

## A Different Take on Why Exercise and Bodywork Are So Important

We know exercise and bodywork are good for many things; stress and pain relief, removing of toxins in the body, moving lymph, calming the nervous system, relaxing tight muscles, for a few. I could go on, it's a long list. But, they are even more important from an anatomical point of view.

Remember that our bodies function as a unit. The liver does not function on its own. How it's working effects everything else in the body. If you pull a muscle in your leg it has just as far-reaching effects. 'The body is always at potential – to change, and for new things to develop', at all stages of our life.

All cells get replaced every seven years.

'Theoretically that means there is a potential in these cells to regenerate in a different direction.' Everything in your body is affected by everything you do, the food you eat, your exercise, or lack thereof, stress level, even your emotional outlook on life has an effect on the structure of your body. This article focuses on relationship between the bones and connective tissue (fascia).

Even bones can be remodeled throughout life as the relative stress on them changes. 'The bumps on bones are places where muscle tendons attach. The bumps are therefore regions of localized rapid growth of bone as a result of prolonged tension of that spot. If tension is applied to a different area, the new area is stimulated to create an increased amount of bone, another bump.' (Think about the extra "bone bumps" we can accumulate – like bone spurs in vertebrae) 'Then what appears to happen is that on the other side of the bone there is some localized resorption of bone resulting in an indentation. It seems that a certain volume of bone is needed in the body; its configuration adapts to changing stresses over time. This means that if we hold ourselves in bent position, bone ultimately accommodates its shape to that position.' It takes place over years. This makes it even more vital to keep up a good regimen of exercise and bodywork. By the time you see alterations of this type in your body, it is the accumulation of years, and therefore can take years to change. The more we keep up maintenance on our bodies, the longer it will take for those alterations to effect us.

Connective tissue literally connects and supports. It forms the structure of the body. The fascia as a major force in the body is a new thought to most allopathic (regular western medicine) doctors.

'We tend to think of structure in terms of muscle and bone. But in fact, structure is the result of the organization of muscle and bone. Connective tissue, in response to movement, is the organizing factor. Muscle tissue is enfolded within the fascia; the combination is called myofascia. Movement is the outcome of embedded muscle tissue action on the surrounding connective tissue. Structure is thus the result of movement, the characteristic muscle action on the connective tissue bed as a whole. Connective tissue (myofascia) defines the body contour and is the organ of structure and movement (as Ida Rolf called it) in the body.'

'Connective tissue is alive in the sense that it responds to stimulus.' Everyday movement, exercise, and bodywork help keep the fascia (connective tissue) flexible and healthy. Healthy fascia has a high water content and has fibers going every which direction. That way it moves and glides anyway you move the body. Accidents, injuries, surgeries, long-term stress, etc. causes the fascia to lose water content, and causes more fiber secretion along the lines of stress in the fascia. That means along the lines of stress, the fascia literally gets thicker and doesn't move as well. In view of the preceding paragraph, just think of how restricted fascia will affect everything else in the body. Think in terms of what that can mean, especially when you factor in the emotional component. A lot of fear in your life can cause you to pull your chest in, round your shoulders and hump your back. What will that do to the structure of your body? What if you have "responsibility shoulders", carrying the weight of the world (at least your world) on your shoulders? Do you think your body might respond by building up your shoulders? Toughening and thickening the fascia literally to support that emotional stress, at the cost of restricted muscles, crimped nerves and blood vessels. How about just physical components? Improper shoes, dragging around heavy purses or laptop cases, especially if you favor one shoulder, hefting kids around, weekend warrior injuries (or just golfing and pickle balls injuries), the list is endless.

Our lives are as they are. But we can move more smoothly through our lives by keeping our bodies in shape and doing things like bodywork to reduce and balance out the tension in our systems. Your body will thank you for it.

\* All quotes in parenthesis's come from the book "The Endless Web – Fascial Anatomy and Physical Reality" by R Louis Schultz, PhD and Rosemary Feitis, DO