
DAVID LESONDAK
AUTHOR OF FASCIA: WHAT IT IS, AND WHY IT MATTERS
THE FASCIA CONNECTION
DISCOVER THE KEY TO FLEXIBILITY, LONGEVITY, AND A PAIN-FREE LIFE

THE FASCIA CONNECTION

DISCOVER THE KEY TO FLEXIBILITY, VITALITY, AND PAIN-FREE LIVING

DAVID LESONDAK

FOR REVIEW

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At the heart of science is an essential balance between two seemingly contradictory attitudes—an openness to new ideas, no matter how bizarre or counterintuitive they may be, and the most ruthless skeptical scrutiny of all ideas, old and new. This is how deep truths are winnowed from deep nonsense.

—Carl Sagan

I believe that more rich golden thought will appear to the mind's eye as the study of the fascia is pursued than any division in the body . . . Every view we take, a wonder appears.

—Andrew Taylor Still

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CHAPTER 1

Every Fiber of Your Being

I see the physician (of the future) as less a mechanic or a chemist but more a teacher. In other words, teaching the patient to use the natural healing ability we all have in our bodies. And our natural healing ability is incredible, absolutely incredible. Most top doctors today will admit we're on the edge of just such a medical revolution.[1]

The speaker continued, saying that in some cases disease states can arise from the conscious and subconscious mind, not just from the outside world. And that some people had healed themselves from everything from "athlete's foot to cancer" without realizing they were doing so. He also mentioned strange, exotic words like "acupuncture," "Zen meditation," and "yoga" and said that these things were starting to gain acceptance in some medical circles.

The year was 1976.

The words were spoken by DeForest Kelley, the actor who played Dr. McCoy on the original *Star Trek*. Kelley was so enamored of that role that he developed a passion for medicine, educating himself about all aspects of it until the end of his days. I was listening to him say these words on a vinyl LP called *Inside Star Trek*. I was twelve years old.

To say it left an impression on me would be an understatement.

I was born in that cusp between the Baby Boom and Generation X—what Larry Wilmore likes to call "Generation Moonshot." And boy, did

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I love anything to do with space! As much as I hoped to grow up to be like Captain Kirk, we weren't going to have starships by the time I graduated high school. I was devastated when we stopped going to the moon (four years before *Inside Star Trek* came out). And as much as I loved science I was never going to be as mathematically brilliant as Mr. Spock, though admiring his ability to reason and adopting a Spock-like stoicism certainly helped me cope with grade school bullies. But Dr. McCoy? That seemed more realistic. His compassion for his patients no matter who or what they were (this was science fiction), now that was something I could aspire to.

Even today I often find myself saying to patients: "Look, if the body didn't have a capacity to heal and remodel itself, we never would've lasted long enough to invent Western medicine!"

How Dr. McCoy can you get?

Even though I would go through a number of different careers in my twenties (including television, radio, advertising, and an eighteen-month stint in a funeral home), the thought that we had some innate capacity to heal ourselves never left me. So did an instinct to help relieve pain through touch. It started in high school, with friends who belonged to a professional ethnic dance troupe in Pittsburgh called Slavjane. This was very physical, high-performance stuff. I often went to their rehearsals, and someone was always pulling a muscle, twisting an ankle, getting their shoulder stuck, or some such. My impulse was to reach out and say "Here, let me help." And then start rubbing, kneading, and stretching the injured area. I didn't know what I was doing in any academic sense, but I could feel what needed to be done. The results spoke for themselves, and I kept getting invited to rehearsals and performances. David Servan-Schreiber, cofounder of the Center for Integrative Medicine at UPMC, called this "the instinct to heal,"[2] and that instinct followed me throughout my education and in nearly every job I ever had.

Where did that instinct come from? I think it started with my mother.

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She would often lightly scratch my back, calming my energetic three-year-old nerves to help me sleep. Sometimes she would sing "Dem Bones,"[3] which goes: "The foot bone connected to the heel bone / the heel bone connected to the ankle bone / the ankle bone connected to the leg bone / the leg bone connected to the knee bone / the knee bone connected to the thigh bone" and so on. She would work her way all the way up my body, jostling the appropriate part along the way. It was my first anatomy lesson.

I also remember watching her apply alcohol swabs to my father's back. Dad had a hard physical life, working as a riveter in the steel mills of Pittsburgh. While my parents were never particularly physically demonstrative toward each other, and a word like "massage" was never used, I'm sure she was doing some of that, too. What I do recall in those moments was a tenderness and vulnerability with each other that I rarely saw otherwise. I think I perceived it as care, as love.

It's amazing the things that influence and shape our lives from such an early age.

Fascia is something that has helped shape you from a very early age. It began when you were a wee embryo between two and three weeks old. You continue to shape and influence it in your daily life, through your movements and physical habits. There's even evidence that suggests fascia can be influenced by emotional states. It's both a tissue and system that runs throughout your entire body. It's also a sensory organ. Fascia, however, is not the next "shiny new thing" of the body; it's actually the shiny *old* thing. We now see fascia in a new light, becoming increasingly more aware of its importance to our overall health and general well-being.

So what exactly is fascia? What is it doing? And how is it doing that? How might it revolutionize some of our fundamental understanding of the body, how it functions, how it breaks down, and how better to repair it?

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COLLAGEN: MORE THAN JUST A SUPPLEMENT

Collagen is the most abundant protein in your body. It is the primary fiber that makes up our fascia, the connective tissue that surrounds every muscle in your body.

Use your thumb and first finger to pull up the skin on the back of your hand. You are now pulling up on the first two layers of your fascia: the dermis and the superficial fascia. The dermis is the connective tissue layer just under the epidermis. Together they are better known as your skin. Immediately beneath your skin is the superficial fascia. Though it varies in thickness in different areas, your entire body is swaddled in weblike superficial fascia.

The superficial fascia is a loosely woven, felt-like mix of sturdier collagen fibers and more stretchy elastic fibers. It's also suffused with more fibrous bands called the *retinacula cutis*. That's Latin for "tether (to) the skin," and that's exactly what they do. Commonly referred to as the "skin ligaments," they form a honeycomb arrangement that houses millions of little round lobules of fat, keeping this vital layer structured but at the same time flexible and soft. Some areas, like the back of your hand, have very few if any fat lobules; most of your body has a lot more, like the back of your thighs. Cellulite is an actual visual impression of clusters of fat lobules surrounded by the skin ligaments. Along with the fat, superficial fascia is home to many nerves and blood vessels. It stabilizes them during movement and protects them against compression. It's your body's all-natural bubble wrap. Superficial fascia also serves as conduit for fluid flow and is the immediate environment of your lymphatic vessels—a vital part of your immune system.

What's also remarkable about the skin ligaments is that they are tougher and denser where needed, and relatively loose and gliding elsewhere. Remember when you plucked up your skin from the back of your hand? Now try that on your palm or fingers and you'll see that it doesn't happen because the mechanical requirements for your palm and fingers

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are quite different. It would be difficult to hold this book, let alone use tools, if the palm of your hand behaved like the back of your hand. Your body is quite smart that way.

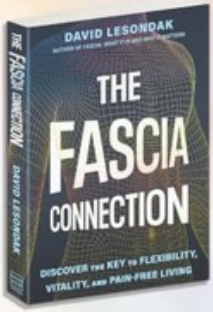
The collagenous tethers of the skin ligaments also connect your superficial fascia to the deep fascia that envelops your muscles. To get an idea of what this is like, take an orange and slice it right down the middle. The outside rind is like our skin. You will also see the familiar, softer inner white skin (called the albedo) surrounding the juicy sacs of pulpy goodness that we enjoy. Now imagine a similar soft tissue surrounding every muscle in your body, creating a separate compartment for each muscle and also connecting all these separate "muscle compartments" to each other and also to the underside of your skin. And like your skin, your fascia is one continuous tissue, interweaving itself like a net or web throughout all your muscles all the way down to each individual muscle fiber and even each cell, as we'll see in chapter 3.

EVERY FIBER OF YOUR BEING

Fibers suggest fabric, so imagine an inner leotard that has 650 or so pockets, one for each muscle. In science and medicine these fascial pockets are called epimysium, because they lie on top of the muscles. The anatomy texts of Jean-Baptiste Marc Bourgery from the 1800s illustrated this quite well, with nearly three-dimensional drawings of muscles housed in their fascial pockets.

You can see the fascia not just on top but also surrounding each muscle as well. This leotard keeps the muscles separate and distinct and also connected to each other, all the way up to the skin. This creates a synergy and rapport from superficial to deep, from one muscle to its next-door neighbor, and from the muscle living in the upstairs or downstairs apartment, and so on, to stretch this architectural metaphor even further. If we zoom in past the epimysium, we'll find bundles of muscle fibers wrapped in fascia, called perimysium, and each muscle fiber has its own fascial

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"This is the clearest guide to fascia available today."
Tiffany Cruikshank, founder of Yoga Medicine

Discover how healthy fascia can reduce pain, improve movement, increase flexibility, and lead to a more resilient and vibrant life.

20 STEP-BY-STEP FASCIA MOVEMENT PRACTICES

Fascia expertise you can trust!

30+ years clinical experience · UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine
Established author on fascia · International speaker and workshop leader

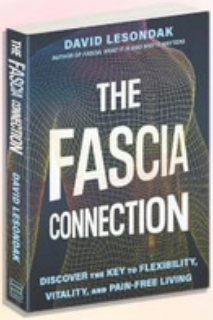
Learn what the science actually says from an international expert and practicing clinician whose work changes people's lives for the better.



"The real gift here is David the storyteller. You feel like he's explaining it to you across the table."
Todd Wright — VP of Player Performance LA Clippers; Founder of *Train 4 the Game*

"A-ha! moments abound. Rich in motion, emotion and solid scientific insights."
Jill Miller — author of *Body by Breath* and *The Roll Model*

"The Fascia Connection is a revelation. Learn how to deepen the connection to your body and embrace a more vibrant, connected, and resilient life"
Sue Hitzman — Creator of *The Melt Method*



MOVE BETTER.

FEEL BETTER.

AGE BETTER.

MAKE THE CONNECTION.