

# Back to Center Massage Therapy

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## Moving Through Life

### Finding the Pleasure in Exercise

Sonia Osorio

We're busier than ever with longer workdays, less leisure time, shorter lunch hours, longer commutes, and more demands than ever before. We may even be in a job that doesn't fulfill us, yet we spend most of our time there. When the day ends, we have almost no energy left to do what we enjoy. How to find a healthy balance?

Plenty has been written about the therapeutic benefits of exercise. So, why aren't more people reaping those benefits and moving toward health and well-being? We need to reexamine our notion of what exercise and movement are and consider what we're moving toward or away from. Then we can begin to ask ourselves other questions: Not

reoriented our point of view to notice where the opportunities lie? We can begin by simply redefining exercise (with its sometimes negative connotation of obligation) to movement. Already opportunities arise: How do we want to move in our bodies and in our lives? How can we have fun doing that? How can we move more (or maybe less, if we need to slow down)? How does it feel to be still? How can we make time to move into pleasure, to move with pleasure? Already, the notion of movement takes on a more healing expression. Rather than simply being another item on our to do list, it becomes a way for us to examine our lives, to see where we can move toward health, and use physical activity as a way to support this.



Pleasurable movement is motivating, connects you with your body, and comes in many forms.

just are we fit, but are we physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy? Are we happy? Do we enjoy how we're moving through life? How can we integrate more healing movement into our days?

### Exercise as "Medicine"

We sometimes see more barriers than options to exercise. But what if we

"When most people think of medicine, they visualize something material like a pill to be popped, a liquid to be swallowed, or an injection to be endured," writes Carol Krucoff, author of "Healing Moves: How to Cure, Relieve, and Prevent Common Ailments with Exercise" (Harmony Books, 2000).

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Please book  
now for your  
December  
appointments:  
reminder--I  
will be out  
12/21/12-3/  
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"Some might also consider surgery, tests, or procedures ... [But] simple physical activity can have profound healing effects."

Krucoff, who cowrote the book with her husband, Mitchell, a Duke University cardiologist, advocates movement as preventive medicine, saying it's an ideal way to combat the increasing number of inactivity-related health conditions such as heart disease and obesity. This could actually be expanded to include stress-related conditions. In fact, it's often this combination of inactivity and increased stress that wreaks havoc on our immune system, endocrine system, and circulatory system. Every system in our body, in fact, responds to stress and inactivity. But, if this is true, then the inverse is also true: every system in our bodies will also respond to movement and pleasure. To make movement pleasurable and to use it as a way to reconnect with our bodies is, in many ways, the perfect antidote to the cycle of inactivity/hyperactivity and stress. As we move more in this way, we gain energy and health, we feel rejuvenated and relaxed, and we become more physically and emotionally aware.

## Emotional Fitness

We often focus on physical fitness, but any movement toward health must also include emotional and spiritual fitness. Psychologist Nancy Mramor, PhD, author of "Spiritual Fitness" (Llewellyn Publications, 2004), ties emotional fitness with our physical health and with our heart's expression. "There is evidence that the largest number of heart attacks occurs on Monday morning between 8 and 9 a.m.," she says. "This occurrence is related to the experience called joyless striving. It applies to feelings of having to force yourself to go to a job that you have no interest in, or even truly dislike. Clearly these feelings suggest a lack of emotional fitness in the match between the employee and the job." When we're emotionally connected to our work in a healthy way and to one another, we not only survive, we thrive.

## Personal Health

Interpersonal relationships, in fact, are one of the three major causes of life stress, along with environmental events/conditions and personal attitudes and beliefs. In his book, "Love and

Survival" (Harper Collins, 1998), renowned physician Dean Ornish, who first proved that heart disease was reversible through lifestyle changes, says that in order to survive, we need not only care for our lives, but the lives of others. Individuals with supportive relationships get sick less, heal faster, and live longer.

Our health and well-being are not about being hyper-active or inactive. They're about finding a balance, making our actions conscious, and learning to move in ways that are both healthy and appropriate in our own lives, then moving this healing energy out toward others. So, rather than exhausting or limiting our energy, we learn to expand it. Then we can begin exercising in a whole new way--exercising our right to choose and to better understand our body, our life, and what we want to be doing with it.

Begin by checking in with yourself as you're moving through your day: How does your body feel right now? How are you breathing? Where is this movement taking you? Do you feel good? Are you satisfied? Are you happy? If not, then change something. Change how you're moving, where you're moving toward, or look at what you're moving away from.

"Become the change you seek in the world," Mahatma Ghandi said. This isn't about a temporary quick fix to end a bad habit, lose some weight, or fill our time. This is about long-term change--making more conscious use of our time and of our life. It's about moving through life in healthy and healing ways, and expanding our idea of who we can be. Then our view of the world widens, our heart grows, our spirit soars, and our body moves toward true change. This is the healing power of movement.



Enjoyable exercise boosts physical health as well as emotional well being.

# The Health Benefits of Ginger

## Easing Nausea, Joint Pain, and Allergies

This pungent spice is found in cuisine around the globe, but ginger has also been used for more than 2,500 years for its medicinal properties. The ancient Chinese knew that it aided in the absorption of many herbal preparations and they prescribed it extensively as a digestive tonic.

A native root of southeast Asia, ginger is a potent ally in the treatment of nausea, motion sickness, and joint pain. Current research confirms ginger's efficacy as an anti-inflammatory, GI calmativ, and antihistamine. The active ingredients found in ginger -- gingerols and shagoals -- lower levels of prostaglandins, the chemicals responsible for pain and inflammation in joints and muscles. By reducing prostaglandins, ginger can even have a positive effect on heart health and circulation because chronic, systemic inflammation increases the risk of heart attack and blood vessel compromise.

Ginger comes in several forms. Fresh

and dried ginger is available in supermarkets for use in cooking. It's also available in capsules, an extract pill form, prepackaged tea bags, crystallized, and as a topical oil.

### Recommended Uses

#### MOTION SICKNESS AND NAUSEA

Most medications for nausea and motion sickness work to calm the nervous system and can cause drowsiness and dry mouth. On the other hand, ginger calms the digestive tract directly and has been shown to reduce nausea after surgery and chemotherapy. For motion sickness, take 100 mg two hours before departure and every four hours afterwards or as needed.

#### ARTHRITIS AND MUSCLE ACHES

Massage ginger oil into affected areas and/or take up to 1 g of powdered ginger daily to reduce inflammation.

#### COLDS AND ALLERGIES

Drink up to 4 cups of ginger tea daily or enjoy authentic ginger ale (made from

real ginger).

While ginger has no known side effects, it's always a good idea to consult your health care practitioner to make sure it's right for you.



The ginger plant has many medicinal uses.

# The Case for Chocolate

## New Studies Show Health Benefits

It's not like we need a specific reason to eat chocolate, but it doesn't hurt that studies are finding increasing health benefits associated with the popular indulgence. While chocolate is high in sugar and saturated fat, it does contain chemical compounds with proven benefits, so enjoy--in moderation--and expect to reap some of these rewards.

### Improved Heart Health

A study in the Archives of Internal Medicine found that women over 70 who ate chocolate at least once a week were 35 percent less likely to suffer from heart disease during the survey period. Researchers suspect that the flavonoids found in chocolate, which are known to reduce blood pressure, likely improve overall cardiovascular health.

### Reduced Liver Strain

These same flavonoids in dark chocolate that help decrease blood pressure can also reduce post-meal abdominal blood pressure spikes that strain the liver by widening and relaxing blood cells. A Spanish study of patients with end-stage liver disease showed that dark chocolate helped reduce some of the risks associated with conditions like cirrhosis.

### Safer Pregnancy

Dark chocolate has been shown to help pregnant women avoid preeclampsia--a significant complication where blood pressure spikes to dangerous levels--by nearly 40 percent when consumed five times a week. Dark chocolate is especially rich in theobromine, which relaxes muscles and dilates blood vessels. As an additional benefit, it also seems to

improve circulation in the placenta.

### Increased Endurance

Research out of the University of California, San Diego, demonstrated that mice given epicatechin, a flavonoid found in dark chocolate, could run for 50 percent longer than those who only drank water. The mice also grew new capillaries and mitochondria in their muscles, changes that explain their enhanced endurance capacity. Unfortunately, perhaps, for chocolate lovers, is that researchers say just one-sixth of 1 ounce of chocolate each day is the ideal serving size to receive this benefit.

*In the end, it's  
not going to  
matter how  
many breaths we  
take, but how  
many moments  
took your breath  
away.*

-Shing Xiong

Dearest clients!! Thank you for your patience this summer as I dealt with a back surgery in August--I am pleased to report that it was a success :).

Most of you already know I will be on a travel sabbatical OUT OF THE OFFICE 12/21/12-3/20/13. I am traveling and serving throughout Asia, New Zealand, India, S. Africa and Turkey/Greece! Please follow me on [living4todayblog.wordpress.com](http://living4todayblog.wordpress.com) if you are interested... And let me know if you have any connections you would like to share, as well. My hope is to come back all the more ready to serve you (with Thai massage as an added skill)!

ALSO--I am glad to give you referral therapists to meet your needs while I am out of the country, just call or email me and I will give you a list.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS, I am sending blessings, warmth and joy to you and yours throughout this season.

## BTC Massage

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Member, **Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals**