

# **Movement for the Middle Aged**

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Sayings such as “Life is warm and moves” or “Death is cold and still” remind us that to be alive is to be physical and it is well recognised that “When you stop growing you start dying”.

When young we find movement natural. If we were active in youth then perhaps as we grow older we learn new activities and find them difficult. Perhaps if we were not active, then daily life itself becomes more difficult.

Not only is physical movement more difficult but also our health may deteriorate. It has long been recognised (and science is now rediscovering) that a healthy body keeps the mind healthy since it is an organ/body part like any other.

The ability to move comfortably aids this in many ways from simply keeping the biological systems running normally to maintaining structural integrity and ultimately to reducing vulnerability to issues such as falls in later life.

In youth we develop habits of body usage which in later years may be found to cause problems – or we may develop emotional habits - in the way we deal with stress for example – which reflect in the tensions we hold in our bodies. These tensions over time can affect our ability to use our body, e.g. the classic “widows hump” where a hunched postural habit ultimately leads to immobile shoulders, spine and neck problems.

Review the classic mainstream medical approaches, also psychological approaches including neurological work, then alternative approaches in general. In particular it is worth considering those of Tai Chi and Alexander Technique which developed independently and centuries apart, but came to reach much the same resolution.

What can be done?

Develop and learn about

- Relaxation, body awareness
- Relaxed movement
- Posture and balance
- Loosening the structure
- Connecting the body
- Using visualisation

- Mindfulness
- How the body works, anatomy, physiology, tensegrity, fascia, skeleton, muscles, basic mechanisms
- Proprioception, mental maps
- The value of good habits
- Diet, weight

In physical work focus on:

- Loosening – specific areas
- Softening
- Posture
- Balance
- On-the-spot – loosening the whole body
- Mobile exercises – e.g. walking, dancing, sitting, standing, squatting
- Mindful standing and moving – Chi Kung

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