

## Zdorovye – The Slavic Natural Health System

Zdorovye (zdah-ROWV-yeah)

Every natural health system has the same core goals: 1. keep the body agile, 2. keep the body strong and 3. keep the body functional. Each natural health system out there attempts to fulfill these goals in one way or another.

The Slavic Health System, Zdorovye, is a natural health system. It keeps the body agile, strong and functional. But it is also an educational system; it has a secondary goal of teaching the practitioner about his/her own body, and how his/her body relates to the physical world around him/her.

How does the Zdorovye Natural Health System do this? By fully integrating movement, posture/position and breathing. A little word about each of these components first:

**Movement:** Your movement is simply your ability to move. Just about everyone can move. Not everyone can move efficiently. Not everyone can move without pain.

**Posture/Position:** In Zdorovye, posture means a little more than sitting up straight or not slouching over. It is the position that your body is in so that you can utilize the greatest efficiency in your movement and breathing. This is the prime area of injury prevention and condition prevention (carpal tunnel, chronic back pain....).

**Breathing:** Most breathing techniques out there are designed to combat high stress by relaxing the body. In Zdorovye, breathing is used to relax and invigorate the body. Just by breathing alone one can raise the heart rate above the aerobic level.

Zdorovye is a fully integrated system. The following statement best exemplifies this:

There is no movement without breathing.  
There is no breathing without posture.  
There is no posture without movement.

This means that each exercise in the Zdorovye Natural Health System comprises of each three components: movement, breathing and posture/position. You can't have one without the other two. Another way of looking at it:

Movement + Posture/Position = Breathing  
Breathing + Movement = Posture/Position  
Posture/Position + Breathing = Movement

I cannot stress that enough, because it is the basis of all the exercises in Zdorovye. Each time you think you are breathing – you are moving and creating good posture/position. Each time you think you are creating good posture/position you are breathing and moving. Each time you think you are moving you are creating good posture/position and breathing. They are completely intertwined.

### **Breathing as Energy Management**

If we think that there is no other alternative to high stress levels from our everyday lives, then we are going to need equal levels of relaxation to maintain any sort of equilibrium. In the same way, if we allow ourselves to believe that there is a need for relaxation, then we are going to let ourselves attain high levels of stress. This is faulty logic if we are to maintain and improve our health.

This is where our breathing is the most important. When we reach high levels of stress our heart rate goes up and our breathing becomes very shallow and fast. We cannot easily control our heart rate. We can, however, easily control our breathing.

In Zdorovye there are breathing exercises that both relax and invigorate the body. Once the body is relaxed, the mind can think clearly. This is done through movement and posture/position.

The lungs cannot do any work on their own. They are just spongy tissues. The lungs need to be worked in order for us to breathe. Our lungs don't breathe; we breathe our lungs. If we breathe our lungs through rotations in the shoulders and maintaining upright posture not only do we relax and invigorate the body, but we begin to increase the power of our breathing and hence increase our stamina levels without ever having to step on a single piece of cardio equipment.

There are an infinite number of exercises that can be designed to increase a relaxed base-breathing pattern. These breathing exercises are detailed on the Phase 3 tape of the Zdorovye Video Encyclopedia.

### **Posture/Position as prevention**

There is another pattern that we often fall prey to. It starts with misuse of the knees, and ends with the inability to use our backs, and often severe back pain.

In a two-dimensional view of the human body our arms swing out straight from the body as we walk. In this same view the legs simply swing straight out from the body. We think that each of our joints acts only as a hinge- like a door opening and closing. Our knees and elbows work like that, but few other joints do.

When we squat down to pick something up off the ground, we often use this two-dimensional view of the body. We use our knees and our quads to lower and lift us. The knees were not meant to withstand that kind of pressure.

Squatting like this will only last for so long before our knees begin to hurt continually (chronically) from it. Now when we wish to pick up a pencil that has fallen on the floor we bend at the waist to pick it up. We might be able to get away with that we breathe out as our torso descends- but most of the time we hold our breath. If the object is any larger, even just a book, then we run a very high risk of permanently injuring our back.

If we learn to squat with our hips and not our knees then we avoid this terrible pattern that has injured so many backs over the years. If we squat with our hips, breathe out and rotate our legs on the way down and back up (posture/position, breathing & movement) then we not only avoid injury, we begin to strengthen and increase our health.

### **Movement as efficiency**

Movement is where Zdorovye solidifies. We all know that movement is possible without breathing (you can walk and hold your breath). We can also get along without good posture. But for how long? How long can you get along without any movement? Remember – something has to move so that you can breathe.

Yes we can move without breathing. But how well, and for how long? Not very well, and not for very long. Yes, we can move with poor posture. But how well, and for how long? Not very well, and not for very long.

This is a health system. When learning a health system you are learning how to improve your health. When learning a health system, you are learning how to live a long, full life. You are not just trying to get by.

Movement should be efficient. You should be able to get a lot out of a little. That is what being efficient means: accomplishing the most while doing the least.

**DO NOT ATTEMPT THIS EXAMPLE WITHOUT PROPER TRAINING FROM A CERTIFIED ZDOROVYE TRAINER**

For example: there is a large box on the ground that needs to be lifted onto a countertop, three feet in the air. In a two dimensional view of the body, you would either bend with the knees, or, worse, bend at the waist, grab the box and heave it up three feet in the air. This will imbed trauma in the soft tissues around the knee or in the lower back, which after a while will develop into arthritis or some other chronic condition. Instead we rotate our legs outwards as we breathe out, keep our spine straight and allow our hips to follow the path of an upside-down question mark, until we are in a flat foot squat next to the box. Then we grab the box, and pull it close so that it is “attached” to our torso. Then we relax, rotate our legs outwards, breathe in, and allow our hips to follow the same upside-down question mark on the way up while keeping our neck long (and hence straightening the spine). Then we put the box on the countertop. This uses the hip muscles (glutes) which are stronger than the thigh muscles (quads) and promotes ease of movement.

To make movement efficient you need to adopt a three-dimensional view of the human body. You also need to integrate breathing and posture with your movement. This is the ultimate use of the human potential.

Keeping the body agile, strong, functional and efficient. This is what Zdorovye does. You learn to breathe in unison with your movements. You learn how to create better posture through breathing and movement. You learn how to manage your energy so that you do not fall into the stress/relaxation roller coaster ride. You learn how to move with efficiency and power.

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