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Healthy Living

The 6th Sense

By Dr. Sandy Sachs, Chiropractor at SLO Wellness Center

A father and son came into my office the other day. I quizzed the son on the 6 Senses of the human body. He easily came up with 5 of the senses but was stumped with sense #6. I told him that it was fairly common to forget

sense #6; most people do. Rather than telling him right away, I asked him to do a simple task, put his hand behind his back and tell me where his index finger was positioned. "No problem," he said. I asked him how he knew where his index finger was if he didn't see it, smell it, taste it, have something touch it, or hear it.

Our 6th sense is our ability to sense movement. Like the other senses, it allows our body to thrive and maintain optimal health. On a second-by-second basis, our brain and nervous system receive information from receptors throughout our body so that we can navigate our environment. Because of our 6th sense, we are able to do simple tasks, such as sitting in a chair without falling over, and more complex tasks like completing an elegant triple Lutz.

The son sat pensively for a moment and then asked what the 6th sense had to do with his dad's back. "Great question," I exclaimed. As we have evolved as humans, we have progressed from being four-legged to standing upright on two legs. As a result, we have had to develop an extensive back system that feeds into the brain and nervous system to keep us upright and prevent us from falling over under the pressure of gravity. 6th sense receptors, or mechanoreceptors, are critical for allowing us to be human. Unfortunately, mechanoreceptors can get depressed and/or injured through major trauma (auto accidents, falls, sporting injuries), micro trauma (repetitive activities) or inactivity (prolonged sitting). Common end results of depressed receptors include degenerative joint disease, arthritis, and poor performance on the playing field.

Dr. Sandy Sachs is a chiropractor and passionate educator at SLO Wellness Center where he utilizes his Masters in Exercise Physiology to teach patients the benefits of healthy movement.



Like the son's dad, many of us neglect, knowingly or unknowingly, our 6th sense. We choose to sit for longer periods of time and embrace technological advances that make our lives easier and unfortunately less physically demanding. A common phrase within the health field is, "sitting is the new smoking". Like smoking, sitting was once deemed harmless. It has now been implicated in a whole host of physical and mental pathologies.

To avoid disease processes associated with lack of movement, find opportunities to move more regularly. Take walks throughout the day, park far away from your office, spend more time in your garden, wrestle with your kids, (or grandkids), bike to the grocery store. Movement need not be organized, just to be enjoyed on a daily basis.

By the time the father and son left the office, I could see the wheels turning in the son's brain. I think he got the message of the day. In order to thrive, don't neglect your 6th sense.

Symmetry vs. Balance

By Michele S Jang

Is there such thing as achieving perfect symmetry in our bodies? Symmetry conveys the idea of achieving a mirror image of the opposite. Our right side of our body should look exactly the same as our left. Our pelvis and shoulders should be positioned equally.

While for the most part this is true, I will often tell my patients that what I aim to do in physical therapy is optimize their alignment. I actually don't believe we can get someone back to being absolutely symmetrical. Inside our bodies, we are literally filled with asymmetry. All our internal organs, including the heart, lungs, liver, spleen, kidneys, pancreas, intestines and stomach are asymmetrically placed.

The more appropriate term I use in physical therapy to achieve "ideal alignment" is one that works towards "balance" of structures in order to achieve maximal function versus simply achieving symmetry.

Everyone's body type is different and we change with age. An extreme example of when balance is the goal rather than symmetry is when working with scoliosis. A person with scoliosis may be in total balance being shifted to the right at one place and shifted to the left somewhere else. In this population, for example, if I treat their pelvis I will also work elsewhere in the body to balance the changes.

Sometimes we've got to work with what we've been given. If you're having trouble achieving an activity or if you're in pain, you may simply be out of balance. If that's the case, we can help you with that.

Michele S Jang, PT is a physical therapist who likes to look outside the box. She has been a physical therapist for 19 years and has extensive training in manual therapy or the use of hands to help rehabilitate the body. Michele has been an instructor both in the United States and abroad. She offers Free Consults on Tuesday afternoons. Michele can be reached at 805-543-5100 or info@spiritwindstherapy.com. For more information please also visit www.spiritwindstherapy.com.

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