



## **Proprioceptive Exercises**

### **WHY ARE MOST CLINICAL SOMATICS EXERCISES TAUGHT LYING DOWN?**

When we are sitting or standing, we instinctively react to gravity by contracting certain muscles in order to stay upright. If we were to try to do all Clinical Somatics exercises sitting or standing, we would make much slower progress because our need to stay upright in gravity would hinder the learning process.

When we lie down on the floor, we do not have to work against gravity. Our muscles can completely relax and it is much easier to reset the resting level of muscle tension. This is why the floor exercises are taught and practiced before the proprioceptive exercises. The releasing of muscles and the relearning of natural movement patterns is done on the floor; then proprioception is retrained when we are sitting or standing.

### **WHY MUST SITTING AND STANDING PROPRIOCEPTIVE EXERCISES ALSO BE TAUGHT?**

When we are sitting, standing, or moving around, we automatically go into the habitual posture or movement pattern that will most easily and efficiently keep us upright. When you stand up after having practiced your Somatics exercises, you might feel significant changes in your posture. However, as you move back into your normal activities, you will gradually slide back into your habitual patterns. It is very important to reinforce what you have learned from the floor exercises by doing sitting and standing proprioceptive exercises. Taking the time to consciously integrate what you have learned on the floor will allow you to make changes in your upright posture and movement patterns.

### **WHY ARE THE PROPRIOCEPTIVE EXERCISES TAUGHT IN A CERTAIN ORDER?**

The order of the proprioceptive exercises follows the same rule as the floor exercises: they work from the core outwards. So, Proprioceptive Exercise 1 (the Seated Arch & Flatten) works with the forward and backward tilting of the pelvis. Proprioceptive Exercise 2 (the Standing Hip Raises) work with the lateral tilting of the pelvis.

All posture and movement patterns begin in the core of the body. The core of the body is like the foundation of a house. The core of the body must be functional and balanced in order for the extremities to move correctly and efficiently. So, it is important that the pelvis be in a neutral position before moving upward to work with the upper torso. Likewise, it is important that the pelvis be in a neutral position so that the legs are in a neutral position.

In Level Two of this course, you will learn how to teach Proprioceptive Exercises 3 and 4, which work with the alignment of the thoracic and cervical spine and rib cage.

## **WHY ARE THE PROPRIOCEPTIVE EXERCISES TAUGHT IN FRONT OF A MIRROR?**

When we have dysfunctional habitual muscular patterns, our proprioception adjusts to them. If we slouch every day, this rounded posture will begin to feel normal. Over time, slouching will feel much better, easier and more natural than sitting or standing up straight. This adjustment in proprioception makes it very difficult to make changes in our posture. A critical part of the Somatics learning process is to retrain our proprioception. This is most effectively done by combining our internal, first-person perspective with an external, third-person perspective.

When practicing the proprioceptive exercises, we first keep our eyes closed so that we can focus completely on our internal sense of our posture. When we feel that we are in a straight, neutral position, we open our eyes. Then we can look in the mirror and compare the third-person view of what we see in the mirror with our first-person sensation of our posture. If we do indeed look straight in the mirror, that third-person image reinforces what we are feeling in our body.

If we do not look straight, then we can make further adjustments to our posture so that we are standing straight. Then we must take a few moments to notice how this straight posture feels in our body.

## **CONTINUING PROPRIOCEPTIVE TRAINING THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

Retraining proprioception takes time. In the beginning, you will experience a lot of back-and-forth: slipping back into old patterns, suddenly noticing it, consciously relaxing your muscles so that you can sit or stand up correctly, and then slowly slipping back into your old patterns again. You will experience this cycle for a long time. By checking in with yourself on a regular basis—every few minutes, ideally—throughout your day, you will gradually retrain your proprioception. It is this repetitive checking in and adjusting your posture that will eventually retrain your proprioception and allow you to integrate all of the muscular releases and movement patterns that you have learned in the floor exercises.