

Review

Moving Into Alignment: Your Practical Guide to Improve Posture, Reduce Pain, and Move with Ease by Jennifer Hayes

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After over a year of social distancing, working from home with often less-than-optimal ergonomics, and the suspension of in-person bodywork sessions for many people (both practitioners and recipients), it is more important than ever for people to have low-stress, accessible ways to practice and teach therapeutic movement.

Jennifer Hayes's 2019 book, *Moving into Alignment: Your Practical Guide to Improve Posture, Reduce Pain, and Move with Ease* is a timely resource for Rolfers who want to provide just such an educational tool for themselves and their clients. While it certainly won't replace good old-fashioned, hands-on Rolfing® Structural Integration (SI), it quite possibly can help many of us escape the world of Zoom meetings and pandemic-related physical and emotional stress for a few moments each day. It also encourages readers to take active roles in their development as moving, thinking, and feeling beings – which is useful under many circumstances.

For lovers of ordered, incremental steps to create gradually cumulative changes (*cough cough* the Ten Series), the organization of Hayes' book will be appealing. It is written as a set of ten self-contained movement sessions that were designed to be used alongside a traditional Rolfing Ten Series, or simply as an organized, independent exploration to be used at home.

Each session is preceded with an "aim" (which should sound familiar to readers of this journal) to help the reader focus their attention, and ends with a list of "perceptions," which are possible perceptual or kinesthetic changes a person might notice after they complete the list of exercises. While the list of

aims may often be a bit beyond the average person's initial grasp, they are most certainly helpful reminders for practitioners, particularly those who are relatively newer to the tradition or are Rolfers-in-Training. And while you may or may not personally notice the perceptions listed at the end of each sequence (depending on you and if you're even accustomed to thinking about such things), the power of suggestion can be a potent vehicle for change, and at the very least, for reflection about one's physical sensations. As I went through these exercises, I found the perceptions section helpful in ending the session with enjoyable sensations whether I read them ahead of time or at the conclusion.

The first three sessions are particularly simple and safe for most people to attempt, and provide basic, practical tools for connecting or reconnecting with our physical selves. Especially foundational are the exercises to provide ease to the breath, improve spinal mobility, and get the toes, feet, and ankles moving – all things that desk workers (and anyone who spends a lot of time sitting and wearing shoes) often desperately need. Also, especially helpful in the age of COVID-19, the seventh session gives useful tools for dealing with neck and facial tension as well as symptoms of TMJ dysfunction. Since it's been a wildly stressful time for many, as well as a time when intraoral work is not as feasible, these exercises could be invaluable for our clients whether or not we can work on them in person.

The cumulative movements draw from a variety of movement traditions, including yoga, Pilates, martial arts, dance, music, and theatre training, and also the exercises of Ida P. Rolf, PhD, among others. As useful as those modalities can be, this is not a program that is appropriate in full for every client. Certain sessions are much more physically demanding and more likely to require modifications than others, it ultimately depends on the ability and limitations of the reader. Acknowledging this, Hayes suggests that it's acceptable to just practice whatever exercises from each session resonate for the reader, but common sense also dictates that it may be advisable to be more specific if you are using this book as homework for clients (i.e., assign only what your client can safely

do on their own and give modifications where needed). However, it is a book you could easily recommend to those clients who want specific skills to work on at home in between Rolfing sessions, who are also already physically active, familiar with some of the movements, and/or who have solid coordination and body awareness skills.

As a person extremely familiar with many of the movement disciplines that inform Hayes' exercises and practice, and as a fairly rusty, newer Rolfer (I graduated in 2019 and started my official practice a mere two months before our statewide shutdown), I sometimes had a hard time making immediate connections between the movements and the goals described (and with the corresponding hands-on work that might take place in a typical Rolfing session), so I'm sure that the average person might experience similar challenges. However, I'm confident that some deeper understanding will come with practice and experience, and the rest isn't necessarily important to unravel intellectually if the movement and perceptual goals are met – and the potential is there in this book. That, added to the author's attitude (Hayes's movement series culminates in a way that celebrates and encourages a lifestyle of joyful, individualized ways of moving), which makes it easy to appreciate this book.

I recommend this book to student Rolfers and those (like myself) who haven't yet had the opportunity to study for their Rolf Movement® certifications, as well as to clients, general 'movers' looking for more comprehensive homework, and experienced practitioners who want a beautifully illustrated coffee-table book that is also an easy-to-read, well-organized resource for clients looking for a challenge.