

1 GROUNDED FEET

EXERCISES TO RELEASE TENSION

We are made for walking. This is due to our ability to stand on our two feet, one of the main characteristics of our species. By standing upright and walking we multiplied our experiences and possibilities, which gave continuity to an increasingly complex evolution. We arrive at a paradox: we know a lot about walking upright and what it implies in terms of healthy benefits from walking and running. However, we walk less than we should, and we have a hard time being aware of how important healthy feet actually are.

Mirror of our Self. The way that we walk shows the world who we are. All of our motor skills are expressed with each step we take. Our feet are our point of contact with the earth, our foundation and base of support. It is said that feet represent strength, firmness, and roots. To have one's feet on the ground means to be grounded in ourselves, to be conscious, aware and present in life. This is why it's important to recognize the important structure within them and improve our body awareness.

Without even realizing it, the tension our body accumulates creates pain and imbalance. We can dissolve them by working our feet.

Some very complicated inner workings (or Very complicated gear) It is no coincidence that a structure as small as a foot has 26 bones, 33 joints, and more than 100 muscles, ligaments and tendons. Nothing is there by chance: the design of our feet, fruit of the best evolution, allows them to have their own intelligence.

Global importance. If these structures' movement is restricted, even if it happens in only one joint, it will affect our entire bodily posture and mobility. This limitation will not be experienced only as a physical or mechanical glitch, but can affect us on psychological, emotional and social levels as well.

Connection with our Body. The way our feet come into contact with the ground, together with the way our body distributes its weight over the foot, determine the structural organization and neuromuscular response of the entire body. The feet form part of the tonic postural system's sensory receptors. There are a vast number of sensory receptors in the tendons and plantar surface of the foot, and these are connected



1 · Allow your weight to drop with no effort

- Place a tennis ball under the ball of the foot, as seen in the photo
- Feet beneath the hips and facing forwards
- Heels on the ground, keep your knees soft (don't hyperextend) and weight distributed evenly
- As you exhale, relax your body and allow your feet to root into the ground
- Do not bear down or squeeze the ball. The key to this exercise is allowing your weight to fall effortlessly.



TAKE YOUR SHOES OFF AND FEEL THE GROUND

- Each exercise should last two minutes. Get to know your feet before you start: points of contact, where the weight falls on the sole, balance...

1. SEATED IN A CHAIR

Alternating feet: flex your feet, moving your foot up and down and inwards and outwards from the ankle.

2. WALK SLOWLY

Place your heel on the ground and then roll through your foot, as you lift your heel and push through the toes. Walk in slow motion.

2 • Awareness and relaxation, step by step

- Place the ball under the middle part of your foot
- When your foot is comfortable on the ball, place your heel firmly on the floor. If possible, place your toes on the ground as well.
- Feel how other parts of your body begin to relax as you do this exercise.
- Bring your awareness to your jaw, hands, shoulders, and other parts as you exhale.
- Observe whether you lock your knees during the exercise. Try to avoid offsetting.



to the rest of the body through our nervous system. Any tension in any part of our body will be reflected in them.

Key Information. Through proprioceptive receptors responding to touch, pressure and stretching, information is sent regarding our position in relation to the ground and our environment, and also about the position of our skeletal structure the tension of the postural muscles. This is key for a good organization for the rest of the body, and for gait quality and injury prevention. A two-way relationship. One small change is enough to have an impact on our complex and perfect system. The same goes for the opposite: we can find all the parts of our body on the soles of our feet, so what happens there gives us clues about something not working optimally in another area. Irregularities. When we don't feel stable on our feet, we look for a new support via contracting muscles from areas above. This appears as a contraction in the trapezium or the mandible, hyper extended knees and many other irregularities, which vary according to our structure and personality.

Releasing Tension. Here are some easy and efficient exercises for releasing tension in your feet and body, which you can do everyday using a tennis ball. Don't do these mechanically; otherwise you will not reap optimal benefits. Try not to go beyond your own limits. Keep your breath steady and do not hyperextend or force your joints. Try to avoid contracting your glutes as you do these, since the goal to release your weight into the point of contact. Keep a relaxed posture so you can enjoy every moment.

3 • Where are your limits?

- Place the ball under your heel and allow your toes to rest on the floor.
- Observe if there are any restrictions or tightness in the tissues surrounding your toes, if you can touch the floor with all your toes or if you notice one toe in particular which feels tighter.
- Concentrate on the part which feels restricted, and then allow your bodyweight to fall softly into it. Remember to keep your upper body relaxed.
- Check in with your neck, shoulders, and hands, searching these areas for sensitive spots.
- Feel your breathing and, as you exhale, allow more weight to sink once more into the affected area.



4 • Integrating foot and ball

- Bring one leg forward, as if you were taking a step
- Place the ball beneath the transverse arch of your foot, behind the
- Standing, with no ball under your feet, take internal stock of the sensations of one side of your body and then the other.
- You can feel the bodily tension which toes. Your back leg is bearing weight.
- Slowly, begin to transfer weight forwards into the front leg and ball. Then feel the pressure beneath the sole of your foot.
- Continue adding weight to the front leg until you notice a sensation of relief.
- Move your foot a bit more forward, little by little, until the ball is under your heel.

*“A sense of lightness
in our feet gives
us the sensation
of relaxation.”*

5 · Feel secure!

- Standing, with no ball under your feet, take internal stock of the sensations of one side of your body and then the other.
- You can feel the bodily tension which shows up in the foot and the tension from the feet in the body.
- Observe if your feet are better placed on the ground, if the point of contact feels wider than normal or at least compared to before the session... Each person will perceive something different.
- This exercise regulates tone and invites the nervous system to let go of unnecessary tension.
- What you feel is greater security in support and more self-confidence on an emotional level.



SEATED ROUTINE

If you have difficulty doing these exercises standing, you can try the following sitting down.

1. Glide your foot. Glide the sole of your foot over the ball without tensing your shoulders or inner thighs. Exhale and gently press into the ball.
2. Rolling side to side. Place the ball under your metatarsal bones and keep your heel on the floor. Move your metatarsals slowly to the left and right as you keep your knee aligned with your hands.
3. Stretch your toes. Place your toes on the ball in such a way that the toe joints are stretched over it. We often don't feel these joints because contracted toes don't touch the floor.



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