

The problematic issue of stretching - There's a better way

(I'm referring to stretching with a sustained stretch, pushing into your limit.)

Is stretching helping you feel at ease? Is stretching getting you the results you want?

- **The brain doesn't learn much from a stretch. Stretching confuses your tension calibration system.**

The limit in a stretch is due to a spinal cord reflex. Very little cortical learning comes from stretching. Stretching does not give the brain the sensory-motor feedback it needs to learn to lower levels of resting tension. Stretching gives a short-lived sensation of relaxed tension, but the system becomes determined to return to its intended tension equilibrium.

"No amount of force or effort will release the involuntary contractions in your body.

Pushing against all tightness will always fail." -Thomas Hanna, Developer of Clinical Somatic Education

- **Stretching can create a recoil effect and stretching injuries.**

Micro-tears from accidental or intentional over-stretching can cause a recoil effect.

Your nervous system perceives the stretch sensation as an emergency. When you push into a stretch, you are making an attempt to override a self-protective reflex, the **Stretch Reflex**, a built-in safety mechanism. At the limit, to prevent tearing, the spinal cord creates an active response, in effect saying:

"Stop!, That's as far as I'm going to let this go!." The need for protection from tearing injury is urgent, and is hard-wired into your nervous system. Proceed at your own risk if you push past the limit.

- **Do you really need the range of motion of a circus performer?**

The problem is too much tension.

- **Cats don't do yoga.**

They pandiculate about 40 times a day. That's how they stay so supple!

- **Pandiculation is:**

Pandiculation is a specialized type of movement that all vertebrates do.

Simply put, it's a yawning-like contraction followed by a relax.

A morning yawn is a natural example of pandiculation.

When great care and precise control is applied to the movement,

making a controlled crescendo of contraction,

followed by a smooth, very slow, controlled lengthening to a full rest,

it is a powerful method for changing deep tension habits.

Pandiculation is your system's natural tension control reset.

It allows you to fill in the brain's spatial map of the body, to change the habit.

It is re-calibration that allows true relaxation!



Siberian Tiger Pandiculating

- **Pandiculate what you feel the need to stretch.**

Consider the places you feel the need to stretch. Learn to move them in full body pandiculations.

Pandiculation is a better way to create ease, comfort, and and spaciousness.

Pandiculation creates the ability to let the muscles fully lengthen.

It's a better way to create ease and spaciousness.

- **Until you have regained voluntary control of your muscle tension, Stop stretching.**

Stretching hinders this process of somatic clarification, restoration, and recalibration.

After you have regained control of tension, it's OK to do gentle somatic stretching to change length.

You may not need to. Use great caution any time your are extending past safe ranges, which can lead to injury.

Somatic stretching means looking at your internal experience, being observant of the safe change in internal space.

About Yoga: Consider doing your Yoga practice more somatically, with your perception focused on your internal movement experience. *"Now, my yoga is ecstatic".* -Raya, Children's Librarian, Eric's daughter.

The
bottom
line

Stretching doesn't do much to teach the brain out of the tension habit.