



adjust your lifestyle™

The Foundation of Flexibility

Contributed by Ambrose Koll and Dr. Eric Plasker

A healthy spine and nervous system is the foundation of flexibility. For some, just getting to the gym constitutes going past their comfort zone. For many, participating in circus gymnastics has become an accessible and exciting way for them to get physical, build skills and enjoy the excitement of moving the body. Instead of the usual cardio and weight-lifting, most of these gymnastics focus on specific awareness of the body along with the strength to isolate these specific areas in movement.

With the spread of hooping, slack-lining, acro (partner) yoga, aerial silks, hand-balancing and contortion, more and more modern athletes are finding they must remain flexible, as well as strong, in order to stay fit for a lifetime.

Have you ever reached a point in your personal fitness or activity level where you felt hindered due to limited flexibility and a restricted range of motion?

Striving to stretch that extra inch, to keep your shoulders aligned or complete each training set in perfect form, high-performance athletes don't need the extra obstacle of locked joints, muscles or tendons. Optimizing your flexibility for the long haul requires those pushing their physical limits to keep their senses sharp and their bodies limber: nerves running without interference, longevity-focused care and the correct placement of bones and joints to handle the demands of their bodies.

Stretching can already be a challenging task, but the value of flexibility far outweighs the time required. Chiropractic Lifestyle Care allows your joints and tendons to be aligned correctly, facilitating progress in flexibility. Not only has chiropractic been shown to increase range of motion^{1,2}, but ensuring an optimum functioning nervous system helps you to be more aware of your joints' movement

through space, to reduce discomfort and to ensure correct joint and muscle alignment while building that important muscle memory. "After I got adjusted, I went up to the gym and noticed, 'Wow! I can stretch further, even before warming up!'" exclaimed Jenn Rauscher, a contortionist and aerialist for Root Elements Entertainment. She attributes much of her progress in feats of flexibility to regular adjustments from her chiropractor.

The proper alignment of her joints allowed further, and more correct, movement of her body, but it also had an unexpected effect. Ms. Rauscher, like many athletes, recalls becoming increasingly aware of her joints and muscle proprioception through Chiropractic Lifestyle Care. At first, she was pulling and compressing her spine to increase flexibility; and now, "the awareness to align, then lengthen my spine, came from the adjustments." She used her new awareness to allow more articulate and intentional movement of her body.

Many athletes' bodies are treated as valuable commodities only when young. However, there are multiple examples of circus performers 85 years young³ continuing to push their talents to the edge. With the odds of you living to 80, 90 and 100 years and beyond are increasing every day, taking care of your spine, joints and nervous system as a priority can help you stretch the number of active, quality years you enjoy.

1. Whittingham, Wayne and Niels Nilsson. "Active Range of Motion in the Cervical Spine Increases After Spinal Manipulation." *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*. 2001; Vol 24, No 9.
2. Millan, Marlo et al. "The Effect of Spinal Manipulative Therapy on Spinal Range of Motion." *Chiropractic & Manual Therapies*. 2012; Vol 20, No 23.
3. Poole, Sheila. "85-Year-Old Stays Young Defying Gravity." *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*. 7 June 2016 (visited 7 Sept 2016). (<http://www.myajc.com/news/lifestyles/85-year-old-acrobat-stays-young-defying-gravity/nrb6T>)

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