

TRANSFER OF WEIGHT

Begin standing with feet at hip width apart – feet parallel, knees soft. The feet, ankles, knees, hips, ribs and shoulders are all in alignment – stacked naturally. Allow the head to float on a long neck. Close eyes to focus internally. Breathe deeply into the pelvic area. Feel soles of feet connecting with the earth for stability.

Take a moment to breathe.

Bring the focus fully to the “Earth Connection” of the soles of the feet with the ground. Have the image of the ground being earth, or sand – and of the feet slightly sinking down into it.

Begin to gently shift the weight forwards towards the balls of the feet, and then back towards the heels. Now take the shifts from side to side – and then progress into shifting the weight randomly on the soles of the feet, still keeping them firmly planted (perhaps around in circles or figure eights).

All the while, keep the body in a relaxed state and breath deeply.

Visualize all the bones, organs and muscles of the body as being suspended in a soft, pliable state in relation to each other (like pieces of fruit suspended in jelly) and allow a fluid response to occur in the body to the shifts of weight.

Once this has been established, start to slide one foot forward slowly, maintaining the earth connection but noting the subtle shifts as the weight transfers, bringing the body forward with the foot.

Explore this sliding motion to travel forwards, backwards or sideways – feeling the weight transfer in gradual shifts on the soles of the feet.

Be aware of the response of the body and allow it to remain soft and fluid, free from tension.

Next, begin to peel a foot off the ground, float through space and replant in a single step. Again – note the gradual shift of weight onto the supporting foot. Keep the action slow and smooth, keep eyes closed as much as is possible unless there is a problem with balance.

Experiment with the difference between transferring heel-to-toe or toe-to-heel, either when lifting or planting the foot.

Introduce the idea of “over-curve” and “under-curve” when transferring weight. For an over-curve, lift up, transfer the weight at the peak of the curve and come down on the other foot. For an under-curve, bend low and transfer the weight, coming up onto the other foot. With these curve transfers, think of the over or under curve motion being initiated by the pelvis.

Again, explore traveling forwards, backwards, sideways, on a diagonal, stepping open or crossing over the foot on the ground – as well as pivoting while transferring the weight.

How do these various ways of stepping affect the organic responses of the body?

As this exercise progresses, feel free to open the eyes for better balance and spatial awareness – but keep the focus soft and internal.

Now begin to transfer weight from the feet onto other parts of the body. The most natural inclinations are towards the palms of the hands, the knees, the buttocks, the back – but also explore more awkward transitions onto other areas of the body. Try to keep the motion as smooth and sustained as possible in order to experience all the increments of each transition.

Once this mode of transferring weight, using gradual, incremental shifts, has been firmly established and feels organic and fluent in the body, one can begin to experiment with more “risky” transfers where there is a moment of free-falling from one part of the body to another. There can also be further play with tempo – the introduction of momentum allows certain transitions that would not be possible without it.

At the end of these explorations, always return to the initial minimal state – through walking with eyes closed to finally planting the feet and feeling the fundamental Earth Connection again.

INTENTIONS:

This exercise is an intense exploration of the body’s weight in relation to gravity and earth. (There are also further possibilities for the concept of relationship to “surface” other than ground.)

The exercise seeks to serve a number of functions within this context.

To establish a deep connection with earth / ground / surface, to develop a heightened awareness of the nuances of exactly where in the body weight is being supported, to increase a contrasting sense of “suspense” in the rest of the body in order for everything not to collapse with gravity.

There is an emphasis on subtle shifts that occur inside the body in order to maintain balance and equilibrium – one that I find akin to structural ideas of “tensegrity” as well as nature, where the strongest organic structures are those whose stability is matched by plasticity.

Transfer of weight is also the key factor in locomotion – allowing a body to travel in space via its relationship with gravity. This exercise provides a solid foundation for further explorations in this vein.