

CHAPTER EIGHT THE HEADSTAND

To be “stood on your head” is to be surprised and shocked, and this is the essence of the headstand—turning the world topsy-turvy and adjusting to being upended. To launch this jolt to our spirit, we balance on the top of a spheroidal surface—the cranium—which can be likened to balancing the pointed end of an egg on a button. The headstand not only inverts our vision of the world, it inverts the pattern of blood pressure in the body—increasing it in the head and dropping it to practically nothing in the feet. And because the increase in blood pressure in the head may be the first deciding ingredient in whether or not it is prudent to try the headstand, we’ll begin with a discussion of the cardiovascular system. Most of the rest of the chapter focuses on the musculoskeletal anatomy of the headstand and related postures: two techniques for doing the headstand and how each of them affects the neck and body; the anatomy of the upper extremities and methods for developing the strength needed for coming into the headstand safely; correction of front-to-back imbalances; breathing adaptations for inverted postures in general and the headstand in particular; and combining the headstand with backbending, forward bending, and twisting. Finally we’ll examine the question of how long one can remain in the posture.



Figure 8.6c. Stage three of the headstand with the hips extended is very stable, and you can stay in it as easily as in the headstand itself. Notice, however, that the flexed knee position drops the feet to the rear, and that keeping your balance will require a more prominent lumbar lordosis than stage four. Wearing ankle weights or heavy shoes will make this plain.



Figure 8.6d. Stage four of the crown headstand with the knees extended is a balancing posture with only a little extra weight on the elbows. Shifting more weight to the forearms can be accomplished conveniently only by thrusting the pelvis forward and the feet to the rear, thus increasing the lumbar curve.