

WE ARE ALL BROKEN

People are sometimes horrified when they come in to see me for a consultation. Hopefully not because of any terrible personal problem of mine but because of part of the induction process, the analysis of posture and movement. It's a stock response for people to say "Oh, my posture's terrible", but much of the time that's just self-deprecation - few people really are debilitatingly misshapen. That said, moving through various screens and positions all sorts of muscular imbalances, faulty movement patterns and structural anomalies present themselves, often coming as unwelcome surprises to the mind that inhabits that body.



The fact is that we are pretty much all broken. See for yourself. Try standing in front of a mirror in a manner that feels natural.

Look at your shoulders. One's lower than the other, isn't it ?

Look at the gap between your left elbow and left ribs. Now look at the gap on the other side. They should be equal but often aren't.

Stand sideways in front of the mirror and put finger on the very top of your pelvis, both front and back. The fingers are meant to be at equal heights but the chances of that being the case are, in my experience, less than 10%.

Or try this one: stand with your back against a wall, your heels a couple of inches away from it. Put the backs of your hands to the wall in a "Hands up!" position. Slide your arms up the wall keeping your forearms in contact with it. You might be one of the people who can get your hands high above your head. Many people can get just a few inches before their arms come away from the wall. Quite a few can't get their hands against the wall to begin with. This is computer posture, driving posture, reading posture, bending us forward, hunching our shoulders. It shouldn't be like that but usually is.



None of these things necessarily mean that much. Our bodies adapt and allow us to continue none the wiser, functioning albeit sub-optimally. It's only when we make demands on those misaligned structures like running, lifting heavy weights, placing more weight on that skeleton than it was designed for, that problems arise. Occasionally these minor discrepancies become issues in unlikely situations like picking a child up, walking up stairs, looking behind you to reverse the car.

There are other more obvious bio-mechanical deficiencies that do affect our daily lives. Sacro-iliac joint problems (often felt high on your backside, immediately below your lower back) are like a plague there are that many sufferers, particularly women with children. Dodgy knees, troublesome backs, problematic shoulders and hips - it's rare not to find something that deviates from the illustrations in anatomy books.



The role of a personal trainer is not the same as a physiotherapist. Physios are better trained and better able to deal with mechanical faults of the body. A good personal trainer, however, will be able to detect potential problems. Minor issues can be addressed in a good programme, major issues require you to be referred to a medical practitioner.

Back to the consultations, there have been clients who were pleasantly surprised at their screening. Both of them were really pleased.

Mike Edwards