

# The **SECRET** to Moving Well and Performing Better

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Do you play sport, such as golf or tennis? Do you walk, swim, run, dance, or cycle? Would you like to move better and be better at what you do with your movement?

When you move well, you feel better, your health may improve, your performance may be improved, you use less energy, movement becomes more FUN, and your body thanks you, as it is less likely to become injured.

## **The SECRET to moving well begins in your BRAIN.**

Within the brain there is something called the motor cortex, the part of the brain connected to movement. The motor cortex receives information from all over the brain, including the frontal cortex, the conscious part of our brain connected to thinking and our beliefs. This is important to remember as our beliefs can affect our movement, often in a detrimental way.

Though there are specific areas in the brain for specific functions, a new model, developed from observing the brain with a Functional MRI, shows that the brain works more like an orchestra, than in separate ways. Each thought, action, movement is an integration of many areas of the brain working together in co-ordination. 'Good' movement is when the orchestra works in tune, 'bad' movement occurs when the orchestra is out of tune. In other words the brain thinks of movement in patterns, not individual muscles.

NB Sometimes individual muscles need to be practised if you have a specific body dysfunction, but this is not the norm in healthy movement. This is best assessed and guided by a physiotherapist or physical or sports medicine professional.

## **The good news is that the brain is PLASTIC, meaning it can be changed, so movement can be improved.**

The mechanism for change in the brain is one of PRACTICE and REHEARSAL, preferably correct practice to get an improved outcome.

However, if you are going to put in the effort to make a change,

then you will need the DESIRE and MOTIVATION. This can come from within, or sometimes you may also need some external help and guidance. This why most elite athletes have coaches, or yoga students, have teachers.

As explained above our beliefs and thinking can be destructive to our movement.

We need to believe we can move well, and move beyond our self imposed limitations. Success in practice can help with this and also mentally choosing to go beyond our limitations. Even visualising our selves performing the desired action. For example if you are tight in your body, imagine yourself as though you are not tight.

**Interestingly research has shown that mental practice can improve movement nearly as well as actually doing the movement.** Imagining yourself performing the perfect golf swing may actually improve your golf swing, or any other movement you choose. Observing others moving well can also help you better visualise yourself moving well.

This makes sense as we now know all movement begins in the brain. When you imagine movement, it sets off patterns in the brain, nervous system, and muscles, as if you were doing the movement, but at a micro level.

The secret to improving movement is to do movement which is challenging for both the brain and body ie movement which requires concentration and focus. Our negative habits can interfere with moving well, so we need to also learn what these are, so they can be improved in a positive way.

This is sometimes called sensory motor learning, where you are guided to find out how you are moving and how you can free your self from self-imposed limitations. This process leads to bodily awareness and trust in your bodily sensations again. Many eastern origin practices do this – tai chi, yoga, martial arts, Feldenkrais, Indian classical dance, to name a few. In this way you can learn about the body and its movement.

Also PLAY with movement, there is no need to always take it seriously. Feel and experience movement fully. Do things slowly, before progressing to faster actions.

Fatigue and tiredness can also interfere with moving well. Many people over train, and don't give the body and mind enough time for recovery. You can't train hard every day, as the body and mind will eventually break down. Enough time between activity, time out

ie fudge time, enough sleep, rest, and relaxation are all required to aid recovery. I encourage every one relax or meditate every day.

Every movement is a SPECIFIC pattern – so to improve a movement, the specific pattern needs to be trained.

Focusing on the action, not the outcome, is a key to success. Be present focused on what you are doing and the outcome will often take care of itself. Of course you need to know your outcome, so your action is progressing in the right direction.

### **Moving well is characterised by 8 main features:**

- It appears EASY – think of the elite athlete and how easy they make things look.
- It is EFFICIENT – achieve a better result with less effort.
- It is GRACEFUL – smooth and often with an internal RHYTHM.
- The mind is focused on the action and is calm – If you are angry, worried, anxious, tense, stressed or trying too hard, then your movement becomes less efficient. You produce too much adrenaline and it can affect your performance.

If your mind is distracted your movement is also affected.

- Your body is FIT – enough strength, endurance and flexibility.
- Correct POSTURE – alignment , core use, and understanding of your centre of gravity for the activity.
- RELAXATION – don't try so hard; tension seriously affects movement.

Moving with the WHOLE body.

Reference:

- "Up close and personal with movement – a review from the experts" [www.bodyinmind.com.au/up-close-and-personal-with-movement-a-review-from-the-experts/](http://www.bodyinmind.com.au/up-close-and-personal-with-movement-a-review-from-the-experts/)