



Organizing from the Core

I recently returned from a 3 week trip to Tanzania. Half of the time was spent in a remote inland village with no running water and no electricity. One of the things that mesmerized me during this stay was the incredible amounts of weight that the women carried so gracefully on their heads. Large buckets of water, filled at the water hole. Masses of sweet potatoes, corn, or peanuts that represented the day's harvest. Firewood gathered from a great distance.

Curiosity overtook me, and in my minimal Swahili, I asked one of the women if she would teach me to carry things on my head. I instantly became the center of attention of a small crowd, who got lots of enjoyment and laughs at my expense. And why not, as my first attempts led to a few steps before the basket on top of my head would tumble down to the ground and the giggles from the growing crowd would start.

But I learned something very valuable in that physical experience. I learned what is possible when we organize from strength inside of ourselves. Everything in my inner core had to line up perfectly to support what was on my head, and in that lining up, I began to feel the experience of fluidity and freedom in my limbs that I had seen in all the women. Something about organizing from this line of centeredness gave me a sense of incredible physical and mental strength. I felt free and ready for anything life might bring. And I was enjoying myself.

Back in this country, I look around and what I see is a scatteredness and rigidity in our bodies as we move about our days. I don't see anything organizing us from our centers, moving us strongly and gracefully forward toward our goals; it is more like we are pushing forward from a disorganized center and overextended limbs. Unlike the women who could move forward with a heavy load on their heads and a squirming child on their backs over a rocky trail, we seem to be thrown off balance by the slightest imposition.

Since I have returned, I have been experimenting with this integration, and I want to invite you into this process. Pretend that you have an imaginary basket on your head that carries what is most precious to you. Perhaps it is prayer, or your values, your family, your health, or the earth. Whatever it is that fills you with an endless joy and vitality. Let the contents of your basket seep down into your heart and into your belly, and then organize your body and your days around it. I think you will find like I am, that with this central core of strength, your body and

your days will feel more loose and fluid, and nothing will have the power to throw you off center.

Deborah Adele is an engaging, lively, and thought-provoking speaker who is not afraid to share stories from her own years of living and learning. She facilitates thoughtful and tangible ways of showing up to life in new ways, leaving participants with a dynamic combination of hope, inspiration, and practical knowledge. She is the author of *The Yamas & Niyamas: Exploring Yoga's Ethical Practice*, 2 CD's: *The Art of Relaxation* and *The Practice of Meditation* and authored a regular wellness column for the Duluth News Tribune.