



## The Well-Tempered Psoas

### The Inner Psoas

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In “An Essential Understanding of the Psoas Muscles”, I referred to the role of injury and stress conditioning in the development of excessive psoas muscle tension. I cover that topic, here.

As it happens, it isn’t exactly rocket science to understand why the psoas muscles get tight (as part of larger patterns of psychomotor/neuromuscular tension) – at least when we look at things somatically (as expressions of the body experienced and controlled from within).

It’s this: memory patterns of insults and injuries, conditioning influences and patterns of immaturity in which we feel are “not up to” the demands of experience trigger withdrawal responses in us that show up as tension at our core. Simple, huh? There’s more.

In my other article, "[An Essential Understanding of the Psoas Muscles -- Upgrading the Approach to Tight Psoas Muscles](#)", I use the term, “open core”. I refer to a person’s “full stature”. I talk about the nervous system’s controlling, centralized role in regulating muscular tension. I refer to the role of the psoas muscles in arising from rest to sitting, standing, and walking; for each of those movements, a corresponding state of mind exists. I’ll go into that shortly; as you’ll see, it’s pretty obvious.

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#### MEMORY

Chronically tight psoas muscles express stuck memory patterns of activity or stress. To free tight psoas muscles, we must release the associated memory -- whether the memory of activity (movement), of a sensation (injury), or of emotional stress.

Memories are congealed patterns of experience. The more they play, the more ingrained they get. Memories are self-reinforcing through habit.

When a person is stuck in a habit pattern, they are closed to new experience. There’s no space. All there is, is the repetitive replay of memory. Noise. The closed (or hard-) core condition.

However, a deliberate, new action can modify a habit – but only if that new action first frees attention from where it is stuck.

The key to freeing attention is to change the habit from a self-perpetuating automaticity to an intentional action done with sufficient attention to resume the position of being the cause of the action. That means that a person deliberately does what ordinarily “happens by itself” until they can feel that they are doing it, rather than it happening to them. That intensity of intention and attention melts the mold of a habit so that it can be remolded.

In that state of “melt”, the person no longer feels identical to (identified with or as) that habit; (s)he has transcended it. That transcendence provides the space for the emergence of The New (in whatever form).

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## **BACK TO THE PSOAS**

The modes of psoas function – rest/repose to sitting, to standing, to walking, correspond to states of the psyche. As I said, it’s pretty obvious.

\* **REST/REPOSE:** no intention, no readiness, no engagement with experience

Although sleep may seem the very definition of rest, sleep is not necessarily restful. Ask anyone with insomnia. Dream sleep involves emotional, mental, and subtle physical activity (e.g., REM -- Rapid Eye Movement sleep). Deep, dreamless sleep is as close as most of us come, and generally, tense people stay tense even during sleep. Waking repose is generally not full rest.

\* **SITTING:** coming to some higher degree of activity; mental and emotional engagement

\* **STANDING:** coming to a still higher level of activity; active mental, emotional and physical engagement

\* **WALKING** etc.: coming to a still higher level of activity and engagement

Any “hold” at any of these levels is a hold on the responsiveness of the psoas/iliopsoas muscles, generally at some level of contraction.

So, generally speaking, tight or unresponsive psoas muscles express a holding pattern at some level of activity (or inactivity).

- If the psoas muscles are simply non-functional, they express a pattern of immaturity in which the person is either passive, relatively receptive like a child, without initiative, or without the capacity to formulate a deliberate intention and more concerned with outer appearances than with true intentions. It's an arrested

(ar-"rested") state of development.

- If the psoas muscles are equally tight, left and right, but very short, they express the pattern of sitting, which comprises sitting and emoting, but not taking action, and actually a restraint upon taking a stand (standing up) and taking action. It's an arrested state of starting things.
- If the psoas muscles are equally tight, but at enough length to permit standing, they express a pattern of high arousal, but without action (repressed action). In this state, the spinal muscles, which get tighter as arousal level increases, would arch the spine backward; the psoas muscles counter that action to some degree, and the person exists in a state of co-contraction, which involves low back pain.
- If the psoas muscles are asymmetrically tight, they usually express a stuck pattern of action, as if stopped mid-step in a standing position. It's an arrested state of follow-through.
- All cases of chronically tight psoas muscles express an inability to come to deep rest.

Physical and/or emotional trauma can create a memory impression sufficiently fixated to create chronic muscular tensions of this type. So can voluntary actions repetitively done or done for a longer period of time at a high level of intensity. These memory impressions function as if the situation is still happening in present time – with the attendant emotional flavor and arousal state.

As I said in the other article, as a generality, people never experience deep rest; they/we are stuck at some level of activity, some level of tension, stuck in some pattern of memory, of arousal, of reactivity, of resistance to outer things and to things inside ourselves.

As the psoas muscles are involved in every state of arousal from rest to full activity, a person stuck at some state of activity has psoas muscles (and actually, the entire musculature, to some degree) stuck at some level of activity. This statement is, of course, an oversimplification, but as a generalization, it holds good.

To the degree that we are stuck in a memory at the physical level (memory of repetitive action, memory of injury), at the emotional level (memory of experience, memory of insult), or at the mental level (memory of worldview, memory of limitation), we are stuck in a closed/hard-core condition.

In general, we are held in a pattern and prevented from coming to our full stature, our best balance, our self-assurance, our freedom.

That means that psoas muscles don't lengthen freely when coming from sitting to standing. We never get completely out of the crouch; we never elongate fully unless we apply extra effort (generally as an automatic action). We never come to our full stature

And we are always held in a pattern. It's just that the pattern may be long-term dysfunctional or short-term functional.

If it's dysfunctional, we are, out of habit, maintaining the pattern with a sense of friction with outer experience or inner preference, a kind of chronic state of emergency; if it's short-term functional, the pattern is playing out freely as a stream of sensations, emotions, and ideas without an effort to prevent or force them, as a creative stream of new emergence to which we may contribute our creative energy.

That creative emergence is a state of alignment in which, if we "take our hands off the steering wheel," things continue to go along with a kind of momentum. It almost doesn't matter. Open core, free sleeve. Resilient, responsive psoas muscles.

In practice, an awakening life involves re-cognition of the ways in which we are fixated in memory and a progressive and dis-cumulative melting of the mold, so that we may continue to evolve. With each increment of "melt", our core relaxes and opens; we elongate further into better balance and greater freedom.

Without that "melt", attempts to free the psoas muscles and the core are limited to the degree to which we have already outgrown our earlier memory patterns and can release them.

And, in any case, the limitations of our present existence are the present temporary limit to which we can be free in mind and in the musculature.