I learned the importance of prioritizing essential feelings over the resulting shape we make. We often decrease the stretch in the intended area to reach external markers like clasping hands, binding, or touching toes.

For example, **Figure 1-8-4** shows a version of Side Angle Pose in which the intention is to stretch the adductor muscles on the inner thigh by pressing (abducting) the knee in opposition to the pelvis.

Figure 1-8-5 is an example of a version of the pose in which the goal of clasping the hands has allowed the right knee to move toward the midline into adduction, reducing the stretch on the targeted adductor muscles.

FEELING

Figure 1-8-4
Side Angle Pose with DUO
Isolated adductor stretch

Figure 1-8-6
Biceps Curl:
30 Pounds, Strict Form
Elbow braced, pure elbow flexion, more isolation of biceps

Figure 1-8-4 shows Side-Angle Pose, in which the space, stability, and adductor stretch of DUO are the number one priorities. Binding the hands and other external markers of success are less important.

1-8-6 shows a stricter form with less weight (30 pounds) to isolate the tension on the biceps without the momentum.

In yoga and weightlifting examples, the risk of injury decreases, and the strengthening or flexibility benefits increase.

SHAPE

Figure 1-8-5
Side Angle Pose, No DUO
Little addcutor isolation.

Figure 1-8-7
Biceps Curl:
40 pounds, sloppy form
Using momentum, arch back, less isolation of biceps

Figure 1-8-5 shows a Side-Angle Pose in which the priority is binding the hands and external markers of success. The space, stability, and adductor stretch of DUO are less important.

Figure 1-8-7 shows more weight (40 pounds) being lifted but using momentum, reducing the work of the biceps.

In both the yoga and weightlifting examples, the risk of injury to the spine increases, and the strengthening or flexibility benefits decrease.

Let your shape be guided by how much stretch you feel, not whether your chin is on your shin.

The Weightlifting Equivalent of a Go-Around

In 2016 I taught yoga to the LA Dodgers. One of the players helped me find the language to describe what I was trying to achieve as he strained to get his chin on his shin in *paschimottanasana* I asked him to back up, and use better technique. Instead of prioritizing getting his face close to his feet, bend the knees and concentrate on decreasing the angle of the pelvis and the thighs. Let your shape be guided by how much stretch you feel, not whether your chin is on your shin.

After feeling the more precise stretch in the hamstrings, a light bulb went off, and he said, "You are just like my weight trainer. He always wants me to use less weight but better form."

He was right; even though the comment was about strengthening a muscle rather than stretching, the analogy was perfect.

If we want to make our biceps muscles stronger by doing curls and are only motivated by how much weight we lift, we will probably "cheat" and use our back muscles to swing the weight using momentum, like **Figure 1-8-7.** When we do this, there are two consequences: the risk of injury goes way up, and the precision goes down.

By contrast, if we strictly brace the upper arm, isolating the controlled movement of the forearm to create tension on the biceps muscle, we will strengthen precisely the area we target, as shown in **Figure 1-8-6**.

On his podcast, Neuroscientist Andrew Huberman says "To generate hypertrophy (muscle growth), rather than lift weights, challenge your muscles." Concentrate on form and the tension in the muscle, de-prioritizing how much weight you are lifting.

This strategy perfectly maps how to use DUO and Sensation-Guided Attunement to stop being motivated primarily by endpoints in yoga poses and tune into the feeling of stretch in the precisely targeted area.

The Main Bodily Feelings We Seek

To help guide the Yoga is a Feeling, Not Just a Shape principle, here are three critical physical sensations in a pose:

- **stretch in the intended area**
- **stability and space in the joints**
- **expansive 3D breath**

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