

Gigi Berardi

### **Understanding the Pelvis: A Functional Approach to Yoga**

Eric Franklin and Alison Wesley  
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*Understanding the Pelvis: A Functional Approach to Yoga* is one of Eric Franklin's newest works. Co-authored with Alison Wesley, the book is an exploration of anatomical function applied to yoga, with focus on the pelvic core. In this application, imagery figures prominently, as the authors present narrative and drawings around cues to allow yogis and others to "benefit fully from the [yoga] pose."

Using evidence-based science, the authors' focus is on cues for the hip and pelvic complex in yoga. They warn that sometimes the cues given in classes can actually have the opposite of the intended effect, in part because those cues might be based on "personal opinions that become commonplace to the point that people began thinking they are general truths." They note that yoga is a welcoming practice, "something the body loves to do," especially if the practitioner has the appropriate cues to avoid unwanted tension. No need to push and pull, tuck or lift—we should not be fighting our bodies.

The text begins with an introduction to, and then a discussion of, pelvic anatomy and function divided into five sections: "The Sacrum," "The Pelvic Halves," "The Hip Joint," "Bone Rhythms" (natural counter-rotation and other bone movements), and "The Spine." Throughout the book, the authors give "Practice" examples of identifying bony landmarks and using imagery in movement, as here: "Place your hands on the sides of the pelvis. Spread your fingers and visualize the pelvic halves as wheels..." Other helpful images include expanding (tree) roots, beaming flashlights, and gushing water. All sections offer a clear and detailed description of anatomy and function, as well as colorful sketches that use skeletal underlays and arrows to show the direction of movement.

The authors distinguish among prescriptive cueing (telling the student how to focus and modify movement), metaphorical imagery (using sense memories, as here: "melt your shoulders, like ice cream"), and anatomical cueing (with reference to body structure and musculoskeletal function). Also discussed is the importance of imagery, arguing that imagery activates the brain in much the same way as does performing the actual movement. It positively affects breathing, blood pressure, and heart rate. Further, meditation, "looking inward," is a path to experiencing chakras (described as "energy centers"), an important aspect of yoga.

The second part of the book is the application of the principles and ideas in part one to 26 actual poses, including the familiar "Child's Pose," "Cobra Pose," "Downward-Facing Dog Pose," "Tree Pose," and "Warrior Pose." One example is Tadasana: Mountain Pose, which is a standing pose, in anatomical position. The authors advocate stillness, which is not just the absence of movement but also a constant balancing act consisting of many subtle movements, as in Tadasana. The authors give helpful imagery cues for Tadasana, making use of a functional anatomy framework—for example, "shift forward and back and side to side to find the place where you experience being centered," or, as one bends the knees, "imagine the femur heads like buoys that are lifting the pelvis." This image is particularly dynamic, with the "legs imagined as strong geysers supporting the hip joint and the pelvis from below."

Rather than focusing on anatomy per se, the authors use it as an imagery tool to focus the brain and body. They advocate for a "deeper practice...going beyond doingness and residing in beingness." This beautifully illustrated text will be highly useful for both educators and students.

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