

13. Arms Hug the Wall

PREPARATION. Stand about one and a half feet away from a wall, facing it. Shift your body into Elemental Placement with at least a foot of space between your feet.

- A. Place the palm of your right hand onto the lower back (with your fingers on the spine) and the palm of your left hand onto the left buttock. Begin to bend forward from the hips, keeping most weight in your heels. *Sense straightening, lengthening in your back, and an expansive grounding stretch in your buttocks.*
- B. Keep your shoulders down, your hips level, and your neck in line with your spine. Bend your arms while, and place your hands (at the level of your shoulder) on the wall. Relax your body. Slowly—inch-by-inch—move your hands up the wall while your pelvis stretches slowly—inch-by-inch—away from your torso. This *bi-directional* stretching of your back and pelvis is the essence of this KENTRO movement. *Sense that your arms move up the wall by muscular action in your upper back.* Now and then, place a hand on your lower back to feel *it straightening; sense a lightness (weightlessness) along your back and pelvis.* There is no goal in Arms Hug the Wall: you are simply *allowing* releases to happen. Place your hand back onto the wall.
- C. As you continue moving your hands slowly up the wall with gentle pressure of your hands “hugging” the wall and you continue to *Ground* your pelvis away from your torso, keep relaxing your body, and keep your shoulders down. If you feel your shoulders move up (toward your ears), you have raised your arms too high: lower your hands a little so that your shoulder muscles once again soften. You can be in this placement for a few minutes. Keep bending your knees slightly, and keep your neck in line with your spine; periodically check your back for straightness.

BENEFITS: This relaxing, limbering placement relieves you of stiffness and easily straightens the spine while expanding and realigning the pelvis.

HELPFUL HINTS: Prevent tightening your back and pelvis by raising your arms but keeping your pelvis immobile (or worse, pushing it toward the wall). Prevent arching your neck and lower back, pushing up your shoulders, sticking out your buttocks, or locking your knees as you bend forward. Practice Bending Forward, Tikanis, before Arms Hug the Wall.

VARIATIONS: Try Push the Wall, a *strengtheners* for the upper back muscles. Practice the guidelines for A and B, but keep your hands level with your elbows and no higher than your shoulders. *Sense your upper back muscles contracting as much as possible (for toning)* as your hands “push” the wall. Keep your shoulders down and avoid arching the lower back.



ARMS HUG THE WALLS

Images for Your Artist

Our bodies are inherently resilient. Pleasing depictions of agile women and men can motivate us to reshape ourselves into limberness. Such images nourish our love of expansive movement. Many travel magazines and magazines from other cultures as well as U.S. historical images are filled with uplifting scenes of ordinary people who reflect physical comfort. Some devotional images and much art—French Impressionist paintings and sculptures, Indian miniatures, ancient Greek frescoes, and Greek, Indian, African, and Asian sculptures—convey physiological fluidity. Certain television programs document everyday life in these regions and show people constructing furniture, harvesting crops, or lifting objects with ease.

Yet, in highly industrialized countries, the magazines, movies, and even charts at doctors' offices represent “good” posture as a flattened, tucked pelvis with the shoulders pushed back from a rounded back.

When we have consciously or unconsciously struggled into “right” posture, strained motion becomes habitual. As a result, we are likely to try to *force* our bodies into the posture shown in illustrations of mobile people. By avoiding a goal, and simply perusing these images as indicators of our bodies' potential for comfortable action, we will have a clearer vision of how optimal bone support allows well-proportioned, unique

Savor the expansive gesture of this ancient Greek sculpture of the god Poseidon (National Archeological Museum, Athens). Notice the even groove down his back, as well as his strong back, buttock, arm, and leg muscles. Notice, too, his angled pelvis, the relaxed angle of his head, and his relaxed shoulders. He conveys strength and ease. In contrast, the young man on the left has a tucked pelvis and strained shoulders. He conveys stiffness and lack of ease.



shaping of our muscles. This transparent understanding of our kinetics engenders an affectionate, aesthetic approach to our posture. Our imagination is then freed into boldly picturing ourselves with supple bearing.

Focusing on enhancing photos and artwork of limber people sharpens our sense of physical flexibility. As our centering movements surge from a deeper level, there will be a fulfilling exchange between the viewer and the subject.

Our inner artist can sculpt our flesh and instill our every action with a fluidity that was already present, at the quick of our malleable bodies. By dwelling on how we wish to look, instead of how we *should* look, we prepare the way for winsome ease.

Soon after I began practicing KENTRO I felt I had a 'secret.' I learned how to walk and stand powerfully without fatigue, bend and stretch with grace, and awaken without pain in my back. The brilliance of Angie's work as a healer is that she gently awakens dormant energy lying in the body and gives it a natural, soulful expression. I am ignited by her confidence in my ability to listen to and find my own centered body balance. I continue to discover and explore new ways of comfort and joy in my movements. In this arena I have found no equal to Angie as teacher, guide and healer.

—Lin Steers, Registered Nurse, Massage Therapist (Oregon)