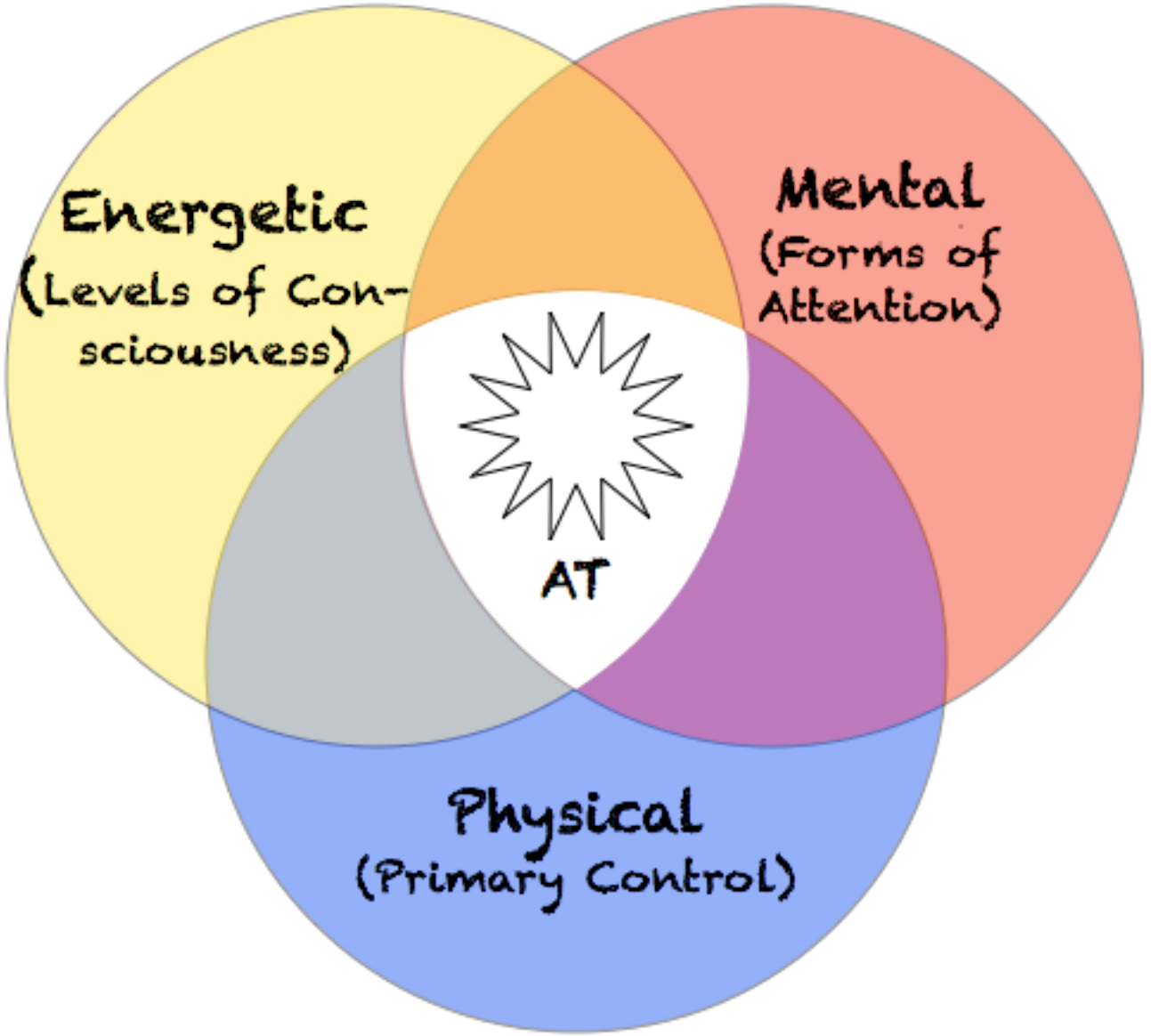
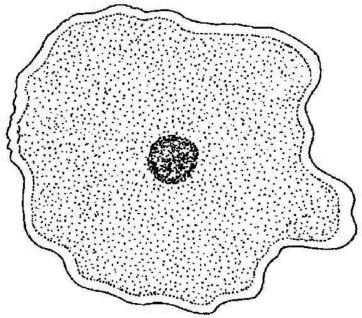
Be patient,
stick to principle,
and it will all open out like a
great cauliflower.

—A. R. Alexander


Energetic
(Levels of Con-
sciousness)
Mental
(Forms of
Attention)
AT
Physical
(Primary Control)

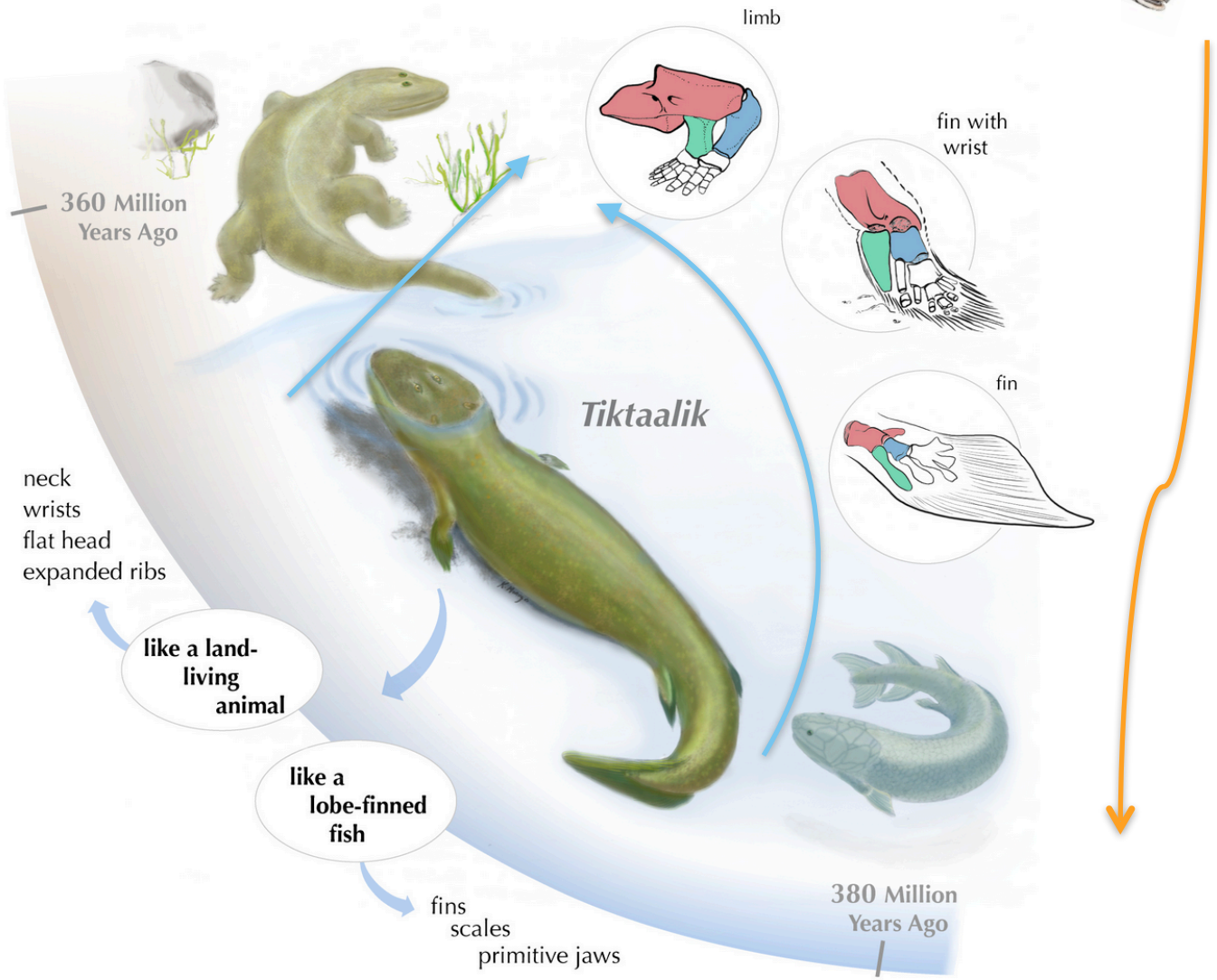
The evolution of the primary movement in animals:



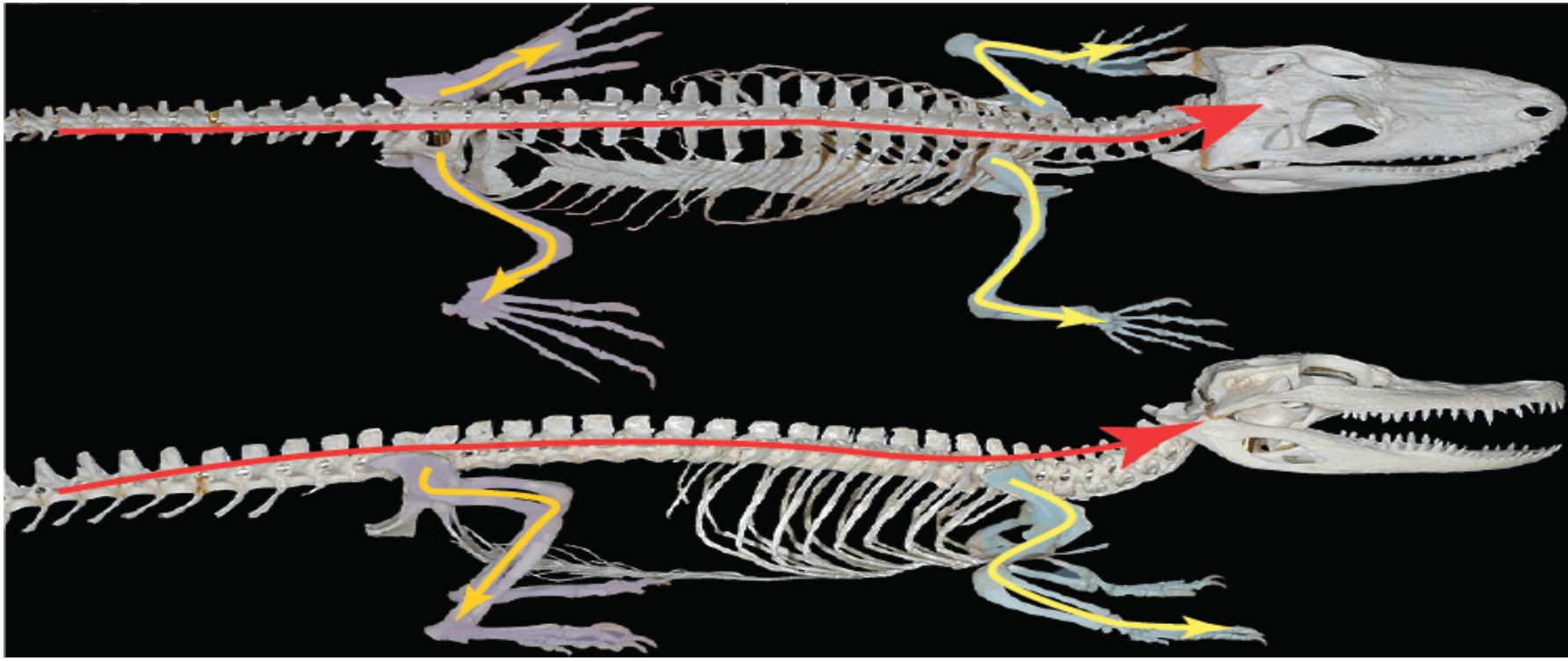




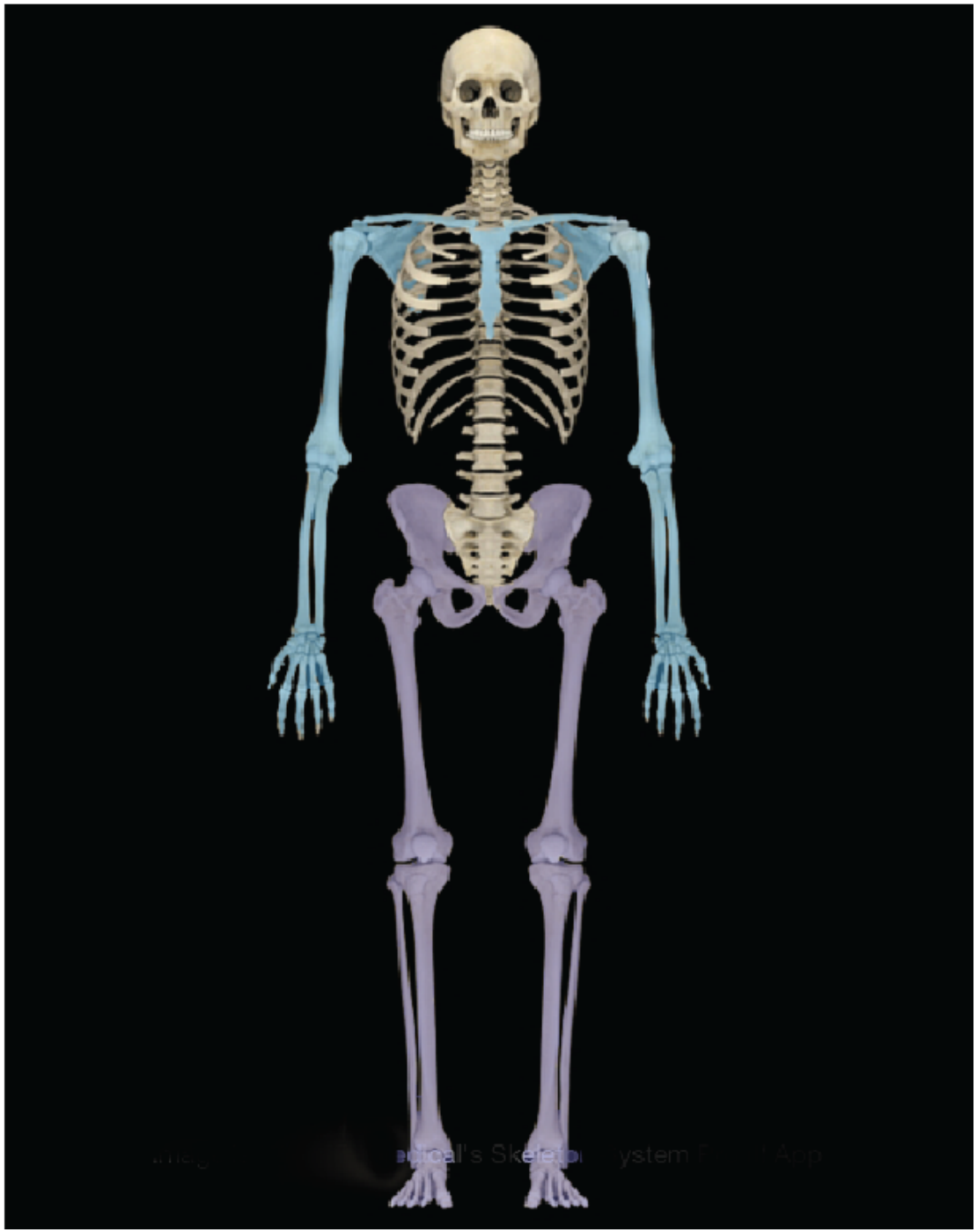
From a creature which was just a blob, creatures developed that had direction: eventually heads and bodies. Those heads led, and those bodies followed. Then as fish moved onto land, their fins turned into limbs, first to drag them over the ground and then length-ening to lift them off it.



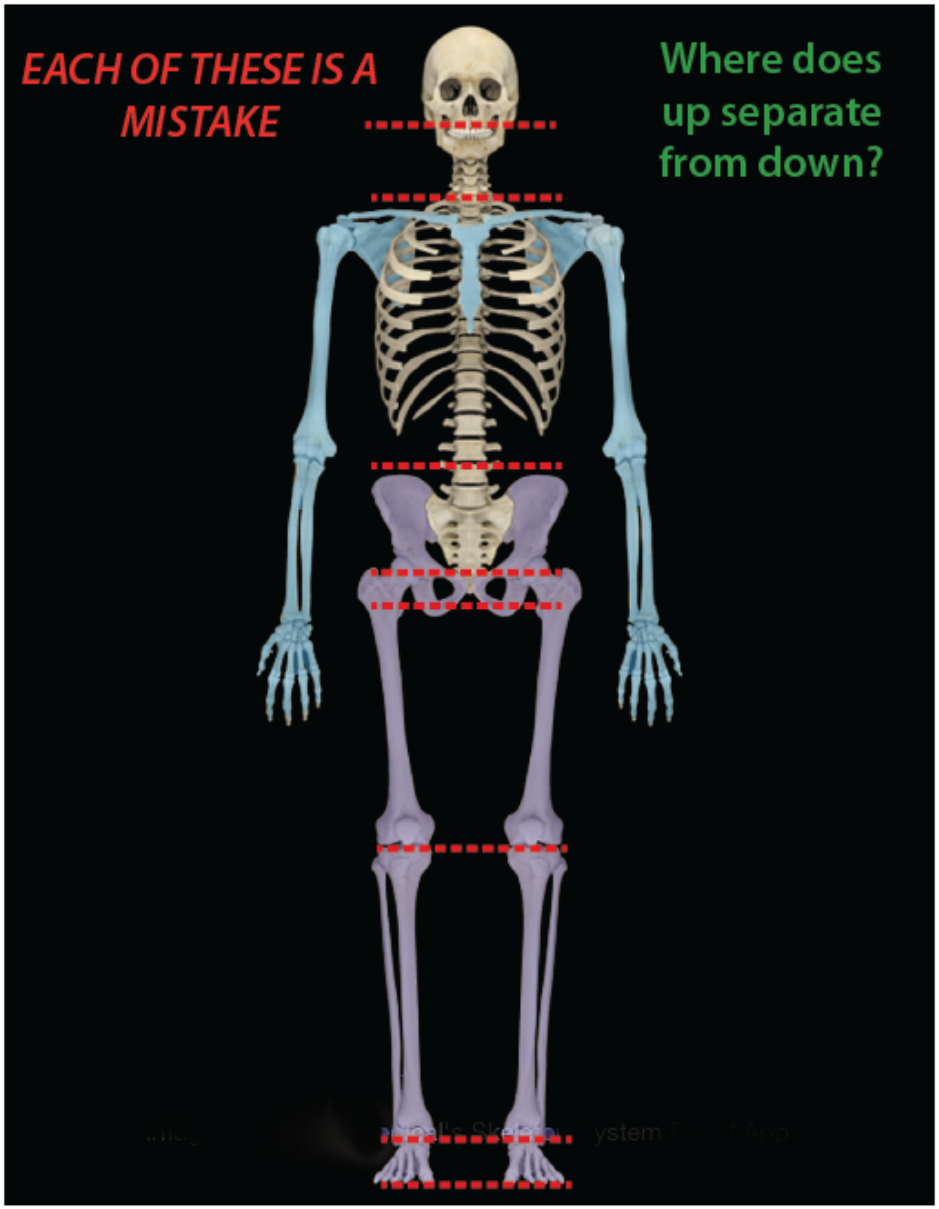
Here's a crocodile. His head leads, his body follows, and his limbs lengthen to lift him off the ground and move him around.



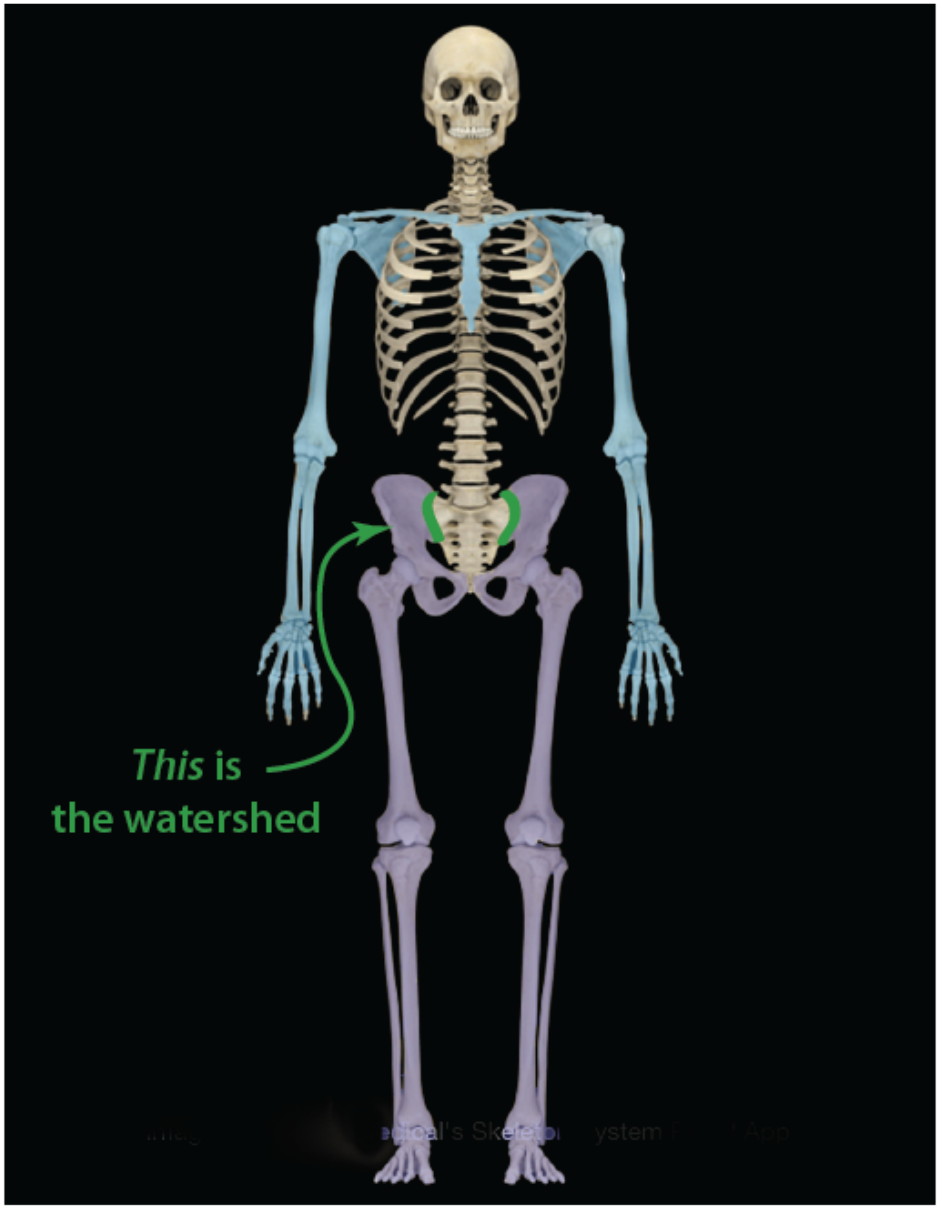
These slides use the skeleton rather than the whole body just to show the underlying structure.



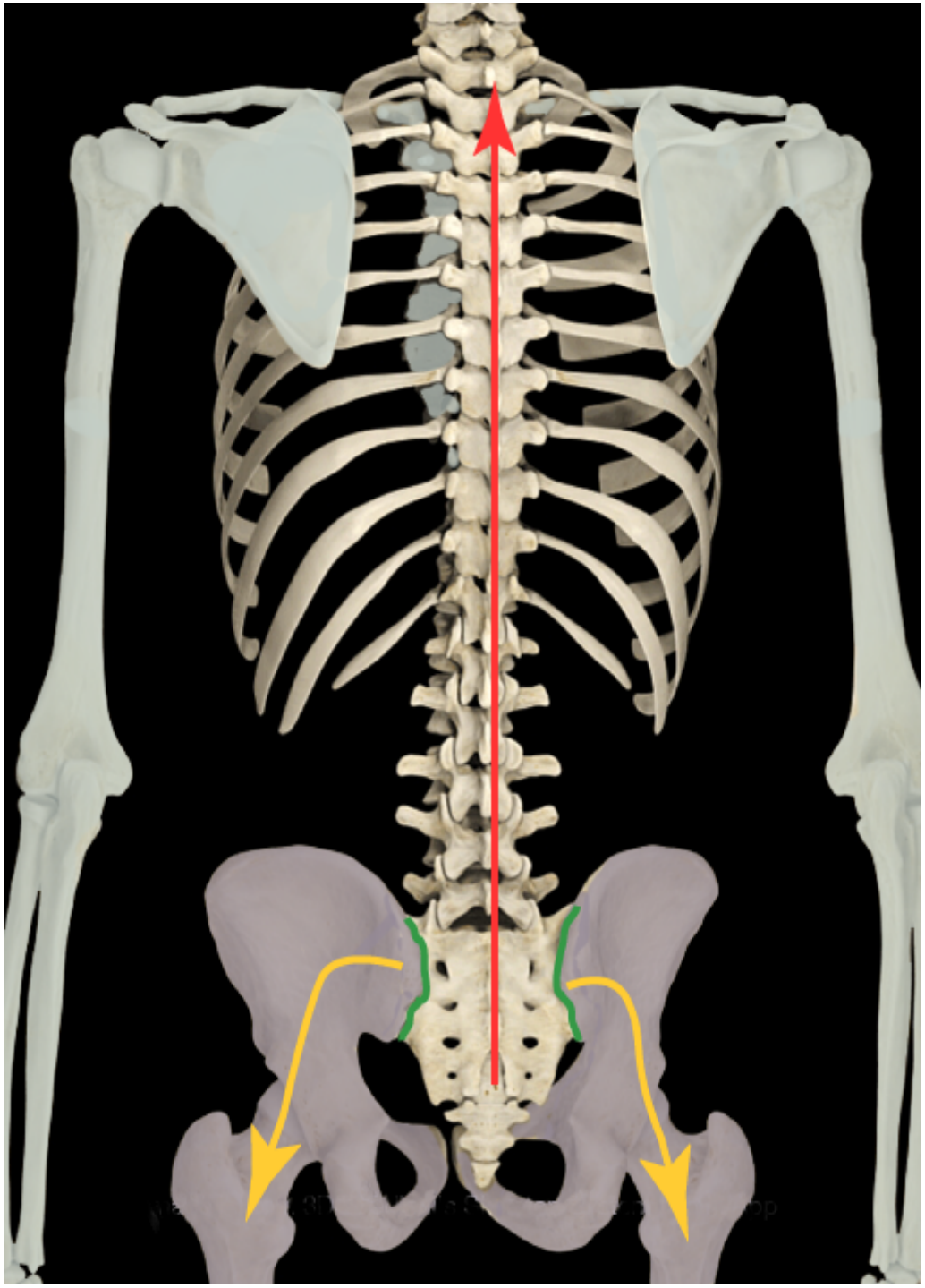
For years I struggled
to understand about
up and down in the
primary movement.
Marj said "Come up out of your
hips and let your legs
lengthen towards the ground."
But when I tried to pin
her down about what she
meant by "hips" she refused
to answer. She knew what she
meant, and she didn't want me
to obsess about details.
We'll come back to that.



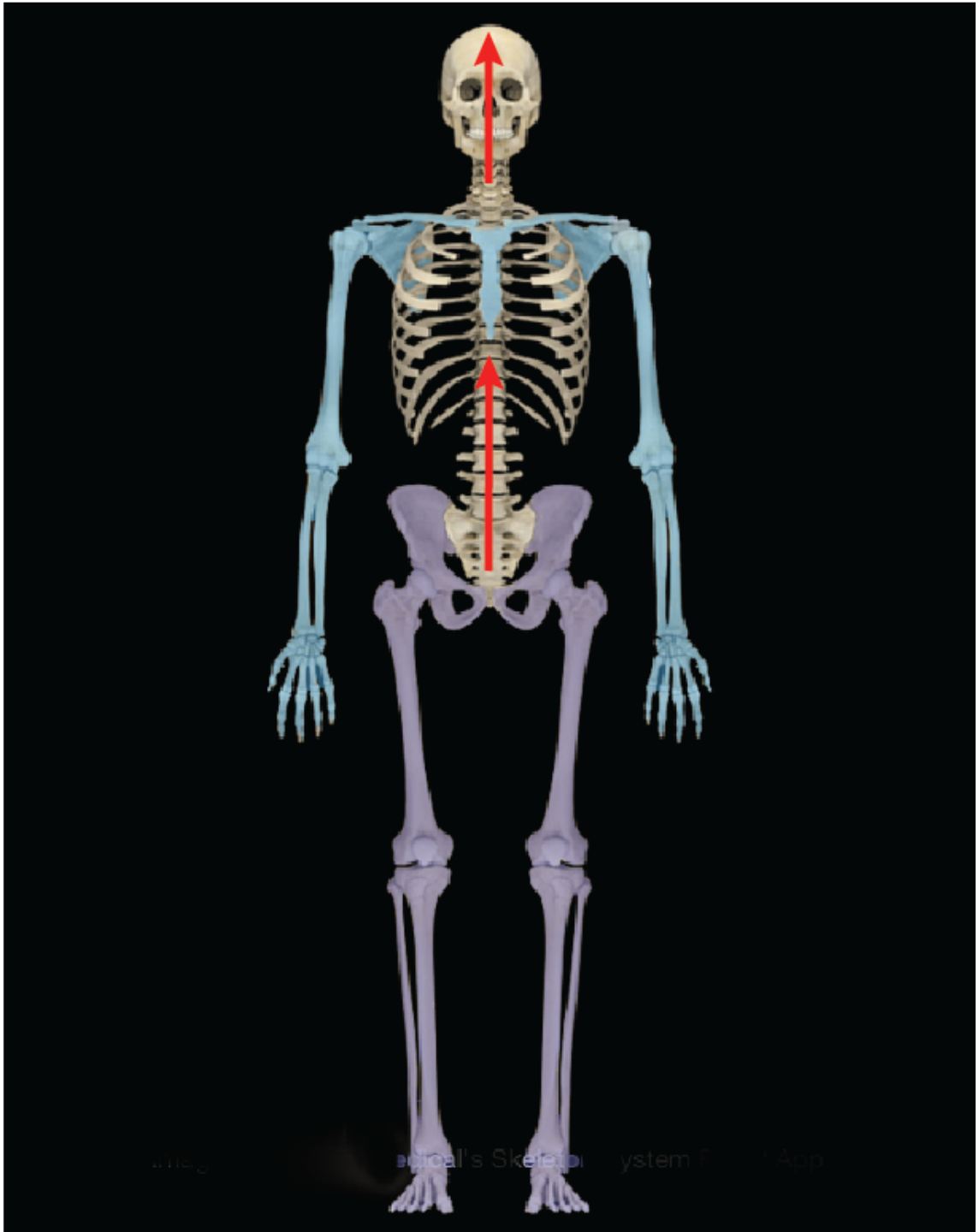
Finally I figured it out (about 10 years after Marj's death...) When Marj said "come up out of your hips," she meant let your sacrum (and head and spine) come up out of your pelvis (and your pelvis and legs release down and away from your sacrum).

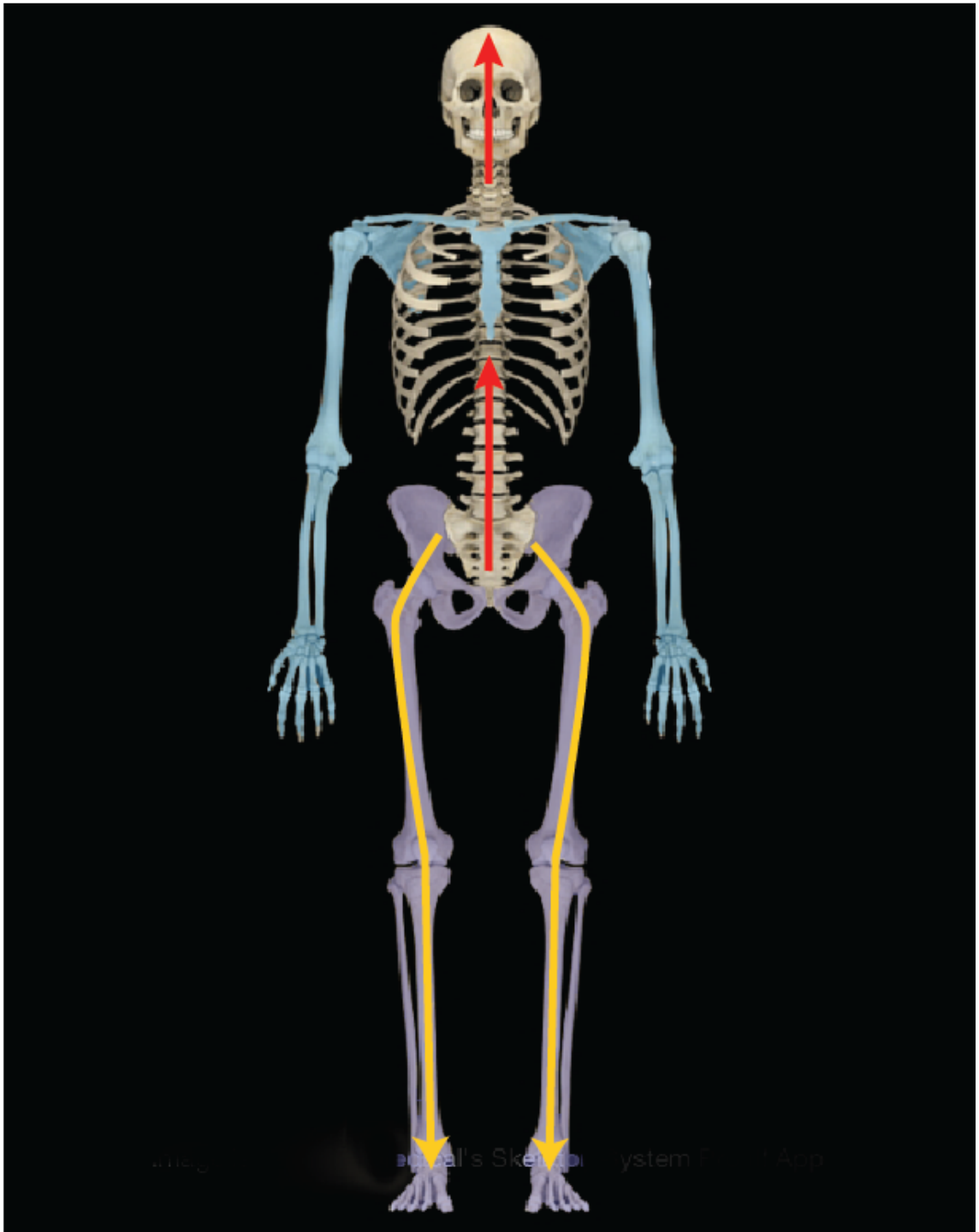


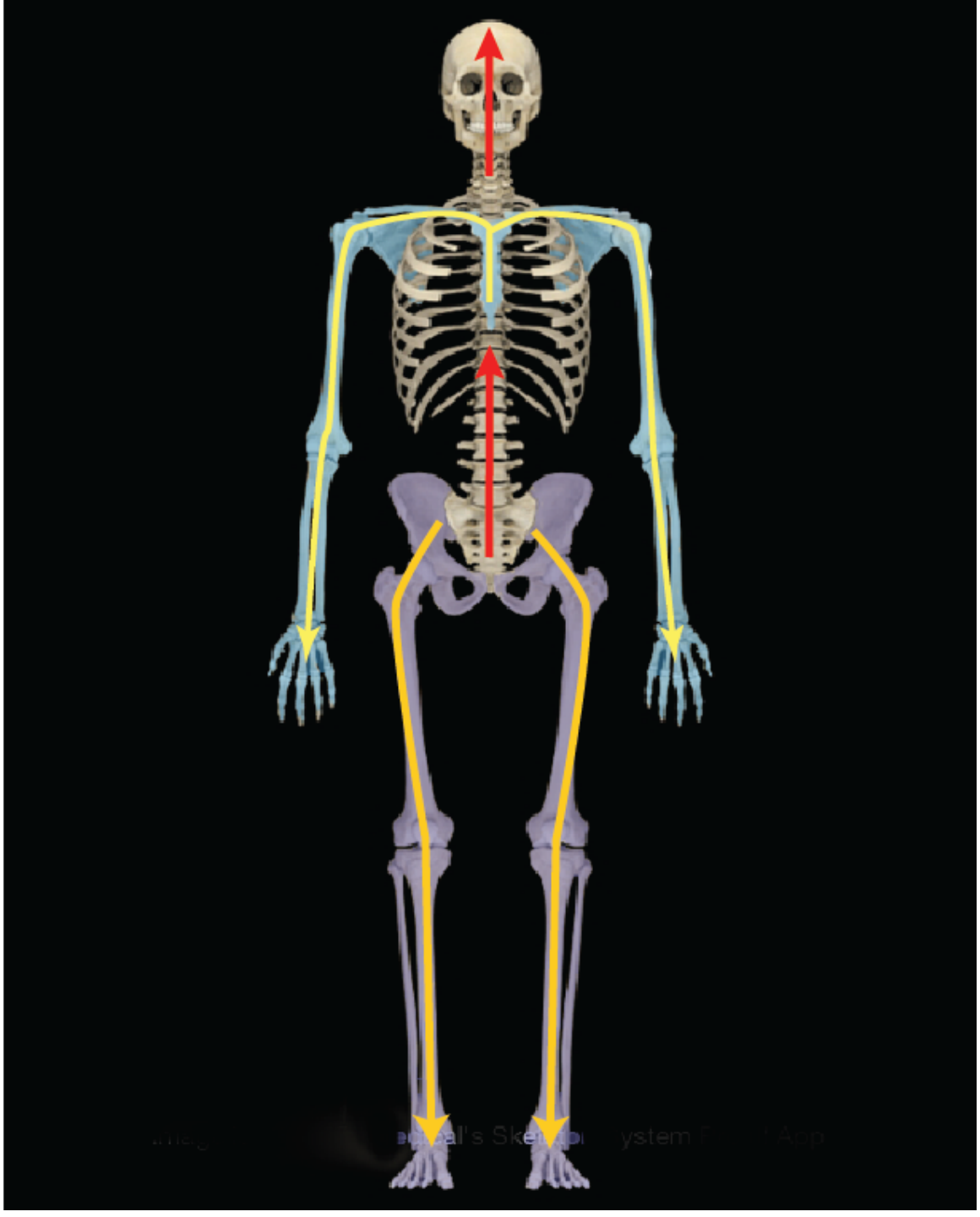
From the back:

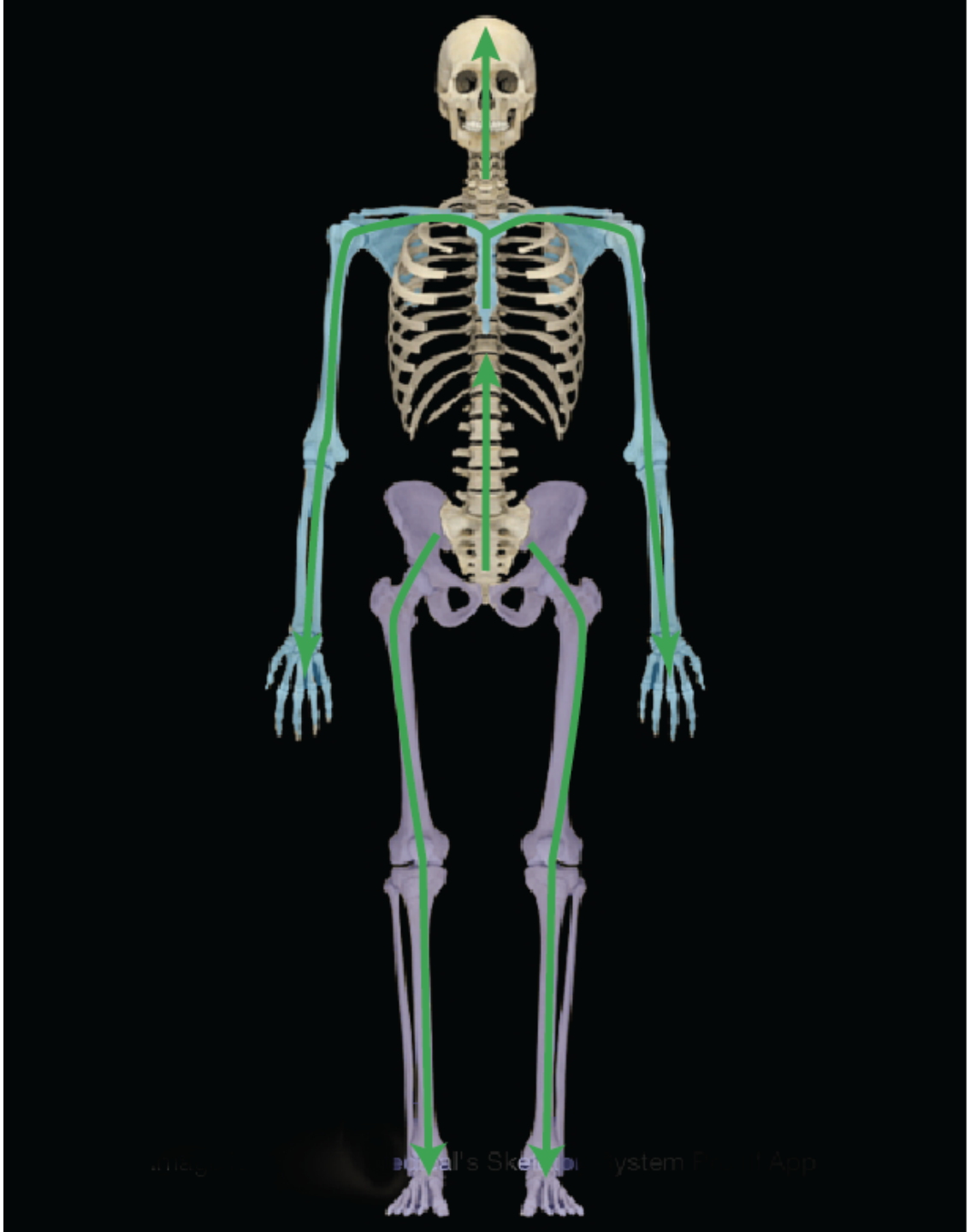


So here's the Primary Movement:









A new look at Monkey: T. Rex





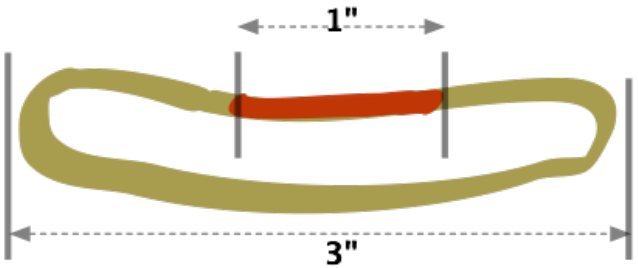
Notice the similarity of the human and TR femurs. Notice that the hind limbs are beside the spine.

Effortless Distributed Lengthening (EDL™)

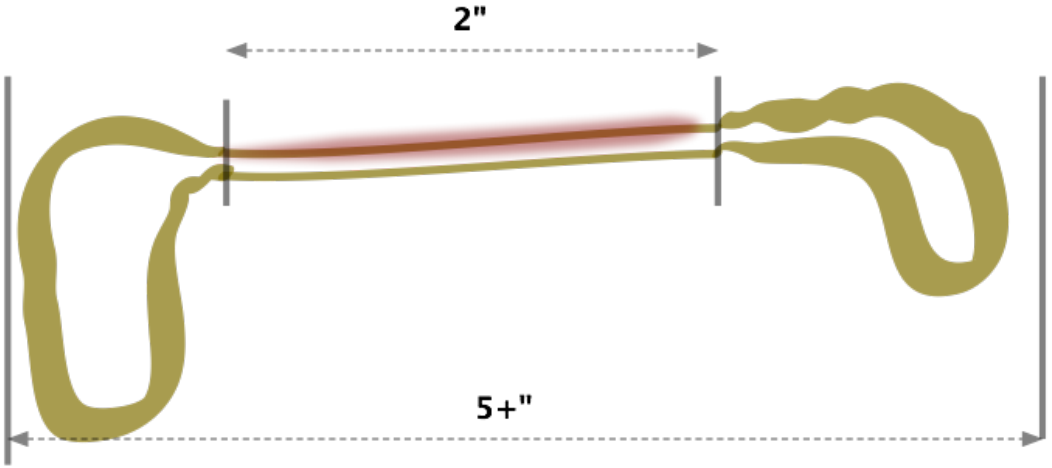
When you notice tightness somewhere interfering with the smooth operation of the Primary Movement, it's very tempting to try to stretch out that particular place. It just feels right.

This is like holding a rubber band and stretching just the middle.

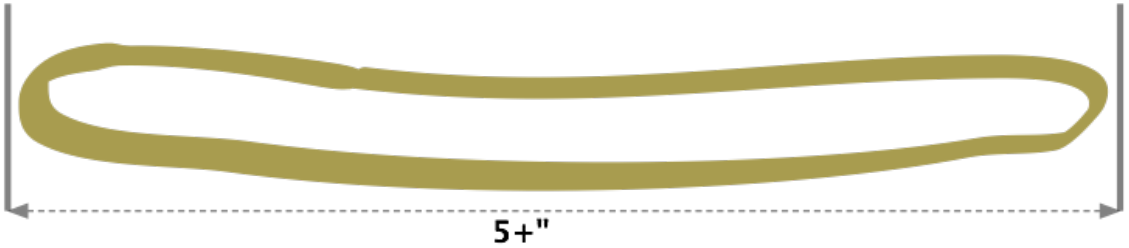
Problem:



Intuitive Solution:



Better Solution:



If, instead, you activate the Primary Control/ Movement as a whole, there is a good chance that the problem will resolve itself into the whole.

[This analogy is flawed: the PC/M is not a stretch. Rubber bands naturally return to their original length when the stretching force is removed. The Primary Control doesn't work like that. But the point about not trying to stretch out a local problem locally is still important.]

EDL™!

That's the literal/physical part
of Alexander's discovery:
The Primary Movement (or Primary Control),
a unified movement pattern
that underlies our posture and
our movement.

Here comes the mental/psychological part:

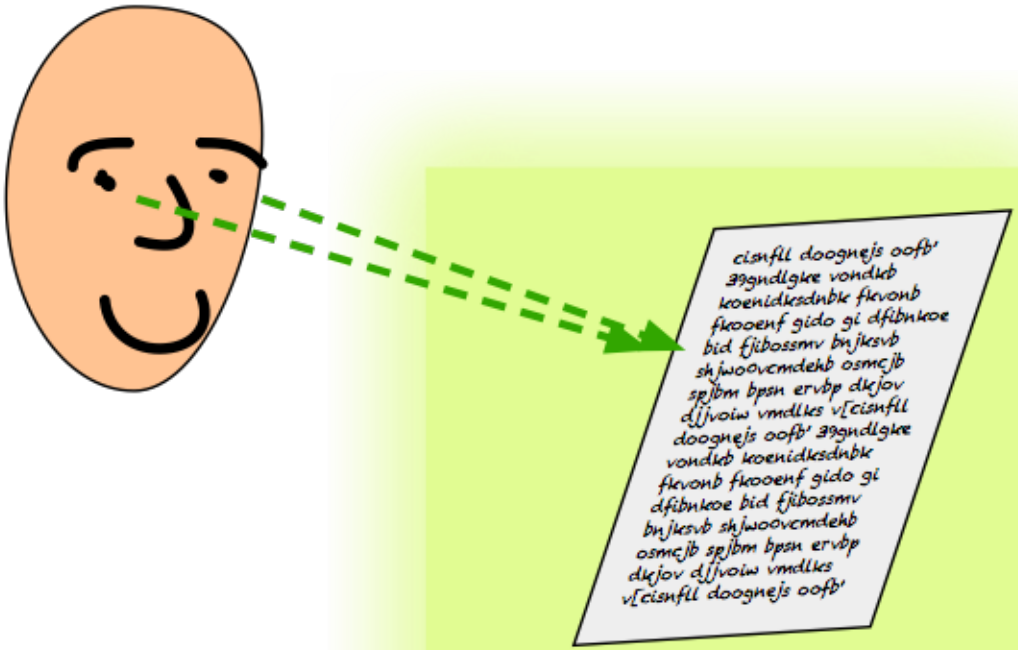
The Alexander Technique, as I understand it, is in part about improving freedom and ease of movement. To accomplish this, we learn to pay close attention to what we are doing.

When we need to pay close attention to something, we use one of (at least) two strategies.

Types of Attention

1: (Our default) For reading

Visually oriented, but can involve other senses, too.



Types of Attention

2: Paying attention to things in motion



We have been expert at this since babyhood. We use it to walk through crowded places, drive safely, watch performances, sports events, conductors, family members, etc. etc.

Since in the Alexander work, what we are attending to is movement, using the "What-you're- paying-attention-to-must-hold-still" strategy to understand what we're doing inevitably leads to failure. You must use the "Paying-attention-to-things-in-motion" strategy.

One of the ways we make things hold still is by analysis: we name a part of a whole and then just focus on that. I think: "My head," and the rest of me more or less disappears. Then I try to do something with "my head" (such as trying to move it forward and up to stimulate the primary control) and I can't, because it's no longer in relationship with the rest of me.



Here's the same phenomenon, only focussing on the legs:



You can see how difficult it would be to try to send these downwards toward the floor (think of the crocodile) from this point of view.

This is even worse! How in the world could you keep track of these two separate parts at the same time (not to mention all the others), let alone allow them to move as part of a whole pattern?





When you experience yourself as a whole, you can move any part of yourself in that context without losing the rest of you. So, if you move your head up, you can notice how the whole of yourself responds to that, stimulating every part of the primary control. It's all one pattern, which underlies any specific action, like standing, walking, singing, playing the flute, or whatever.

To expand on this and reveal its extraordinary power,
here is a new metaphor for considering human experience and states of consciousness.

We'll consider three levels:

I. The Literal
II. The Rational/Symbolic/Analytical
III. The Paradoxical

Level I: The Literal

- This is the world as it is. Solids, liquids, and gases, forces and vectors, heat and light and gravity.
- From the Alexander perspective, it's the way the body works. It includes our anatomy and the primary movement as it's found in animals and young children. We are trying to restore this in our behavior and experience, to act in harmony with it.
- The Literal is experienced by paying attention to things in movement, because they always are.

Level II: The Rational/Symbolic/Analytic

- Language, mathematics, pictures and diagrams, logical categories. This is where most people spend much of their time. It's what we learn in school and where science operates. It's explanations of the literal world and their extensions, maps (and mapping, including body-mapping). It's very powerful and essential to modern life.
- It should be evident that it involves making the world hold still; that includes the analysis and mathematical study of movement and the descriptions of what's going on with Alexander's discoveries.
- We often call this Thinking. Its subject is the first level, the Literal, though it can also be self-referential, and indeed, it can lose its moorings to the literal world. A major source of the world's problems is people trying to impose Level II structures/maps on Level I, as if truth arose from Level II rather than from Level I. These problems can be the type that arise from inaccurate body-maps, or they can be political...

Level III. The Paradoxical

- The Paradoxical is also experienced by attending to things in movement. Rather than either/or, it's both/and: up and down, in and out, here and there, now and then, whole and parts, all together. From here you experience a world that's changing all the time. But unlike experience in the Literal, it includes the understanding developed in the second level. So this level is about the first two (and itself).

- This all sounds like what it is: a Level II description of something that doesn't exist just on that level. It's easy enough to describe the idea of Level III; of course up implies down, for instance, so you can say that one implies the other. That doesn't get us anywhere.
- This model actually refers to what I would like to call three states of consciousness. As children we start in the first; we gradually develop increasing fluency in the second; and that's often where we stop, refining and refining, explaining and explaining.
- For the practice of Alexander's discoveries, that's fatal: Level II awareness inherently stops movement. If we analyze something into parts, we can attend to only a few of them at a time, and if we try to work them in relation to each other, we are stuck.
- And if we try to substitute the idea of an all-encompassing vague whole, that's also difficult if not impossible to do anything with, because it's just a big buzzing nothing.
- Level III awareness, on the other hand, includes not only the first but also the second level. From that state of awareness, it's trivially easy to be aware of and move parts within a whole.

A Plane to be Reached

It's crucial to realize that these three levels are levels of *conscious experience,* not just theoretical ideas.

Alexander wrote: I wish it to be understood that throughout my writings I use the term "conscious guidance and control" to indicate primarily a plane to be reached rather than a method of reaching it. (UCL, p.15)

- Many of the problems people experience when they try to explain, teach, or use Alexander's discoveries arise because of the inadequacy of Level II description as an operational strategy. People are told **not** to think, **not** to feel, **not** to do.
- **Not** thinking, **not** feeling, and **not** doing imply **not** trying to make our experience hold still.
- All those instructions are a well-intentioned attempt to describe and evoke the experience of operating in Level III; but trying to understand them within Level II usually leads to failure. If a teacher can directly communicate the Level III experience, then people can sometimes find their way to success, but often not, even after years and years of lessons.

- This is why I find this particular model of what we do so useful: invoking the Primary Movement and making it the basis of all sorts of activity from a Level III state of consciousness is trivially easy. From Level II, it's not just difficult, it's impossible.
- Marj used to say, "This is just too easy for you." She was frustrated because we kept trying to carry out her instructions from Level II (the impossible level) when it was so easy for her from Level III. But she didn't have the vocabulary to describe her experience so that we could understand it. She didn't realize it was a thing.
- I think that was also why she distrusted body-mapping (even though we essentially learned it from her, and it is just a systematic approach to Alexander's idea of Faulty Sensory Appreciation). She feared that it would trap us in Level II consciousness—and it did, at least for some people.

Grateful acknowledgement

I owe the model of the levels to Jim Kepner and Carol DeSanto, with whom I've been studying energy work since 1995, and to their teacher, Rosalyn Bruyere. I started with Jim and Carol because I thought their work might have some relevance to my Alexander study. Then I became interested in it for its own sake.

As I continued with them, I realized that one phenomenon that unites the two disciplines was this: as we learned to work in our clients' nervous systems, it became clear that that is what skillful Alexander teachers have always done.

And then later, as we studied and experienced these successive levels of consciousness, I came to realize that this understanding was at the heart of what I needed to know to really understand, teach, and practice Alexander's discoveries.

A new way to think about some of this

- The English psychiatrist and philosopher Iain McGilchrist has written extensively about the functions of the two brain hemispheres.
- Put in the very simplest terms, the right hemisphere perceives relationships, wholes, and novelty, while the left hemisphere perceives patterns, analyzes, names, and grasps.

Correspondence between these brain functions and the levels

- The right hemisphere seems to correspond to the 1st level of consciousness
- The left hemisphere seems to correspond to the 2nd level. This is the level which, acting alone, fails to be able to utilize Alexander's discoveries.
- The right and left hemispheres acting in appropriate partnership, with the left in service of the right, seems to correspond to the 3rd.

Caveat

This description of McGilchrist's work (which summarizes the results of decades of research by a host of scholars) is vastly over-simplified, and represents what I have gleaned from my first reading of part of his extensive writings. It may eventually prove misguided.

Nevertheless, the correlations I've noticed between what he reports and what we do seem so telling and their implications so fruitful that I am including this information in this presentation.

The 4th level: the transcendent

- There is a 4th level: the transcendent.
- The transcendent is about the first 3 and includes them all in a whole
- McGilchrist's model doesn't seem to include anything like this. (But I'm only 20% through his huge 2nd book.)
- All 4 levels include some sort of interaction with the energy fields surrounding and generated by our bodies.

More about energy

- We live in a sea of electromagnetic energy, and our bodies, especially our nervous systems, generate electromagnetic fields.
- We can learn to sense and interact with these.
- Good Alexander teaching involves matching and interacting with the energy of the student's nervous system. All successful Alexander teachers do this, at least intuitively, if not consciously. Both Marjorie Barstow and Patrick McDonald referred to it in passing. Doing so can be taught.

Our relationship with energetic fields and the Transcendent

- An analogy:
- The eyes do not see: the brain uses the eyes to see.
- Similarly, I believe that the brain does not think: our Selves use our brains to think.
- I think it is the Self that can directly perceive the 4th level.
- What this means I frankly can't explain. I'm just learning to reach this level; but my reading of spiritual writings leads me to believe it has been part of human experience for millennia.

In Summary

What I think we need to do as Alexander teachers is to teach people

- 1. to recognize and utilize the difference between the 2 attention strategies, and
- 2. using that as a bridge, teach people to move into the 3rd or Paradoxical level of consciousness, and recognize when they have left it and regained it.

When they get it, of course they want to keep it, that is, to hold it still, moving back into level II. At that point it vanishes.

A BETTER LEARNING MODEL IS:

1. Gather information
2. Allow your brain to make sense of it gradually
3. When that happens, instead of trying to remember or hold on to it, trust your brain to do that and
4. Gather more data!

All this is the subject of this workshop. We'll try to help you understand and use this information to enrich and clarify both your practice and your teaching of Alexander's discoveries.