



BibianaBadenes

# BODY INTELLIGENCE

“When you reach  
the end of what you  
must know, you’ll be  
at the beginning of  
what you must feel.”  
Khalil Gibran.

- 1 LIGHT FEET
- 2 TAKE CARE OF YOUR HANDS!
- 3 EXERCISES ANTI STRESS

Body intelligence shows us what our body knows. The body has its reasons. It's an intelligent system and it has the answers, but we are losing our ability to listen and take proper care of it, and with it we are losing the ability to preserve its possibilities and live a full life.

The good news is that the memory of the body persists and we can recover and enhance its qualities through experience, awareness, sensations and these exercises.

In these pages I'll describe simple exercises that you can perform every day. We will work different areas of the body to create an increased awareness of your gestures and movements, releasing areas where there is tension and restriction. In time, you will become the best expert about your body and yourself.

These exercises are focused on health and prevention of premature aging. They will help you to become more vital and energetic, to increase mobility and to have less pain, you will feel more centered and relaxed and will have more capacity of action and reaction.

You will discover the intimate relationship between your body, your expression, and your emotions. This is called integration. You achieve integration when you feel yourself as a whole organism.

Dedicate a few minutes per day to these exercises, at any time of day, in your office, at home, or at the gym. Find your moment for them. Your body intelligence is there, you only need to discover it.

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Advanced Rolfer™, Embodied Coach, Physical therapist

## 1

LIGHT  
FEETEXERCISES 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 an about 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 in 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.

Some very complicated inner workings (or

Without even realizing it, the tension our body accumulates creates pain and imbalance.

We can dissolve them by working our feet.

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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## TAKE CARE OF YOUR HANDS!

### EXERCISES FOR RELEASING TENSION

Our society places a lot of importance on the face: we re-touch it to look more seductive, spend a ton of money on make-up, get nose jobs, whiten our teeth, and whatever else we deem necessary so that our face looks perfect from the outside. There is, no doubt, something to the saying that the face is the mirror of the soul. However, the truth is that our hands are what transmit the dimension of human expression.

#### A question of tact

Perhaps our hands might not be our most glamorous part, but they show a certain complexity and richness of our humanity. The texture of the palm, in itself, is different, and full of sensory receptors which have their own language: touch, an entire world of it's own.

#### Emotional communication

With our hands we can express delicacy, subtlety, love, strength. We write with them, and we craft and create. Might we consider this a direct projection from our hearts? In fact, when we greet each other by

**The body often expresses itself through the hands. By relaxing them and allowing them to move with fluidity, we can release and relieve blockages in other areas.**

grasping hands, this gesture brings our hearts closer together. When we hug, we use our arms as much as our hands, and with them the entirety of our bodily energetic field, to transmit our feelings, thoughts and emotions.

#### A language

As our species evolved, defying gravity, the movement of the hands became more agile, even becoming the embryo of human language. The motor areas of language and movement are not only side-by-side, but are intimately connected within the brain. One example is sign language, where hand symbols create language. By using our hands we activate different areas in our brain: a pathway of neural connections is formed and each pathway is unique to each function.

#### Creative hands

So much can be said about hands. They bring food to our mouths, and, if it's tasty, we say the food is "finger-licking good". The healing power of our hands has been used since time

forgotten to restore health and transmit energy. In meditation we use our hands in certain postures. Also, in the practice of chi kung, specific mudras are used to activate certain energetic circuits.

### Show your hands

Using our hands makes us more human, and the fullest expression of this is creativity, where humans are endlessly creative. In that case, we could say that trained hands, hard working hands, are creative hands, and we can be proud of them. However, in these times we seem to value machines more than our own hands. We even hide them if they don't look glamorous enough, or if they are solid hands of a woman who works with them or those of someone who bites their nails to let go of tension.

### Changing Sensations

We are not aware that so much of the stress we suffer from is, precisely, the fruit of not being able to express ourselves or communicate, not only through words, but also with our body. We can change and reorganize our sensations and tension substantially just through our hands.

### Stress free mobility

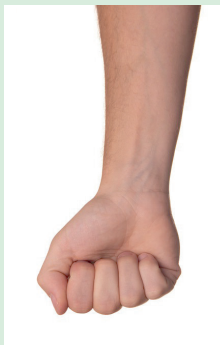
The exercises and explorations proposed here can be done either separately or as a sequence. They help improve mobility and fluidity in daily movements, thereby preventing tension not only in your hands,

but tension created in other areas that can be released through your hands. Keeping your hands versatile will furthermore improve circulation and prevent arthrosis and keep the palmar tendons from retracting.



## 1 • Relating your hand with your body

- Stand and observe how your arms hang, notice the sensation you feel in your hands in general, and then, in your fingers.
- Begin to walk with your attention on your hands, and then tighten them. Watch what happens in other parts of your body.
- Release the tension and continue to observe how you feel.
- Continue the exercise by applying less tension although keep just enough so that you can sense it, and notice how it relates to and affects different areas quite distant from the part you tighten in each moment.
- You can try this seated as well, or while standing in line or in a waiting room . . .
- It helps identify unnecessary tension in different situations of daily life, including when you are working or just relaxing.



## 2 • Stimulate your fingers and your body

- Sit down comfortably with your acupressure ring.
- Roll the ring repeatedly up and down each finger (at least 7 to 8 times each one). If you notice more sensitivity in one spot, go slowly without stopping.
- Stand up and repeat exercise 1 explorations. Feel how your arms and hands hang now. Do they feel any different?
- Repeat the exercise on your other hand, making sure you address each finger.
- Acupressure ring work is based on a Korean therapy called Su Jok (created by professor Jae Woo Park). According to this therapy, the palm and fingers contain points that correspond to all organs and body structures
- Daily stimulation with this acupressure ring can therefore balance the entire body.

Start by making a fist and begin to release tension as you slowly open it.



### 3 • Wide-open Hands

- Glide your index finger along each of the inside edges of your fingers, also massaging the webby area that joins one finger with another.. Repeat this 3 times slowly.
- Do this first on one hand, then the other.
- Now interlace your fingers and rub them, creating some friction.
- This exercise opens up the hand in general, and each finger specifically. It also improves finger flexion and total hand strength.

### 5 • Gain strength and mobility

- Place a tennis ball on the floor or seat of a chair.
- Put your hands one on top of the other so that the ball is in the center of your palm, near your wrist.

### 4 • In line with your Spine

- Sit on the edge of your chair and place your hands against the wall.
- Separate your fingers. Your feet should be flat on the floor.
- You will begin to notice that, as soon as once of your hands or fingers loses contact with the wall, this directly affects your back. Try this explotation with different contacts.
- Now remain still for a few minutes, just feeling the firm support from your hands and feet.
- Stand up, relax your arms and shake them out, and then notice how your arms hang and any sensations in your hands.
- This exercise integrates the hands, shoulder girdle and spine. It stimulates the line of from hand to shoulder to spine.



- Using your bodyweight, very gently allow your hands to sink into the ball.
- Move the ball very slowly (as if you were painting) in different directions for at least one minute.
- Switch hands and repeat
- You will see how mobility improves in your bones and joints. Your hands will get stronger with consistency.

## 6 • Massage to tonify and relax the hands

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- Massage your hands with a bit of oil or cream. Enjoy every second.
- In circular movement, wring each finger 5 times clockwise, and then 5 times counter clockwise. Do this at a moderate pace.
- Draw circles with your thumb on the palm of your hand, using soft but firm pressure and without overstretching your thumb.
- Using your thumb and index finger, “pinch” and draw straight lines on all your fingers, from the base to the fingertip, 3 times on each finger.
- Make a soft fist with your other hand and gently slide it in circles along the entire palm.
- Massage the dorsal side, or top, of your hand in continuation. Use the entire palm of your other hand. Repeat 5 times.
- Draw circles with your thumbs on the top of your hand.
- Repeat the entire sequence on the other hand. Do this work more slowly on the side that tends to be more sensitive.
- When you finish, rub your hands together again softly and sensually, as if you were absorbing the last drop of oil or cream.
- These massages not only improve circulation, mobility and strength, but also yield better balance in movement.



*“The circular, wringing, movement wraps around the entire finger.”*



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## 3

# EXERCISES

## ANTI STRESS

**This simple sequence with a ball will help you to recognize the tension stored in your body and to get rid of it... and anxiety.**

Occasional stress is a survival factor in situations of alarm or danger. It helps to keep us in action and gets us out of our comfort zone, to interact with the environment and with the rest of the world. A different matter is stress sustained over a long time: in such cases, overstimulation and the failure to de-activate automatic responses cause some symptoms which deplete us physically and mentally, showing up as muscular contractures, lack of concentration, feeling of shortness of breath, anxiety...

Over time, we can get used to living in a partially incapacitated body and with limited potential -without being aware of it.

Our responses to daily stress begin to get out of proportion when there is an accumulation of tension in our muscles and throughout our body. We need to free ourselves from this physical stress, and the first step is to recognize it. We can do so by directing attention to the inside of the body, exploring the relationship with the environment and

our responses to external stimuli, and becoming aware of sensations as they arise in us. These are the keys for eliminating those symptoms that stress has left us so that we can generate new physical responses.

### EXPLORATION LYING DOWN

- Find a place to lie down comfortably on the floor. Start by paying attention to the movement of your breath, just as it is, without controlling it or conditioning the movement of breathing.
- In what part of your body do you feel breath? Notice how your abdomen and chest rise and fall. You might feel how the cranial bones relax, as well as a general feeling of natural elasticity from your skin in response to the movement of breathing. Little by little, notice how delicate movements and sensations of tingling, warmth and the coolness of the air entering and exiting through your nose (or your mouth in case you breathe through it).



## A BALL TO AVOID BLOCKAGE/ GETTING STUCK



The majority of muscles have a longitudinal layout, but there are areas where muscle fibers and connective tissue are transversally more dense. Working on them with a ball can release that and produce a general, whole body relaxation.

1. **SOFT AND BOUNCY**, All you need is a soft, rubber, inflatable ball, about 18 cm in diameter (without filling it up completely).

2. **MUSIC MAKES IT BET TER**, You can put on soft music that you like, but preferably something with no lyrics so you don't get distracted in the exercises.

*“The exercises help us to release and feel supported.”*

## 1 • Relax your pelvis and sacrum

- Place the ball just under the sacrum, without worrying about it moving toward the sides. Don't do anything, allow your weight to sink, but not compress.
- Begin to dance and move to the music from this position, slowly, gently. And if you do not want to move, concentrate on your breath and watch the pause between the inhalation and the exhalation.
- Enjoy: don't do anything, simply let it happen, observe, let go.
- When the song finishes after 3-4 minutes, pause and move the ball to the next area.

*“The ball helps to relax the areas where tension accumulates”*





## 2 • Release chest tightness

- It's important to adapt the size and softness of the ball if necessary to not increase the tension that might be stored in the neck. The exercises help us to release and feel supported.
- It's important to completely allow all your weight onto the ball. Raise your arms behind you to open the rib cage.
- If you wish, begin to move slowly to the music starting from this position. If you remain still, concentrate on breathing and carefully observe the moment of pause.
- Remember that it's important to enjoy the exercise. Don't force anything, let whatever comes up to just be, let go...
- When the song finishes, move the ball to the next area.



• Become aware of the rhythm of breathing. Is it heavy, light, intermittent, restricted? Observe the quality of your breath as well as the many answers that it brings about as a result of the attention that you give it. Do you observe any discomfort or pain? You can perceive images, memories, emotions, thoughts, plans, awareness of sounds, temperatures and aromas.

• Focus on tactile sensations that come from your body. Feel the contact of the back, buttocks and thighs with the ground, and the position of your arms and legs.

• Is the contact of your body with the floor even, or do you notice it more than one side than the other? Can you feel the breath in those areas? Are you aware of the movement of the air around you and are you aware of the points that are touching your skin? In which parts do you feel warmer or cooler?

• Return to the breath, to sensations that occur upon the rising or falling of the abdomen or sensations of the movement of air through your nose. To help focus, you can concentrate on the sound of air when it goes "in" (say it to yourself) and the sound of when it goes «out». Try this simple practice for five or ten minutes depending on how comfortable it feels.

### CONNECTING WITH YOURSELF

This is a very relaxing technique that creates new awareness, because it connects you in a more spacious and serene way with yourself. You can do it whenever you want and best before the other exercises suggested here, to help you to relax muscles and transverse fibers, which are key for achieving a general state of relaxation.



### 3 • Liberate the neck area

- Once again, place the ball in this area. Relax your neck and face. Your expression will begin to release little by little...
- Begin to dance if you want to and to move gently with the music starting from this position. Even slower than before, as if you wanted to paint something with the ball on the floor or you could imagine that you had a

brush in your mouth and you wanted to paint the ceiling. The smaller the movement, the better.

- If you don't want to move, concentrate on your breath and of pause between the inhalation and the exhalation. Remember: enjoy, let it unfold...
- After 3-4 minutes of song, move the ball to the next area.

### 4 • Unstick your ribs/ Free your ribs

- Lying on your side, place the ball under your highest ribs, almost in your armpit.
- Support your head on the arm on the same side as the ball, without forcing the position.
- Release your breath and let your weight fall, don't try to hold yourself up.
- Begin to move your spine as if you were a snake, making micro-movements in all directions.
- Do the same exercise on your other side and then move the ball to the next position.

*"This area of transition is very prone to tension and pain."*



## 5 • Relax the expression on your face

The face is a mirror of the soul: it expresses tension that we have accumulated.

- Relax the expression on your face, and make gentle micro movements which gradually become smaller and smaller.
- Now release your jaw, and then close your eyes and rest.
- When the song finishes, get up slowly, without stressing your joints, and while connecting with the breath.



*“The release of tension in your face can be seen in your jaw and eyes.”*



## 6 • Before you start to move

- While you're standing and before walking, place the ball for 1 minute underneath your armpit.
- Feel the breath in this area and how your shoulders and jaw relax.
- Change sides, and when you're done, allow the ball to fall without thinking and begin to walk. You will feel the changes immediately.
- You can practice this anti-stress sequence whenever you want.
- And remember, when you feel anxiety growing within, breathe. Better yet:
- The face is your mirror. Feel your breath.



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