

Unwinding the Spine

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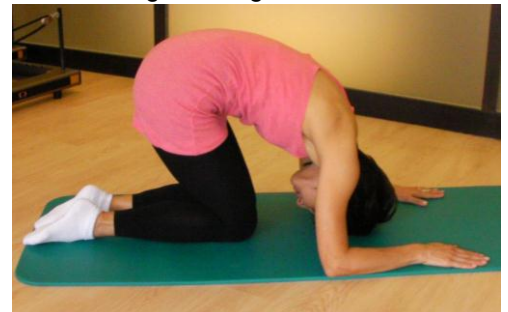
In the early 1900s, Robert W. Lovett, MD, and anatomist Raymond A. Dart introduced the concept of a spiraling movement system governed by muscle and joint actions. They developed theories and corrective exercises based on the assumption that a rotational component was integral to human movement.

This summer I had the good fortune to work with a number of Polestar Graduates and present my “Unwinding the Spine” workshop. I am grateful to you all for your feedback and enthusiasm. In keeping with the forces of our world, our bodies **are** each a living spiral. The muscles wrap around the bones and, often, work in force couples to ensure balance and harmony, something that is basic in our natural world. Water moves in spirals and clouds swirl in the sky; Plant life winds and unwinds adjusting to the forces of their surroundings and weather patterns. We too adjust, to our surroundings, to changes and patterns develop that reflect our lifestyle, emotions and response to activities of daily living. Internally, our organs, nervous, circulatory and lymphatic systems adjust too. Our summer seminar students discussed with me how, over time, imbalances in all of these areas become habitual and “normal” and unwinding or finding optimal alignment can become compromised by increased tonus in muscles, restrictions of the fascia and muscular-skeletal relationships.

We can improve our movement capabilities in the same way that infants develop their movement repertoire. As they learn to make their way from rolling to creeping to crawling, so too can “grown-ups” continue to expand the range and quality of their adult somatic expression, intelligently cultivating and refining their movement range throughout their lives. With an emphasis on not just surviving, but thriving, our ability to continuously improve in this domain — and mature our movement “I.Q.” — is a lifelong but achievable endeavor.

One of the most basic spinal movements we worked on in our time together was of a developmental **Spinal push** pattern connecting head and tail and then extremities (based on Pre-spinal rocking):

1. Sit back on your heels, arms in a diamond shape in front of you and forehead resting on the ground
2. Start to curl the tailbone under and rock forwards as far as possible keeping the forehead connection with the floor.
 - Return to the starting position
3. Repeat moving towards the hairline and finally onto the crown of the head, always resisting the movement from forehead to crown.
4. Once on the crown, lengthen the spine into a quadruped position and from there hinge back to the starting position.
5. Finish by coming upright through a standing roll-up and walk around the room.



Bibliography

Wisdom of the body Moving, Linda P Hartley
Body Stories, Andrea Olsen