

# The Language of Movement

## Tools and solutions

By Anat Baniel

A “thinking person’s approach to movement” that involves the whole self is the foundation of the *Anat Baniel Method(sm)* to vitality and anti-aging, to enhanced fitness, and to the learning of a new vocabulary of movement.

Students improve motion with techniques that provide both knowledge of the physical effects of exercise on the body, and the understanding of the importance of each individual’s thoughts, emotions and perceptions for successful outcomes from working out. These techniques re-train the brain to send more effective, “mindful,” better organized commands of movement to the muscles, allowing students to achieve higher performance levels, reduced stress levels, and progress towards greater health, vitality, and well-being.

The *Anat Baniel Method* maintains that conventional workouts are often harmful, not only to the joints and muscles, but to the self-esteem of those who experience failure because they are unable to perform the routines successfully. People frequently drop out of exercise classes, like Aerobics, Yoga, stretching, or quit a sport or other physical activity, like running, golfing, tennis, because of injury or because they feel clumsy, stiff and uncoordinated.

By simply breaking the movements down into their smaller, underlying parts and using those movements to communicate with the brain so that it can reorganize the muscles to perform the exercise successfully, all of this can be avoided. The focus of exercise should not be trying to accomplish a specific “correct” outcome from the start, nor to mimic the instructor trying to do what you cannot, but rather engage in a process that will lead you to successfully learn the necessary underlying skills and hence reach successful performance.

In order for any exercise and fitness program to be most successful, it has to be approached as a process that is built to fit the unique needs of each individual. Each person exercising should have a great degree of control over their process, because only the person exercising FEELS their own body and can effectively respond to its needs.

Here are some tips that will help you be the master of your own process and will greatly increase your success with whatever form of exercise, or fitness activity you choose:

1. **Don’t Force It.** Perform new movements slowly and gently so that you can feel what you are doing and give your brain the opportunity to differentiate and form new, more effective patterns of movement.

**2. Recognize your own comfort level** and exercise within that zone. Build up to extra effort gradually without forcing. Once you know the mechanics of the movement, you can very quickly make it more powerful and faster.

**2. Listen to Your Body.** Exercise is not an isolated activity for just one part of your body. Be in touch with the way your entire body feels and its relationship to the floor and your surroundings. Pay attention to your pelvis, your lower back, your breathing, your neck, your eyes, your head, the length of your spine, the expression of your face and more. Rest between movements.

**3. Use your intelligence.** Think through the movements as you exercise. The body and brain are one, in constant communication. When you concentrate on what you are doing and feeling, the brain receives new information, which it uses to help improve the commands to the muscles and manage your movements more efficiently. The brain thrives on variety and when it is reprogrammed with an expanded movement repertoire, it replaces repetitive, boring, compulsive exercises that wear out our joints, and often lead to injury with a successful new relationship with our bodies.

**4. Be Your Own Person.** Exercise at your own pace, even if it means have a different pace than the rest of the class. Watch the teacher and understand the instruction and then pay attention only to yourself, to how you feel, what is the range, speed and intensity that is right for you. Modify the movement to fit your own sense of comfort, safety and ease.

**5. Don't be concerned with the final outcome.** Pay attention to the process. A high quality process will always lead to effective learning and change and often times will lead to changes that are better and greater than we knew to ask for.

**6. Take pleasure and pride in "small" changes.** It is continuous seemingly small changes that lead to transformational outcomes.

**7. Age Is A State of Mind.** When it comes to fitness and exercise, you are truly as old as you choose to believe. There is nothing static about movement of our body, of our minds, of our feelings and of our emotions. When we cast aside old, automatic ways of moving, thinking, and feeling, and integrate new movement options into your life, regardless of age, we can tone our body, take up new sports and improve overall in ways we never thought possible.