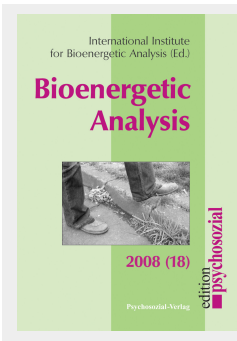


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Your Core Energy is Within Your Grasp



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Summary

This paper, an abridgement of a 55-page paper, *Curling: Exercises and Notes*, highlights a new gentle approach to stimulating instinctual life-energy, helping restore natural energetic pulsation, and providing containment for building boundaries.

A soft curling and uncurling of the fingers and/or toes, in rhythm with the regular breathing pattern, brings up a mild, expansive, pleasurable energetic charge, which can then be augmented with simple body movements, eyes and words to help repossess repressed natural instincts. If stronger, more assertive energy is desired, the curl can be held tighter and longer.

This paper outlines six Curling exercises, useful both in the therapeutic setting and as self-help. The exercises can be done standing, sitting or lying down, and can be both relaxing and/or revitalizing. Some exercises can be done in bed, for helping to fall asleep, for example, or for an invigorating way to wake up.

Keywords: boundary, charge, contain, energetic, exercises

I Introduction

What are the Basic Motions and Rhythms of Curling?

First, gently start curling your fingers and toes in unison. (Finger-curling charges the *upper body* while toe-curling charges *the pelvis and legs*.) All motions, including the breathing, should be natural, gentle and unforced to allow a flow of pleasure in your body. Do not force the extension of fingers (Fig. 1) or toes (Fig. 2). There should only be a partial curling of your fingers, so that your fingernails do not touch the palms (Fig. 3); nor should the toes be curled too tightly (Fig. 4).

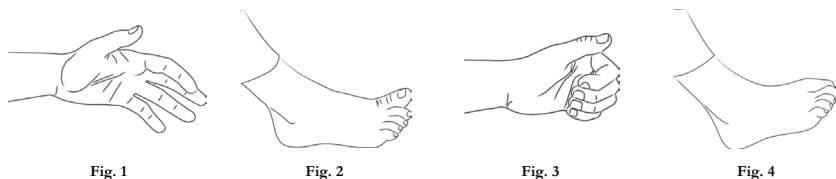


figure 1–4

Next, *inhale* as you extend the fingers and toes and *exhale* as you curl them. (This is the preferred pattern.) Once you have coordinated the breathing pattern with the extension and curling, you should stop. Remember, this is only an orientation, not an exercise.

Who Benefits from Curling Exercises?

- *New/vulnerable clients:* Curling exercises very gradually and gently enlarge the capacity for expansion/contraction, for increasing energetic charge/discharge, and for inducing revitalization/relaxation; they are therefore ideal as an introduction to energetic work for new or vulnerable clients and for frozen or traumatized clients.
- *Clients whose boundaries are too porous, too open:* As curling exercises

promote both energetic containment and ego control over instincts, impulses and feelings, they help build boundaries for those clients whose boundaries are too porous, too permeable, and who are too easily overwhelmed or who overwhelm others.

- *Inhibited clients:* Curling exercises can be used to loosen inhibited self-expression in the eyes, the voice and simple body movements, and to repossess instincts for reaching out to the world and obtaining satisfaction, fulfillment and pleasure.
- *Self-helping clients:* As curling exercises are simple and pleasurable, clients easily adapt them for daily self-help use; e.g., when lying in bed, sitting at home, or in the office.
- *Clients in recovery:* Curling exercises are being explored for recovery from medical operations, for disabled clients and for use by both in-patients and out-patients in a psychiatric hospital.

II The Components of a Curling Exercise

A. Physical Position

Physical positions can be standing, sitting, lying on the back, lying on the belly or lying on the side, as shown in Table 1, Section III. Positions have infant, child and adulthood associations – e.g., lying down may feel more vulnerable than standing.

B. Energetic Charging/Containing/Discharging

Charging: The mild charge generated by alternating between extension and curling can be greatly increased by verbalization of a developmental instinct (Component C), by self-expressive movements, eyes and voice and the use of boundary-building ‘props’, e.g., pillows (Component D). This greater charge/discharge can then lead to more relaxation and more *pleasure*.

Containing: Clients consciously generate all movements, expressions and verbalizations themselves, and the buildup of the charge is slow and gradual.

Therefore it is unlikely that the clients will feel overwhelmed, since the slow and deliberate pace is sufficient containment in and of itself.

Discharging: The vibrations, quivering or involuntary movements that occur during the exercises indicate that the body has become charged and is now discharging. In order to discharge excess energy, exercises should conclude with bending over and grounding into the feet and legs.

C. Verbalizing a Developmental Instinct

I use the term “developmental instinct” to mean an instinct that moves a human being, in relationship to others, to seek satisfaction, fulfillment and pleasure while remaining connected to herself. In many of us these instincts have been withdrawn inwardly as a result of primal injuries.

Following are some instincts important to clients, listed in developmental order:

- “I can go out to the world ... and come back to myself.”
- “I can go out to the world ... gather in something (or someone) and keep them for me.”
- “I can go out to the world, see you, sense you, and then come back to myself and sense what I’m feeling physically and emotionally from having connected with you.”
- “I can go out to the world, be sexually attracted to you, reach out and enfold you in my arms.”

The words “I can” means that the Adult (observing ego) can own the desire to repossess this instinct. “I can” avoids an “I will” or an “I should,” which may not be the intent of the client.

Also, the mild expansive energetic charge stimulated by curling provides a measuring tool for exploring the deficits/traumas in a developmental instinct. First, the expansive flow is stimulated by extending/curling the fingers and toes in rhythm with natural breathing. Then a verbalization is introduced, e.g., “I can go out to the world... and I can come back to myself.” Accompanying the verbalization of the instinct is an associated body movement of hands, arms, legs and eyes for going out to the world and different body movements for coming back to oneself.

The client then takes note of any change in their energetic flow and body sensations – e.g., is there more excitement in thinking “I can go out to the world” and making the associated movements? Or is there more excitement in thinking, “... and I can come back to myself,” with its associated movements? Does “going out” feel more risky? Does “coming back” feel more secure, safer?

Clients experience this procedure as being very revealing in a gentle, kind way. For example, some clients weren’t conscious they had a clear choice to be “in” or “out,” that it’s possible to alternate between the two, and some are surprised to discover that they’d rather be “in.”

D. ‘Accelerators’ (Self-Expressive Movements, Eyes and the Voice)

Each accelerator involves alternating slowly and rhythmically between two *polarities*, e.g., eyes alternating between open and closed. The rhythm of each accelerator is superimposed upon those of inhalation/extension and exhalation/curling. ‘Accelerators’ can greatly increase Curling’s mild energetic charge; therefore a new/vulnerable client can only contain the added excitement of two or three accelerators, whereas a therapist/advanced trainee can integrate many. Of new and particular note are accelerators involving the tongue, the back, the heart, and props for boundary-building.

I. TONGUE

Letting the tongue hang out *limply* from the *corner* of the mouth (Fig. 5) stops the ability to make words and makes thinking more difficult. Hence it is ideal for clearing the mind for really relaxing. When coupled with a smile, eyes open with excitement and charged arms reaching forward, the tongue out the corner of the



figure 5

mouth, brings up the excited Natural Child (core energy) with all its heartfelt intensity toward life. This maneuver stimulates a lot of strong positive excitement that is normally suppressed. The strong charge then moves quickly to the periphery of the body and generates great overall body heat with very little muscular effort.

In addition, the tongue hanging out limply from the corner of the mouth deepens *all feelings*, e.g., expressions of anger or fear. Moreover, some clients find that once they have experienced their excited Natural Child (see Exercise B), their tongues will emerge spontaneously as they express deeper feelings. People concentrating on a manual task do likewise.

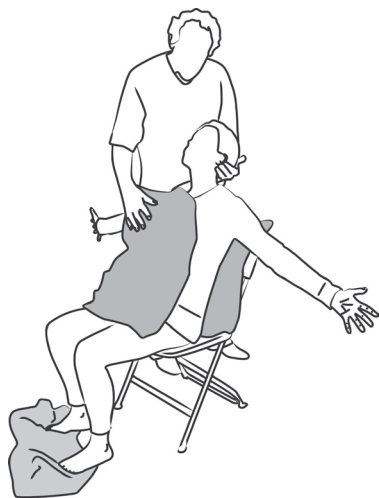


figure 6

2. BACK

In Curling, arching the back *longitudinally* will increase the aggressive (assertive) charge. This is done most easily by slightly pressing backward on the shoulders and buttocks on inhalation. Also, letting the head go backward on inhalation assists the arching; letting it come forward on exhalation accommodates relaxing the back.

All the above movements are naturally inherent in every inhalation and every exhalation. By deliberately exaggerating the arching and relaxing, the client begins to breathe gradually more spontaneously and deeply. And when coupled with expressing an emotional feeling, the effect

on breathing can be surprisingly strong (e.g., see Exercise C).

3. HEART

To help encourage the heart to open, the back needs to arch *laterally* as well as longitudinally (see above). In Curling this is done on inhalation by extending charged arms, wrists and hands fully out to the sides and about a foot back (see Fig. 6). Then on exhalation, bring your arms forward and across your

chest, curling both hands around the edges of a pillow (see Fig. 7). Also, letting the head go backwards on inhalation helps to open the throat (a gateway to the heart); letting the head come forward on exhalation provides protection for vulnerability in the throat and heart. A fully detailed exercise for opening the heart is described in Shapiro, B. (2007).

4. PROPS FOR BOUNDARY-BUILDING

Props stimulate an expansive energetic charge by providing a boundary for excitation, as did the mother's body. Substitutes for the mother's body include pillows for the chest and between the legs, soft fabric under the arches and toes to curl into and for the palms to curl into (see Fig. 8).

5. OTHER ACCELERATORS

Many other accelerators can be utilized, i.e., the eyes, the voice, the mouth and teeth, lips, jaw, arms, hands, legs and pelvis. In Exercises A to F, the uses of some of these more traditional accelerators are described in greater detail.

E. Perceiving Pleasurable Sensations

The pleasurable sensations induced by Curling exercises include:

- Warmth or tingling or streaming



figure 7



figure 8

- Perceiving energy flowing through a body part not previously a source of pleasure, e.g., the feet
- Revitalization – a feeling of aliveness and wanting to be involved with life
- Letting down, relaxation

In Curling, pleasurable body sensations are more likely to arise because the charge/discharge cycle occurs in conjunction with rhythmical movements, e.g., inhale/exhale, extend/curl. (Rhythm is an important part of pleasure, as Lowen, A. (1970) notes.

Also Curling exercises give clients an ideal opportunity to explore their limits in perceiving pleasurable body sensations. The low level of charge/discharge and the slow pace of the charge/discharge cycle, in rhythm with the natural breathing pattern, help to lessen initial awkwardness/anxiety about perceiving bodily pleasure. If an accelerator is added to an exercise, with the subsequent addition of more excitation and another rhythm, the client's boundary issues could become apparent to her as she finds herself struggling to integrate the increased pleasure.

F. Strengthening Adult Functioning

The first task of strengthening Adult functioning is just to *locate* the Adult and then get it more *present!* Fortunately, our Adult *can* be located and strengthened simply by alternating between perceiving our outer world and perceiving our inner world.



Curling exercises are ideal for alternating perception because with every extension of our fingers and toes we are opening up to the world, and with every curling of fingers and toes we go inward, back to ourself. Strengthening our Adult in this way is analogous to strengthening the biceps by repeatedly extending and bending the arm at the elbow.

The slow pace of Curling enables our Adult to stay present and make many sequential deliberate decisions. Usually we act impulsively or too rigidly, either of which can easily overwhelm our Adult. In Curling, the basic motions and rhythms are coupled with the verbalization of a developmental instinct and the expressive gestures of the accelerators. This requires initial *control* of the voluntary musculature, *coordination* of breathing together with the

curling, and *containment* of the resulting energetic flow. The slow, rhythmic and deliberate pace allows underlying *perception* of these capacities and of the energetic charge and resulting pleasure. All the above activities strengthen the Adult (observing ego) by exercising it.

III. Six Curling Exercises

Table 1 outlines the six exercises A through F. Exercise A is introductory. Exercises B and C are playful and light-hearted. Exercises D, E and F may initially require a therapist's help.

EXERCISE A	EXERCISE B
<p><i>"I can open up ... and I can close down"</i></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introductory exercise; provides grounding through curling • Charges/discharges whole body while grounding • Introduces use of developmental instincts, accelerators, and perception of pleasure 	<p><i>The Excited Natural Child Reaching Out</i></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quickest, easiest and most fun way to bring up the intense aliveness, excitement and warmth of core energy • Charges arms, wrists and hands for reaching out • Key accelerators: letting tongue hang out limply from the corner of the mouth, opening eyes wide and smiling

EXERCISE C

Laughing



- The most enjoyable and spontaneous way to deepen breathing and for revitalization
- Illustrates the power of the “body curl” to open the throat and chest and respiration
- Limp tongue deepens the breathing cycle and revitalization even more

EXERCISE D

“I can go out to the world ... and come back to myself”



- Develops the ability to alternate between the polarities of being inside oneself or out in the world
- Clarifies that we need to make conscious decisions whether to be “in” or “out”
- By alternating between perception of inner and outer experiences, we discover what is fearsome and what safe

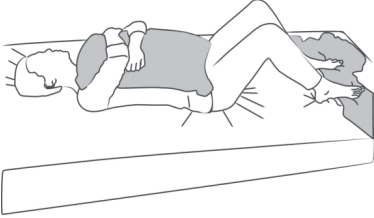

<p style="text-align: center;">EXERCISE E</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I can open out ... and gather in and keep for me”</i></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mattress provides a boundary for, and supports and strengthens, the aggressive flow of energy in the back • Arching back lengthwise further charges the aggressive component; arching it sideways opens chest and tender feelings • Gathering in and keeping for oneself involves arms, legs and mouth (teeth) 	<p style="text-align: center;">EXERCISE F</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I can feel fear ... but I can hold myself together”</i></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a safe container for exploring fears that pull our energy ‘up’ and ‘in’ so that we cannot let down • Therapist’s hand(s), mattress and wall provide a simultaneous boundary for front, back and feet • Curling in this position without a verbalization or exploration of fear lets you relax deeply and even sleep
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Table 1: Curling Exercises

Exercise A: “I can open up ... and I can close down” (standing)

This exercise introduces you to the basic rhythms and motions of Curling while leaning slightly against a wall and holding a pillow to your chest. The resulting energetic charge achieves some ‘grounding,’ especially if you bend over and hang down at the conclusion.

Equipment: a wall or closed door to lean against; a pillow; some soft fabric for feet.

- 1) To ‘ground’ through curling, lean against the wall/door, feet hip-width apart and heels at least 10 inches out from the wall to allow toe curling without losing your balance (Fig. 9). (If any leg-stress occurs, slightly bend and straighten your knees; never lock your knees!) Holding a pillow to your chest with crossed arms:
 - On *inhalation*: gently extend your wrists, fingers and toes; see Fig. 10.
 - On *exhalation*: gently curl your fingers around the pillow edges and your toes into the soft fabric (not shown in Fig. 9).
 - 2) Once you have established the rhythm, relax your jaw, close your eyes and:
 - On *inhalation*, think, “I can open up;”
 - On *exhalation*, think, “... and I can close down.”
 - 3) When you feel you’ve had enough excitation and involuntary movement, stand up, bend over, let your fingertips touch the floor, and bend and straighten your knees slightly to allow vibratory movement in your legs; then come back to a standing position.
 - 4) To incorporate arching and unarching your back, after repeating Steps 1 and 2:
 - On *inhalation*: gently extend your fingers/toes, arch the back by pressing shoulders and buttocks lightly against the wall; let your head fall back slightly.
 - On *exhalation*: gently curl fingers around the pillow edges and toes into the soft fabric; let your back relax and head come forward slightly.
- Note: your back will slide slightly up the wall on inhalation and down the wall on exhalation.
- 5) Once you have established the rhythm of arching and unarching your back:
 - On *inhalation*, think, “I can open up” as you rise up slightly and extend fingers/toes;
 - On *exhalation*, think, “... and I can close down” as you slightly come down and curl fingers/toes.
 - 6) Continue until you feel some vibrations or involuntary movement. If you wish to deepen your feeling of being able to “open up” and/or your feeling of being able to “close down:”

- On *inhalation*, open your eyes with excitement, reach softly with your lips (letting the lower jaw stay relaxed), smile and think about being able to open to the world;
 - On *exhalation*, close your eyes and mouth and strongly bring your lower jaw forward in your determination to protect yourself by shutting out the world.
- 7) Option: To increase charge/discharge substantially, put pillows between your legs (see Fig. 8).
- 8) What are your emotional and bodily feelings about being able to “open up” and/or “close down” and being able to alternate between the two? If you are familiar with traditional ‘grounding’ techniques, how does ‘grounding’ through Curling compare?
- 9) To perceive pleasurable sensations in your body:
- Hold a pillow to your chest, arms crossed over the pillow, hands curling around the pillow edges, and close your eyes to focus on sensations in your body. Keep bending and straightening your knees very slightly.
 - Leaning slightly against the wall to keep your balance:
 - On *inhalation*, extend your fingers and toes and think, “I can feel my body;”
 - On *exhalation*, think, “And I can feel its pleasure,” or “I can feel ... and I can flow,” or just “Feel ... flow.”You may need to moderate the intensity of the sensations in order not to lose perception of pleasure. An internal or external sigh of pleasure is helpful.

When you’ve had enough, open your eyes and come back to the world.

Exercise B: The Excited Natural Child Reaching Out (standing)

This exercise allows the energetic charge from grounded feet and vibrating legs to fully excite your Natural Child as it reaches, with all its heartfelt intensity, out to life. The exercise evokes a lot of fun, and feelings of great aliveness and body warmth when the core energy reaches the periphery.

Note: Read this exercise before beginning, to grasp the intent of the sequence of steps. Also review “Tongue,” Component D (Accelerators).

Equipment: A wall (or closed door) to lean against.

- 1) ‘Ground’ your feet and legs: see Exercise A, Steps 1 to 4.
- 2) To charge your arms, wrists and hands, hold your hands in front of your chest and, strongly pressing the fingertips together (as in Fig. 11), turn the fingertips toward your chest until your arms begin to tremble. (Reaching out is sabotaged if your arms/hands are limp/flaccid.) Meanwhile continue to charge your legs.



figure 11

- 3) Imagine you are a little toddler at a playground for children your age. You see a little friend of yours slowly coming toward you, with a big smile on his/her face, tongue hanging out the corner of his/her mouth and reaching out to you:
 - Let your tongue hang *limply* out of the *corner* of your mouth, open your eyes with excitement, smile and make an “Egh–egh–egh” sound (or whatever sound comes naturally).
 - Keep leaning against the wall for balance, so that you can reach with strong intent in Step 4.
- 4) Slightly bending your elbows and *rigidifying your arms, wrists, hands and fingers* so that they shake with tension:



figure 12

- On *inhalation*, reach out to your little friend with *charged* (not limp) arms and hands. Smile with your tongue out and your eyes open with excitement. See Fig. 12.
 - On *exhalation*, close your eyes and bend your elbows so that your arms retract slightly.
- 5) Press the balls of your feet against the floor to increase your excitation and send more vibratory movement

up your body. As you keep reaching, your body may wish to involuntarily bounce up and down with all the excitement – just let it happen!

- 6) When you've had enough reaching out, bend over and sense the feelings in your legs, and your feet as they meet the floor. You may wish to do some good-humored laughing about your experience as you are hanging down.
- 7) Option: To increase charge/discharge, put pillows between your legs (see Fig. 8, Component D).
- 8) On standing, do you feel considerably warmer, freer, more alive? Hold a pillow to your chest if feeling vulnerable. To focus on pleasurable sensations, see Exercise A, Step 9.

Note: doing this exercise is a way to wake up happy in the morning. You can do it in bed with your knees up and feet on the mattress. Or you can do it in the bathroom, seeing yourself in the mirror as your little friend, as you lean against the washbasin for balance!

Exercise C: Laughing (standing)

Laughing is the easiest, most enjoyable and spontaneous way to deepen your breathing. In laughing an energetic wave moves downward through the diaphragm into the lower body. This exercise allows you to laugh strongly without ending up curled on the floor to ease a possible diaphragmatic contraction.

Note: The arching and unarching of the back is considered by some clients to be a body curl, as it follows the same pattern as the extending and curling of the fingers and toes.

- 1) Immediately before this exercise, do Exercise A to 'ground' yourself, or use traditional grounding so that your feet are firmly on the floor and your legs are vibrating.
- 2) To stimulate some spontaneous laughter, try to remember a situation when something was so funny that you almost doubled over laughing; or picture yourself as your Natural Child reaching (Exercise B); or as Santa Claus, with a twinkle in your eye; or as a powerful pirate captain.
- 3) Stand with your knees slightly bent and your hands lightly on your

hips. This will open your throat and chest so that you can laugh more deeply.

- 4) Thinking of the funny situation, or your excited Child reaching out, or Santa or the pirate captain:

➤ On *inhalation* (see Fig. 13): let your eyes open with excitement, arch your back slightly as your head goes back, and let your mouth open a bit.



figure 13

➤ On *exhalation* (see Fig. 14): let the laughing sound come out as your eyes close; reverse the arch of your back as your head comes forward, and your chin descends almost to your chest. You may naturally want to begin to bend over as your laugh deepens, in which case your hands need to shift slightly to accommodate this forward movement.

Note: these instructions for inhalation/exhalation are just to help you achieve a full body laugh. If the movements don't come naturally, don't force them – spontaneous laughter is important.

- 5) Let yourself keep laughing; if the laughing lasts progressively longer on the exhalation, this will deepen your inhalation and help open your throat and chest, which could lead to deeper laughter.
- 6) When you've had enough, hang down, let your fingertips touch the floor and your legs vibrate. You may

wish to continue laughing in this position, which could be more comfortable for your diaphragm.

- 7) On standing again, are you warmer? Eyesight better? More relaxed in shoulders? Breathing more deeply? Feeling more connected in your body?

Revitalized and/or relaxed? More positive about life? Hold a pillow to your chest to protect this new aliveness.

- 8) If you wish to continue the charging and discharging while standing, just extend and curl your fingers and toes in coordination with your breathing.
- 9) If you wish to deepen your laughter, begin the laughing again and let your tongue hang out limply from the corner of your mouth, as in Exercise B. When you've had enough, repeat Steps 6, 7 and 8.
- 10) To focus on perceiving pleasurable sensations, see Exercise A, Step 9.



figure 14

Exercise D: “I can go out to the world ... and come back to myself” (sitting)

Many of us move out into the world from our False Self, with little regard for our deeper unconscious need to protect our Primally Wounded Child. Hence, usually we are not *really* ‘out there’; i. e., we may act ‘as if’ we were involved with others, but we hold back a deeper, more intimate connection, and we may act ‘as if’ we are ‘taking a bite out of life’ but we are unconsciously fearful to demand of the world what is rightfully ours, for fear of punishment.

This exercise lets you very slowly, and with gradually increasing degrees of excitation, explore what it means for you to ‘go out to the world’; what it means for you to ‘come back to yourself’; and how it feels for you to go from one state to the other. (Be aware of the difference between a healthy going into yourself to rest, and more chronic fears of being ‘out in the world’ and/or of being ‘inside yourself’.)

Equipment: A chair without arms, two pillows and some soft fabric for your arches and toes.

- 1) Sit with feet parallel, hip-width apart, the soft material under your feet so that your foot arches and toes are filled. If desired, put the firm pillow between your back and the chair back.
- 2) Hold a pillow to your chest, with arms crossed over the pillow and hands curled loosely around the pillow edges. *Keeping your eyes closed:*



figure 15

- On *inhalation*, think, “I can go out to the world,” and gently extend your fingers and toes.
 - On *exhalation*, think, “... and I can come back to myself,” and gently curl your fingers around the pillow edges and your toes into the soft material.
- 3) Once you have established the rhythm, what were your emotional and bodily feelings about ‘going out into the world’? About ‘coming back to yourself’? About being able to go from one state to the other? Is it easier being in yourself than being out in the world? Does your answer surprise you? Were you previously aware that you have a clear choice to be ‘in’ or ‘out’?
 - 4) Repeating the instructions for Step 2, on *inhalation* open your eyes. What did you feel? On *exhalation* close your eyes. What did you feel?
 - 5) With your eyes *closed*, imagine somebody out in the world that you like:
 - On *inhalation*, while thinking, “I can go out to you,” keep your upper arms close to the sides of your body so that your elbows hold the pillow in place, and reach out with your lower arms and hands to that person, as in Fig. 15. Meanwhile arch your back gently by

- gently pressing your buttocks and shoulders slightly backward, and let your head go also slightly backward. (This will put your chest out more into the world and also add more energetic charge.)
- On *exhalation*, while thinking, "... and I can leave you and come back to me," retract your arms and cross them over the pillow again, and curl your fingers over the pillow edges. Meanwhile, gently relax the arch in your back and let your head come slightly forward, as in Fig. 16. (You may find your breathing naturally deepens as you alternate arching and relaxing your back.)
- 6) Once you have integrated these additional rhythms and energetic charge, did you note that you reached with strong feelings? Were your arms, wrists and hands charged? (Or were they limp, which would have sabotaged your reaching?) Was the act of reaching pleasurable in and of itself?
 - 7) Finally, in addition to the instructions in Step 5, above, add:
 - On *inhalation*, say *out loud*, "I can go out to you." Did you feel stronger for having said it 'out loud' rather than just 'thinking' it? Did it feel more risky?
 - On *exhalation*, say *out loud*, "... and I can leave you and come back to me." Did you feel embarrassed about stating out loud that you wanted to come back to yourself – as if you weren't entitled to do that? Or because it would seem offensive and/or selfish?
 - 8) When finished, stand up, hang down, let your legs vibrate, and feel how your feet meet the floor.
 - 9) On standing erect again, you may wish to hold a pillow to your chest. Do you have more clarity about, or respect for, your own feelings of vulnerability? But is your immediate outside world, including people, really so threatening that you need to protect yourself so strongly? Or perhaps you feel your inside world could also be threatening to your False Self identity?
 - 10) To focus on pleasurable sensations, see Exercise A, Step 9.

Exercise E: Opening Out, Gathering In and Keeping (lying on your back)

A basic instinctual organismic movement is to open up, move out to the world to secure what is necessary (e.g., stimulation, food, a mate), gather it

in and keep it for oneself. Unfortunately, as infants, our parents may not have encouraged reaching out (e.g., failing to pick us up and feed us when we cried in our crib). As a result, our natural instinctual movements became “tentative, weak and sporadic” Lowen (1967).

Equipment: A mattress or pad, with one end placed against a wall (if possible); three soft bed-pillows; a thin small soft blanket or soft large towel to fill your arches and for your toes to curl into.

- 1) Lying on your back, put the bottoms of your feet on the mattress with your knees up, 5 or 6 inches apart; slip some soft material (and/or a pillow) under your arches and toes for your toes to curl into; place one pillow on your chest and another under your head to support your neck.
- 2) On *inhalation*, arch your back slightly (easily done by pressing your buttocks and shoulders lightly into the mattress), let your head go back slightly and leaving the pillow on your chest, fully extend your arms and hands out to the sides, palms facing up – all while thinking, “*I can open out...*,” see Fig. 17.

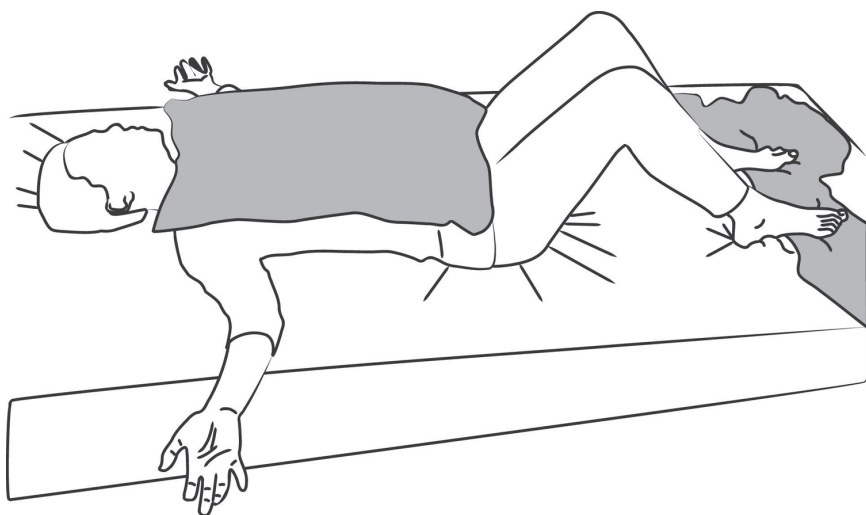


figure 17

- 3) On *exhalation*, release the arch in your back, let your head come naturally slightly forward (and perhaps your pelvis also), as your arms cross over

the pillow and your fingers curl tightly into the pillow edges – all while thinking, “... and I can gather in and keep for me;” see Fig. 18.

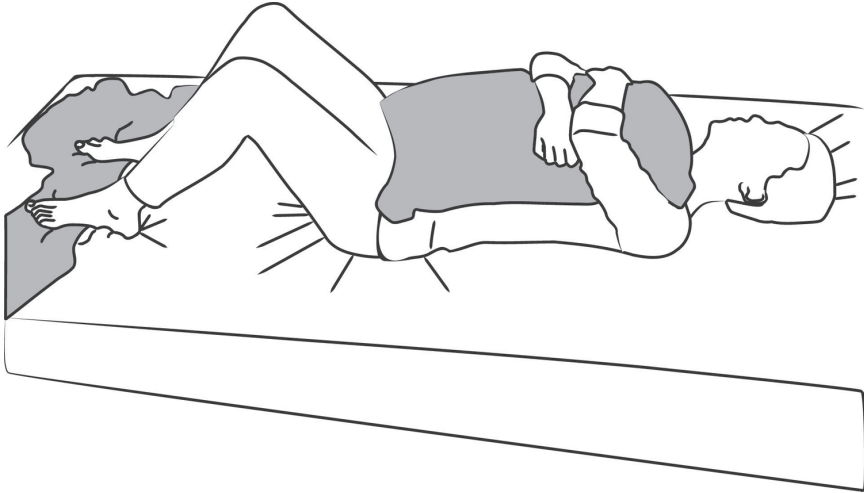


figure 18

- 4) Once you have established a rhythm, on *inhalation* open your mouth slightly and open your eyes with excitement. On *exhalation*: close your eyes, bring your jaw forward aggressively as you reach out, gather in and keep; you may then also want to clench your jaw and bite down as if you were holding onto something with your teeth.
- 5) What are your emotional and bodily feelings about being able to open out, to aggressively reach out, bring in and keep for yourself?
- 6) Continue the process of Steps 2 and 3 until you feel vibrations or involuntary movement. If you wish more vibrations:
 - Option 1: to feel that you can bring in and keep something also with your legs, the therapist needs to hold two pillows or a cushion positioned between your knees. On inhalation, let your knees go apart (still keeping your feet 5 or 6 inches apart); on exhalation bring your knees together to hold the pillows as tightly as you wish.
 - Option 2: to accelerate your excitement on the inhalation, keep your eyes open with excitement and let your tongue hang out limply from the corner of your mouth; then, on exhalation let your tongue go in and your lower jaw come forward.

- 7) When you feel you've had enough excitation and vibratory movement, stop and let yourself rest. Then stand up, bend over, and let the charge come down into your feet and legs.
- 8) To focus on perceiving pleasurable sensations, see Exercise A, Step 9.

Exercise F: Allowing Fear/Excitation without Being Overwhelmed (lying on your belly)

Our mother's body was the earliest boundary for our very sensitive chest and belly (and also the sensitive insides of our arms and legs), and chest-to-chest contact was fundamental to our feelings of security and safety. Unfortunately, early infant and childhood fears in our contact with our mother and father pulled our energy 'up' and 'in' so that we could not let down to the security and safety that should have been provided by their bodies.

Equipment: a mattress/foam pad, one end against a wall (if available), and 3 soft pillows.

- 1) As in Fig. 19, lie on your belly, each hand grasping a corner of the mattress or some other soft material. If it is stressful to turn your head to the side, use a pillow so that your neck is relaxed. Your feet should be perpendicular to the mattress, so that the toes can dig in, and the legs can vibrate when stretched.
- 2) Your therapist places pillows or cushions between your feet and the wall to provide a boundary for your feet.
- 3) Your therapist now places her hand on your upper back to provide boundary support for the back. If you wish more contact and/or more pressure, your therapist could use both hands and perhaps lean on your back.
- 4) On *inhalation*: with your eyes *partially open*, extend your fingers and think, "I can feel fear..."
- 5) On *exhalation*: with your eyes *closed*, curl your fingers while thinking, "... but I can hold myself together" (or what feels best for you, e.g., "... but I'm still safe").
- 6) What are your emotional and bodily feelings about being able to alternate between feeling fear and yet being able to hold yourself together and/or feel safe?

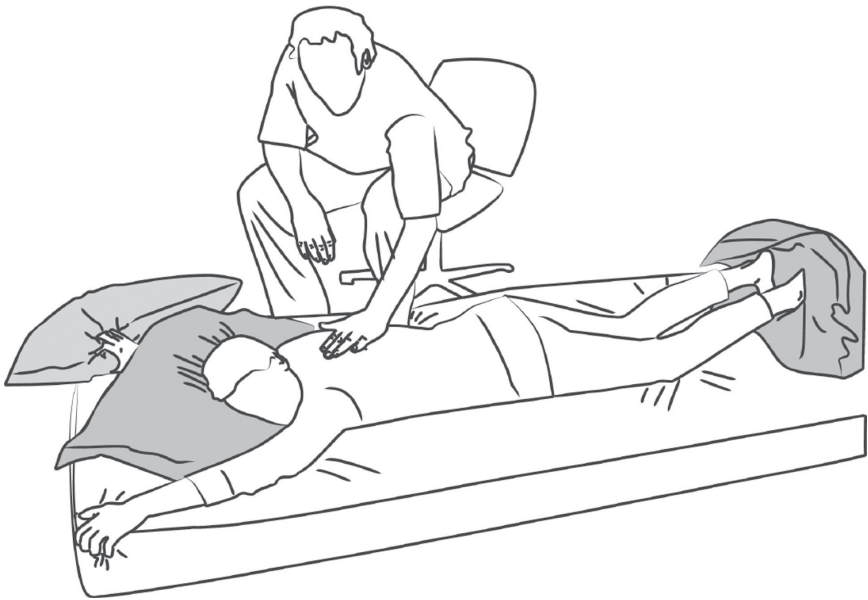


figure 19

- 7) After approximately 20 breaths, you may begin to feel some energetic flow/vibrations/involuntary movement in your body. If you wish to deepen your process:
 - On *inhalation*: imagine something (or someone) in your life that you are currently afraid of; extend your fingers and open your eyes wider so that you can feel more fear, and think, “I can feel more fear.”
 - On *exhalation*: close your eyes and think, “... and I can still hold myself together” (or whatever verbalization you choose). However, this time, bring your lower jaw forward to mobilize your aggression to be able to stand the fear.
- 8) If you wish to deepen your process even further:
 - On *inhalation*: open your eyes and mouth even wider, and think, “I can feel a lot of fear.”
 - On *exhalation*: say again, “... but I can still hold myself together” (or whatever verbalization you choose) with your jaw forward; however, this time, stretch out the “an” sound of “I can–an–an–an,” while progressively tightening the curling of your fingers. Instead of trying to do it all in one

- exhalation, take little breaths; it will feel like the engine of a sports car when it revs up. (I call this technique Charging/Containing.) You can also experiment with saying “I can–an–an–an” out loud while you exhale.
- 9) When you’ve had enough excitement or vibratory movement, stop and let yourself rest briefly. To focus on perceiving pleasurable sensations, see Exercise A, Step 9. Afterwards stand up and let the charge come down into your feet and legs.

IV. Curling Concepts

Polarities and Rhythms

Polarities abound in the Curling exercises. Generally, going to one pole offers risk, charging-up and revitalization; the other pole offers safety, letting down, relaxation. E.g.:

expansion	↔	contraction
opening	↔	closing
inhalation	↔	exhalation
extending	↔	retracting
charging	↔	discharging
arching back	↔	unarching back
out to world	↔	back to self
Body (Natural Child)	↔	Ego (Adult)
letting go of control	↔	building control

The slow steady rhythmical alternation between the two poles of a polarity is very integrating:

- Rocking forward and backward to free a car stuck in the mud offers a good analogy to rocking between ‘risk’ and ‘safety’; it frees us muscularly, energetically and psychologically.

- Since ‘risk’ is limited to the time taken to inhale, and ‘safety’ is regained in the exhalation, our unconscious protective mechanisms (resistance) can relax as the need for protection is being valued and honored.
- The regular and very frequent *perception* of both poles *locates* and *strengthens* the Adult (Observing Ego); this lessens resistance and calms the inner turbulence in the subselves that is created by the exercise.

The effectiveness of superimposed rhythms occurs when the basic rhythm of extending and curling is supplemented by another rhythm (e.g., inhalation and exhalation). Adding a third rhythm – e.g., opening and closing the eyes in cadence with the other rhythms – can result in an exponential increase in energetic charge. (A troop of soldiers crossing a bridge does *not* march in step, lest the powerful oscillation thus set up destroy the bridge.) Also, since rhythm is a very important aspect of pleasure, the additional rhythms greatly increase the *pleasurable sensations* from any one exercise.

Why Does Curling Stimulate an Energetic Charge?

Curling’s energetic events are possibly a holdover from our simian ancestors in the trees. If you can imagine yourself as an ape swinging from branch to branch in a tree, as long as your fingers, or toes, are wrapped (curled) solidly around a branch, you will not fall and be seriously injured or killed. Thus the closure of the fingers/toes means safety, security and hence the possibility of letting down and relaxing.

However, you need to open your fingers/toes so that you can swing to the next branch and find some food or a suitable mate. Opening your fingers represents some risk but it also has some inherent excitement in the anticipation of being able to secure what you want and find pleasure.

Once we began walking on the earth, it was still important to be able to curl our hands in order to be able to secure and hold onto something, and our toes to be able to curl to hold onto uneven ground. Accordingly, we have a huge number of proprioceptors in our hands and feet. When our hands are filled with soft but firm material so that we can curl our fingers and palms around it, and likewise with the toes and arches of our feet, we can relax and

let down – all of which stimulates the expansive, pleasurable flow of energy from the core of our body to the periphery.

Another explanation for the beneficial aspects of Curling is that its movements are similar to nursing at our mother's breast. To open our little fingers is risky but necessary to let our mother's milk come to her nipple; closing our fingers means we possess the breast and, most important, the milk that issues forth. Babies and small children curl their fingers and toes when in pleasure and cats likewise curl their paws.

V. Future Investigations

We saw that Curling exercises involve the slow, steady, rhythmical alternation between the two poles of risk and safety. Could these concepts be incorporated into Bioenergetic maneuvers to help lessen conscious and unconscious resistance, provide more security in 'opening up,' and thus better integrate increases in energetic charge? Can they be used to increase self-awareness, self-possession and thus strengthen overall Adult functioning? Can they be used to deepen perception of the body (with each inhalation) and deepen the perception of pleasurable sensations (with each exhalation)?

Specifically, we saw that letting the tongue hang out limply from the corner of the mouth gives us instant access to our Natural Child core energy and also deepens all feeling; that longitudinal arching and relaxing of the back, in rhythm with our natural breathing pattern, quickly stimulates deeper respiration; that lateral arching and relaxing of the back likewise helps open the heart. Could some of the above maneuvers be integrated into traditional Bioenergetic techniques and thus enrich them?

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About the Author

Bennett Shapiro, Ph.D. is a member of the IIBA Faculty and teaches in the U.S., Canada and Europe. He has a private practice in Victoria, B.C., Canada. He has written more than 30 papers on various aspects of Bioenergetics and is now extending and consolidating them into six workbooks titled *Explorations in Energizing Psychotherapy*.

Bennett Shapiro, Ph.D.
1542 Prospect Place
Victoria, B.C.
V8R 5X8 Canada
fax: (250) 598-6842
phone: (250) 598-5595
benandmillie@shaw.ca
www.bennettshapiro.com