

ANMO TUINA FOR ZEN KNEES

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Hours of zazen inevitably call our attention to the legs and knees. Ven. Anzan Hoshin sensei says in "**Practice, Pain and Posture**" that "*When we allow the pain in our legs to practice it is no longer pain. It is just alive sensation.*" The bones, the tissue covering the bones, the tendons, the space in the joints, the joints are alive. Fed by blood, cushioned by fluid, moved constantly since the day we were born, the knee is delicately fashioned yet strong and flexible. We have used them every day in walking, running, sitting and some of us may have asked them to perform in a more demanding way in dance, in aerobics, martial arts, distance and marathon running.

Our usual pattern however has been one of generally ignoring the body when things work well, (except for routine maintenance, cosmetic or ritual decoration, sculptural or cultural alterations) and attending to it only when things go wrong.

Some basic knowledge of the structure of the bones and muscles is useful and can be acquired most effectively through the fingertips and hands. To make the fullest and best use of the following instructions, actually do what is being spoken of as you read it. Keep your practice as you enter into the practice of compassionate caring for your Zen knees. You will be surprised at what you discover.

WARMING THE JOINTS:

- Stand with knees bent at a 45 degree angle.
- Cup the knee joint with the palm of your hand, fingers pointing down. Right hand on right knee, left on left.
- Notice a sensation of warmth spread.
- Rest with this for at least 10 seconds.
- With palms still cupping the round bone of the knee (the *patella*), circle the legs to the right (clockwise) for 10 seconds, stop, and then circle to the left (counterclockwise) for another 10 seconds.
- Notice the sensations of activity in the knee joints.
- Slowly straighten and bend the legs 10 times.

LOOSENING:

- Sit in a chair or on the floor with the legs extended but slightly bent and the heel resting lightly on the floor.
- Place the left hand behind the right knee with palm facing the back of the leg.
- Cup the right hand across the kneecap.
- Hold lightly and notice the warmth spreading.
- Do the same for the left leg, reversing hands if that is more comfortable for you.

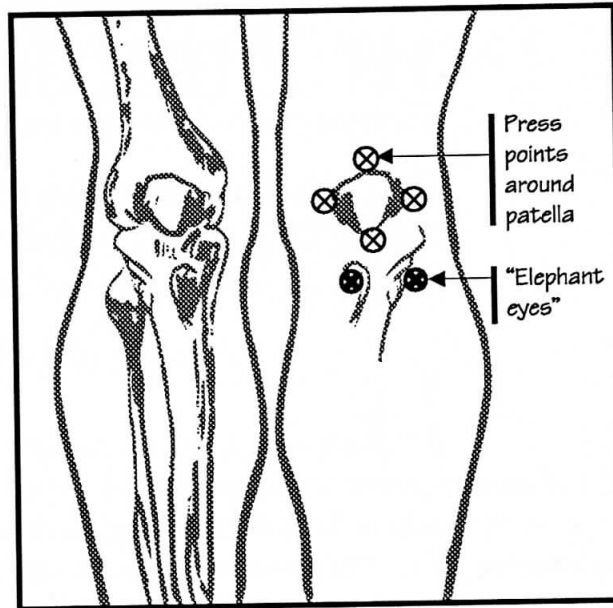
KNEADING AND SEPARATING MUSCLES:

- Place the right hand on the right side of the upper thigh of the right leg and the left hand on the left side.
- Move the thumbs to the front of the thigh so they meet in the mid-line.
- Grasp, lift and press the flesh moving inch by inch along the thigh to the knee
- Slide hands over the bony part of the knee and continue the grasping and pressing to the ankle.
- Notice that the fingers will naturally fall into a valley between the large muscles (*gastrocnemius*) at the back of the calf. The *gastrocnemius* muscle may often be tight. Gentle grasping and kneading can help the process of release and softening.
- Notice what happens.
Grasp, press and knead both legs using firm but gentle pressure.

OPENING THE KNEE JOINT:

- Move the fingers from the ankle to the front of the shin and slide the hands upward to the knee until the forefingers come to rest in the depression below the patella (the large, moveable, circular bone which protects the knee joint) in the front of the knee.
- Press on the depressions below the bone for 10 seconds, feeling it move beneath the fingers.
- Release for 10 seconds
- Continue pressing and releasing on each knee in turn for about a minute.
- Grasp the patella with the thumb and fingers and gently lift up.
- Rotate patella clockwise for 10 rotations.
- Stop for a moment.
- Rotate counter clockwise for 10 seconds.

ELEPHANT HEAD:



In China it was noticed that the front of the knee resembles the head of an elephant. The patella forms the big broad head, the depressions below the patella can be likened to the elephant's eyes, and the slightly raised area which moves down into the shin is the trunk. There are acupuncture points around the "forehead".

- Press down gently at 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock positions around the "head".
- Press the "eyes" for 10 seconds.
- Lift the patella gently and then allow it to rest.

Allow the legs to rest in a relaxed posture for a minute or two after you are finished. Notice the changes which have occurred.

Caring for one's own legs and knees in this manner produces beneficial and easeful results in a surprisingly short time and with very little effort. Caring for the legs and knees of another introduces another facet to learning about the activity of bodymind and brings mutual benefit.