

Movement:

a brief history





Where Intentional Movement Started

Movement has always been crucial to humanity's survival.

At the beginning of mankind, humans lived amongst groups and tribes where the only way to put food on the table was to hunt and gather it themselves. This required skill, focus, physical strength and stamina, as hunting parties would often be gone for days at a time. As society grew and discovered alternate means to food, we moved to an agricultural society that allowed for a calmer lifestyle and allowed food to be put on the table without going miles into the wilderness to find it.

This is when the idea of "fitness" or intentional movement first hit the scene and each ancient society used it a bit differently than others.

China is where it is first believed that Cong Fu gymnastics developed, it started under Confucius' watchful eye to stop "organ malfunctions and internal stoppages." Around this time India's religious leaders began to develop a series of movements that could aid in the traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism, today we call this movement yoga.



Agriculture



Cong Fu



Yoga

In the Near East, movement manifested itself in the form of military discipline. From as young as six years old, boys were trained in the art of war which included hunting, riding, javelin throwing and more. This is where the game of boxing can be traced back to, with signs of boxing in Egypt as early as 3000 BC.

A lot of our modern day ideas around movement come from the Greeks and the Roman philosophers. Physical fitness was held in the highest regard. With huge gymnasiums built for the art of gymnastics as well as running, jumping and wrestling. The Greeks placed such emphasis on 'physical fitness' they employed it as a part of their educational system. This is the earliest record of a Physical Education class in primary school. The Romans valued war and the ability to march for long durations as well as javelin and discus. It is during the Greek and Roman time frame that we have the earliest records of the Olympics and movement being turned into a competition in which the lay person would watch for entertainment; although competition through fitness has existed for hundreds of year. Primitive forms of games such as rugby, javelin throwing and discus and the famous gladiator battles would be watched and judged during this part of history.

As the world was plunged into the dark ages, the old forms of movement resurfaces, as hunting, fishing, gathering and agriculture was the way food was kept on the table. After the dark ages, life became a bit more sedentary for the wealthy and lessons learned from the Greeks were remembered. Intentional movement began to once again be taught to the elite and games such as cricket, golf, and tennis became popular among the upper class.



Cricket



Discus



Javelin





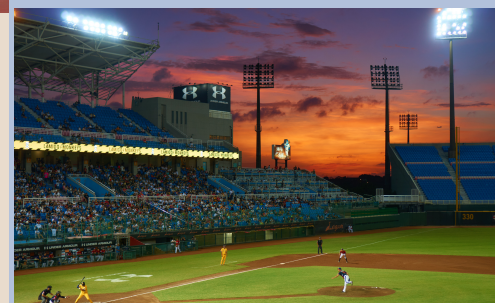
Modern American movement followed a similar track as the rest of the world. In our infancy, we were primarily an agricultural nation and our movement centered around the needs of the farm. However, as the industrial revolution began, America became more urbanized and intentional movement once again began to be emphasized and in 1820 Physical Education classes began to be standardized across schools.

During this time that we saw a rise in competitive sports. Games such as baseball and softball emerged; competitive rowing, basketball and football were born and prestigious colleges and universities began to compete in these sports. During this competitive sports growth, the first modern Olympics were held. Modeled after the ancient Olympics of the Greek and Roman Empires, the first modern Olympics began on April 6th, 1896 in Athens, Greece where 241 athletes from 14 countries competed in 46 events.

After this sporting events took off and became a national and international phenomenon that people could go and watch and enjoy. More sports continued to emerge as communication became easier and cultures and ethnicities intermingled. Volleyball, skiing, surfing, even marathon running emerged and began to take place on the world stage. After the World Wars, the idea of personal fitness gained momentum and in the 1970s a running craze began and people began jogging as an intentional way to move.



Volleyball



Baseball



Skiing



Surfing

This brings us to modern day where movement is still very much embedded into the fabric of our society. The point of this essay is to help you see there are so many ways you can move your body. Remember, there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to movement. We all are different, we all have different jobs and different capabilities. Spanning throughout history, humanity has changed and adapted its movement to fit the current lifestyle. From hunting and gathering to war movement to agricultural movement to structured sports and physical fitness, movement changes. Today you will see sporting events starting as young as three years old and continuing through adolescents. Adults are bombarded on social media with the best "workout" and movement is talked about constantly.

While sports and movement are a good thing, I urge you to quit placing the same morality and self worth on intentional movement that social media promotes. Movement is there to simply help stop "organ malfunctions and internal stoppages" as Confucius taught. Modern medicine has helped us understand that intentional movement may help us decrease the risk of disease, mental illness and stress.

But no matter how you look back on history, I hope in the present time you choose to move your body in a joyful way. Let go of the morality that modern society has assigned movement and instead tailor your movement to your own lifestyle. Do what brings you joy.

List of Movement Activities

- walking
- soccer
- basketball
- tennis
- baseball
- golf
- running
- volleyball
- badminton
- swimming
- boxing
- table tennis
- skiing
- ice skating
- roller skating
- cricket
- rugby
- pool
- darts
- football
- bowling
- ice hockey
- surfing
- karate
- horse racing
- snowboarding
- skateboarding
- cycling
- archery
- fishing
- gymnastics
- snowmobiling
- curling
- racquetball
- figure skating
- rock climbing
- sumo wrestling
- taekwondo
- fencing
- water skiing
- jet skiing
- weight lifting
- scuba diving
- judo
- wind surfing
- kickboxing
- sky diving
- hang gliding
- bungee jumping
- lacrosse
- polo
- wrestling
- squash
- handball
- rowing
- sailing
- kitesurfing
- triathlon
- paddle boarding
- ultimate frisbee
- hiking
- canoeing
- kayaking
- skiing
- martial arts
- paragliding
- equestrian
- pickleball

Research Sites:

[ThoughtCo](#), and [unm.edu](#)

