

Lesson 1: Easy Bending in Sitting

Please Note: This is an extract from *Awakening Your Inner Healer* by Arnie Lade, a forthcoming eBook. If you have already done the audio Chair Lesson, you will notice that this lesson is similar, but significantly different. In many ways audio is a superior medium compared to the written form for learning Awareness Through Movement. Indeed, live classes with a teacher are even better! We encourage you to attend classes regularly for maximum self-improvement.

Length: Twenty to thirty minutes. This lesson involves learning to improve bending forward and backward (flexion and extension) with your spine as you sit.

1. Sit on a hard or firmly cushioned chair or stool. It is best if the seat is flat and the height of the chair allows for your knees to be bent at about a right angle while your feet lie flat on the floor. Sit on the forward part of the chair so that your back does not touch the backrest. Place your hands on your thighs. Place your feet at pelvis-width apart directly below your knees. Take a minute and sense how you are sitting.

Notice how your sitting bones are touching or pressing into the chair.

a) Slowly raise your face toward the ceiling, looking up as you do so, and then return to where you started (facing forward, eyes looking straight ahead). Do this a number of times. Stay within your range of comfort - there's no need to stretch or strain yourself. As you look up, inhale and let your back arch a bit.

Notice how your breastbone or sternum moves as you look up.

b) Again, while inhaling and arching your back slightly, raise your face toward the ceiling. This time, let your eyes look downward toward the floor. Move slowly, and coordinate the movement of turning your face to the ceiling while simultaneously looking down.

Does moving your eyes and head in opposite directions somehow limit your ability to comfortably tilt your face to the ceiling?

Sit still and notice any changes that have occurred.

c) Slowly lower your face toward the floor, looking down as you do so, and then return to where you started (face and eyes forward). Do this a number of times. Again, stay within your range of comfort - there is no need to stretch or strain yourself. As you look down, exhale and let your

back round a bit.

Let your neck, shoulders and chest become soft.

How does your sternum move as you look down?

d) Lower your face toward the floor while exhaling and rounding your back slightly. This time, let your eyes look upward toward the ceiling. Move slowly and coordinate the movement of turning your face to the floor while looking up.

How does the eye movement affect your ability to lower your face?

e) Rest in sitting.

Notice how you feel different - your sense of support, the curves of your spine, how you sit on your sitting bone.

2. Sit as before.

a) Keeping your face forward and head upright, start arching and then rounding your back. Go back and forth, arching and rounding. Keep the breath free and the movement light.

As you move, can you sense yourself rocking over your sitting bones?

b) Lower your face so that your chin goes toward your sternum, and look down. Now go back and forth between rounding and arching your back in this position, with your face lowered. Move only within the range that is comfortable. Remember to breathe.

c) Raise your face toward the ceiling and look up. Begin rounding and arching your back as you keep your face continually raised. Stay with what is comfortable.

How does this change your ability to move?

d) Sit and notice how you are sitting now. If you feel the need, you can lie down to rest, or rest leaning back on your chair.

3. Sit as before.

a) Slowly begin alternating between extending and flexing your entire spine. Start by lifting your face while looking up and arching your back. Look down as your face lowers, and your back rounds. Go back and forth between these two directions, letting your breath be free.

Notice how your sternum and chest sink as you look down and rise slightly

as you look up.

What about your sitting bones - do they rock slightly as you move?

After a comfortable number of repetitions, stop and rest either seated or lying down.

b) Sit as before, then turn your upper body slightly to the left. Place your right hand on or near your left knee while your left hand rests on your right hand. In this position, flex and extend your entire spine as before. As you round your back, let your head move toward your left knee, and as you lift your face, keep your head turned slightly to the left. After a comfortable number of repetitions, stop and rest.

c) Sit as before, then turn your upper body slightly to the right, with your left hand on or near your right knee, and your right hand resting over your left hand. Flex and extend your spine as before. As you round your back, let your head move toward your right knee, and, as you lift your face, keep your head turned slightly to the right. After a comfortable number of repetitions, stop and rest.

d) Sit face forward, both hands on your thighs. Once again, extend and flex, arching and looking up, then rounding your back as you look down with your head and eyes.

Do you notice any differences in the quality of movement now?

4. Sit still and notice how you are sitting.

Is there a difference in your uprightness?

How do you sense your sitting bones now?

Notice the quality of your breathing.

How does your chest feel?

Let it go and rest.

You have just finished the first lesson. In the hours and days ahead, you may want to pay attention to any changes in how you sit at your desk or in your car or at your kitchen table, or how you move in general. Observing and sensing improvements and changes from time to time after a lesson is an invaluable practice. Simply reflect on how you're moving in your daily activities. Perhaps your movement has changed or perhaps not. The point is – that this act of reflection and noticing change will slowly increase the quality of your awareness.

This will help you to better sense the work that you're doing in the lessons themselves.