

The Power in Understanding the Body

The individual obtaining significant knowledge concerning the understanding of the human body possesses a lot of power due to such. Not in the understanding itself, but in the way they are able to use it in order to assess and treat others. This aspect is substantial at Reignited Fitness as day in and day out we put effort into understanding the human body and applying it to athletes beyond assessing and treating, but also implementing better movement patterns. Such patterns in result, through many different realms, lead to a better overall quality of life. This post will serve as an example of a practical application of such in a specific individual / subject who suffers from musculoskeletal dysfunction, but can also apply to those simply with musculoskeletal pain.

Example individual is male, nine years old, and possesses a body type that from a visual perspective seems to be an ectomorph. An ectomorph is defined as a person with a lean and delicate build. Beyond the dysfunction present, this person obtains no other barriers concerning their general health information. The dysfunction present is known as hypotonia; thereby allowing the individual to be referred to as hypotonic. Hypotonia is a state of low muscle tone – the amount of tension or resistance to stretch in a muscle – often involving reduced muscle strength. It is not a specific medical disorder, but a potential manifestation of many different diseases and disorders that affect motor nerve control by the brain on muscle strength. The long-term effects of such on a child's development and later life depend primarily on the severity of the muscle weakness and the nature of the cause, which is often hard to find. In addition, hypotonia is known as “floppy baby syndrome.” This would be an accurate description of our client’s posture in comparison to others. Upon quick observation one can see that this individual

seems to always be rather limp, loose, and not maintaining much tension in their body. Upon diagnosis the individual had to use assistance when walking – let this paint a picture in your head of the delicate state of their body and support they needed.

It is critical for this client, as with everybody, to focus on the mind-body connection concerning their movement patterns. If we can learn how to move better for the one hour that we are in the gym, it will transfer to the other 23 hours in the day that we are outside of the gym. The principal treatment we have implemented for our sample client is based solely around improved movement quality along with muscle strengthening. This is in hopes for the client to learn how to move, and strengthen such movers, so that they can overcome the dysfunction. Metabolic conditioning is an aspect of CrossFit that we tend to avoid with this individual as it would only be counterproductive to their progress. Each hour is rather identical to that of a physical therapy session, but obviously more fun and encouraging as it is a child that we are working with. Each approach toward better movement stems around the concepts of chain reaction and breaking the movement down piece by piece. For example, a lunge. The emphasis of reaching the lead foot out directly in front of the body where one would step, from here the weight of the front foot is in the heel, the next step is to descend the body down ensuring that the lead shin is vertical, the toe is in front of the knee, the lead knee is driving out over the second toe, and the back leg / foot is pointing forward. Then on the ascent driving through the heel with an upright torso, retracted scapula / shoulder blades pinched back, and finishing by bringing the back leg forward to hip extension with a contraction of the glutes. Put simply, if the client can learn how to lunge with good mechanics, they can transfer this into a simpler movement pattern such as walking, which indeed may not be so simple for a person with hypotonia. How so? Such persons have the potential to be so flimsy in their posture that their knees concave when walking.

If they can remember, “OH, I am supposed to drive my knee out over my second toe at all times,” then this will lead to a lifetime of better, safer, and strengthening movement. In addition, consider it a blessing that such is something we as the majority do not have to actively focus on. Let it serve as an example for the focus and attention that better movement deserves and where it all starts; the mind.

Again, such understanding of the human body is powerful in the way that it leads to proper assessment, treatment, and a better overall quality of life through movement. Society today is very different than it was in the past. We used to run, jump, crawl, and climb on a daily basis as we searched for food and found ways to survive. Today we sit 8-12 hours a day with food sources so convenient the only time you have to get up is to answer the door. Exercise is our way to fill this void. We have created a set of movements to help us improve strength, and / or cardiovascular fitness, but many of the exercises can be repetitive and overwork one plane of motion. Movement on the other hand is non-technical and variable. It is what the body needs to offset the repetitiveness of daily life. Mix in your hour worth of exercise and supplement it with a good dose of daily movement. Your body will thank you!