

The Trombone Player's Survival Guide

**HOW TO GET OUT AND STAY OUT OF PAIN
USING MOVEMENT ALIGNMENT TECHNIQUE**

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Using Movement Alignment Technique**

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Foreword

Playing trombone is not a natural act. It requires the musician to hold up a 15 pound instrument for hours at a time while simultaneously breathing freely to support the tone and moving the slide and tongue in a coordinated effort to produce the desired sound. Trombonists move in this way for hours every day. In fact, dozens of practice hours have a way of turning into days, weeks and years of trombone-playing movements without the slightest hint that there may be trouble on the horizon.

The aesthetic appeal of music-making often masks the effect of so many repetitive motions because the trombonist is otherwise engaged in musical thoughts. While the musician may be unaware of any adverse effects, the body is, in fact, well aware. The potential tension of tens of thousands of repetitions does not necessarily dissipate; in many cases, it accumulates within the system and eventually manifests in pain or dysfunction.

The Trombone Player's Survival Guide provides a means by which players can apply a new approach to playing pain free. Allan and Norwood have done trombonists everywhere a great service by aiming them toward freedom and ease in playing.

With help from *The Trombone Player's Survival Guide*, here's wishing you a lifetime of enjoyable, pain-free trombone playing!

David Vining
Trombone Professor, Northern Arizona University
Owner, Mountain Peak Music

I. How to Play Better and Stay out of Pain: The Seven Principles of Movement Alignment Technique

Good technique and ease in playing your instrument are an expression of following The Seven Principles. Understanding and applying these provide many benefits, two of which are: helping you to understand what therapies might be most effective and assist in effectively dealing with the cause of pain issues rather than the symptoms; and helping you to play better and stay out of pain. Here are the seven principles followed by explanations for each principle.

1. It is NOT normal to play in pain.

A relaxed pain free body is normal.

2. The body is an inseparable connected interdependent whole.

There is no such thing as a body part.

3. The body is self-healing.

Outside influences either assist or hinder the body in healing itself.

4. Site and Source are different.

Most of the time, the site of the pain is not the source of the problem.

5. Correct body alignment is essential.

Relaxed movement comes from correct alignment.

6. Integrated body movement is vital.

Whole Body Rhythm is using connected alignment to move any part of the body.

7. Correct movement in the right sequence relieves pain and changes posture.

II. What to Do About Your Pain: Applying the Movement Alignment Technique

Step 1: Rate your pain

Begin your alignment routine by taking a quick moment to rate your discomfort on the scale below.

"0" is no pain/discomfort and "10" is "I can't function."

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(circle one)

Step 2: Relax unneeded tension

Only the part of your body that is moving or being stretched should feel slight muscle tension. If you do these movements as if you're working out, other parts of your body will tighten. Your goal is to use only the muscle tension needed to accomplish each movement. If you find yourself saying "This is too easy—I'm not doing anything," then you are doing the position/movement correctly.

Step 3: Begin your alignment routine

The sequencing of the positions is essential to their effectiveness.

NOTE: For MAT to be effective you must do the movements/positions in the order given.

III. A Foundation for Avoiding Pain: Connected Alignment

Connected Alignment has its foundation in three of the Seven Principles of Movement Alignment Therapy. They are:

- The body is an inseparable connected interdependent whole. There is no such thing as a body part.
- Correct body alignment is essential. Relaxed movement comes from correct alignment.
- Integrated body movement is vital. Whole Body Rhythm is using connected alignment to move any part of the body.

Bear in mind that the alignment photos in this chapter are offered solely as visual representations of connected alignment. They are useful as a home base from which you begin playing and to which you return as you play; they are not meant to be held, static positions. The photos are only snapshots of a moment in time and cannot possibly reflect the dynamic nature of the body in movement.

As much as possible begin playing from these positions by bringing your instrument to you using the photos as an alignment reference to support your playing with your entire body.