Dear Alice,

I'm concerned about my stooped posture and wonder whether there is a physical therapist that I can see under the Health Service for exercises I can do to stand up straight and tall?

?Straight Up

Answer

Dear Straight Up,

In addition to improving your bodily alignment, some social scientists posit that standing taller may actually affect how you're perceived by others. Standing tall and straight may improve first impressions with a potential employer or give off an air of confidence on your next steamy date. Either way, there are more than just physical justifications for perfecting your posture.

Whether you choose to work on your posture through physical therapy or simply do exercises on your own, there are plenty of options. Two at-home exercises you may want to try include:

- Sitting on a chair with your knees at a right angle and your back slightly arched, gently squeeze a folded pillow, soccer, or volleyball between your knees for three to five seconds with your chin comfortably tucked, your eyes looking straight ahead, and your shoulders pulled slightly back. Repeat two to three sets of ten every day.
- Sitting on the floor with your legs stretched out in front of you and your tailbone and shoulders flush with the wall, flex your toes toward your torso while pulling your shoulders slightly down and back and tucking your chin like in the previous exercise. Hold for three to five seconds and do two to three sets of ten per day.

These exercises as well as correcting your posture throughout the day may help strengthen the muscles in your torso that help control slouching. Pulling in your abdomen and tucking your tailbone while balancing your weight evenly on both feet may prevent your muscles from settling in positions that may be contributing to your stooped stature. Practicing the same concepts while sitting may also help (see the first exercise listed above).

If you're concerned that your rounding shoulders are more than just a simple slouching issue (certain physical conditions such as scoliosis or kyphosis may require professional correction) or if they're causing you pain, it may be a good idea to see your primary health care provider to get a physical therapy referral. At the extreme, stooped posture may require braces or other
corrective procedures, but for the majority of slouchers, simple exercises may go a long way.

So, chin up! Whether for physical comfort or to help improve your chances at that big interview you have coming up, working on improving your posture has many benefits.

Alice!

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