

RE-DEFINING NEUTRAL ALIGNMENT

Neutrality. In the world of rehabilitation, biomechanics and sports conditioning this is one powerful word. Everyone is after it. Along with the word “core”, “neutral” is one of the hottest words out there. Therapists, chiropractors, massage therapists and other healthcare practitioners all seem to be trying to achieve the perfect alignment in their patients and I’m no different. **But what is neutral???**

Traditionally, many healthcare practitioners seem to view neutral alignment as a single static position. It is a centered position where all the bones and joints align in perfect symmetry that provide the ideal position that reduces stress and strain on the body. I like to think of it as **a position that allows the body to “rest”**, meaning stress and strain is at its least. But if we are moving creatures, how do we stay neutral and still be able to travel from point A to point B? How can we lift objects, clean the dishes and scrub the floors without losing our “neutral”?

I’m here to argue that true neutrality is not static but **DYNAMIC**. We are creatures that must move and adapt to challenging and changing situations and environments. We need to be able to move in and out of that “perfect” static neutral spine.

I think of neutrality as a **neutral range** rather than as one “perfect” static alignment. You also must be able to move on either side of that perfect neutral position starting point to be able to walk. When you only move to one side of that range and never to the other, that is when imbalances occur that can create injury.

However, it is not quite that simple. We don’t just move in one direction, we move in 3 directions. We must have **balance in moving forward and back, side to side, and be able to rotate both directions**. When proper balance in all three directions is achieved, a person can not just decrease stress and strain when lying still, but also while moving and performing their everyday activities.

Think beyond neutral, move DYNAMICALLY!