

The Practice Of Natural Movement

The practice of natural movement is an ancient approach to physical activity that emphasizes reconnecting with the innate ways humans move. Rooted in the understanding that our bodies are designed for a wide range of functional, effortless, and efficient movements, natural movement prioritizes restoring and enhancing physical skills that are often neglected in modern sedentary lifestyles. As we increasingly spend time sitting at desks and engaging with screens, the art of moving naturally becomes not just a form of exercise but a vital component of overall well-being, injury prevention, and longevity. This comprehensive practice draws inspiration from the movements of our ancestors, animal behaviors, and traditional training methods, encouraging practitioners to develop strength, flexibility, coordination, and awareness through simple, functional activities.

What Is Natural Movement?

Natural movement, also known as primal or functional movement, involves performing movements that mimic those used in everyday life and ancestral activities. It focuses on cultivating strength, mobility, and agility through movements that are intuitive and fundamental to human survival and activity.

Core Principles of Natural Movement

- **Functionality:** Movements should serve practical purposes, improving everyday life and athletic performance. - **Efficiency:** Moving in ways that minimize unnecessary effort and reduce injury risk. - **Adaptability:** Developing a wide range of movement skills to handle various situations. - **Mindfulness:** Cultivating awareness of body position, balance, and movement patterns. - **Playfulness:** Embracing a joyful and exploratory attitude toward movement.

Benefits of Practicing Natural Movement

Integrating natural movement into your routine offers numerous physical, mental, and emotional benefits:

Physical Benefits

- **Enhanced Mobility and Flexibility:** Regular practice helps maintain joint health and range of motion. - **Increased Strength and Endurance:** Functional movements develop muscles in a balanced and natural way. - **Improved Coordination and Balance:** Moving in varied patterns enhances proprioception and stability. - **Injury Prevention:** Strengthening stabilizer muscles and improving movement mechanics reduce injury risk.

Mental and Emotional Benefits

- Stress Reduction: Movement outdoors and in natural settings can boost mood and reduce anxiety. - Increased Body Awareness: Developing mindfulness about how you move promotes better self-care. - Boosted Confidence: Mastery of diverse movements fosters a sense of capability.

Fundamental Movements in Natural Movement

The foundation of natural movement comprises a set of fundamental patterns that form the basis for more complex activities. These include:

Locomotion

- Walking, running, hopping, crawling, and climbing. - Emphasizes developing balance, coordination, and strength.

Upper Body Movements

- Pushing, pulling, reaching, and lifting. - Focuses on shoulder stability and upper body strength.

Lower Body Movements

- Squatting, lunging, jumping, and stepping. - Enhances leg strength, hip mobility, and stability.

Stability and Balance

- Balancing on one leg, traversing uneven surfaces, and controlled falls. - Improves core strength and proprioception.

Breathing and Posture

- Deep diaphragmatic breathing and maintaining proper alignment. - Supports overall vitality and movement efficiency.

Techniques and Exercises for Natural Movement

Practicing natural movement involves engaging in specific exercises that promote the development of the fundamental movement patterns.

Animal Flow

- A dynamic workout mimicking animal movements such as bear crawls, crab walks, and

ape squats. - Improves strength, mobility, and coordination while fostering playful exploration.

Movement Flows

- Combining multiple movements into fluid sequences, e.g., crawling into lunges or jumping into turns. - Enhances neuromuscular control and adaptability.

Mobility Drills

- Focused exercises like hip openers, shoulder stretches, and ankle rotations. - Maintain joint health and improve range of motion.

Functional Strength Training

- Bodyweight exercises such as push-ups, pull-ups, squats, and lunges. - Emphasize proper form and full-body engagement.

Playing Outdoors

- Activities like climbing trees, balancing on logs, or jumping over obstacles. - Reinforces natural movement patterns in real-world settings.

Integrating Natural Movement Into Daily Life

The beauty of natural movement is its versatility and accessibility. You can incorporate it into daily routines with simple strategies:

1. **Start Small:** Dedicate 10-15 minutes daily to movement practices like walking barefoot, stretching, or animal movements.
2. **Use Nature as Your Gym:** Take advantage of parks, trails, and open spaces for movement exercises.
3. **Practice Mindful Movement:** Pay attention to how your body feels during everyday tasks—lifting groceries, standing up, or sitting down—and perform movements with awareness.
4. **Include Play:** Engage in playful activities such as climbing, jumping, or balancing to make movement enjoyable and sustainable.
5. **Progress Gradually:** As your skills improve, increase intensity and complexity while maintaining good form.

Challenges and Considerations

While natural movement offers many benefits, it's essential to approach it thoughtfully: - Listen to Your Body: Avoid pushing into pain; adapt exercises to your current ability level.

- Seek Guidance: Especially for beginners, working with a trained instructor can help ensure proper technique. - Progress Safely: Gradually increase difficulty to prevent injury and build confidence. - Modify for Limitations: Use supports or alternative movements if you have joint issues or mobility restrictions.

Resources and How to Get Started

Getting started with natural movement can be simple and rewarding: - Online Courses and Tutorials: Platforms like YouTube offer free videos on animal flow, mobility drills, and outdoor workouts. - Local Workshops and Classes: Many communities have movement studios or outdoor programs focused on primal or functional movement. - Books and Guides: Titles such as "Move Your DNA" by Katy Bowman or "Animal Flow" by Mike Fitch provide comprehensive insights. - Join a Community: Connecting with like-minded individuals can motivate and inspire consistency.

Conclusion: Embrace Your Innate Ability to Move

The practice of natural movement reconnects us with our evolutionary roots and promotes a healthier, more resilient body. By focusing on fundamental, functional movements, we can improve our physical capabilities, reduce injury risk, and enhance our quality of life. Whether through dedicated workouts, playful outdoor activities, or mindful daily habits, integrating natural movement into your routine offers a pathway to greater vitality and joy. Remember, the key is consistency and curiosity—embrace the innate way your body was designed to move, and enjoy the journey toward greater health and freedom of movement.

The Practice of Natural Movement: Reconnecting with Our Innate Human Abilities

In an age dominated by sedentary lifestyles and technology-driven routines, the practice of natural movement offers a compelling way to reconnect with our primal roots, improve physical health, and foster a deeper understanding of our bodies. Rooted in the idea that humans are naturally designed to move in diverse and functional ways, natural movement training emphasizes restoring fundamental movement patterns that have evolved over millennia. This holistic approach encourages individuals to move freely and intuitively, fostering strength, flexibility, resilience, and mental clarity. As more people seek alternatives to traditional gym workouts, natural movement has gained prominence as a sustainable, enjoyable, and deeply human form of exercise.

What is Natural Movement?

Natural movement refers to a broad spectrum of physical activities that emulate the movements our ancestors performed in daily life—walking, crawling, climbing, jumping, balancing, and lifting. Unlike structured workouts or machine-based exercises, natural movement emphasizes spontaneous, functional, and playful actions that develop the

body's natural capabilities.

The core philosophy revolves around the idea that humans are inherently capable of a wide range of movements, and that these skills can be reawakened and refined through practice. It encourages exploration, curiosity, and listening to one's body, fostering a sense of freedom and adaptability in movement.

The Evolution and Foundations of Natural Movement

Historically, humans relied on natural movement for survival—hunting, gathering, building shelter, and navigating varying terrains. Over generations, these activities shaped our muscular and skeletal systems, creating a body optimized for diverse, functional motions.

In recent decades, however, modern life has shifted us away from these natural patterns. Sedentary jobs, automobiles, and technology have reduced the variety and frequency of functional movement, leading to issues like poor posture, muscle imbalances, and decreased mobility. Recognizing this disconnect, pioneers in movement culture, such as Georges Hébert, Ido Portal, and MovNat founder Erwan Le Corre, have championed the practice of natural movement as a way to restore our innate physical intelligence.

Key Principles of Natural Movement Practice

The practice of natural movement is guided by several foundational principles:

1. **Functionality:** Movements should mimic real-world activities, improving practical strength and coordination.
2. **Variety:** Incorporating diverse movement patterns prevents plateaus and promotes well-rounded physical development.
3. **Playfulness:** Movement should be enjoyable and exploratory, fostering a positive relationship with physical activity.
4. **Progression:** Building skills gradually to develop strength, balance, and control over time.
5. **Body Awareness:** Cultivating mindfulness of movement quality and alignment.
6. **Environment Utilization:** Using natural terrains and surroundings to challenge and enhance skills.

Core Movement Patterns in Natural Movement Training

Natural movement training emphasizes mastering fundamental movement patterns that form the building blocks of more complex actions. These include:

1. **Locomotion**
 1. Walking
 2. Running
 3. Skipping

4. Crawling

5. Hopping

1. Balancing and Stability

1. Standing on one leg

2. Walking on uneven surfaces

3. Balancing on logs or beams

1. Lifting and Carrying

1. Picking up and carrying objects

2. Climbing objects

3. Lifting heavy loads safely

1. Jumping and Springing

1. Vertical jumps

2. Broad jumps

3. Plyometric movements

1. Climbing and Hanging

1. Tree climbing

2. Monkey bars

3. Rope climbs

1. Manipulation

1. Pushing and pulling objects

2. Carrying loads over distances

1. Breathing and Core Control

1. Breathwork techniques

2. Developing core stability through movement

How to Incorporate Natural Movement into Your Routine

Integrating natural movement into daily life can be simple and enjoyable. Here's a step-by-step guide:

Step 1: Reconnect with Your Environment

1. Walk barefoot on grass, sand, or dirt to improve foot strength and sensory awareness.

2. Use parks, forests, or open spaces for movement practice rather than confined gyms.

Step 2: Focus on Fundamental Patterns

1. Dedicate time to practicing basic movements like squats, lunges, crawling, and

balancing.

2. Use natural obstacles—logs, rocks, stairs—to challenge your movement skills.

Step 3: Include Play and Exploration

1. Embrace playful activities such as jumping over logs, climbing trees, or balancing on uneven surfaces.
2. View movement as a form of play rather than just exercise.

Step 4: Progress Gradually

1. Start with simple movements, paying attention to quality and control.
2. Gradually increase complexity and intensity as your body adapts.

Step 5: Train Regularly and Mindfully

1. Aim for consistency, even if sessions are short.
2. Practice mindfully, focusing on breath, posture, and movement quality.

Benefits of Practicing Natural Movement

Engaging in natural movement offers numerous physical, mental, and emotional benefits:

1. Enhanced Mobility and Flexibility: Regular practice keeps joints and muscles supple.
2. Increased Strength and Endurance: Functional movements develop real-world strength.
3. Improved Balance and Coordination: Challenging varied terrains enhances proprioception.
4. Injury Prevention: Better movement mechanics reduce strain and risk.
5. Mental Well-being: Playful movement reduces stress, boosts mood, and fosters mindfulness.
6. Body Awareness: Developing kinesthetic intelligence leads to better posture and movement habits.
7. Connection with Nature: Practicing outdoors strengthens the bond with natural environments.

Common Natural Movement Exercises and Drills

Here are some practical exercises to incorporate into your routine:

1. Bear Crawls: Crawl on hands and feet, engaging the core and shoulders.
2. Lizard Walks: Move forward in a low squat position, mimicking a lizard.
3. Step-Ups: Use natural stairs or logs to practice stepping and lifting.
4. Balance Walks: Walk along a narrow beam or fallen branch.
5. Jumping Drills: Jump onto and off elevated surfaces.
6. Climbing Practice: Climb trees or playground structures.
7. Crawling Variations: Incorporate crab walks, inchworms, or spider crawls.
8. Breathwork: Practice diaphragmatic breathing or box breathing to improve respiratory

function.

Challenges and Considerations

While natural movement is accessible and adaptable, it's important to approach it safely:

1. **Start Slow:** Focus on mastering basic patterns before progressing to more complex movements.
2. **Listen to Your Body:** Avoid pushing into pain; modify movements as needed.
3. **Seek Guidance:** If unfamiliar with certain exercises, consider consulting movement professionals or coaches.
4. **Respect Environment:** Use natural settings responsibly, avoiding damage to ecosystems.
5. **Progress Gradually:** Build strength and confidence over time to prevent injury.

Incorporating Natural Movement into Daily Life

Beyond dedicated practice sessions, you can embed natural movement into everyday routines:

1. Take the stairs instead of elevators.
2. Walk or bike instead of driving when possible.
3. Play with children or pets in active ways.
4. Use park benches, logs, or rocks for workouts.
5. Break prolonged sitting with movement intervals.

The Broader Impact of Practicing Natural Movement

Embracing natural movement extends beyond physical health. It fosters a mindset rooted in curiosity, resilience, and adaptability. It encourages us to view our bodies as dynamic, capable, and connected to our surroundings. As urbanization and technology continue to influence our lifestyles, reclaiming natural movement becomes an act of rebellion—restoring balance, vitality, and authenticity to our human experience.

Final Thoughts

The practice of natural movement is a powerful pathway to reclaiming our innate physical abilities and reconnecting with the environment. By integrating simple, functional movements into daily life and embracing playfulness and exploration, we can cultivate a body that is strong, agile, and resilient. Whether you're an athlete seeking to enhance performance, a fitness enthusiast craving variety, or someone simply looking to move more freely, natural movement offers a timeless and accessible approach to health and vitality. Embrace your primal roots—move naturally, move joyfully, and rediscover what it means to be truly human.

Questions & Answers About the practice of natural movement

N o	Question	Answer
1	What is the core philosophy behind the practice of natural movement?	The core philosophy of natural movement emphasizes reconnecting with innate human movement patterns, focusing on functional, efficient, and mindful movements inspired by how humans move in their natural environment.
2	How can practicing natural movement improve overall physical health?	Practicing natural movement can enhance strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination, reduce the risk of injury, and promote better posture by encouraging movements that align with our evolutionary design.
3	What are some common exercises or activities involved in natural movement training?	Common activities include crawling, crawling variations, climbing, balancing, lifting, jumping, and movement flows that mimic animals and natural scenarios to develop functional strength and agility.
4	Is natural movement suitable for all age groups and fitness levels?	Yes, natural movement is adaptable to all ages and fitness levels, focusing on safe, progressive movement patterns that can be modified to meet individual needs and capabilities.
5	How does natural movement training differ from traditional gym workouts?	Natural movement training emphasizes functional, full-body movements inspired by nature and daily life activities, whereas traditional gym workouts often focus on isolated muscle groups and equipment-based exercises.
6	What are the mental benefits associated with practicing natural movement?	Practicing natural movement can improve mental well-being by reducing stress, increasing mindfulness, boosting confidence in physical abilities, and fostering a deeper connection with one's body and environment.

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