

Book Notes

The McCall Body Balance Method

By Lisa McCall (Dallas, TX, Brown Books, 2001, 230 pp., \$27.95).

In *The McCall Body Balance Method*, Lisa McCall, an exercise physiologist and physical therapist, discusses her approach to teaching pain-free movement as well as recovery from and prevention of injury. Her ideas are based on her observation that we in the modern world have developed postures and ideas about movement that are counterproductive and cause us to be vulnerable to injury. Her beliefs were ignited by her experiences as a physical therapist during which she noticed that many patients, despite extensive therapy, were frequently afraid to move after injury or surgery due to fear of pain or reinjury. She felt that there was a disconnect between clinic-based treatment and real life. Her conclusions were that we have separated the body from the person and that physical therapists, fitness specialists, physicians, and individuals need to reeducate themselves about what constitutes functional and healthy movement. McCall maintains that there are no specific rules or “do nots” in her Body Balance Method. She says that we do know the language of movement, but that we have forgotten how to speak it. Her aim is to bring the intelligence back that we had as children regarding moving and living at home in our bodies.

Throughout the book, McCall discusses her techniques and her definition of what constitutes correct movement. This entails rethinking our beliefs about posture and exercise. Beginning as a physical therapist and moving into a study of yoga and of movement in different cultures around the globe, she has devised a program of movements that emphasize the integration of body parts, the relationship of simple movements to more complex ones, and the need to live in the moment as we move, in order to more fully engage the mind and spirit in our movements. The objectives are first and foremost to avoid injury and pain as a result of exercise and to experience more completely the full range of physical expressions available to us as we become more comfortable moving through space in our daily lives.

The book begins with an introduction to the author’s background and the forces that motivated her to conceptualize this method of teaching integrated movement. It is full of anecdotes and

references to particular patients and descriptions of the movement dynamics of people in other cultures. The central sections of the book instruct the reader on specific postures and exercises so that one can initiate oneself into the Body Balance Method. In these sections, McCall briefly reviews anatomic and neurophysiologic principles to educate the reader on how tissue breakdown and pain occur with repeated poor posture and dysfunctional movements and, conversely, how we can retrain our bodies into movements that promote structural health. She maintains that all complex movements are based on simpler movements and that we must relearn these component actions and then integrate them back into all our activities. Her approach includes an emphasis on breathing and stretching and the importance of learning to enjoy movement and of listening to our bodies.

McCall emphasizes that her method doesn’t represent a specific exercise trend, but rather a reeducation process that allows tissue self-healing through elimination of damaging movements and postures. The book is very reader-friendly in that the concepts are put forth in a way that can be readily understood by the average reader. A background in fitness training or movement science is not a prerequisite to understanding the precepts of this book. The author illustrates how her exercises and one’s subsequent new awareness can become a natural part of our daily lives. The book shows us how the concepts and postures can be easily incorporated into simple movements such as sitting in a chair or climbing stairs.

McCall successfully shows us how healthy movement and pain-free living is a goal that is within reach and that doesn’t require special equipment or exotic interventions. The book jacket impressively attests to the impact her approach has so far had on orthopedic surgeons, professional athletes, athletic trainers, and patients. The book is a solid introduction into the McCall Method and is well worth a look by anyone interested in the science of movement, in athletics, and in staying healthy and injury-free.

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