

# The Posture of Meditation

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## Alignment

### Balanced Posture

- achieved it requires little effort to maintain
- “generates a natural condition of alert awareness” (p. 20 The Posture of Meditation)
- If unbalanced, muscles will work, often against the force of gravity, trying to achieve a state of balance. This decreases your focus and alertness (p. 21)
- Gravity provides support to any structure that is vertically aligned with the direction of gravity’s influence
- Without alignment with gravity, “life can become an exhausting struggle simply to remain erect.” (p. 22)
- Goal in meditation is to achieve this alignment of your body with the vertical force of gravity
- Allows a free flow of energy
- Maintain natural curves of the spine; these curves are where energy centers or chakras are located
- Notice the “feeling tone” so you can use this to maintain the posture
- “...the sitting posture helps us to release the structural imbalances that exist in the body.” (p. 30) **I differ here. I believe the structural imbalances need to be addressed to be able to attain the proper sitting posture.**
- Placement of hands in meditation is based on comfort and your particular body shape
- Posture is not static. Movement will occur according to the path of least resistance. You have to be aware of these movements and bring yourself back in line with the vertical force of gravity.

### Three Major Structural Relationships to Promote Proper Posture- apply no matter what you’re sitting on

- Knees lower than pelvis (degree varies person to person)
- Pelvis tipped slightly forward
- These allow upper body to sit with less effort on the pelvis
- Position may be altered if you have a back problem; find functional neutral

### The Posture of Collapse

- You are constantly bracing yourself with muscle tension against the force of gravity
- If you truly relaxed you would become compressed and collapsed until your head was sitting in your lap- **only if your joints have the mobility and your tissues have the length and lack of stiffness to allow it which would be quite a trick!**
- Holding in the body creates holding in the mind; the mind’s deeper possibilities are concealed

## Relaxation

- Relaxation is a function of the body's ability to surrender its weight to the force of gravity.
- If you are not aligned naturally, you need to exert muscular tension to support yourself and try to achieve a state of alignment. This muscular tension is counteracting the downward pull of gravity. Ex: forward head
- Relaxation without alignment can only be partial at best. (p. 40) Alignment without relaxation creates a state of rigidity.
- Chronic tension in the body blocks our [awareness of the nature of reality](#)- the goal of all forms of meditative practice. All of our senses are diminished. Our internal monologue increases in strength and intensity.
- As relaxation expands and tension falls away we can attain much [deeper levels of awareness](#).
- Relaxation allows [greater connection to the earth](#). The energy field of the body merges with the gravitational energy field of the earth. Relaxation is synonymous with grounding.
- Relaxation is the key to meditation. Alignment is a precondition and resilience is a condition that allows relaxation to continue. (p. 85)

## Resilience

- The element of resilience helps reconcile the contradiction of stillness and movement in the meditation posture. Can't meditate if we're constantly moving and also can't achieve any awareness of our sensations if we sit rigidly. "The result of this physical holding and hardening is a mind filled with involuntary thoughts of attack and judgment, fear, desires, and fantasies." (p. 55)
- Stillness is the softening and quieting of the body and mind. It does not imply rigidity or immobility.
- Resilience is about accepting and yielding to the forces of nature- the force of gravity, the sensations in the body, or the movement of breath.
- You can't relax without resilience. You can't surrender your weight to gravity and constantly tense your muscles to hold yourself still.
- Try to allow resilient motion in your posture. Where there is breath there is movement. The movement may be so subtle that no one else notices it. With movement there is no stable ground for your internal dialogue so it subsides.

## **Integration**

- “Over time a relaxed and resilient body will allow residues of tension and holding, at the levels of both the body and the mind, to come to the surface of awareness and resolve themselves.” (p. 75)
- Integration is about transition and growth, not completion or stasis.
- Dissolution comes after integration. Dissolution is about the posture of meditation dislodging deep psychological residues “in the form of intensified emotional states in the mind and powerful energetic currents in the body.” (p. 79) Understanding this allows understanding of periodic disorientation while meditating. Responding resiliently means allowance and acceptance.

## **Moving Through Life**

- Hopefully the effects of formal practice will spill over into our lives of informal practice.
- “...the fruits of meditative practice are a result of letting go of the habit patterns of the mind and the body that interfere with our clear awareness of this present moment.” (p. 84)
- Bring alignment, relaxation and resilience into our movements and actions in life.
- We bring alignment into our lives by paying attention to the effect of gravity on the energy field of our bodies. Alignment generates awareness, sensations and feeling tones.
- Allow relaxation to enter your daily life. Relaxation means doing whatever you’re doing in the easiest way possible. A relaxed mind is comfortably alert.
- Let go of tension and invite relaxation all day.
- “Commitment to the posture of meditation will force you to let go of the unconscious reliance on different masks or ways of posing in the world. It will allow you instead to meet and become familiar with a deeper, more authentic sense of self, one that does not need to rely on artificial poses and projections of self-image.” (pp. 92-93)
- Resilience extends relaxation over time. Resilience involves the entire body.
- “Alignment, relaxation and resilience are ultimately capable of transforming consciousness itself.” (p. 95)

“There is no ultimately perfect posture that you need to strive to embody. There is only the posture that is appropriate for your particular body...” (p. 98)