

**This time feel your elbow, and let it lead the movement. Again, feel what musculature is involved.**

This should illustrate that when the endpoints (in this case, the fingertips) lead the movement, the muscular sequence is complete and continuous. Integrated movement is movement in which the moving and supporting body are working as a whole. This occurs when the initiation of the movement is from an endpoint. When the elbow leads, the forearm remains passively uninvolved. It is not integrated into this movement.

Overall, movement initiated at the endpoints is more sensitive to the environment and fully coordinated within the body. If we feel in ourselves or observe in others that a gesture with the arms is not fully articulated in the hands, then we might presume that it has not yet been fully processed; that is, that the inner process is not yet fully in contact with the environment. Imagine someone gesticulating angrily with relatively limp hands. The internal process of anger is not fully in contact with the environment. In almost all important human processes, the relationship between the inner and the outer world is key. Working with movement sequencing in and out through the endpoints of the body is a graphic way to address this relationship. We can characterize movement that sequences to or from the endpoints as more alert, sensitive, vulnerable, and capable, both in perceiving and acting.

We are constantly giving and receiving through our endpoints—giving and receiving objects, information, love, energy, anger, and so forth. Neurologically this flow of giving and receiving occurs through five fundamental actions of either *yielding*, *pushing*, *reaching*, *grasping*, or *pulling*. Play for a moment with your hand in space and in contact with various objects around you. Whatever your hand does is some variation or combination of these five actions.

## Five Fundamental Actions

### YIELDING

Yielding, the least obvious of the five fundamental actions, underlies the others. Yielding is a quality of resting in contact. It is not resting inertly, which is resting out of contact.

**Rest your hand on an object and feel it. In feeling it, there may be a sense of flow, of being in contact. Withdraw this sense. Now reengage it. You are playing with your ability to yield. For a more pronounced sense of yielding, stand up and contract all your muscles, then release them and feel a sense of yielding into gravity.**

**There are different ways of yielding. One can yield into a physical force,**

### FIVE FUNDAMENTAL ACTIONS

Yielding

Pushing

Reaching

Grasping

Pulling

**such as gravity, as above, or the force of being pushed by another body. One can yield to internal impulses rather than inhibiting them. Imagine the feeling of your eyes welling up with tears, allowing yourself to cry.**

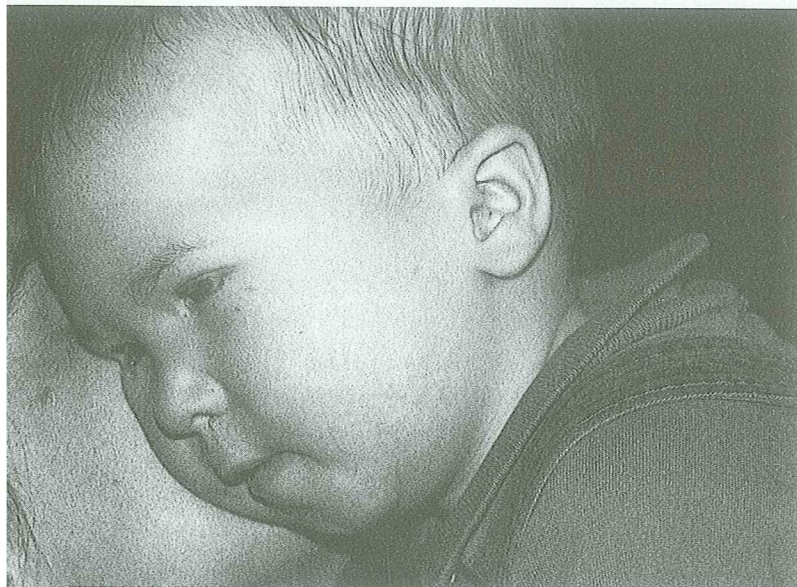
**One can also allow an internal part of the body to yield into its natural shape, rhythm, or position. Entertain the possibility that some of your internal organs are either cramped or sagging. Breathe into your trunk and find an area that has some discomfort that might relate to this. Visualize that area yielding into itself. Like a sea sponge plumping up with fluid, it assumes its rightful shape and position, even vibration. This is the most subtle form of yielding.**

Yielding brings us into contact with the environment so that we can feel if we want to push or reach or pull. When your hand is resting on an object without a sense of contact, it is not yielding—your hand is instead out of contact with the environment. To a greater or lesser degree, there is no energy sequencing through your hand.

Yielding underlies our basic relationship to the world. In utero and as young infants, we do a great deal of yielding. These early experiences with yielding affect our relationship to yielding throughout our lives. Yielding has to do with what we might describe as “letting down,” or feeling safe. Yielding is about just *being in contact*, not doing. We all have some confusion about yielding. I have never met someone who was able to fully yield in all the endpoints and along all their pathways.

Our ability to yield is the basis for our ability to take effective action in the world. If we are not in contact with our environment, we are not able to assess it accurately. In yielding there is a release of weight into our environment; we physically rest our weight into that which we are in contact with. This weight serves as a springboard from which to push away, just as a diver yields down into the diving board before pushing off it and then reaching into





Yielding into contact.

space. In this way yielding is the basis for pushing, and then reaching, grasping or pulling.

Healing our relationship to yielding involves observing when we are doing it and when we are not. Observing where in our bodies we are yielding furthers this. As I write this I am frequently conscious of my throat, which gets over-involved in this writing. I am trying to speak what I am thinking. Inviting my throat to yield brings greater ease to the flow between my brain and hands, the two aspects of my body that are the primary actors in the writing process.

Often, healing our relationship to yielding brings up a great deal of fear. It feels unsafe to let down. I have found that the earth is very safe for most people to yield into. It is so solid and reliable, so much bigger than us, always there, unconditional. Lying with one's belly on the earth can be a way of healing the earliest experiences of yielding, as once again, our umbilicus is connected to the mother.

#### PUSHING

As we saw with the diver, yielding underlies pushing. Pushing is the most basic of our actions. Unlike yielding, pushing is an act of separating ourselves from the immediate environment. The environment is our springboard for moving out into new spaces.

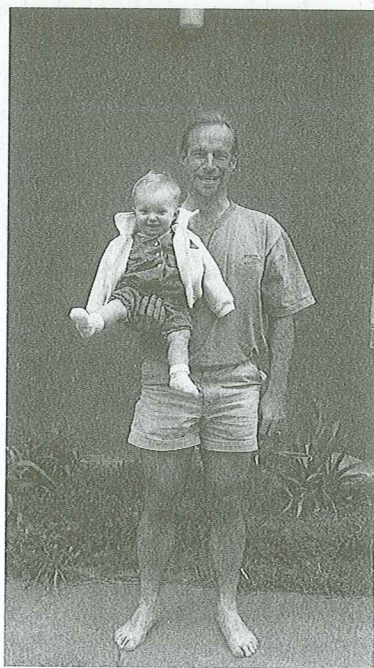
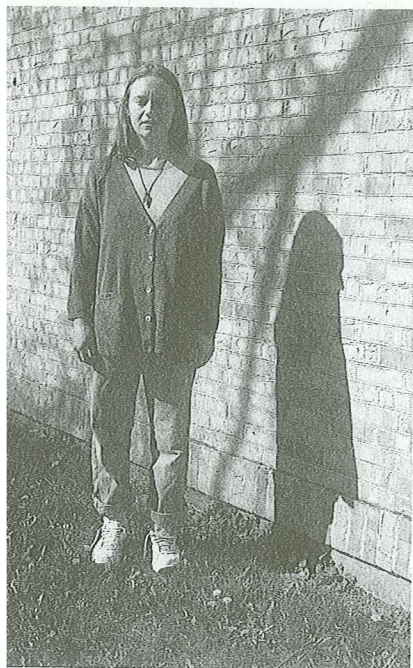
A push is an action that concentrically contracts (shortens) all the musculature around the pushing limb. This contraction occurs in degrees, the push compressing the body inward from the endpoint. This compression or condensation integrates the body around the pushing (weight-bearing) surface. By integration, I mean that it organizes the movement into a coordinated unit focused on one action. When the body is organized around a push, that push can either support or move the body. You can experience this directly by doing the following exploration:



**Place the palm of your hand on a surface in front of you, well below your shoulder level. Press into that surface and follow the energy of the push as it moves into your body. Follow it as far as you can until the surface or your body begins to slide away.**

As we push, we literally become denser, more substantial. Pushing illuminates the fullness of the body. Psychologically this means feeling ourselves, our boundaries, our ability to maintain boundaries, and our ability to support ourselves. The power of the push allows us to feel empowered. We can differentiate between what's "in here" and what's "out there." As the infant pushes with both hands, she separates from mother or from the supporting surface.





Even in simply standing, the various qualities of yield, push, and reach can be expressed.

This develops into a way of saying “no.” We push away from what we don’t want.

As adults, the extent to which we are able to push reflects our internal sense of support, individuation, confidence, and ability to propel ourselves. Pushing gives us a sense of “being able to stand on our own two feet,” “sticking up for ourselves,” not being “a pushover.”

### REACHING

Reach, on the other hand, is an action that lengthens the musculature around the reaching limb. As our endpoints become alert to something “out there” and move toward it, there is a sense of release through the reaching part.



**Place your hand on the same surface as before. Become aware of its texture beneath your skin. Let your hand reach forward as it explores the texture. Feel the sense of lightness in the hand and arm as the energy of the reach moves inward from the hand.**

There is literally a lessening of proprioceptive input as we reach out. Proprioceptors are the nerve endings that give us information about ourselves. As we reach, our attention is focused externally. Reaching is the way we extend out into space, toward others, toward objects. It is our ability to go beyond ourselves. Psychologically, reaching manifests curiosity, desire, longing, compassion. Imagine the moment in which a brightly colored object catches an infant’s eye. The hand begins to move slowly, with complete attention toward the object. The infant has no sense of when the connection will happen, so the reach is continuous and full of life and curiosity.

To support a reach out into the environment, there must be adequate push to maintain the original position. To illustrate this, imagine an infant in a newly gained hands-and-knees position. The infant is drawn to an object in front and reaches a hand out toward it, but because there is not adequate push through the other arm, the infant collapses to the floor. With time, the push becomes stronger and can support the reach. Push precedes reach. Support precedes movement.

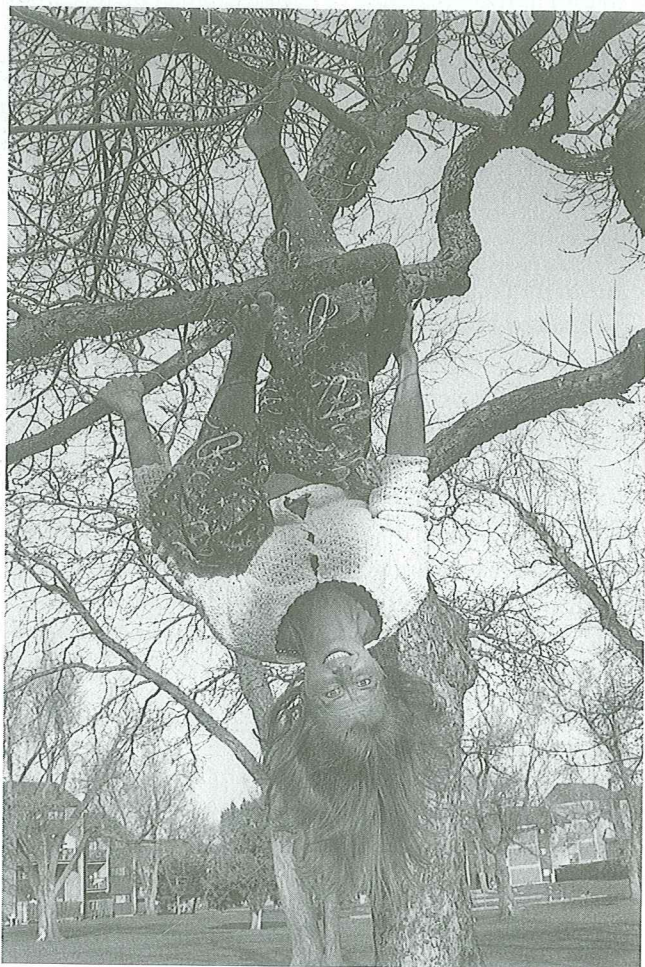
Just as the infant reaches into the unknown, as adults, reaching takes us out of the known and into the new. As adults our ability to reach allows us to invite others, reach out with compassion, envision a goal. This might be accompanied by a sense of vulnerability, groundlessness, or riskiness. For adults as well as infants, the ability to reach depends on the support of the push. Without push, reach becomes a falling toward, a tumble into chaos; a reach to another may become a demand for external support. Without the supporting push, there is no ground from which to move out. Often an in-



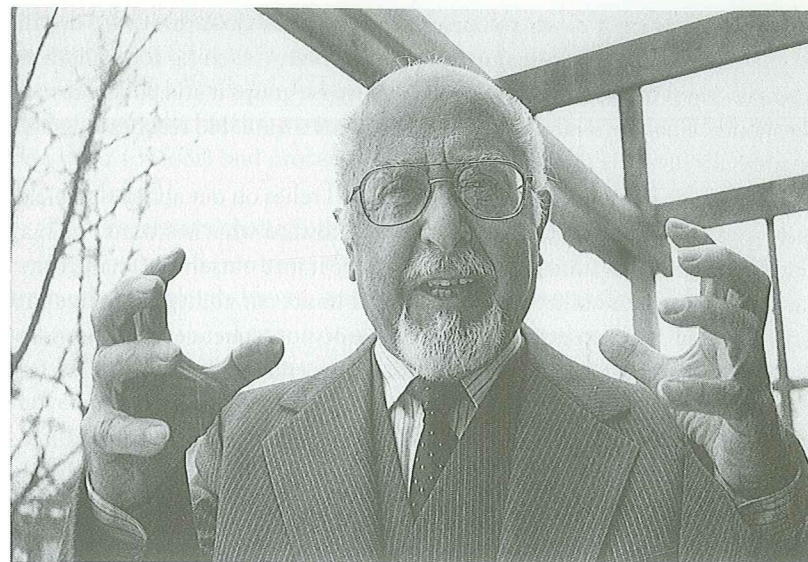
ability to reach is rooted in an inability to push, or a prohibition against pushing. Here the developmental hierarchy gives guidance as to the path for further development. When a reach is supported, it can be the exciting connection of inner and outer worlds.

### GRASPING AND PULLING

Yielding precedes pushing, and pushing precedes reaching. Likewise reaching can blossom into grasping and pulling. As we reach out into space and come in contact with something outside of us, if we are pleased with it we often



Grasping with the feet and hands.



Even without an object, the quality of grasping is expressed in this man's face and hands.



After reaching, grasping, and pulling, one can return to a state of yield in order to receive.



ould like to bring it closer to ourselves, or bring us closer to it. We do this by grasping and pulling. Again, imagine an infant reaching for something right and moving. Contact is made. Quickly, she grasps it and pulls it toward her mouth. Imagine a monkey reaching toward a vine. He reaches it, grasps it, and pulls his body through space toward it.

Psychologically, our ability to grasp and pull relies on our abilities to yield, push, and reach. If we are not able to reach toward what we want, we may never have the opportunity to grasp it and take it into ourselves. On the other hand, overusing our ability to grasp and pull limits our ability to receive in a satisfying way. In an unsatisfying pattern, we do not sequence from the grasping/pulling endpoint into our core. Thus, there is no satisfaction, and we feel the need to grasp and pull again.

Conversely, it is possible to reverse the direction. Out of fear or anger, we can pull away from the world into ourselves. This action becomes tangled up within us and makes sequencing other actions difficult. Again, satisfying giving and receiving becomes blocked.

**Look around your environment for something you want. Feel your body and breathe. Allow yourself to reach toward the thing you are wanting, grasp it, and pull it toward you. Bring it to the midline of your body. If it is something to smell, bring it to your nose. If it is something to taste, bring it to your mouth. If it is something to receive emotionally, bring it to your throat or heart or belly. Allow yourself to feel the experience of receiving it.**

## Neurological Organization

As mentioned previously, the neurological organization of movement precedes from spinal to homologous to homolateral to contralateral. We see this both evolutionarily (fish to amphibians to reptiles to mammals) and in human motor development. The human infant in utero is a completely and voicelessly integrated unit; there is no neurological differentiation. A stimulus to any part of the body elicits a total body response. We can all picture the digestive squirming of a newborn—even her face seems to be digesting. The whole body digests in unison.

Slowly, with time, body parts begin to differentiate out of this pattern. They begin to be able to perform actions that do not involve the whole body. Initially, the head begins to make movements independent of the rest of the body. This develops into spinal movement. Then both hands begin to make movements independent of the feet, and vice versa. This is homologous movement, like the frog. Here the hands are still responding together to the

same stimulus. As one hand (or one foot) differentiates and begins to move independent of the other, we reach the homolateral level of neurological organization, like the lizard. At this level, movement sequences up or down one side of the body. Finally, mammalian movement (contralateral) begins with one hand (or foot) and proceeds diagonally across the body to the opposite foot (or hand).

The progression through these levels is not linear, though each previous level supports and facilitates the next. In other words, you don't "graduate" from one neurological level, leaving behind the more primitive ones. Without an ongoing spinal connection, no amount of pushing in the lizards' limbs would lift his head from dragging on the ground. At the level of contralateral movement, all the previous levels are active and supporting.

These basic neurological actions form the building blocks for adult human movement. Picture an infant nuzzling his mother's breast in search of the nipple. The action is composed of a series of small pushes and reaches initiated from the nose, mouth, and cheek. In this way we learn to move our heads and subsequently our spines. This small action becomes enlarged until it has the power to draw the whole body into movement. Picture an older infant on hands and knees. A sound issues from behind the infant, who reaches first from the ear, then from the eyes, and then from the entire head in an action that moves the spine and then completes itself in a series of steps that turn the whole body. The reach from the head is part of this movement of crawling to turn around. Like all the basic actions, it is one of the building blocks that forms adult movement. An adult who is drawn to a sound would use this action as part of walking toward it.

## Twelve Basic Neurological Actions

The following discussion of the major developmental actions is designed to introduce the reader to the actions and some of their psychological manifestations. They will be presented in an order that somewhat reflects our movement development. However, the reader must realize that in the actual development of any individual, many tracks are being cultivated at once; therefore, any single linear track cannot fully represent the course of development.

### SPINAL PUSH FROM THE HEAD

The spinal push from the head is the basic neurological action that we use to do a headstand, to push out of the birth canal, to burrow under a pillow, or simply to support the weight of our head on our body. These are just a few examples. To experience a spinal push from the head, try the following: