

One chapter of my translated book:

## **Bodilance: Principles and practice by Petra Kunz Blunert**

### *Willed, conscious movement and impulse-directed movement*

The movements we make every day happen automatically. We do not put any *conscious* thought into them. When we clean our teeth, we automatically reach out with our arm, pick up the toothpaste and put some on the brush – which has somehow made its way to our other hand – and bring the brush to our mouth. We might be thinking about the things we plan to do that day. Alternatively, we might be consciously attending to the process of cleaning our teeth, but even if we are, is it the movement we are thinking about, or the process of getting our teeth clean?

Many of our everyday actions are performed automatically and we are not aware of how we carry out the movements. This changes however, when we want to carry out movements that we have never carried out before.

Imagine you go to play golf for the first time, and an instructor tells you how to drive the ball to make it fly as it should. You will now consciously think through this new movement sequence. How you perform, though, will depend on your personality: if you are a relaxed kind of person you will try to do it in a relaxed way; if you are the goal-driven type you will be asking yourself “Am I doing this right? Am I good at this?” which will immediately influence your movements.

How did you learn to do things as a child? Did you feel the pressure to get things right then, or did you have fun? Our early habits of learning are usually carried over into our adult life.

So why do we need a trainer to help us recognise of our ingrained habits? Well, even our surroundings adapt to the way we habitually move. It is only when we are made aware of any harmful movements we may be making that we have the chance to change them – if we want to! Without a trainer’s help we can only be aware of movements we can see or recognise in some objective way: for example, we can use our eyes to monitor and correct the picking up of a pencil. Our vision tells us what we need to know. We can also sense how we walk and which part of our foot is in contact with the ground. However, if we are used to walking with our feet angled far outward and we then try to set our feet down straight, our legs will feel crooked. This is because all the muscles of our legs have aligned to the way we habitually move – falling too far inward or outward as we stand or walk.

The way we move affects the whole static balance of our body, and we have become used to that balance. We know no other way of moving. It is only when we receive information telling us how another way of moving actually *feels* that we can draw on this and apply it in practice.

Because of this, *Bodilance* trainers give corrective impulses to the functional lines determining body balance *at the moment* that the movement is being carried out. The impulse itself is a movement given by the trainer that works fluidly to correct the client’s movement. The client’s own body is the system that decides what degree of change it can absorb and implement.

Perhaps there is some misplaced torsion in the arm and shoulder region. The impulses will then offer a reminder as to how this region can relax and be in balance. This activates the memory governing movement, which is located in the brainstem. The person is suddenly able to rethink the movement: “Why do I raise my shoulders along with my hand when I clean my teeth? Do I want to? No, I don’t need to; it’s less effort if I don’t.”

**How does the static balance of the body affect our movement sequences?**

Standing upright and maintaining upright posture against the force of gravity is something that happens by reflex action. Body weight falls downward to the floor and we are given the uprighting impulses from our feet. For this to happen we need a firm base that offers resistance, and a system that rebounds like a spring; we could not stand fully upright in water, for example. Think of it: if we throw a ball against a wall, it bounces back; but if we throw it against a curtain it will just slide down, because there is no resistance.

As explained in 'Functions of the feet', our body weight falls to our feet, which depresses the arch of the foot and tenses the complex of plantar fasciae, muscles and tendons on the sole of the foot. As on a trampoline, where the downward force is transformed into an upward moving energy, this elastic complex pushes the force quickly upward, bringing the body into an upright position.

How the body weight falls into our feet is determined by the manner in which it makes its way there. If, somewhere along that route, we are out of balance, then the weight will fall differently – arriving at our feet too far medially or to the side, forward or behind, or crookedly. It follows that this will also disturb the uprighting function, so the reflex, upward postural force will be off-line too.

Think of the ball mentioned above. When you throw it straight down it bounces straight back up along the same line. If you throw it at an angle, it bounces up at an angle. These disturbances in the uprighting process affect the entire static balance of our bodies and thus all the movements we make. There is a further problem: when weight does not fall straight, muscles elsewhere in the body have to tense to compensate. This causes problems of excess tension.

Our functional lines together form a system in perfect balance, enabling us to move freely forward and backward in upright posture, and to move our arms freely in three-dimensional space as we do so. Trainers can correct imbalances and restore equilibrium by means of impulses, given at the feet to the functional lines during uprighting. This process of postural support is freshly set in action every time we take a step, and when we stand up from a sitting or lying position. So, while the clients are standing up from a chair, trainers will give these regulating impulses to their feet, directing the impulse into the movement itself.

People regain the ability to perform movements in a *willed and conscious* way once they have become aware of what they habitually do and have learned what the alternative feels like. With this awareness they are then able to choose. Movements that depend on reflex responses (such as uprighting) can only be changed by means of *impulse-directed* correction given by a trainer. This is because when people's static balance is distorted, this state has become a habit and therefore feels "right".

To begin with, clients will find that the new state of balance feels strange. But once they have practised the new movement sequences several times this will begin to feel natural and the new, corrected movement pattern can be adopted into the person's subconscious.