**Vitality and pliability - how focusing on the process can bring great reward**

**By West Norwood Therapies Team, Oct 26 2016 09:00AM**

Massage therapist and yoga instructor, Erika Zetterval, shares some articles that have given her food for thought about how we approach change



Internet and social media is awash with clips, quotes and articles with the purpose to amuse, provoke and inspire. Two of the latter popped up in my sphere over the summer.

The first is a video and article telling the story about an 85 year old lady. She is standing straight and tall having previously spend years hunched over crooked and in pain. Now transformed in less than two years by a considered and dedicated yoga practice. If you have not yet seen follow the link:

<http://nypost.com/2016/08/08/this-85-year-old-proves-yoga-can-keep-you-young/>

It looks miraculous and might invoke doubt if it's true or not if such a dramatic change is possible or not. But to me this is an inspiring and amazing example of our bodies' incredible possibilities and pliability.

This speaks to me from the aspect of a body worker and yoga practitioner but also closer to home. My mother was always very fit and active but with a desk job. With age movements gradually became less easy and at the point of retirement she had very stiff shoulders rolling forward beginning to close the chest and round the back.

Then she picked up a fitness class that combines chi gung, yoga postures, gentle movements and balancing. The regular participation lead to significant increase in joint movement and flexibility as well as discovering abilities never before experienced or explored, but perhaps best of all the joy and playfulness of practice.

She just turned eighty and still moves with ease and joy finding new horizons. Perhaps not as strong as she used to be but still maintaining the regained openness in shoulders and chest.

The other article I came across talked about unrealistic and big goals and how they can backfire and what to focus on instead. It points to an emphasis on the process or in other words the practice rather then the end game. It's also well worth a read.

<http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2016/08/why-having-big-goals-can-backfire.html>

For both my mum and the other lady there is no finishing line or big price but a continued practice and unfolding. With that mindset there is more room for playfulness and less rigidity in what is and what is not possible as an outcome.

We can get locked into restrictive holding patterns out of protection from pain or injury but also just habit. Forgetting how to let go and trust or try mentally as well as physically. Mind and body need to find ways to introduce new experiences. With repetition a new normal range of movement can establish. Yoga is combining movement with breath and hence mind and therefore fantastic for health. But any physical activity aid vitality. To that add a form of deep relaxation a massage every now and then and you have a good formula to maintain and regain health.