

## **“The Egoscue Method of Health Through Motion”**

By Pete Egoscue

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Life is movement and movement sustains life. In the “Egoscue Method of Health Through Motion” Pete Egoscue teaches his readers how to take responsibility for their own state of wellness by adding movement back into their lives. Egoscue, an “anatomical functionalist” has spent over two decades studying the relationship between the body’s structure, and function and what happens to this relationship in the face of lifestyle devoid of proper movement.

Egoscue introduces his readers to the idea that all of the body’s systems are designed to work together. He then goes on to illustrate how misalignment in one area of the body can cause pain or discomfort in another location. For example, a hip rotated foreword on one side or tilted underneath can lead to knee pain, back pain or shoulder pain. Egoscue presents several illustrations showing the body in proper alignment, and he explains what happens when the body is subjected to a lifestyle devoid of exercise or full of repetitive, unbalanced movements.

Having worked with many professional athletes over the course of his career, Egoscue encountered numerous clients who had chosen to have joint replacement surgery. Invariably, surgery did not correct the underlying imbalance, forcing the patient to return for another surgery, often to another area of the body. In the example above, replacing a knee in a patient whose cartilage has been eroded due to hip misalignment temporarily relieves the pain, but it does not correct the hip problem.

Egoscue devotes the next part of the book to self-diagnosis. The reader stands in front of a mirror to determine what their particular issue may be. Are the feet turned out to the side? Is one shoulder higher than the other? Are the hips tilted underneath or tilted back? Is one shoulder more foreword than the other? What about the angle of the head – is it leaning to one side or slightly juttred out to the front of the body? From this exercise, Egoscue delineates four categories of body types:

**Condition I:** Feet turned out, head leaning foreword, shoulders tipped foreword and pelvis tilted foreword (sway backed).

**Condition II:** Has all of the above plus some rotation foreword in the hip and/or shoulder joints.

**Condition III:** Egoscue describes this as the most serious condition. It has the pelvis tilted underneath – causing the S curve of the lower spine to flatten out – shoulders drooping forward and head jutting out as well as leaning forward.

**Condition IV:** Not really a condition at all. It is the state of perfect body alignment called “D-Lux”. The shoulders, hips, knees and ankles all aligned on horizontal and vertical planes. Feet and knees point forward, head and chin are erect, hips are square, and the body is efficiently bearing weight in perfect balance as nature intended.

The next section of the book contains exercises for each condition designed to return the body to appropriate alignment. Egoscue also includes a list for “D-Lux” types to maintain their current state. Depending upon which category a person falls in, there can be 10 to 22 exercises required.

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I went through the process of evaluating myself and found myself to be mostly in **Condition I** with some minor **Condition II** symptoms. At the time, I was training to compete in triathlons, and I had been having some recurrent in my hips, knees and lower back. By adding the exercises to my normal stretching routine, I hoped to alleviate some of my pain.

In practice, some of the exercises seem to be taken right out of the yoga books. **Downward Dog**, for example, is a yoga position. Some of the other exercises seemed very simple – like arm circles, modified sit-ups and foot circles – and I wondered if they could possibly make a difference, considering my normal level of activity. Still others, like the **Crocodile Twist** – lying down on the floor, placing the heel of one foot on the toes of the other, extend arms out to sides, tighten the quadriceps muscles and rotate hips to one side while the head looks the other way – were quite painful at the beginning.

Fortunately, the illustrations and exercise descriptions were clear and understandable. My only difficulty was that the list of exercise for each condition did not have the corresponding page number listed next to the exercise.

Almost immediately after doing the first exercise (arm circles with my shoulder blades pulled back) I noticed a difference in how my upper back and neck felt. I had a much greater range of motion from left to right and the muscles seemed less tense. As I continued to do the exercises over several days, I noticed that my body felt more fluid overall, and I experienced less pain during or after running and biking. I can remember feeling the same way after a Rolfing session; only this was more like self-Rolfing.

Egoscue helps talk the reader through different ways to evaluate progress – especially since progress may be slow at first. I got very good at standing in a relaxed position and paying attention to how my weight was distributed over my feet both before and after the exercises.

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Overall, I enjoyed Pete Egoscus’s style and approach. Egoscue strongly believes in taking personal responsibility for one’s own health. This fits in nicely with the

message that I want to offer my clients. Throughout the book he states the client needs to have dedication and desire to make the changes.

“In my clinic I’m always on watch for signs that the patient is trying to transfer responsibility to me or to the exercises. And since this book is a surrogate for my clinic, I am particularly concerned that you don’t get the mistaken impression that the Egoscue Method is going to fix your back or knee or shoulder. No way. *You’re* going to do the fixing.”

This message is repeated in many different forms throughout the book. Egoscue always reminds his reader that, “...when it comes to the human body, *everyone* can be an expert.”

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