

CounterStretch

by Todd Fiorentino

After a massage the other day, my client lamented how her hips get out of whack because she always carries her daughter on one side. She brightened when I told her, “Try carrying her on the other side once in a while.” It was sort of a funny moment because it was so obvious. I’m sure she had thought of this, but somehow, we tend to do things the same way over and over. Inertia, I guess.

So I took my own advice yesterday at the gym. I tried swimming sidestroke on the opposite side. Wow, what a difference! I could feel how tight those muscles were all around my scapula and under my arm. What I’m getting at here is the importance of counter-stretching. Yes, muscles get pushed and pulled out of position, yet by counter-stretching we can make sure it doesn’t lead to a permanent imbalance.

Kids really need to hear this. They have these giant book bags filled with textbooks, many of which you just know never get cracked at home. But it does make for a good appearance when your parents see you lugging this huge book bag around. Then they sling their bag over one shoulder setting themselves up for imbalances like scoliosis later in life.

If your child does this, tell them to leave a few books in the locker, be realistic about their studies and use both straps. They will be less hunched over—standing upright and strong later in life.

* Tip: When you stretch and counter-stretch, make sure and avoid hyperextension. For instance, try not to lock your knees and don’t tip your head back too far. Here’s a good stretch... the “cat and the camel.” Get down on all fours and arch your back then curl your back (continue).