

FOREWORD

In some ways, John Loupos and I could not be more different. He is a Tai Chi and martial arts expert, and expert in Thomas Hanna's practice of Somatics. I am a biological psychiatrist, an expert in sociobiology, and a reductionist. He is an expert in Qi (pronounced *chee*), the Chinese concept of life energy. I am an expert in psychopharmacology, the use of medications for mental disorders. Theoretically, we are as different as different could be.

But we find common ground in a firm belief in human free will and potential. John Loupos' new book, *The Sustainable You* outlines the theory and practice of Hanna Somatics, which is, as I understand it, a practice of expanding the use of the human brain to improve communication with muscles and the rest of the body, resulting in vastly improved levels of function and pain reduction. The actual treatments by somatics practitioners take, in most cases, just a few sessions and claim dramatic improvements for people with back pain, strokes, muscle contractures, and even sexual dysfunction. These clinical sessions work best when coupled with the daily practice of exercises that although painless are far from simple, because they involve teaching the brain to overcome "sensorimotor amnesia" in order to reconnect incoming signals to the brain with outgoing improvement in striated muscle responsiveness. Many of these uniquely designed exercises entail painstaking detail in awareness and then control. The book includes discussion of the theory of

Somatics, case histories, and a sampler of exercises to be done at home, daily.

I hurt. I just had a knee replacement and was told that even with extensive conventional physical therapy I have an extension contracture of my new knee, and it will never get better. How I wish that I could fly to Boston to meet John Loupos and have him attend to my poor knee. Conventional medicine has given up, as happens so often. Somatics offers hope where conventional medicine has failed. I like this book because the neurophysiology is correct and sophisticated. It is not “New Age” hocus-pocus. I understand, as a scientist, how improved proprioception and afferent neuronal function plus consciousness should result in improved efferent signaling and neuromuscular function. Learning to control the muscles of the perineum, for example, should be similar to learning to play the piano—awareness, practice, then improved control and finally improved habits of control. I especially like John Loupos’s lack of shyness dealing with the urogenital system, including sexuality.

Given the limitations of modern allopathic medicine, the prohibitive costs of treatments, and the side effects of invasive procedures, the world needs more information, realistic and informed alternatives, about ways to feel good and improve health into old age. I am looking forward to trying the exercises myself, and committing to using this method as a step in my own recovery from knee surgery. The only people who would not benefit from reading this book are those who want to be passive, who want other people to take care of them, and who don’t really want to work towards better health. For anyone else with chronic pain or disability, read this book.

-Judith Eve Lipton, M.D.

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