

Self-Body-Alignment (“Jiriki Seitai”)

Background

“Seitai(body alignment)” therapy, which is similar to osteopathy but a broader concept and technique, is one of the long-practiced traditional medicines in Japan. Seitai (body alignment) therapists provide patients with treatment which alleviates chronic disorders, such as lower back aches, knee aches, tense and stiff muscles and joints, by realigning the spine and pelvis and relaxing tense muscles and joints. It also eases, sometimes even cures, problems such as autonomic imbalance, sleeplessness, constipation, and high blood pressure by helping our body to regain a balance in the autonomous nervous system and/or to stimulate secretion of beneficial hormones. People first go to orthopedics to have their chronic pains treated in their locomotive organs, but will turn to Seitai (body alignment) therapists when the orthopedic treatment shows no sign of improvement.

Approximately 190,000 therapists are regularly practicing Seitai (body alignment) in Japan helping people suffering from chronic pains. Unlike medical doctors, there is no formal authorizing/licensing processes by the national government for Seitai (body alignment) therapists. Instead, they acquire skills from their master therapists through apprenticeship and will in turn hand over expertise to their disciples, and this tradition has been continuing for hundreds of years in Japan.

In 1973, at the age of 20, I went to a professional acupuncture school to get a license (the acupuncturist is a nationally accredited/licensed profession) and opened an acupuncture clinic in 1976. In the meantime, I studied Seitai (body alignment) therapy with several master therapists. 20 years later in 1993, I developed a new format, “Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment)” based on Seitai (body alignment). Since then, I have been promoting this format mainly by training people who want to become an instructor. To date, 500 students of mine are teaching Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) with approximately 20,000 people who regularly attend classes throughout Japan.

As the word “Jiriki (self-help)” implies, Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) is a self-applying therapy, which has been developed from my experience of treating patients as a Seitai (body alignment) therapist. It is designed to apply the Seitai (body alignment) technique to yourself to treat your own chronic disorders without therapist’s help. This self-applying aspect of Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) is similar to yoga, which also helps mitigate

chronic disorder by taking various body postures.

There are three reasons why I developed Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) instead of continuing the practice of Seitai (body alignment) therapy. First, financial. Seitai (body alignment) treatment, not covered by any kind of health/medical insurance, costs 5,000 to 10,000 yen per visit, and average of 30,000 to 40,000 yen a month as a patient typically has treatment every week. Including transportation cost, it constitutes a substantial expenses for a household. If people would practice Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) at home and enjoy the same benefits of Seitai (body alignment) therapy, they could save these expenses. Moreover, on the national level, the government could save a lot of money in social security expenditure.

The second reason relates to the effectiveness of treatment. Chronic pains could be alleviated by Seitai (body alignment) therapy, but the effect would be temporary and limited unless muscle training is performed in addition. In reality, pains tend to be recurrent and patients tend to keep coming back to Seitai (body alignment) therapy clinic. A great advantage of Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) is that it prevents recurrence of aches and pains by training muscles and aligning the entire skeletal system. Even if some pains might recur, you could mitigate or even eliminate them by yourself through repeated practice of Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment). It could save those patients who are trapped in a vicious cycle of pains and treatment.

Thirdly and finally, self-confidence. An experience of alleviating or curing chronic disorders by yourself will help gaining self-confidence. It will also motivate you to prevent any severe aches and pains from recurring by paying more attention to daily eating habits and use of body that might have caused them. Such consciousness of health maintenance constitutes the concept of preventive medicine where people would safeguard their health with their own efforts, not relying on doctors and therapists only.

By attending a Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) class every week, you would be able to make a habit of checking your physical condition and applying appropriate technique for cure whenever any disorder is found. Also, it would be an excellent opportunity to make friends and establish a good relationship with them and with instructors whom you would consult on health matters. That is how people would help and encourage each other in ageing well without being cared by family members and/or professional caregivers.

Concept of Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment)

Unlike modern medicine which treats a specific disordered part of the body, Seitai (body alignment) therapists examine patients' body from head to toe, and correct any misalignment detected. The key concept of Seitai (body alignment) therapy is that as misalignment of any part of the body causes misalignment of others, any disorder of a specific part cannot be cured by correcting the misalignment of that part alone. The only way of curing the disorder is to correct misalignment of the entire body. Based on this principle, Seitai (body alignment) therapists typically spend 60 minutes or so for a patient, examining every bone of the spine and joints, and correcting any distortions from their proper positions.

By the same token, Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment), to be exercised by yourself, checks and corrects any imbalances of the entire body with a basic 90-minute program. To practice Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment), it is best to attend a class to get a first-hand experience from an instructor. However, there is an alternative way of learning it by using DVDs, where instruction is provided by myself. In practicing Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment), you would feel as if you were being treated by a therapist while performing jiggling, pressing and stretching exercises by yourself. In a sense, you act both in the capacity of a patient and a therapist. You are encouraged to master the technique so that you could cure any chronic disorder; if not cured, it would indicate that your skills and techniques are not appropriate/sufficient.

Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) Curriculum in Nutshell

In the outset, it should be noted that development of Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) is still in progress and a curriculum which will be practiced a few years from now might be different from that described below. The curriculum is 90-minute long and consists of three parts: firstly, a warming up step to ease tension and relieve stress from the body, especially tense and stiff muscles; secondly, a treatment step to realign the spine and pelvis in proper positions; and thirdly, a building up step to tone up muscles which support the skeletal system and to master proper use of the body such as walking. This step ensures that the effectiveness of the treatment will be maintained and disorders will not recur,

Benefits of Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment)

As mentioned above, Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) is a holistic approach to

muscles/joints aches and pains by working on the entire body rather than targeting on the painful part. Modern medicine typically takes the targeted approach. The rationale behind the holistic approach is that any living creature is equipped with self-healing power, and this self-healing function is facilitated by the autonomic nervous system, specifically the parasympathetic nervous system. Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) reinforces self-healing power by working on the parasympathetic nervous system so that it dominates sympathetic nervous system. The self-healing process of the parasympathetic nervous system proceeds in the following sequence. Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) will bring you sound sleep on the day you practice it, and increased amount of feces next day. This is the first step of self-healing, where waste matter begins to be excreted from the body. Once this detoxification process is complete, muscle tension will be eased, the pressure on blood vessels will be relieved, and blood flow will be promoted to toe and finger tips. Higher temperature brought about by increased blood flow will be maintained, leading to alleviation/elimination of pains. Without this process, you would have recurrent pains even if they are once removed. Complete removal of pains would always ensue from the process of detoxification, muscle tension relief and improved blood circulation, followed by rising temperature. This process is effective not only for pains but for any other chronic disorders as well. The three-step sequence followed by rising temperature is the driving force in dissipating any chronic disorders. If asked what kind of benefits Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) does provide, my answer to the question is: it is expected to work for any chronic disorders including mental illness.

Typical 90-minute Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) Curriculum in Classroom

Part I: Warming up

1. Before the session begins, it is helpful to check the overall balance of your body by standing straight with your back against the wall, with legs 10 centimeters apart and outer edge of feet in parallel. Ideally, your body evenly touches the wall in heels, calves, hips, shoulder blades, and the back of the head. Some of you may find calves and/or the back of the head not touching the wall. Check also if there is an unevenness of touching between the right and left sides of these parts of your body.
2. Standing straight as above, raise your arms one by one overhead with elbows straight and touching the wall, check if one arm is easier to raise than the other. Check also if there is unevenness of the height between the right and left shoulders. Finally, stretch the whole body upwards by standing on the heels and raising both arms to see how high and easily you can stretch upwards.

3. Sit with your legs crossed and begin meditation. In practicing Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment), you are expected to “feel the inner body” or “pay attention to all the sensations of your body such as stiffness, aches/pains, chills, and comfortableness”. If during practice you engage yourself in thinking this and that, your ability to feel such sensations would be disturbed. Typically, the left side of the brain is better for thinking and the right side for feeling. Switching our brain’s function from the left-side to the right-side is the primary purpose of meditation. The secondary purpose is a dialog between a therapist and a patient within yourself. As mentioned above, Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) is a self-applying therapy. In applying it, you as a therapist receive information from you as a patient, making sure if “the posture, intensity, and duration of a particular stimulating action is appropriate”. In other words, you as a patient give commands to you as a therapist in stimulating actions for treatment. Meditation provides an opportunity for the two actors within yourself to assure that each performs their proper roles respectively.
4. Press acupoints around eyeballs and move the eyeballs vertically, horizontally, and diagonally to the limit. Repeat this process at the end of the curriculum and compare eyeball movements. As Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) strengthens the eyes (extraocular muscles) your vision will be improved, enabling your eyesight to be recovered over time.

Part II: Alignment

5. This part consists of two steps: a treatment step and a realignment step. In the first step, follow a sequence of movements which helps maintain the flexibility of various joints such as fingers, wrists, elbows, ankles, knees, hip and shoulder joints. Stimulating them by bending, stretching, pressing and jiggling will extend their range of motion so that you can smoothly move these joints without pains.
6. Take a 5-minute break for relaxation by lying on your back with your arms stretched out.
7. Follow a second step: a series of movements specifically developed for realigning the spine and pelvis (sacroiliac joints) in their proper positions. A specially designed ring-shaped towel (you can make it by yourself by sewing up both ends of a 180-centimeter-long towel) will be used in this step.

Part III: Building up

8. A number of muscle training techniques are incorporated into the movements described in 7 above. These techniques help tone up various muscles which support the skeletal system. To maintain the benefits of treatment described in Part II, it is essential to use properly your body in various actions of daily life. The building-up step also includes training of walking and sitting postures.

9. Repeat the eyeball movement described in 4 above followed by the meditation described in 3 above. At the end of the session, you are encouraged to check the overall balance of your body once again, and see if there are any improvements in your standing posture.

Best time to practice Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment)

It is best to finish the entire curriculum 5 to 6 hours before going to bed. This is because the autonomic nervous system, which controls our internal body clock, brings body temperature at the highest level around 5 or 6 p.m. and gradually to a lower level, making us sleepy around 10 p.m., 5 to 6 hours after the peak. Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment), which is a temperature-raising and sleep-inducing practice, is best and easiest to practice at its peak temperature, with the autonomic nervous system synchronized and reinforced.

Although some classes are open during morning hours for operational reasons, for example, easier for housewives and senior people to attend morning classes, you are advised to practice it at home during evening hours when temperature is high.

For those who have severe aches and pains, it is advisable to go on a 18-hour fasting as substantial amount of waste have been accumulated in your body. The 18-hour fasting is intended to give your digestive organs a chance to rest by spending 18 hours from 6 p.m. to 12 noon the following day (including sleeping hours) with no food at all. If you continue this for 4 days or so, your large intestine resumes its normal function, producing a large amount of feces. It follows that blood flow within muscles will be increased, which will in turn raise body temperature, thereby dissipating aches and pains.

By combining Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) practice with the 18-hour fasting, you will be able to obtain a desired body weight, shape and posture, transforming yourself into an ideal figure, as well as eliminating disorders.

How to Join my Class?

In Japan, students of any traditional arts/skills to pay monthly tuition at the end of every month before classes begin. There is no system of paying an attendance fee for each lesson. Since the monthly tuition is paid in gratitude for instructors, it is customary that no refund is made if you miss classes for personal reasons. To take a case of my classes, the tuition is 6,000 yen a month for 4 lessons, and must be paid in advance (at the end of a month before the lesson begins) no matter what.

Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) Group Allows No Labeling

I belonged to a group with a rigid hierarchical structure during my yoga training. At the end of that period, I committed myself not to have such a hierarchical structure once I began managing my own group. Despite my intention, I find some navigators tend to behave hierarchical, talking about others on the basis of, for example, their seniority, the number of students they have, the number of navigator training sessions they attend. It is regrettable that some of the navigators who received my instructions have a hierarchical mind-set while I abandoned it from the outset. Whether one is senior to the other or whether one attends regular navigator training sessions would not make any difference in realizing the Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment)'s mission. To me, they are equally important in promoting Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment). I urge all navigators to abandon the hierarchical mind-set.

Since the New-Year Issue of the Newsletter this year, I have been introducing navigators' backgrounds and activities. Such introduction is an encouragement for some, but a burden for others; stressful burden since they are not like those introduced. They take it that I am pushing them to become like those navigators. I do not blame them for such thinking, but they should be aware that I condemn any hierarchy and all navigators are equally needed to promote Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment).

This could be understood by looking at the organization of the human body. Would you be able to rank internal organs? Would the heart be most important? Or kidneys? No way! Each organ performs an irreplaceable function playing a unique role with no hierarchy.

Naturally, more people tend to copy Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) as it becomes increasingly popular. I do not denounce them for plagiarism or copying but rather welcome them as promoters of Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment), who provide an opportunity for the public to be familiarized with the self-applying and preventive treatment. I have no intention of making money out of Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment). My aspiration is to let the world know that you can cure any chronic disorders and pains by your own efforts and even prevent them. I only appreciate their and your help in realizing this aspiration.

My lifetime is not endless. I am now concentrating in developing an even newer format of

Jiriki Seitai (self-body-alignment) that is more effective and comfortable and yet easier to practice. It is my mission to complete the development and hand it over to the next generation.