



The Shinbones Your Living Stilts

Do you think about your shins as you walk, and go through the tasks of your day? Do you consider your shins when you dance, or run? Quite often, the only time most people are aware of their shins is when they hit them on the corner of a coffee table, or when they get shin splints from improper running technique. This is in part because the shins are quiet pillars of support, providing communication of balance between the ankles and feet, and the large thighbones. Your shins are your living stilts; they make it so you can balance your body over your moveable feet and ankles. Paying attention to your shins makes for healthy movement of your entire body, from the ground up.

Your shins are made up of the strong and straight tibia bone (the second largest bone of the body) and the gracefully curved fibula bone. The function of the tibia is to receive information from your thighbone above and communicate with the talus, the big bone that makes the top of the foot. The function of the fibula is to transfer weight from the thighbone down into your foot and to provide stability and mobility in your ankle joint.

To your emotional body, your shins create a connection from the earth into your belly, the place that feeds you with nutritional and intuitive energy. To your spiritual body, your shins are the ethereal tree trunk, the physical part of your spirit that wants to tower up into the heavens where illuminated spirit resides. As you develop trust in your shins and you really begin to communicate with them, you can become light as a feather, like an angel who walks the earth.

Activate Your Shinbones

In Nia, you are taught to connect to your shinbones through Awareness, and get in touch with Sensation through the thighbones. Use the shinbones like fence posts, vertically planting them with purpose as you move. Sense the two bones of each shin supporting the left and right sides of each foot, and the inside and the outside of each foot. Use the shins to relax your thighs above and your feet below.

While standing, practice these two moves from the Nia book – the Toe Pop and the Relevé. In the Toe Pop, lift your toes off of the floor to strengthen the shins and stretch the calves. In Relevé, rise to the balls of your feet to strengthen your calves and stretch your shins in a different way. Keep your feet parallel as you do this to work the inside and the outside of your leg, and push through the area between the big toe.

For more information

Ask your teacher for more information about this, and other available Nia Handouts.

Get the Nia Book, *The Nia Technique* (2005, Broadway Books).

Go on-line to read and subscribe to the free monthly Nia Newsletter.