

VISUALIZATION EXERCISES – EMBODYING THE ARMS AND LEGS

Developing **3-dimensional sensation** of the arms and legs helps us clarify their use. When arms and legs are thoroughly embodied, we have access to all joints and muscles, and freer movement. We can also correct and refine our maps of the structures during these exercises.

Before trying the exercises, read them through, and **find an anatomy book** that shows the nervous system and the circulatory system.

ARMS

Look at a picture of the nerves that go from the neck to the arms – the **brachial plexus**. Notice how they divide from a few thick bundles of nerves into several thinner ones.

Most of them pass in the space **between the top rib and the collarbone** (about 1/2 inch of space). As they go towards the hand they divide further so that they enervate the whole arm. Remember there is another set of nerves going to the skin for our tactile sense.

Look at another picture that shows the **blood vessel pathways** to the arm. Notice how the big artery that comes up from the heart divides and sends one branch to each arm. These brachial arteries also go between the top rib and the collarbone, dividing further to reach all cells in the arm with tiny capillaries. Remember that there is another, equally complex pattern of veins that return blood to the heart.

1. Lying on your back with knees up, or sitting calmly in a chair, **move each arm** around slowly, one at a time. Using your kinesthetic sense, notice what it feels like - the weight of the arm, the quality of movement, the amount of sensitivity when you rub your fingertips against your thumb tip, the temperature. Put your arms down.
2. Now choose one arm, and slowly **visualize the nerve pathways**, from the neck all the way to the tips of the fingers. Allow 2-3 minutes to do this for one arm.
3. When you feel you have allowed all the nerve enervation, **visualize the blood vessel circulation** – allow another minute or two for this.
4. As you visualize, also **sense your whole arm kinesthetically**, from the skin outside to the muscles and joints inside. Also, notice how your neck and back feel – whether there is any change in the way they feel against the floor or in the chair. Notice how your upper arm bone feels in its socket, and whether the width of your shoulders changes.
5. After a few minutes, pick up your arm and move it around again. Notice what it feels like - the weight of the arm, the fluidity of movement, the amount of sensitivity when you rub your fingertips against your thumb tip, the temperature. Put your arms down. Now move the other arm, and **compare the two**. The arm that has had the visualization may feel warmer, more fluid, lighter, or heavier. It will definitely feel more alive. In comparison, the other arm may feel stiff and wooden.

The free arm now feels “**embodied**.” Our arms can feel like this all the time when we play, if we keep our awareness alive. Now go back and embody the other arm – it deserves the attention!

VISUALIZATION EXERCISES – EMBODYING THE ARMS AND LEGS

LEGS

Go through the same process with your legs.

Look at a picture of the **nerve pathways to the legs**. You will see a plexus of nerves coming out from the side of the lumbar spine, and another from the sacrum. These plexuses combine and recombine in a fascinating way.

Notice **how big these nerves** are - the femoral nerve, which comes out from the lumbar spine and goes to the front of the legs, and the sciatic nerve (about the size of your thumb), which comes out through the sacrum and the back of the pelvis. As with the arms, these bundles of nerves divide into smaller and smaller branches until they get to the ends of the toes. There are other nerves enervating to the skin.

Look at a picture of the **circulation to the legs**. Notice the huge aorta coming down through the trunk and how it divides into two major arteries, one for each leg. Remember there is a parallel system for blood returning to the heart.

1. Lying on your back with knees up, or sitting calmly in a chair, first move each leg around slowly, one at a time. Using your kinesthetic sense, **notice what it feels like** - the weight of the leg, the quality of movement. Put your legs down.
2. Now choose one leg, and slowly **visualize the nerve pathways**, from the lumbar spine all the way to the tips of the toes. Allow 2-3 minutes to do this for one leg.
3. When you feel you have found all the nerve enervation, **visualize the blood vessel circulation** – allow another minute or two for this.
4. As you visualize, **sense your whole leg kinesthetically**, from the skin outside to the muscles and joints inside. Also, notice how your hips and back feel – whether there is any change in the way they feel against the floor or in the chair. Notice how your upper leg bone feels in its socket, and whether the width of your hips changes.
5. After a few minutes, pick up your leg and move it around again. Notice what it feels like - the weight of the leg, the quality of movement, the amount of sensitivity when you wiggle your toes, the temperature. Put your legs down. Now move the other leg, and **compare the two**. The leg that has had the visualization may feel warmer, more fluid, lighter, or heavier. It will definitely feel more alive. In comparison, the other leg may feel stiff and wooden.
6. Stand up and walk around a little – **see if your balance feels any different**, or if walking feels different.

The free leg now feels “**embodied**.” Our legs can feel like this all the time when we play, if we keep our awareness alive. Now go back and embody the other leg – it deserves the attention!