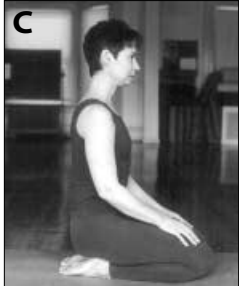


## The Body Has Its Reasons: Part II

As long as I can remember I have had unattractive feet. In the summertime when I was young I would always tuck them under a towel as soon as I got out of the pool or quickly put on shoes to make sure they were out of sight. It seemed that no one else had feet like mine, at least no one my age, and they embarrassed me. People assumed my bunions were from hours of ballet, dancing on point shoes, but that wasn't true. I did take ballet but my passion was for jazz and we mostly danced in our bare feet (the only drawback). Later my interest moved toward modern dance, which is also practiced in bare feet. Given my early attempts to keep my feet under wraps, it is ironic that I have spent most of my life shoeless. When I taught dance to kids I would inevitably have



to explain that their feet would not begin to look like mine and that I inherited my feet from my grandmother. They, in their innocence, would breath a sigh of relief. I should mention, however, that in many respects I am very fortunate. My feet do not give me any physical pain, unless of course I need to wear "real" shoes. I attribute some of this good fortune to the fact that I have always tried to take good care of my feet as well as those of my students. Both my fitness classes and yoga classes are practiced in bare feet and include at least one exercise specifically for the feet. Despite this attention to the "inside" I have only just begun to nurture the "outside." It took me 54 years to get my first pedicure, and I am looking forward to my second one next month at age 55. I do not plan on waiting another year before the next one.

Are there any other reasons besides coming up short in the genetic lottery why my feet are shaped the way they are? Louise L. Hay author of the book *Heal Your Body* would say there is. She believes there are mental causes for all physical illnesses, and these causes must be addressed in order to overcome them. She writes, "In order to permanently eliminate a condition, we must first work to dissolve the mental cause." The mental cause of bunions is described as follows: "Bunions-Lack of joy in

meeting the experiences of life." Hay's healing affirmation for bunions is, "I joyously run forward to greet life's wonderful experiences." I appreciate a good affirmation every once in a while, but this just does not seem to ring true for me. Furthermore, I do not see my bunions as a disease. I ultimately rejected this approach. What influenced me more was a "pearl of wisdom" (her term) from an 80 years young ballet mistress named Mary Anthony. She said, "We age from our feet first." Often, when older people shuffle down the street it is because they have lost all flexibility and vitality in their feet, and this limitation is reflected through their entire body.

For those of you who did not read last month's column, I introduced movements designed to help you learn to be more comfortable in your body. It is not necessary to read the last column to do the following Preliminaries (exercises) but I recommend it.

**Warm ups for the feet:** As shown in Photo (A) tuck your toes under and massage them into floor trying to get the back of each toe onto the floor (the little toe can be quite challenging). You can use your hands to help spread the toes apart. If this position is not too uncomfortable sit back over your toes as in Photo (B). It may take several weeks or more of practice to do the second move if your feet are very stiff or rigid. Next, untuck your toes and sit back over your heels as in Photo (C). This position can also be uncomfortable so be patient with yourself. You will and should feel strong sensations, but do not stay in any position which is painful. This position can also be beneficial for shin splints. Note: If you have problems with your knees, working the feet this way might not be appropriate. Instead, skip to the preliminaries described below.

**Preliminary 1 (Inking the feet):** While standing place a small rubber ball the size of a racquetball under your right foot. Keep your toes pointing straight ahead as in Photo (D). Gently massage the underside of your foot and toes with the ball. If one spot is especially tender, work around that area and come back to it when you feel ready. Continue working the inner and outer edges of your foot adding more body weight as is comfortable. Allow the muscles of your foot to welcome the ball. When you are finished, bend forward from your hips and note if there is more ease on the right side of your body. Repeat with the left foot.

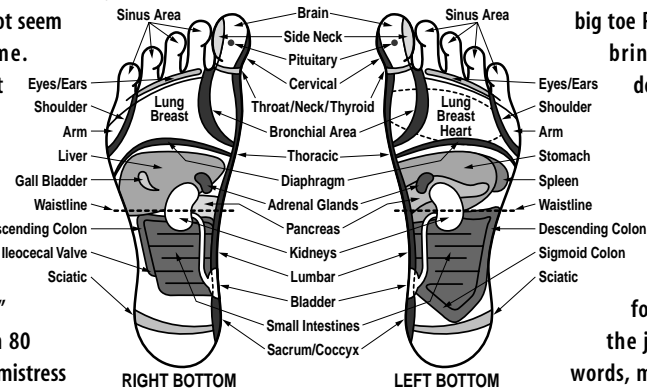
**Preliminary II (foot massage):** Sit on the floor with your right leg extended and place your left foot on the extended leg. While holding your left foot in one hand, use the other hand to pull each toe gently and turn it slightly to the right and left as though you are trying to unscrew it Photo (E) Start with your big toe. Try not to hurry and remember to breath softly. Next, take the big toe with your right hand and all of the other toes with the left hand and gently separate the big toe from the others. You are trying to make a right angle between the first and second toe and so on. This can take several weeks or more to achieve, especially if your toes overlap. When you are finished (remember to take your time), lie down on your back with your legs extended and compare the two sides of your body. To finish, place the palm of your right hand

over the sole of your left foot. Pass the fingers of your right hand between each toe, little finger between the two smallest toes and so on ending with the thumb on the outside of the big toe Photo (F). Try to bring your fingers down to the spot where the toes begin. Now gently bend the front of the foot toward the ball of your foot to bring out the joints. In other words, make a fist with your foot. Before starting the other side, stand up slowly, walk around and compare one side to the other. Note: Don't always start with the same foot—try to alternate.

**Yamuna's Body Rolling™ Foot Savers:** Photo (G) shows Betsy standing on the foot savers. Yamuna says, "as a result of the constant beating on your feet they get tired, stiff, sore and cramped. Foot savers provide a safe, therapeutic way to exercise, rejuvenate, re-educate and reactivate the muscles of the feet." She offers two routines; one to work the muscles and reflexology for your health.

**On Health:** Reflexology is a body therapy that works on the hands and feet activating pressure-points that correspond to different parts of the body. The illustration shows the location of some pressure-points. With a slightly bent thumb, Photo (H) press deeply into one of the points thereby releasing tension, encouraging better circulation of the blood and improving energy. It is even more relaxing when someone else does it for you. An alternative is to use the foot savers. FYI: Betsy, the model for this issue, is a certified massage therapist. She often combines reflexology work with other massage techniques and also offers whole sessions of just reflexology.

**On Breathing:** Activate the pressure-points relating to respiratory system (see illustration). The foot warm ups described above are also a great way to clear your sinuses. The sinus reflexology points are located at the tips of the toes. ■



### To Learn More:

*The Body Has Its Reasons* by Therese Bertherat and Carol Bernstein; *Heal Your Body* by Louise L. Hay

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### Next Month: Healing Yoga Postures

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