

The Pleasure of Movement

Theory and Practice

By Oscar Naval

The Rhythm of Life

All of nature pulsates. From the basic atom to the complexity of the human species there is movement. Every molecule has a different vibratory state just like every living cell functions on a rhythmic cycle. All living tissue is in a constant state of motion produced by its inner charge or excitation. There is a natural rhythmic movement to all aspects of our lives.

The state of movement directly correlates to your wellbeing. Only to extent that you are in touch with your body's movements, both voluntary and involuntary, you feel pleasure. In the absence of movement, there is nothing to sense or to feel – you are numb.

To speak of pleasure we must also look at pain. In the analysis of the involuntary movements of agony, pain, distress to those good feelings of pleasure, joy, and ecstasy, we observe that the difference between the two ends of the spectrum is the presents or absence of coordination and rhythmicity. The agony of death is a twisted and contorted series of convulsive movements. Ecstasy, the highest form of pleasure, is unified and rhythmic in nature. For example, sexual orgasm takes hold of the body and involuntarily produces strong rhythmic convulsions of the musculature of the entire body.

The paradox of pleasure is that you can only feel it to the extent that you can feel all your feelings. Most of us avoid pain, fear, and anger at all costs. From pills, smoke, drinking too much, to rising above the feelings in a heady attempt at self-analysis, we all find a way to avoid it. In this process of masking the anger, fear, and pain we stop ALL the movement of emotion. In our desire to stop these “negative” feelings we also stop our ability to feel pleasure. Our natural rhythmic movements freeze.

Feelings are also in the moment. Young children who have not yet suppressed their organic response to their feelings can be crying with their whole bodies convulsing with intense pain over the loss of a loving pet in one moment then dancing and playing with great joy the next.

Therefore, our challenge in life for having great pleasure is keeping our emotional life motile and feels in the moment.

The Biological Theory

Children's movements are natural with their feelings. When an incident occurs their little nervous systems are over whelmed by the contradictions of conditioning verses their natural responses. For example, the child experiences fear when the mother attention is distracted by a phone call. The child cries for her to return. Upon return the mother yells, 'stop that racket, you have nothing to cry about.' The truth is the child felt fear and the pain of being separated; therefore, their natural response to pain is to cry.

What is physically occurring in the nervous systems?

The vegetative or autonomic nervous system (ANS) is the part of the nervous system that controls the heart, smooth muscle, and glands. It is also called the involuntary system because the effects of this system are not usually under voluntary control. When you have

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intense feelings then your ANS changes your circulatory system, digestive muscles, sweat glands, tears ducts, etc.

The ANS is divided into the “sympathetic” and the “parasympathetic” divisions. The sympathetic system is our “fight or flight” response. For example, heart rate and blood pressure increase, dilatation of the pupils, secretion of adrenaline occurs. This is where people may exhibit great feats of strength in times of stress. The parasympathetic system is the opposite (“para-“) of the sympathetic. For example, the heart rate is returned normal, the dilatation of the blood vessels return warmth to the extremities and pressure to normal, and stimulation of the lacrimal glands produce tears. Left to follow its natural course you go from a charged state (sympathetic) to a discharged state (parasympathetic) and back to a state of stillness or “homeostasis”. The flow and balance of the two divisions of the ANS is vital to our being. Like a pendulum it swings one way then the other in an undisturbed rhythm.

In not-so-technical terms, you have a system that must be kept in balance. This yin/yang, active/receptive, male/female aspect of our nervous system act antagonistically. You charge ready for action then you must discharge to return to a normal state of being.

When early man (or woman) experienced the leap of a wild animal in their path they felt fear and possibly anger. The fight or flight response was triggered so they fought to the death or ran. Once they were safe with their friends and family they recovered and allowed their systems to return to a resting state.

In modern life, your boss leaps in your face yelling and screaming that your work is unacceptable. Your fight or flight response is activated. But, you don’t fight to the death nor do you run. You suppress the natural urge. Movement stops. You hold our breath and you just “take it”. (I’m not suggesting kill your boss, although you thought about it at some level).

Furthermore, these traumas to our nervous systems that started from childhood stay with us and build layer, upon layer in our bodies until our energy wains and we are void of pleasure.

Practice - Breathing, Movement and Feeling

What is the healthy response? Movement. Exercise; you have a flight response, so run. Go to the beach, jump through the surf and scream. Seek out exercise classes, aerobics, and body therapy groups.

How do you strip away those layers of trauma in our bodies? Breathe. One of the first movements we suppress in our bodies is breathing. It is a false belief that we breathe with our lungs; they have a passive roll. The diaphragm creates a vacuum in the lungs causing the chest expands, the belly to stick out, and the spine, pelvis and neck are also in movement. We breathe with the movement of the entire body.

An exercise to help you feel your natural movement of breath is to lay on your back with your knees bent so that the feet are flat on the ground. The arms lie at the sides. Relax your head, neck, and jaw while breathing from only the mouth.

When the breathing is easy and deep and no muscular tensions block the respiratory waves as they pass through the body, the pelvis will move spontaneously with each breath.



On Inspiration your belly and chest rise and there is a backward movement of the pelvis while your lower back comes off the floor. You will also experience your head rocking forward.



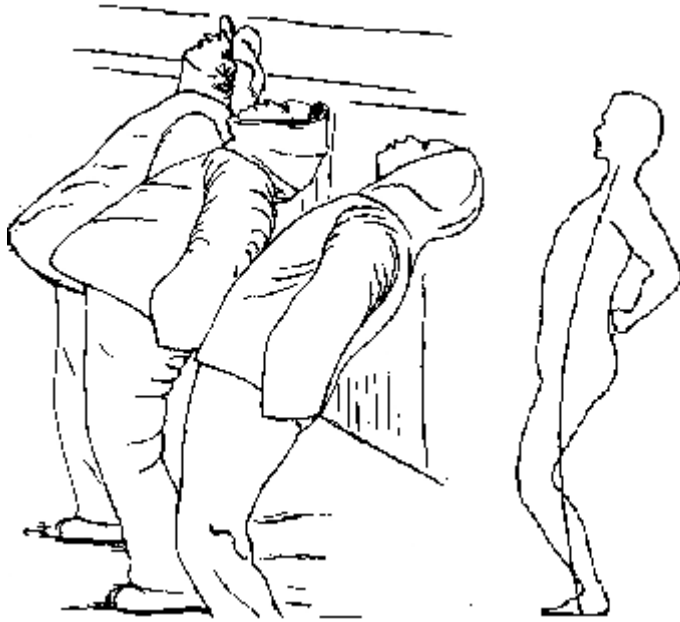
On Expiration there is a forward movement of the pelvis and your lower back and feet press the floor.

Focus your awareness to the relaxed, natural response to breathing. This may be difficult at first and you may need some help. In some cases you may notice your chest move but not your abdomen, or visa versa. You may breath shallow breaths or you may not have movement in your head or pelvis. Note this and relax the tensions in your body to return this natural movement of breathing with your whole body.

Continue this breathing for at least 15 minutes being aware of you body, sensations, and feelings. Because shock and trauma is held in the body these process may illicit emotional feelings to the surface. Be aware of them and you may wish to express them in even more movements or tears. What does your inner child wish to do in the moment with these feelings? If you find yourself with having strong feelings of rage, fear, etc. with any of the movements described here then I would strongly suggest you seek out a therapist trained in body therapy.

“If you feel it, you can heal it!” Much of our neurosis comes from the suppression of our natural feelings. Movements bring feelings to the surface that lead to expansion of the life force and healing.

The “Taoist Arch” or bow is another stimulating exercise. Standing with your feet shoulder width apart and your fists pressed into your lower back, arch backward with your knees and joints soft. Breathing should be relax and through the mouth only. Continue this until you start to have an involuntary movement such as shaking or vibration of your legs and/or other parts of you body. You may also feel like expression through your voice since this opens up the abdomen



This exercise is rooted in the Taoist philosophy and aims at attaining harmony with the universe through a combination of body movement and breathing technique. It balances the charging and discharging states. “All things alike go through their processes of activity and then they return to their original state.” The Tao.

The second part of this exercise is to arch your back in the other direction by bending forward so you touch the ground with your fingertips of both hands. Feet are about shoulder width apart, the toes turned slightly inward and the knees slightly bent. There should be no weight on the hands; the whole weight of the body rests on the legs and feet. The head hangs down loosely. The weight of the body should fall midway between your heel and ball of the foot. With your jaw relaxed breath through your mouth.

Keep moving and your awareness will continue to grow. Only to the degree that you are aware of yourself are you aware of others, and only to the extent that you feel yourself as a person can you feel for another person. So keep moving!

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