

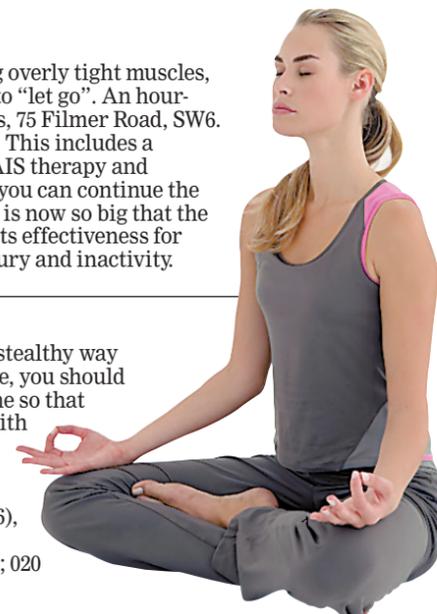
way through a course of Hellerwork and advises on less painful ways to realign your body



OTHER TECHNIQUES

ACTIVE ISOLATED STRETCHING

A new and gentle method of encouraging overly tight muscles, which are distorting the body's posture, to "let go". An hour-long session costs £85 (at 1 Filmer Studios, 75 Filmer Road, SW6. 020 7731 1800, www.stretchtherapy.co.uk). This includes a diagnosis of what's wrong, a session of AIS therapy and instruction in how to do the exercises so you can continue the good work at home. The buzz around AIS is now so big that the National Institute of Health is studying its effectiveness for reducing pain caused by bad posture, injury and inactivity.



YOGA

An old favourite but a brilliant slow and stealthy way of working on posture. In every yoga pose, you should be mindful of trying to "release" the spine so that eventually you can stand, sit and move with ease. For gentle, rehabilitative yoga, try Jane Kersel, who teaches at Triyoga and the Life Centre, W8 (to ask about private lessons, at £100 per hour; call 07771 906 006), or consider a course at the Iyengar Institute in Maida Vale (from £9 per class; 020 7624 3080, www.iyi.org.uk).

METHOD PUTKISTO

An innovative, precise system of deep stretching and deep breathing which works wonders for improving posture and is popular for creating a longer, leaner body shape. You can learn the

technique one-to-one at the studio in Richmond (with Marja, it costs £120 for an hour), or buy a DVD to use at home (The Body Lean & Lifted: £19.95, to order, call 020 8878 7384 or visit www.methodputkisto.com).

ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

Focuses on re-learning habits of movement and posture which have built up over time, with particular emphasis on keeping the neck and spine in proper alignment. In central London, try Noel Kingsley (£70, 020 7491 3505, www.alexander-technique.co.uk), or Chyna Gordon, who also practises in Clapham (£75, 07960 313 466, www.chynagordon.com) and who is the

only Alexander teacher to make the technique work for women wearing high heels. You can also learn to apply the principles of Alexander Technique to swimming with the Shaw Method (£70, 020 8446 9442, www.artofswimming.co.uk for venues) or running, with a new book by Alexander teacher Malcolm Balk and writer Andrew Shields (Master the Art of Working Out, Collins & Brown, £12.99).



PILATES

Pilates works wonders for posture since it is all about balancing the body by getting some length into muscles which are over-tight and strengthening weak areas. The main focus is on the "core" — the deep muscles of the stomach and back which give the body its strength and stability. Visit Alan Herdman (£32 per private lesson in his studio, 020 7723 9953, www.alanherdmanpilates.co.uk) or Gillian Greenwood (£140 for a block of 10 group lessons, 020 7385 3577, www.gilliangreenwood.com)

DEPORTMENT

Paying attention to the way you carry yourself is the key to better posture if you ask the redoubtable Jean Broke-Smith, former principal of Lucie Clayton and now the star of manners-makeover series such as From Ladette to Lady and American Princess. "Stand tall, as if you are a puppet on a string," she instructs. "Keep your head up as you move along.

The most important thing for good posture is to think about keeping the shoulders back, your bottom tucked under and your weight on your back leg. Then glide forward." She does still teach in between filming; for details and prices, call 020 7221 5815.

STRETCHING

Suppleworx's Martin Jefferies prefers to call his highly effective system "muscle release" rather than stretching since his aim is to get muscles back to where they ought to be, as well as making them longer. His secret weapon is a whole book of specific stretches which involve making tight muscles contract, holding the contracted position, then releasing, to encourage them to gain greater length. He leads workshops where you can learn the whole lot (£80 an hour at Natureworks, W1, 020 7629 2927; for workshops and corporate remedial work visit www.suppleworx.co.uk).



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