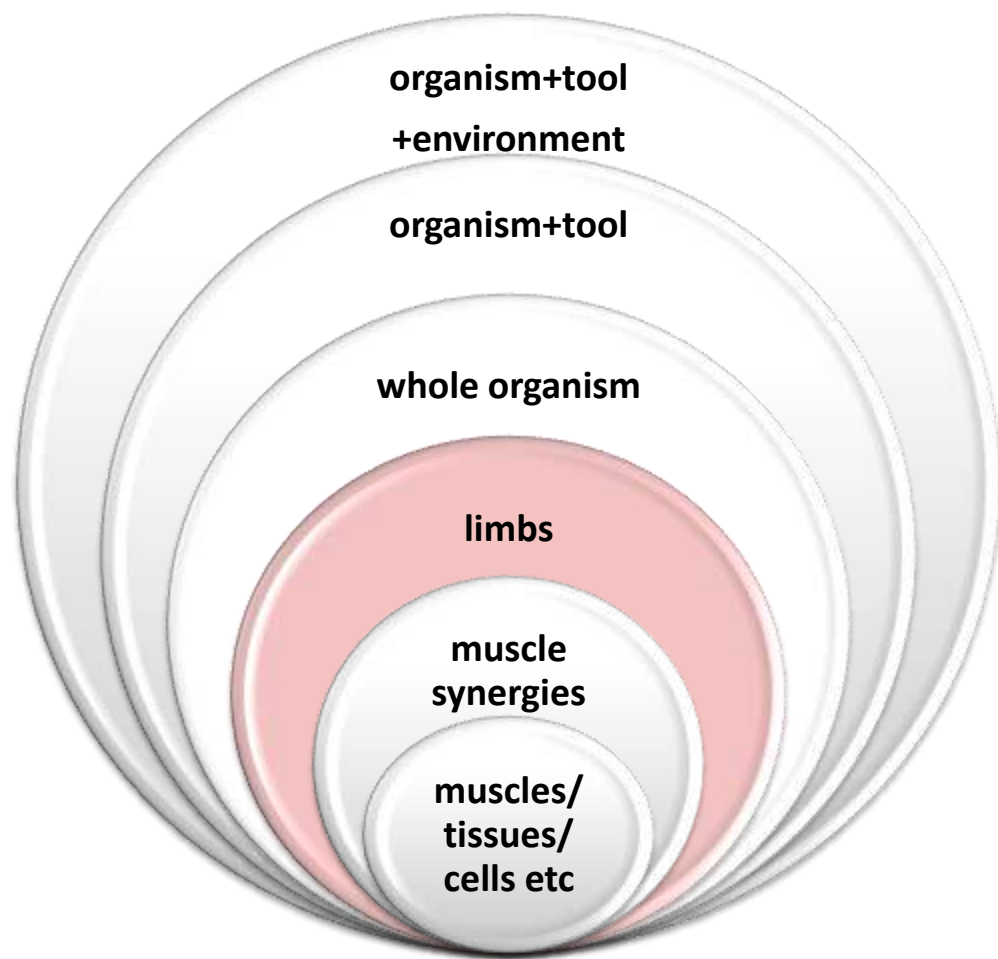
Shoulder girdle support



[exercise – rubber band]

Postural support





Allowing self-organisation: the arm (1 of 3)

Ask your partner to mime, with a loose arm,

- a) knocking on a door
- b) using a salt shaker
- c) patting a dog
- d) cleaning a window
- e) bouncing a ball

Do you notice anything about the movement of the elbow?



Allowing self-organisation: the arm (2 of 3)

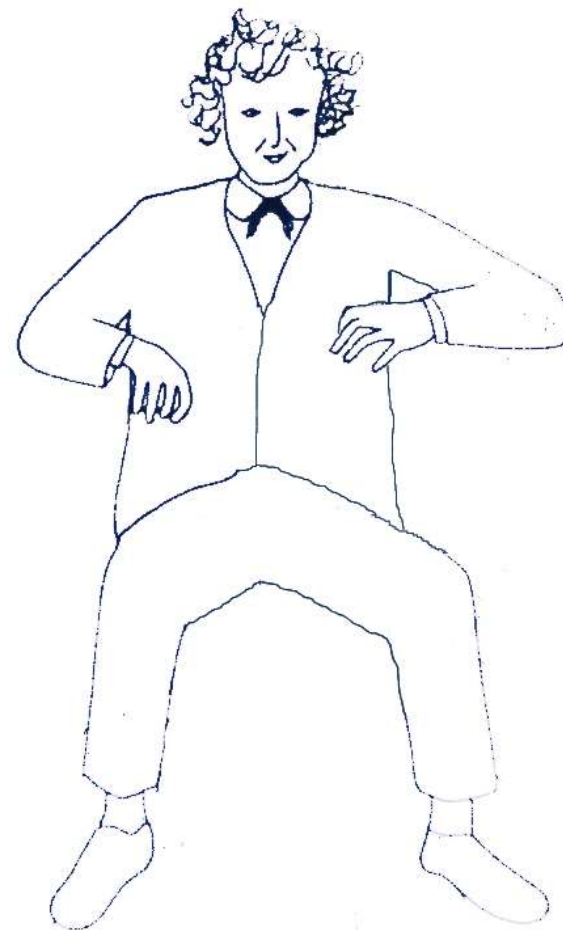
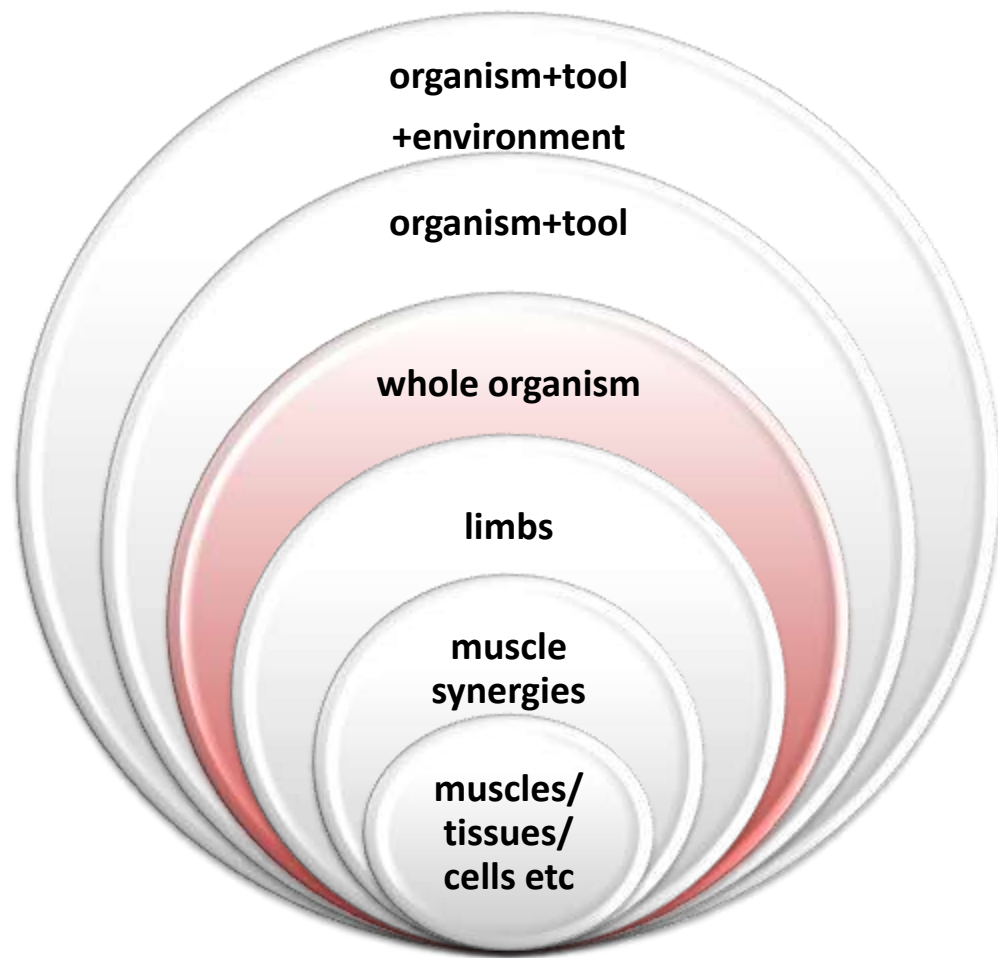
‘Research studies in kinesiology show that rotary movements are more effective and less tiring than flexion/ extension movements. The excessive use of flexion-extension movements (such as the exclusive use of forearm movements from the elbow) in détaché, sautillé, spiccato, and tremolo bowings, or in vibrato, causes fixation of the upper arm which does not permit natural inclusion of rotary movements.’

Paul Rolland, *Teaching of Action in String Playing*

Allowing self-organisation: the arm (3 of 3)

- **upper arm rotation**
- **momentum:** preparation, movement, follow-through
- **larger parts first**
 - wave -like motion in bowing
 - preparatory movement in shifting
- **humero-scapular rhythm**





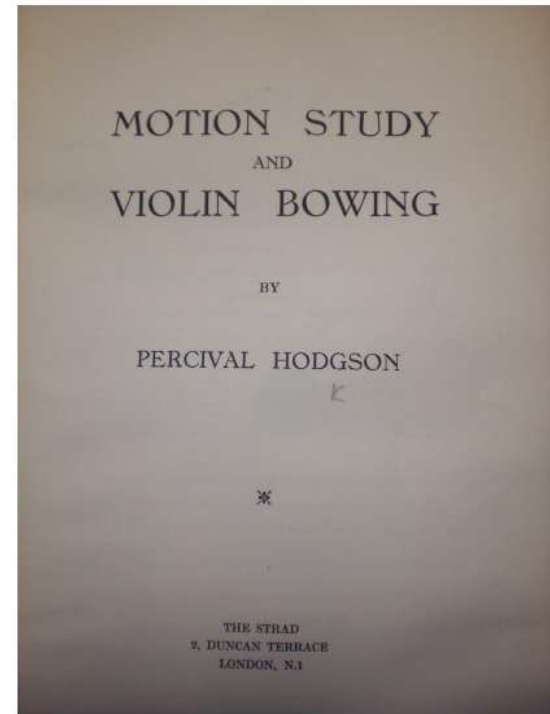
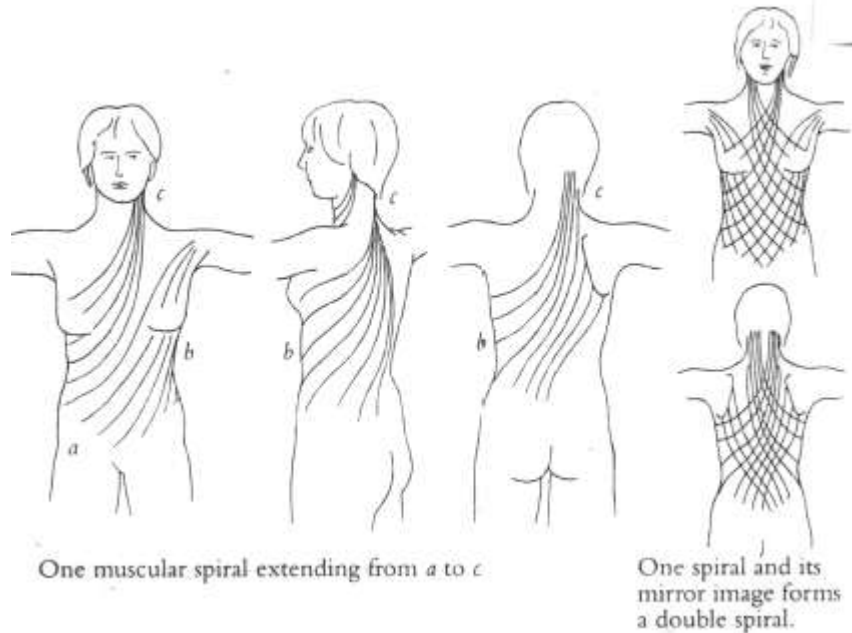
Allowing self-organisation: weight transfer

“a capacity for easy transference of weight from foot to foot is the correct foundation for arm movement”
(Percival Hodgson)

“Opposites are implicit to the concept of balance. When your bow arm and your body move in opposite directions at the same time the friction created between the bow and the string enables you to produce a sound easily. If, however, your bow arm and body move in the same direction at same time, this friction is partially or completely neutralized. It then takes greater force to produce sound.”
(Victor Sazer)



Allowing self-organisation: Spirals



‘Observe a track and field athlete throwing a javelin, a violinist vigorously bowing, or even an artist drawing at an easel and it’s easy to see that these complex uses of the arms require the ability to rotate at the trunk ... virtually all movement takes place in three dimensions, including the spiral or rotational movement of the trunk’ Ted Dimon, *The Body in Motion*

CYCLOGRAPHIE



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

CYCLOGRAPHIE



10



11



12



13



14



15



16



17



18

CYCLOGRAPHIE



19



20



21



22



23



24



25



26



27

CYCLOGRAPHIE



28



29



30



31



32



33



34



35



36

CHAPTER X

FIGURE EIGHT PATTERNS

THE next group typifies a compound curve with two loops, which we will call the *figure eight*, because of its resemblance to that figure placed sideways. There are several ways of approaching this pattern, the easiest being to extend the simplest *forward curve* (see *Graph 1*).

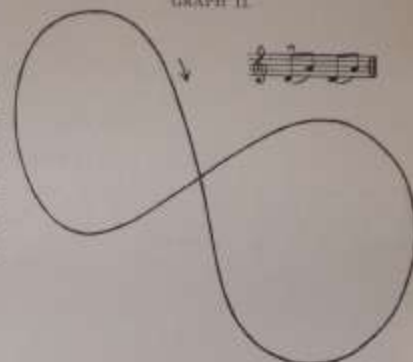
GRAPH 10.

Graph 10 shows the *forward curve* of *Graph 1* bending back on itself, as a result of returning to the D string (see also *wave patterns* in Chap. XI).



GRAPH 11.

Graph 11 is an excellent example of a *figure eight*, the cycle being completed during the playing of every four notes (see also *Cyclograph 5*). The passage was played at a moderate speed, with a wide swing of the arm. This particular *figure eight* is probably the easiest for the player to visualise during his own performance.



A reversal of the order of the notes, while still beginning down bow, produces a similar figure, but the hand proceeds round the track in the opposite direction.

Graph 12 shows a *figure eight* which can be regarded as a combination of the *forward* and *backward ellipses*. The path is that of a cycle made by every four notes during the continuous repetition of bar 1. The alternation of D and A, as shown in bar 2, would make a *forward ellipse* for every two notes; the alternation of E and A, as in bar 3, a *backward one*; while bar 1 combines these paths (see also *Cyclographs 6 and 7*).

GRAPH 12.



CHAPTER XI WAVE PATTERNS

A VERY easy pattern to visualise is one which can be classed as the wave type.

GRAPH 16.



Graph 16 shows the simplest kind of wave, made by playing adjacent strings alternately in the same bow. When the notes are played more rapidly the waves become shallower, and the pivoting of the bow away from the double stopping position is only very slight.

MOTION STUDY AND VIOLIN BOWING.

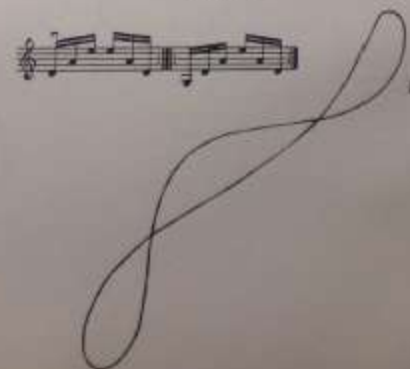
GRAPH 17.



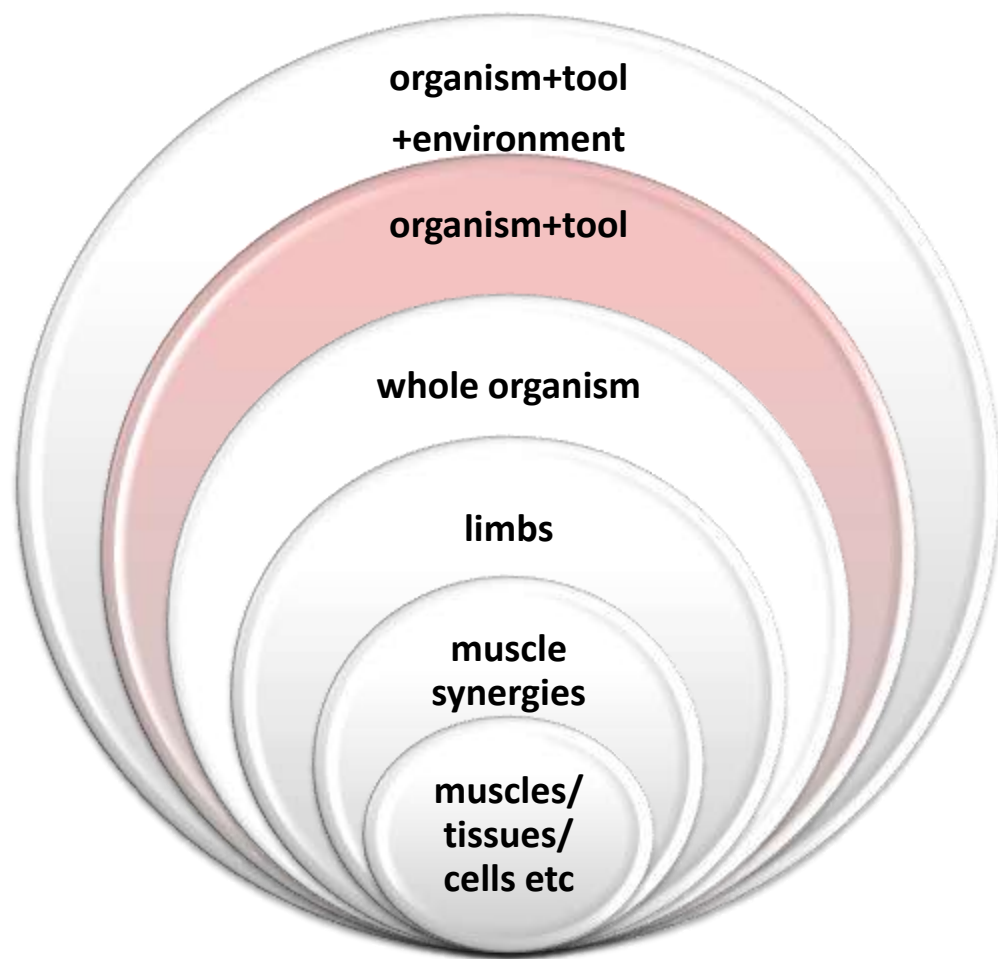
Graph 17 results from playing the same notes as in Graph 16, but divided into two bows (see also Cyclegraph 9).

When the number of notes per bow is reduced to two, the type shown in Graph 11 is produced. This suggests the idea of viewing the figure eight as evolving from the wave type.

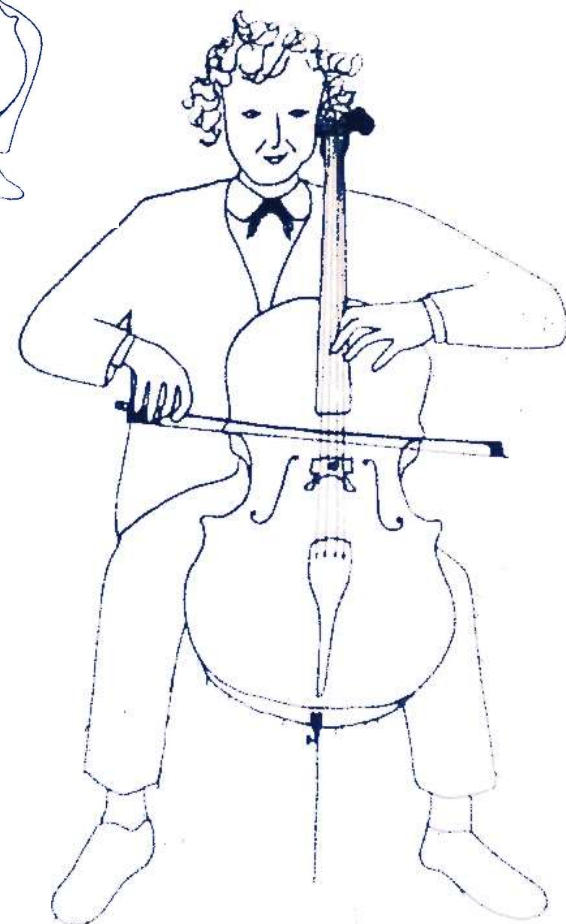
GRAPH 18.



Graph 18 was produced by the first of the two bows; the second has a similar pattern (see Cyclegraph 10).



“player and instrument
are interconnected...”
Pedro De Alcantara



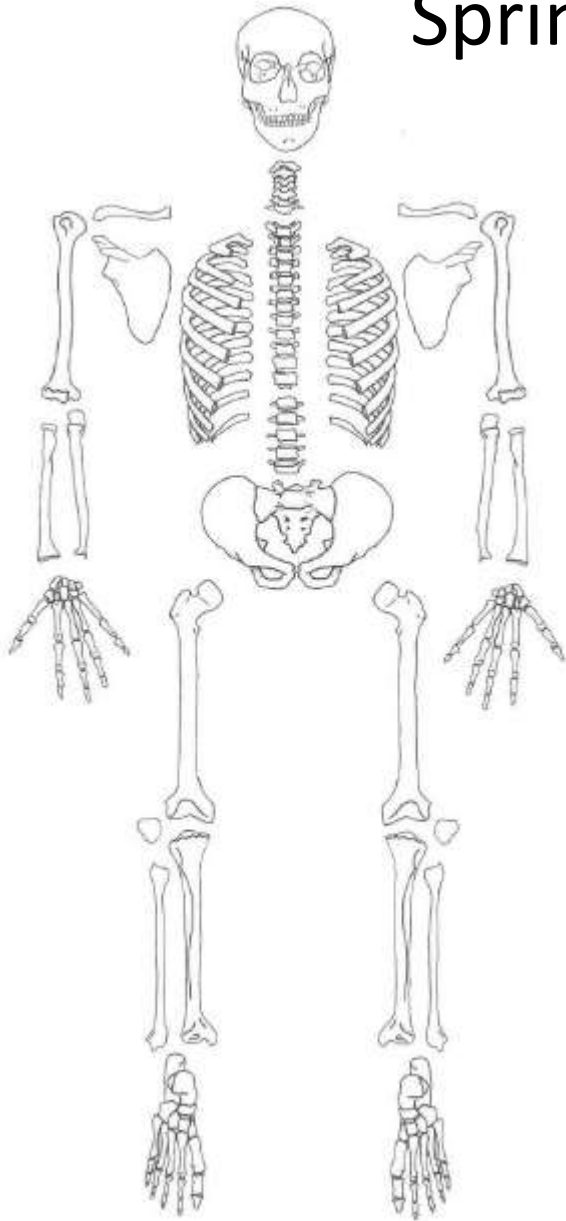
Spring / Buoyancy in the arms...

‘nothing really constructive can be accomplished unless the joints of the fingers, thumb, hand, and arm are flexible and spring-like. There has to be this resiliency and springiness in the functioning of the whole arm from shoulder to finger tips or else the tone will be hard and ugly, the bowing clumsy and uncontrolled.’ (Galamian)



[exercise]

Spring / Buoyancy in the whole self, instrument, world...



‘[When bowing] instead of just going through the motions with your hands and arms, tune into the energy that comes back into your body from the instrument.(Madeline Bruser, *The Art of Practising*)

When you stroke a cat, it often arches its back up against your hand so that while you push one way, the cat pushes the other. In the same way, do not let the violin or string sit passively and inactive while the bow plays on it. Play with an ‘ardent violin’ which rises up to meet the contact of the bow (Simon Fischer)

[exercise – spring in legs]

“Everything is elastic! *Everything!* ... Yes, not just the player. The cello, the strings, the bow ... the *earth!* ... Of course the great thing about the elasticity is that you have to *let go* into the elasticity. And it's the elasticity that gives you security. And ‘letting go into security’ is a very strange idea ... for most players! ...

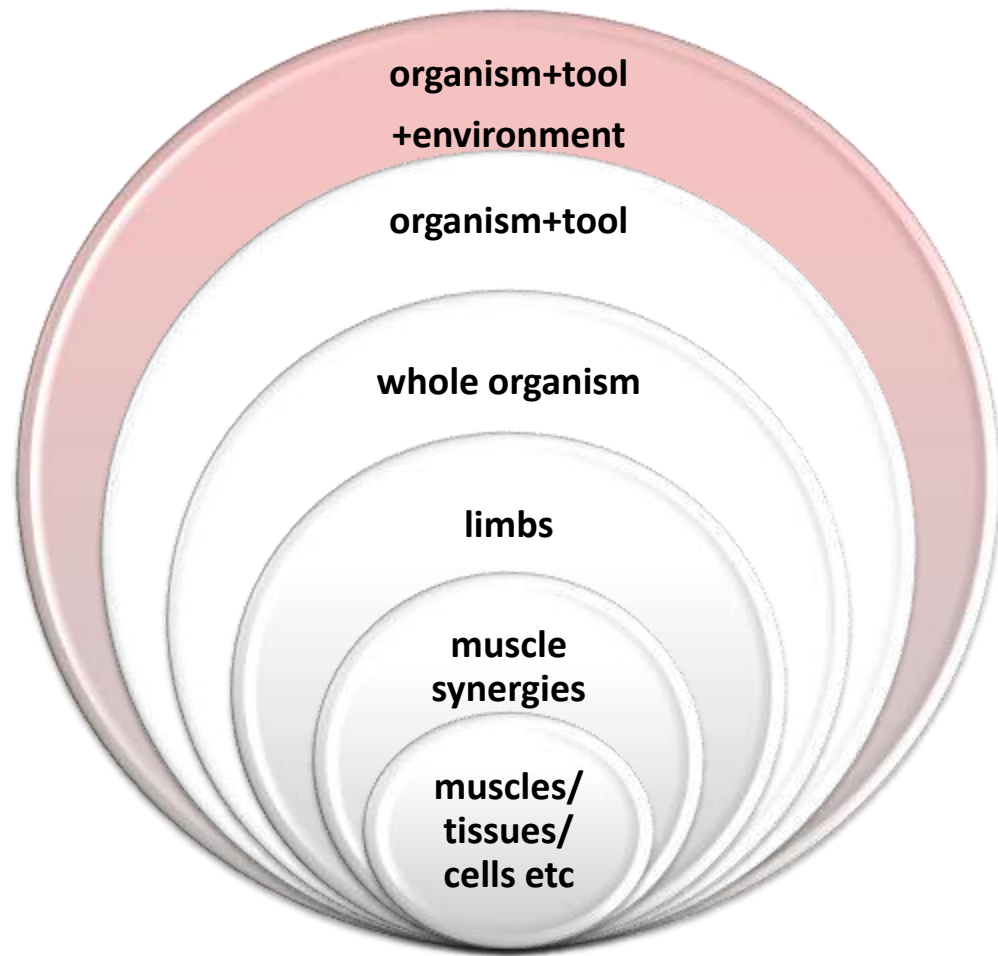
“The important thing about elasticity is that it's there in all the joints, and in the flesh of the fingertips themselves ...

“And I think it would be true to say that all instruments vibrate the player - just as the player makes the instrument vibrate - as far as the player's elasticity will allow. *Elastic conditions* are what we need, through and through. “

“And another thing I'd like to say is, that I tell people nowadays that they should regard practising as a *treat*. As if you've saved up for it. You mustn't drudge your way through it. You do it as an exquisite pleasure. And you surely don't stiffen when you're enjoying a treat!”



Vivien Mackie



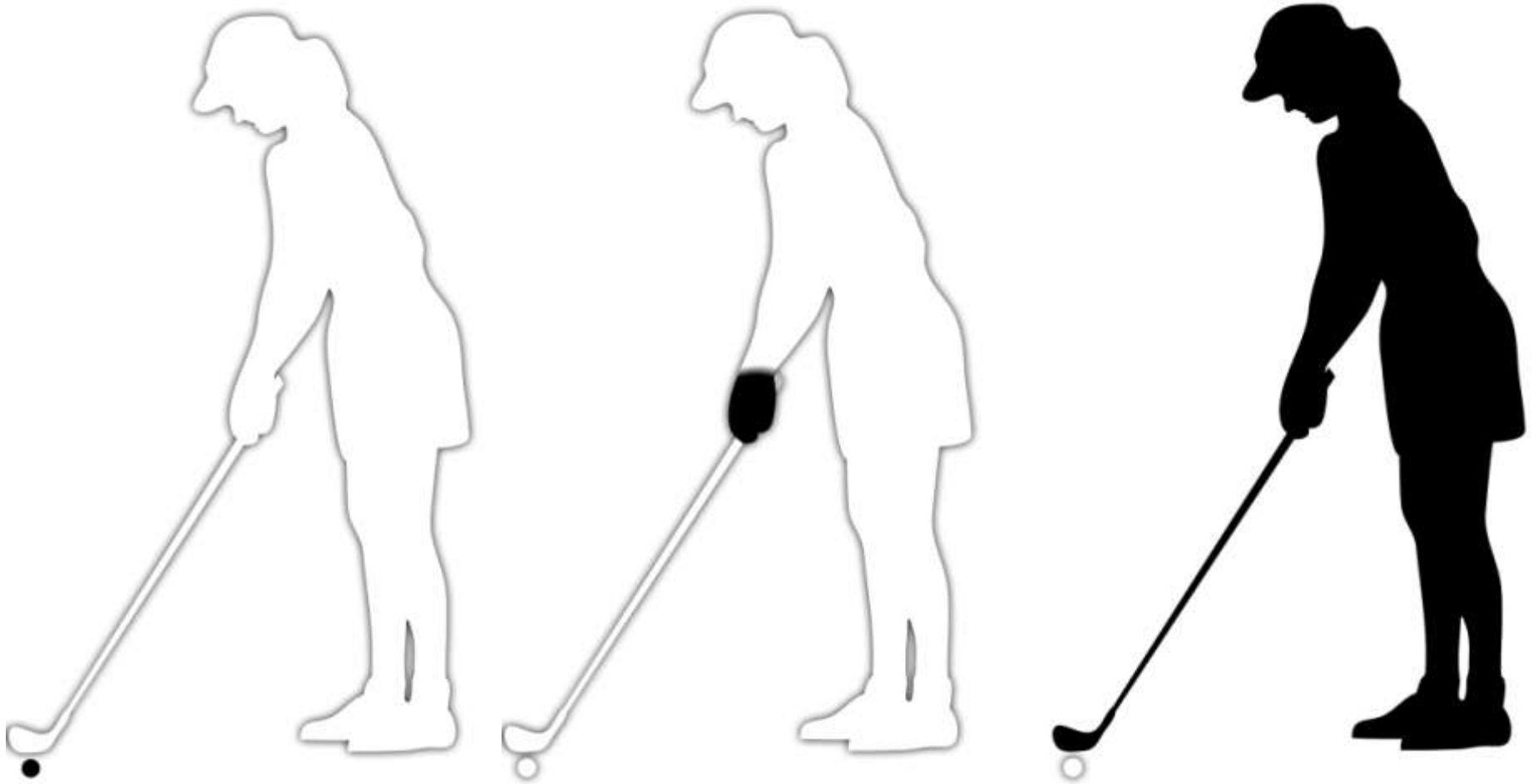
Role of Attention

'Attention changes *what kind of* a thing comes into being for us: in that way it changes the world ... A mountain that is a landmark to a navigator, a source of wealth to the prospector, a many-textured form to a painter, or to another the dwelling place of the gods, is changed by the attention given to it. There is no 'real' mountain which can be distinguished from these, no one way of thinking which reveals the true mountain' (Iain McGilchrist)

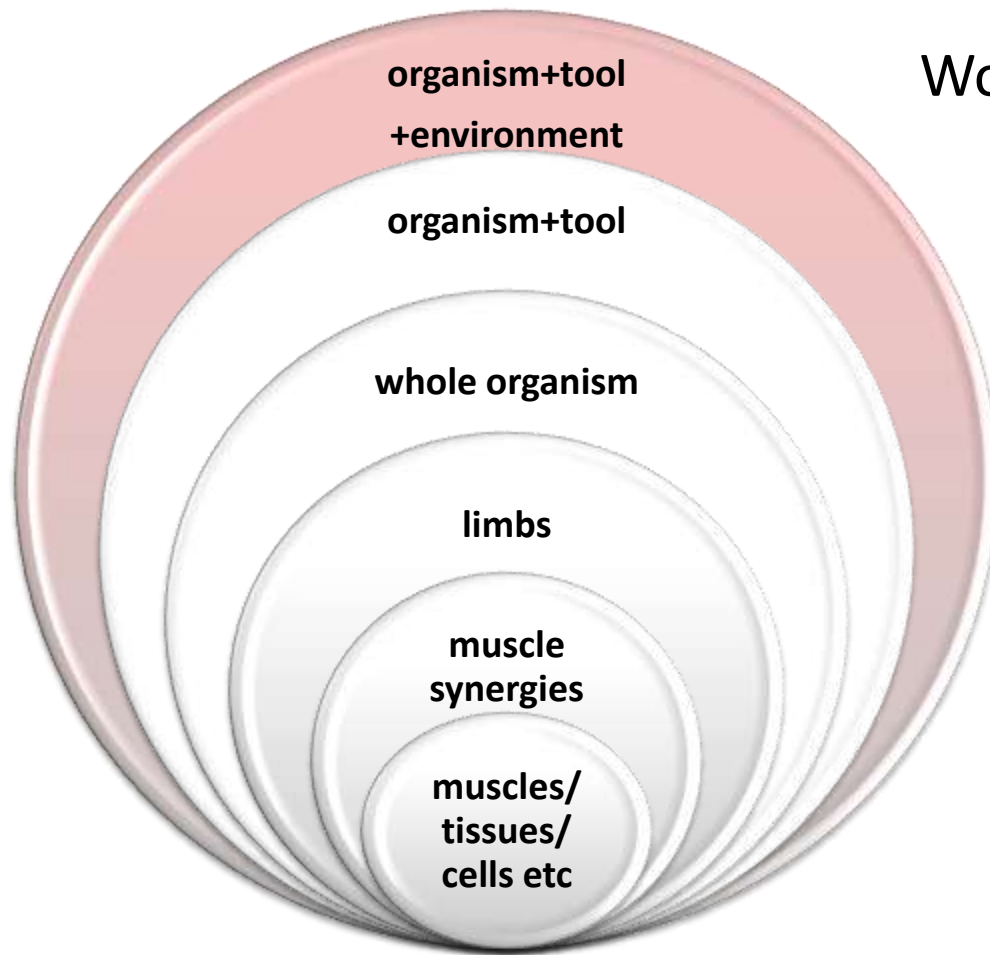


- wide visual attention with soft focus (including peripheral vision)
- 'peripheral audition'
- balance between internal and external attention
- 'unified field of attention'

three types of bodily awareness



Working with performance anxiety



Barbara Conable, **What to do about performance anxiety**
(available at bodymap.org)



Believe me, I've seen everything you can imagine to try and solve this problem, and nothing but this demanding procedure really works.

If you don't believe me, try all the others and then do this, hard as it is.

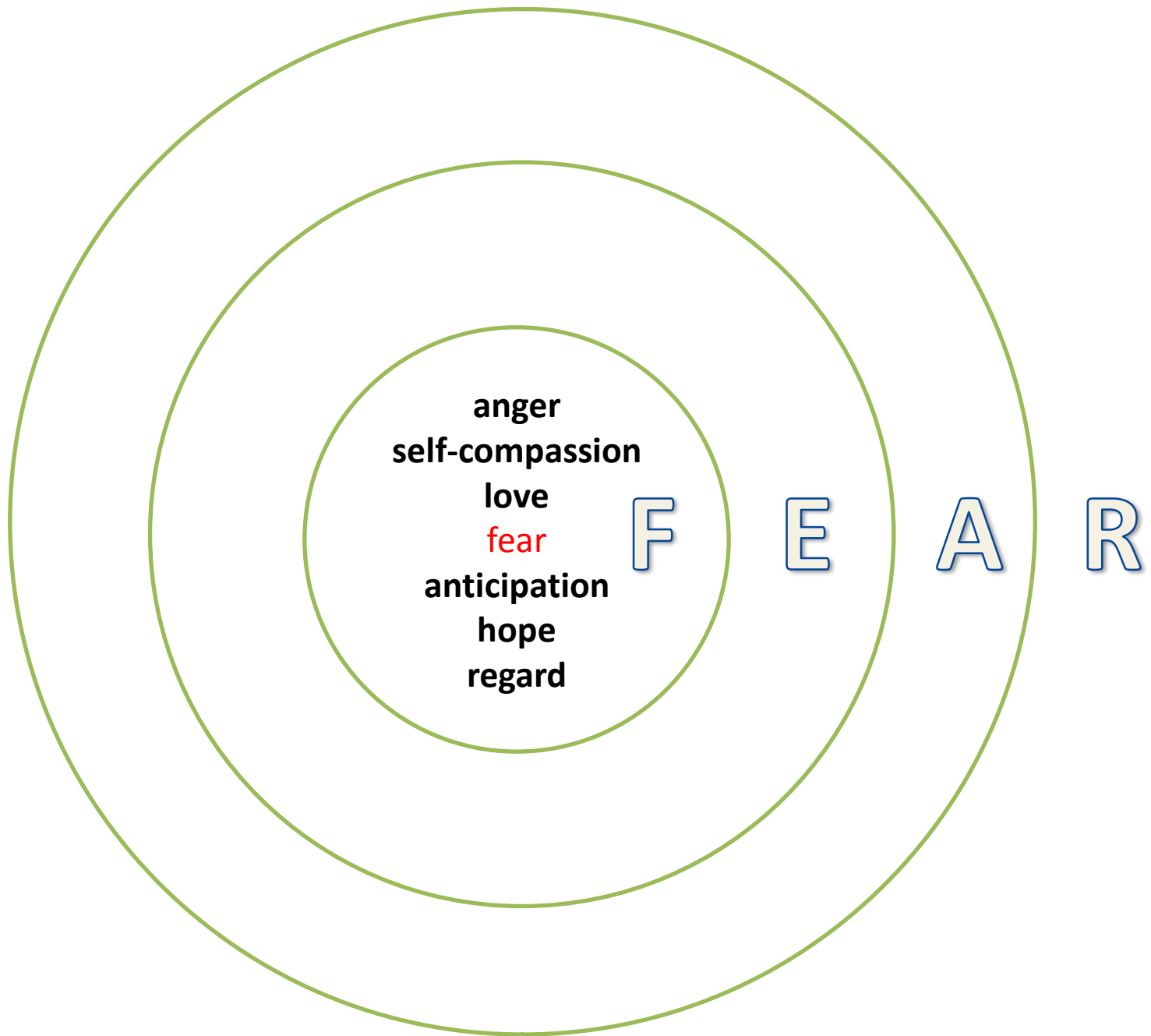
No one ever said being a successful performer was going to be easy, only that it was going to be fulfilling and in keeping with our deepest humanity, so the reward is great.

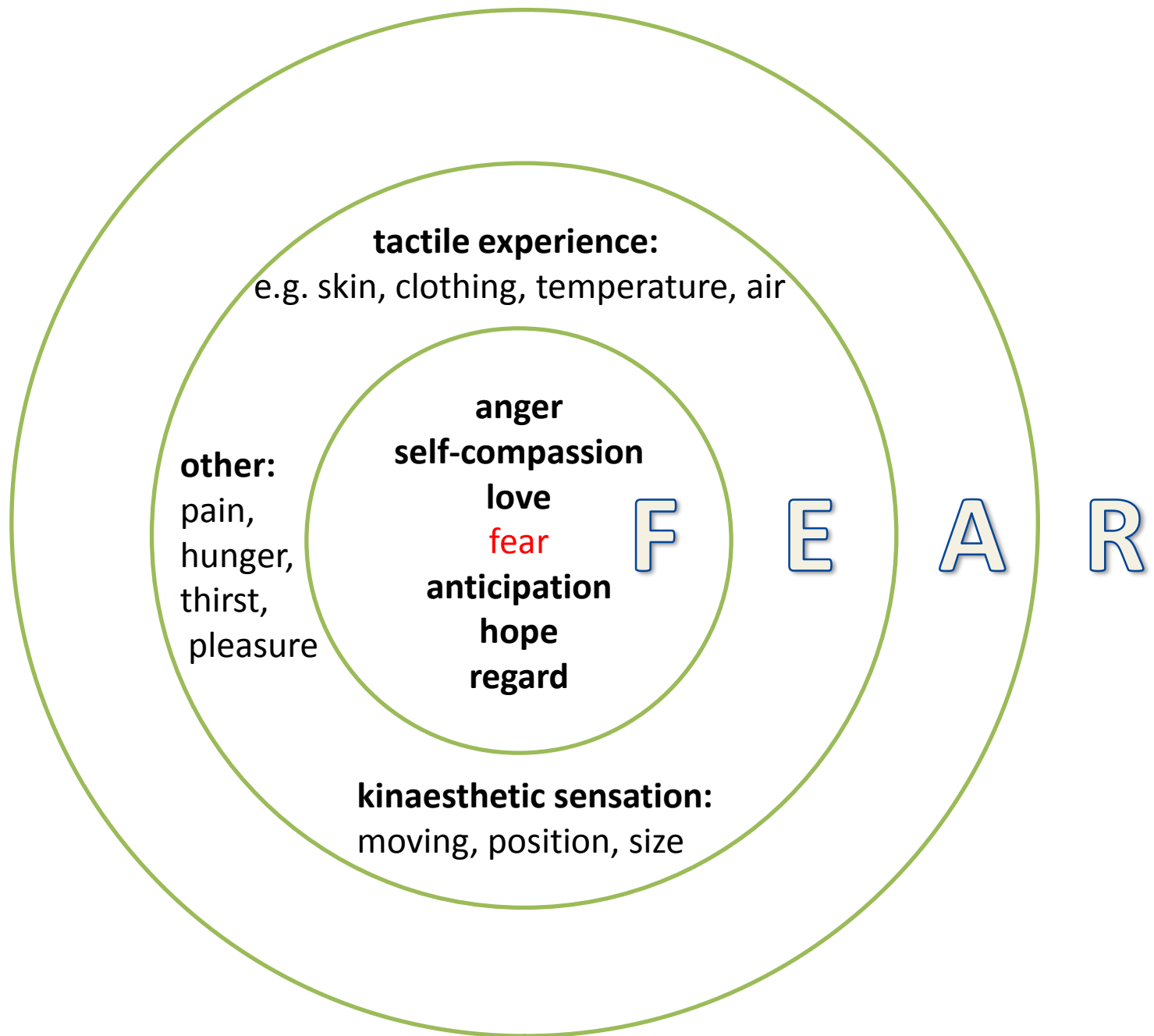
So, here's how it's done, letter by letter.

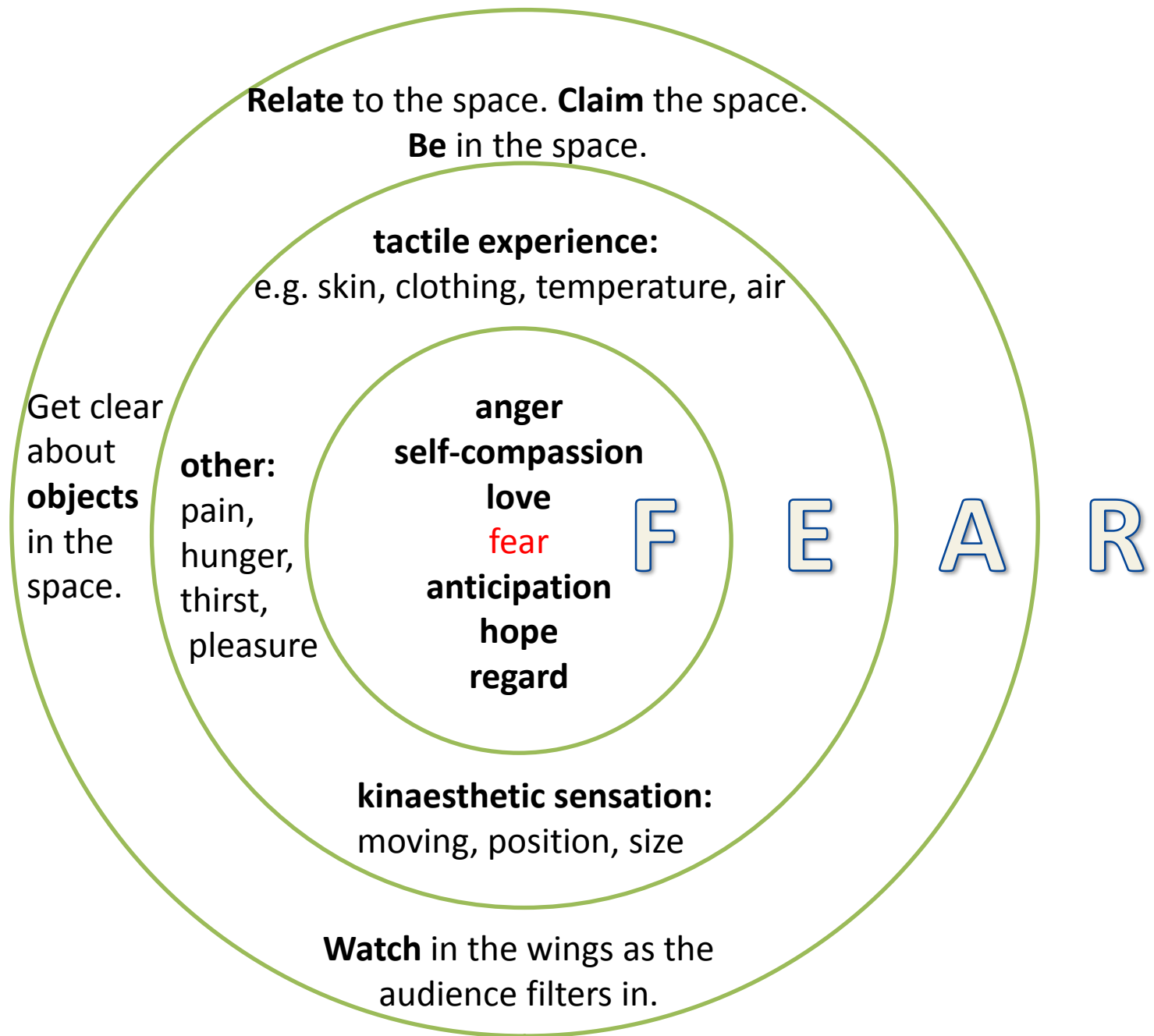


F **Feel the fear**
E **Embody the fear**
A **Arrive**
R **Relate**









Relate to the **space**

Relate to the **music**

Relate to the space. **Claim** the space.
Be in the space.

tactile experience:

e.g. skin, clothing, temperature, air

Get clear
about
objects
in the
space.

other:

pain,
hunger,
thirst,
pleasure

anger
self-compassion

love

fear

anticipation

hope

regard

F

E

A

R

kinaesthetic sensation:

moving, position, size

Relate to the **audience**

Watch in the wings as the
audience filters in.

Relate to your **instrument**

End of presentation

Thank you!

Additional material on performance anxiety

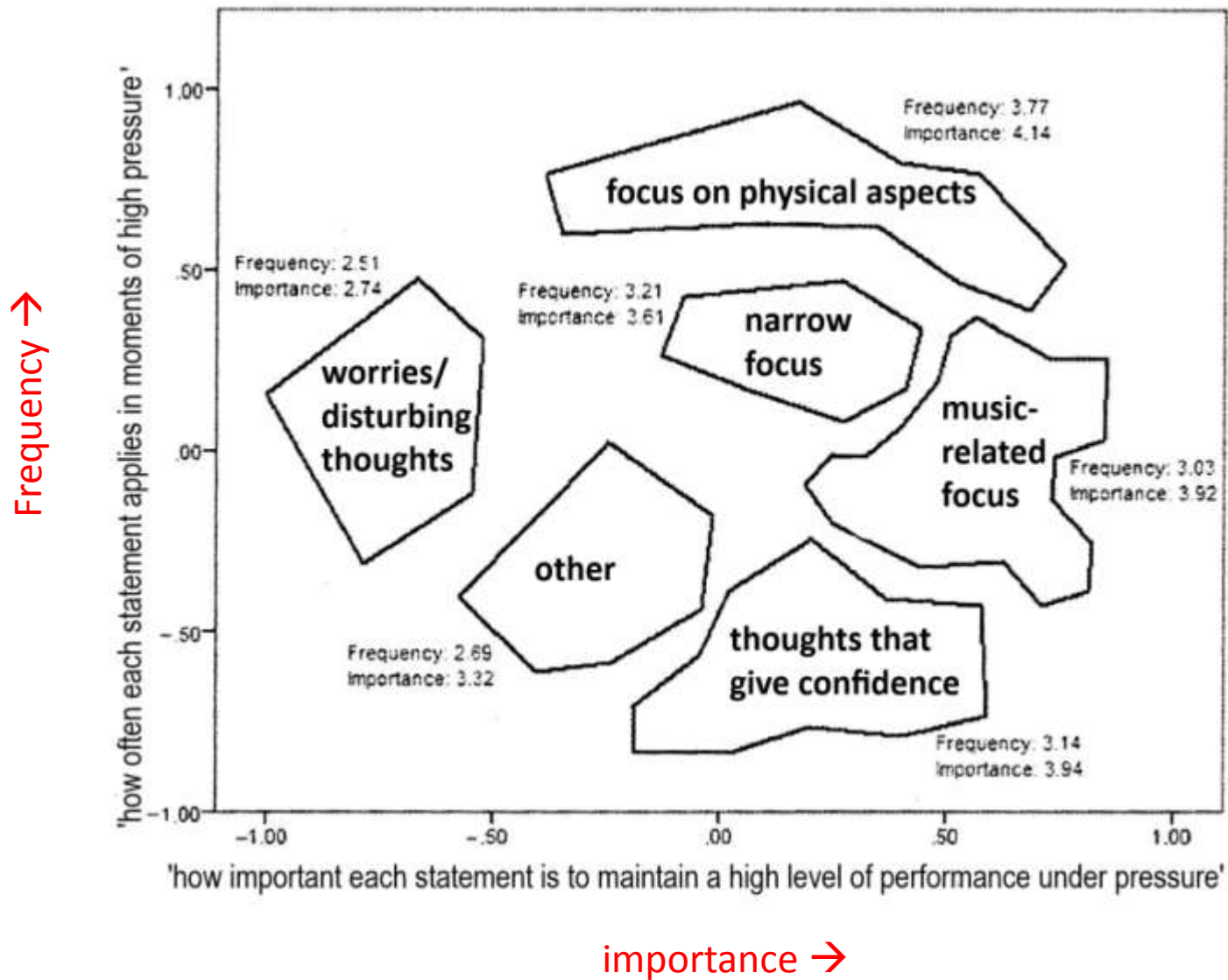
Buma et al. (2015) Exploring the thoughts and focus of attention of elite musicians under pressure.
Psychology of Music 43 (4).



Undoubtedly there are moments in which you are under great pressure to play well and in which you cannot afford to make any mistakes. Think for instance of those moments in which you are the only musician playing or when an error made by you would be clearly audible; moments at which all eyes are on you.

At these stressful moments, where does your focus of attention go? Can you explain where you focus your attention and/ or what you think about?

Small sample of elite musicians



Larger sample of elite musicians

