**Fall Update 2009**  
Hi all, recently a long distance client came through the clinic and she noted several things that were clarified for her, so I wanted to share that with you, as it's so easy to forget some of the small things that are so basic and really do make a difference.   
  
1. Remember to breathe in through your nose and then blow out with a long vigorous loud exhale through your mouth when doing an exercise. Always exhale on the hard part. e.g. when doing the Bend-Hang, as you are hanging, exhale deeply and as you do feel your body releasing/elongating and the head releasing. You will get more elongation and more success if you will regularly do this. You must teach your muscles to elongate, and the breathing and deep exhales are a key for this.  
  
2. If your mind is distracted while you are exercising, you won't get as much benefit as you will when you really focus. THINK the stretch into the back of your skull and neck every time you are using the military. If you are on Botox, you won't feel much, but, if not, you should feel a big strain/stretch in the back of the head/neck when in a strong military. Remember to practice the military on the floor, in bed and against a wall. ALWAYS use the Eeee whenever you are doing the military brace (MB); this helps to hold the MB and keep you from drifting out of it. As a further exercise, try standing against a wall in a strong MB and then slowly walk away, holding the MB to teach your brain to do that. Practice makes perfect. It's like music - you have to do things hundreds of times to establish new muscle memory and teach your brain and body to work together, and for us, to elongate the muscles, especially on the short side.  
  
3. When carrying a water bottle, use one with a straw so you won't be rolling your head back with each sip, and try to find   
PBA-free bottles available at most sport stores. This eliminates the dangerous chemicals most plastics contain. I use this one:  
<http://www.camelbak.com/sports-recreation/bottles/better-bottle-1L.aspx>  
4. Remember the value of mini rest breaks - on the floor on your back (using a pillow if you need one), just breathing and letting your body go heavy and loose as you can. A body with ST has forgotten to relax, so you must home-school your body into the ability to relax again - mind over matter, one tiny step at a time.   
  
5. There is now a rubber chest flexor available on [Amazon.com](http://amazon.com/). Do a search for "chest expander" and look for the one with blue rubber bands. You can begin with one band and add more as you are able. I got one and like it.   
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I know many of you attended the Dystonia Symposium in Atlanta in Oct. and hope you had a great time! As you know I don't fly and the train trip with house sitting expenses etc.. was just to pricey for me. I missed being there and seeing everyone. But Myra and Theresa did go, did massages all during the conference, and I've had great feedback on that. It was such a positive experience for them both and the first time Theresa has had the chance to meet a lot of ST'rs and relate to the struggles and suffering, so  it was wonderful that she could be there too. A reminder that you can see their info at [http://www.torticollismassage.com](http://www.torticollismassage.com/)  
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Now, regarding the flu and the vaccines. Many of you have asked me for my opinion. I'm NOT a doctor and so will not advise you one way or the other. We all need to study and then make informed decisions regarding what is best for us and our family. My younger son and his wife had their kids vaccinated and are getting the shots themselves. I personally will not take the shots for either the seasonal or the swine flu. As most of you know I'm a fan of Oriental Medicine, as my older son is a Dr. of OM and every time he has prescribed herbs when I've been sick they have worked perfectly with no risks and no side effects, so that is my own personal choice. That son is also refusing to get the shots. **The swine flu vaccine contains 2 reportedly dangerous compounds - one is called Thimerosol.**It is made 50% of mercury. It binds to receptors in your brain, and can basically cause brain damage.  
**The other ingredient is called Squalene.** Squalene accidentally tricks your immune system into killing your own cells, which can create autoimmune diseases like asthma, multiple scelerosis, diabetes, and other diseases.   
As you know I go natural whenever possible, though if I needed a Dr. or hospital, I'd use that option. Recently I got an email with some research on onions and the flu. This is strictly for your discernment, as many will think it's from kookville, but I share it for what it's worth and am NOT recommending this [ just reporting. The report is that in 1917-18 during the terrible flu plague that killed millions, it was discovered by scientific analysis that an onion will absorb virus and bacteria and that placing unpeeled onions around the house will help prevent getting the flu and that in homes where this was done, those in the home did not get the flu. So I went out and bought a dozen yellow onions and have a couple in every room and one in the car. Then a friend who is 90 told me that when her Dad had the flu in 1918, her Mom made a poultice of onions and put it on his chest and he recovered quickly. Then a guy at the post office I go to, told me he was started to feel sick last week and happened to be cutting some onions for dinner and the next day his symptoms were gone. So, who knows.... but for me, it's worth a try. The report also said that if actually sick, cut the end off both ends of the onion. Stick a fork in one end and place in a glass, fork down with exposed end of cut onion up and place on bedside table. So much for home brews, but there it is - for your discernment. Don't do this because I'm doing this and not take the vaccines, unless you personally feel this is the right route for you. With a flu pandemic, we are fed lots of seemingly conflicting information from everywhere and it can be so confusing, so study, research and think carefully about which choice is most prudent for you and your family.   
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Those of you who have come to the Clinic during the last 10 years met my precious dog Gussie. She was failing quickly during the last few months and finally all but lost the use of both back legs and had a tumor on her tummy. I had no choice but to have her put to sleep. That was on Oct. 9th and was one of my worst times in many years. I cried for days. The house is so empty without her, and I miss her sweet presence so much. The night of Oct. 9th when I walked into my bedroom, it was filled with a pungent, sweet incense. I felt it was the presence of the Lord comforting me and letting me know the house wasn’t really empty after all! But the upside is that I have so much more freedom now. For the last 10 years I've felt guilty every time I left the house and always had to run home to let Gussie out, let her in, feed her, keep her company to assuage my guilt, etc. Now I'm free to stay out, spend the whole day in Albuquerque, etc. So I've decided not to get another dog. I have my two sweet cats and they seem to love being kings of the hill.   
  
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The last bit of personal news is that in June I took up the drums. I've wanted to play drums for 40 years and decided not to wait till I'm 90, so found a great used set and a terrific instructor and take two lessons a month. It's a great instrument for an ST'r as you sit nice and straight. For a couple of months the muscles in my back protested, but that's now calmed down. Two weeks ago I began rehearsing with the music team at church on Wed. evenings and will be able to sub for our regular drummer during Sunday service when he's out of town. Better late than never! Soooooo much fun!!!!!  
  
Be good to yourselves, plod along one day at a time, building that foundation, and don't ever give up in your pursuit of recovery.   
  
Love, Abbie