

Introductory Lesson - Body Mapping, Kinesthesia and Movement

An introduction to the concept of Body Mapping: what it is and how it works. This includes an explanation of the kinesthetic sense and its importance in understanding and improving the movement of singing.

Objective: Students will be able to explain the concept of both Body Mapping and the kinesthetic sense. They will begin to recognize and demonstrate the movements of singing.

Introduce:

Have paper and pencil ready for making a list and journaling. You may begin the video without further introduction.

Begin Introductory Video

Pause where indicated to have students list the movements of singing. They can add to this list throughout the class. There are no wrong answers!

Have students participate in the mapping explorations in the video.

Explorations - in class or at home:

Have students share youtube videos that show remarkable singing movements. List and discuss them.

Have the students share videos of themselves singing. Have them sing while experimenting with various amounts of movement, both allowing it and preventing it.

Have the students sing with and without allowing movement.

- Ask them to notice and list the movement they can sense kinesthetically in the rest of their body: arms, feet, abdomen, chest, back.
- Have them rate their movement on a scale of one (most stiff) to ten (completely free of tension).
- How does this noticing help them understand that the quality of movement directly affects the quality of singing?

Journaling about this will be a good reference point for the end of the lesson series.

Find other examples of kinesthetic sense: Touch your nose with eyes closed, notice the position of your hand if you put it behind your back.

Evaluation:

Name some of the movements of singing. (jaw, tongue, head, chest, belly/abdomen, legs, air)

Note: There are really no incorrect answers. This question just gets them to start thinking about singing as movement.

How do you know if the movement is good quality? (It's easy, fluid, comfortable, effortless)

Describe the kinesthetic sense and give an example. (Your movement sense, where you are in space. Examples: Knowing where your feet are or noticing a change in your position.)

Body maps govern our _____. (movement)

I must use my _____ sense to become aware of my movement. (kinesthetic)

Note journal entries/discoveries/participation.

Journal entries are of particular importance for this lesson. Students may have profound discoveries at the end of the course when looking back on these initial entries and realizing how far they have come.

LESSON 1-1 The Spine

The spine is the central support for the body. An understanding of the spine is the foundation for good movement throughout the body. Therefore, it is foundational for support in singing.

Objective: Students will be able to show an understanding of the size, structure and function of the spine by drawing, describing, tracing its curves, and exploring its movement.

Reconnect:

Recap the idea that movement creates music. Assure your choir that they will learn to move well.

Remind them of the spine mis-mapping from the previous lesson. Why do they think that knowing about their spine would be important to singing?

- It keeps us upright
- It connects us
- It is the center of our movement
- You might get some posture-type answers
- It can keep us buoyant

No answer is wrong. You just want them to begin thinking about their spines and how they relate to the rest of the body and to singing.

Using their kinesthetic sense, have they been able to think about themselves differently as they sing?

Have students get out pencil and paper for the drawing assignment that is coming up.

Begin Video Lesson 1-1

Pause where indicated to have students draw their spine. Assure them that they do not need to show these drawings to anyone. They are just a learning tool.

Have students participate in the spinal movement activity toward the end of the video.

Explorations - in class or at home:

Have students draw their spine again and compare to their previous drawing. Then compare to an anatomically correct image of a spine.

Practice tracing the curves of the spine in the air. Doing this in front of a mirror is helpful. Share videos of students doing this exercise. Were there any surprises?

Continue actively exploring the movements of the spine. Why does or doesn't that feel good?

Have students journal about any discoveries, freedom or limitations they notice with this movement.

Have students share youtube videos that show remarkable spinal movement.

Palpate as much of the spine as possible, look at spine images, and notice that those little bumps you are feeling in back are just the "tip of the iceberg"

Evaluation:

How many vertebrae are in the spine? (24)

Where is the top and bottom of the spine? (Between the ears to the tailbone)

Name two functions of the spine: (Bear weight or deliver load, house and protect the spinal cord, organize or coordinate whole-body movement, cushion/absorb shock with discs)

Describe the structure of the spine: (Segmented, curved, moveable, varying sizes of vertebrae)

Note journal entries/discoveries/participation

LESSON 1-2 Balance at the A-O Joint

The Atlanto Occipital Joint (A-O Joint) is where the head balances on top of the spine. It is the first place of balance in the curriculum. Balance here provides a dramatic improvement in tone and resonance.

Objective: Students will be able to find their A-O joint by pointing to it or finding it on a model. They will be able to demonstrate singing and speaking while both on and off balance there. They will also be able to discern a difference in tone quality from examples of singing on and off balance.

Reconnect:

Review the properties of the spine and explore some spinal movement as a warm up. Discuss any changes or revelations students have had in terms of spinal movement. Remind them that music begins with movement and there is much more mapping and movement ahead.

Print and distribute the balance mascot handout. Have the students prepare a crayon, colored pencil or small round sticker to place on the skeleton after each of the remaining lessons in this Unit.

Begin Video Lesson 1-2

Pause the video to allow for discussion or exploration. Encourage the students to imitate the movements that are demonstrated on the video. This kind of exploring will help them map their own A-O Joint and balance there.

Explorations - in class or at home:

Point to your A-O Joint. Do you think of it between your ears? Behind your uvula? Some other way?

Practice going on and off balance at this joint. Sing and speak while doing so. Take a video to share with the class.

Watch videos of your classmates singing both on and off balance. Close your eyes and see if you can tell the difference just by listening to the change in tone quality.

Imagine a mis-mapping of this joint as if it were at the back of the skull. How would that feel? Can you feel a difference in your neck muscles? In your jaw?

What other things do you do, besides singing, that might pull your head out of balance? Try to be mindful of balance at the A-O joint throughout the day. Discuss or journal about your experience.

Find videos on youtube that show head balance, in particular people balancing things or balancing themselves on their heads. Can you learn something from these? Discuss or journal about it.

Evaluation:

How much does a head weigh? (8 to 10 lbs.)

What does A-O joint stand for? (Atlanto Occipital joint)

Why do we sometimes hyphenate the names of joints? (Because there is no common name for them, like elbow, knee or ankle)

Point to your A-O joint and demonstrate movement there.

Name at least one other activity besides singing that would benefit from balance at the A-O joint. (computer work, texting, looking at my phone, anything that would pull the focus forward and off balance)

Note journal entries/discoveries/participation

Lesson 1-3 Balance at the Hip Joints

The hip joint is the center of our body from top to bottom. Understanding the movement of the torso and the legs at this joint is necessary for understanding balance of the body while sitting.

Objective: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the location of the hip joint by showing its location and movement of the legs and torso from this joint in sitting and standing.

Reconnect: Review the structure and movements of the spine and warm up with some spinal movement as in Lesson 1-1. Have students practice coming on and off balance at the A-O Joint. Listen for differences in singing and speaking when on and off balance. Discuss journal entries or share and discuss video assignments.

Watch Video Lesson 1-3

Pause the video often or rewatch portions to allow more time for finding the hip joint and practicing the movements. Having a mirror available may be of help (this can be a tough one).

Explorations - in class or at home:

Practice finding the hip joint by pointing to it and demonstrating leg movement in many directions. Looking in a mirror may help. Putting hands first on the iliac crest and moving down to the actual joint is also helpful, as well as using pockets as a guide.

Submit videos demonstrating movement at the hip joint, both legs and torso. How does this movement compare to what is demonstrated in the lesson video?

Journal about this experience. Did you have to correct or clarify your body map of this joint? Did you have a waist joint in your body map? If your movement is different now, explain it.

Practice sitting down by first moving the torso at the hip joint and lowering into the chair. Explore the difference between sitting on your “tail” with a tipped pelvis and sitting on your rockers.

While sitting both balanced and slumped, guide the students in some breathing exercises. Ask them to journal about what they notice.

Note that some students (especially women) will over arch their lumbar spine when sitting on their rockers. Remind them that they don’t need those outer muscles they can feel in their backs to hold them upright. Letting go of that muscular tension will bring much more freedom to their mobility and their breathing. The exploration video will explain this in more detail.

Evaluation:

Have students point to their hip joint and demonstrate leg movement from this joint.

Have students demonstrate standing and sitting with good movement at the hip joint.

Have students label the parts of the pelvis (hand out).

- Iliac crest
- Sacrum
- Tail bone
- Rockers (sit bones, sitz bones)
- Hip joint socket

Note journal entries/discoveries/participation

Lesson 1-4 Balance on the Lumbar Spine

Understanding balance over the front of the lumbar spine, and coordinating this balance with movement at the hip joint and balance at the A-O joint is key to buoyancy in moving, sitting and standing.

Objective: Students will be able to locate the lumbar vertebrae in images and on themselves. They will demonstrate an understanding of its importance in the balance of the body by walking, sitting, standing and carrying something heavy, such as a backpack.

Reconnect: This is also done in the beginning of this Lesson Video. Review the size, structure and function of the spine, particularly noting the variety of vertebrae from top to bottom. Review the function of the spine, especially the difference between the front half (bearing weight/delivering load) and the back half (housing and protecting the nervous system). Review balance at the A-O Joint and balance at the hip joint. Discuss journal entries or share and discuss video assignments.

Watch Video Lesson 1-4

Pause the video often or rewatch portions to allow more time for finding the lumbar spine and practicing the movements. Be sure to ask the students often if one way is more comfortable. Ask them to notice what is happening in the rest of their body as they come on and off balance here. Especially notice what happens at the knee and the way their foot feels on the floor. Remind them often to stay balanced at the AO Joint.

Exporations - in class or at home:

Walk backward and forward many times. Walk around the room and observe each other's movement.

Practice sitting and standing with these three places of balance in mind.

Imagine a mis-mapping of this place of balance being along the back bony processes of the spine. Walk, sit and stand with this mis-mapping and compare it to movement according to the truth.

Carry something heavy focusing on balance over the lumbar spine. Can you stay balanced if you are carrying something on your back? Over one shoulder? In front?

Submit videos demonstrating movement on and off balance at the lumbar spine.

Journal about this experience. Did you have to correct or clarify your body map of this region? Are you noticing any changes in the rest of your body? Does this place of balance make movement in the hip joint easier?

Evaluation:

How many lumbar vertebrae are there? (5)

Where are the lumbar vertebrae located? (They are the bottom 5 vertebrae of the spine)

Have students point to their lumbar spine or color it on the balance mascot.

Have students demonstrate understanding of balance on the lumbar spine by showing how to easily carry a heavy backpack, or by walking or sitting with both a mis-mapping and an accurate map of balance over the lumbar core.

Note journal entries/discoveries/participation

Lesson 1-5 Balance at the Knee

The knee joint plays an important role in keeping us upright. This unit maps the knee joint and explains that locked knees are caused by being off balance in the torso.

Objective: Students will be able to describe the knee joint, including the function of the kneecap. They will also be able to demonstrate how going off balance in the torso will cause the knees to lock.

Reconnect: Review the three previous places of balance, A-O joint, lumbar spine and hip joint. Balance on the lumbar spine and at the hip joint will be especially critical to understanding their effect on the knee joint. Stand up, sit down, and walk around with these places of balance in mind.

Watch Video Lesson 1-5

Pause the video to allow for exploration particularly at the knee cap and going on and off balance while standing. In each position draw attention to the previous places of balance and how they are interrelated.

Explorations - in class or at home:

Bend and unbend the knee and compare the range of motion between right and left legs.

Explore the knee cap. How much movement can you feel there. Find other images on the internet which show more details of the tendons around the knee joint.

Stand and take your torso off balance forward and notice what happens at the knee. Take a breath. Try to sing.

Stand and take your torso off balance backward. Notice what happens at the knee. Take a breath. Try to sing.

Take a video of yourself with knees locked and unlocked. Sing and see if your classmates can tell which is which. Take this video both full-length and of just above the torso. See if you can observe locked knees simply by observing what happens in the torso.

Journal about this experience. Did you have to make any adjustments in your torso in order to unlock your knees?

Evaluation:

True or False:

The kneecap does *not* have a role in the bending and unbending at the knee joint. (True)

The number one neuromuscular priority of the brain is to keep us upright. (True)

The fibula does *not* have a role in the bending and unbending at the knee joint. (True. The joint is where the tibia meets the femur.)

Have students demonstrate going on and off balance at the torso and raise their hand at the exact moment they notice the locking of the knees.

OR Have the students stand with knees locked and describe what they are feeling in their torso.

Note journal entries/discoveries/participation

Lesson 1-6 Balance at the Ankle Joint

Standing with weight-delivery down the front of the leg, through the ankle joint and arches of the foot is key to a buoyant balance of the entire body. Balancing this way will facilitate standing with ease and comfort, as well as allowing easy movement in any direction.

Objective: Students will be able to identify the two bones of the lower leg and the ankle joint. They will have an understanding of the arches of the feet, will be able to trace them on an image or model, and explain the role they play in the balance of the body.

Reconnect: Review the places of balance from the previous lessons. Discuss previous journal entries or share and discuss video assignments. Remind students of their kinesthetic sense. They will be reminded of it again at the end of the video. Have paper and pencil ready if you want them to trace their feet in the final exploration.

Watch Video Lesson 1-6

Pause the video often or rewatch portions to allow more time for exploration and understanding of the detailed information. If your choir does any choreography, the end of this video may be a good place to add some movement explorations of your own. Have them be aware of their feet, their connection to the floor, and their entire body as they move, breathe and sing.

Have some fun exploring balance at the ankle and through the feet with a variety of footwear. This might be a fun time to have some of the men try to balance, walk and sing in high heels.

Explorations - in class or at home:

Trace the outline of your feet on a piece of paper. Can you locate where your longitudinal arches end and your toes begin?

Shift your weight all around the perimeter of your feet. Can you sense the arches? Are your toes free to wiggle? Can you distribute your weight equally between your heel and the front two sides of your foot?

Walk forward and back with an awareness of balanced weight distribution from the front of the leg, through the ankle and through the arches of the feet.

Imagine a mis-mapping of this weight being delivered through the back of the leg and into the heel. What happens in the rest of your body? Take a breath. Now come back to balance and take a breath. Discuss or journal about what you notice?

Do some of these explorations with a variety of shoes. Does your choice of footwear affect your ability to balance easily? What happens in flip-flops? Or high heels? Take a video of yourself and share it with the class.

Evaluation:

How many bones are in the bottom of the leg? (2)

Can you name them? (tibia and fibula)

Which bone is in the front of the leg? (tibia)

Explain the arches of the feet. (they are all across the bottom of the foot, front to back and side to side)

Where does weight deliver for easy balance? (Down the front of the leg, through the ankle joint and through the arches of the feet, equally to the front and back of the foot.)

How might your choice of footwear affect your performance? (It is more difficult to balance in some shoes. Encourage students to speak from personal experience.)

Note journal entries/discoveries/participation

Lesson 1-7 Balance of the Arm Structure

An understanding of the balance of the arm structure is critical for a well-balanced whole body and for free breathing.

Objective: Students will be able to identify the joints of the upper arm and demonstrate movements at these joints. They will be able to explain the importance of freedom of the arm structure as it relates to both movement and breathing.

Reconnect: Review the places of balance and any explorations that have seemed difficult or need more time and understanding. Refer to the balance mascot and the stickers or colored dots you have placed on him.

Watch Video Lesson 1-7

Observe students carefully as they move their arm structures. Pause the video to allow plenty of time for experimenting with different movements. Many students will have some revelations with this information. If possible, give them all the time they need. As they explore, remind them to stay balanced through the rest of their body.

Explorations - in class or at home:

Trace the shape of the collarbone in the air. Notice if you map it as round or linear. Look at the actual shape of the collarbone on an image.

Find the S/C joint where the collarbone meets the breastbone. Use the index finger and middle finger of one hand to find this joint. Move the opposite arm to feel its range of motion. Reverse arms to notice any difference between sides.

Walk your fingers along the full length of one collarbone and around the bony ridge of the shoulder blade. Let fingers stay there. Move the whole arm and feel what happens with the collarbone and shoulder blade. Reverse sides.

Drop the right arm alongside the body. Finger-walk to the outer edge of the collarbone and let two fingers stay there. Rotate the arm forward and backward. Reverse sides.

Find the neutral home base for the arms by making large movements up and down with the upper arm joint, then coming to rest in the center. Find the rotational home base for the arms by rotating forward and backward, then coming to rest in the center.

Hold your arm structure in an unbalanced position. Take a big breath. Now free your arm structure by finding that neutral home base. Take a big breath. Discuss or journal about the differences.

Journal about this experience. Did you have to correct or clarify your body map of this region? Are you noticing any changes in the rest of your body? Does finding a neutral home base for your arms make breathing or any other balance place easier?

Evaluation:

Find the following on the hand out:

Sternoclavicular Joint or S-C Joint
Collar Bone (clavicle)
Shoulder Blade (scapula)
Upper Arm bone (humerus)

Perhaps create a color-code for them.

Demonstrate movement at these joints - don't forget about rotation!

Review Journal Entries and discuss or write about possible mis-mappings and how they affect free breathing.

BONUS: What instrumentalists would find this information important? (This information is important to virtually all musicians but students may note pianists, flutists, string players or anyone who holds an instrument.)