

# The Accidental Ergonomist

Power not pain with Tim Finucane



## More power, less pain at the gym

Over the years I have met and coached hundreds of people who train at gyms, including Personal Trainers and health specialists. Almost all of them had learned to keep their backs straight, shoulders back, etc. as well as keep their weight over their sitting bones (or over heels or middle of feet) when exercising. And yet despite regular exercise and despite continuous attempts to maintain 'correct posture' and 'correct balance', **many still suffered from lower back pain (LBP), shoulder pain and/or neck pain.**

**What nobody had ever explained to these people** was how the above ways of balancing and holding the back and body **would create** the oppressed body use and oppressed postures that not only **weaken** the body but also help to **maintain** or even **exacerbate** aches and pains in the lower back, shoulders and neck.

This **weakening of the body** occurs in gyms (and other places, such as offices and factories) because **the difference between oppressed and elevated use of body** is not yet sufficiently understood.

Unfortunately, **the belief today** is that strong, elevated sitting postures are created by keeping the back straight or keeping the spine plumb line aligned and the torso balanced over the sitting bones.

But **this is not true**, and this is the root of our dilemma. The best sitting posture is achieved when the body is balanced over the legs, just in front of the sitting bones, **because this is the position that invokes natural elevation** where the body is strongest and most stable and at the same time most relaxed.

The surest way to sort out the 'recipes' that really do created elevated use from those that don't is by testing the **function of a posture (MUBA)**. That is, by testing **the way it works** when subjected to loads that threaten to distort it and then assessing the control exerted to prevent distortion. Unfortunately recipes for 'good posture' based on plumb line alignment or 'keeping your back straight', etc. **fail these tests consistently**, because the ability to maintain mechanical cohesion is automatically weakened the moment this thinking is applied.

If you have tried the exercises I described in **Sitting 101** you might like to try the same thing at your gym. That is, compare **exercising while sitting oppressed** with **exercising while sitting elevated**. Don't be surprised if you find that exercising from an elevated posture feels much stronger and easier compared with exercising from an oppressed posture. The difference varies from person to person but a **15-20% power gain** is not unusual.

**Anyone can make this dramatic shift** and since most people use the body in an oppressed manner (in most situations), most of us have everything to gain by exploring this matter a little further.

Then, when you have found that you do get 15-20% more power it might be worth asking your gym manager for a corresponding reduction in membership fee.



Is this PT sitting elevated or oppressed? The difference is 15-20% more or less power in the exercise...

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