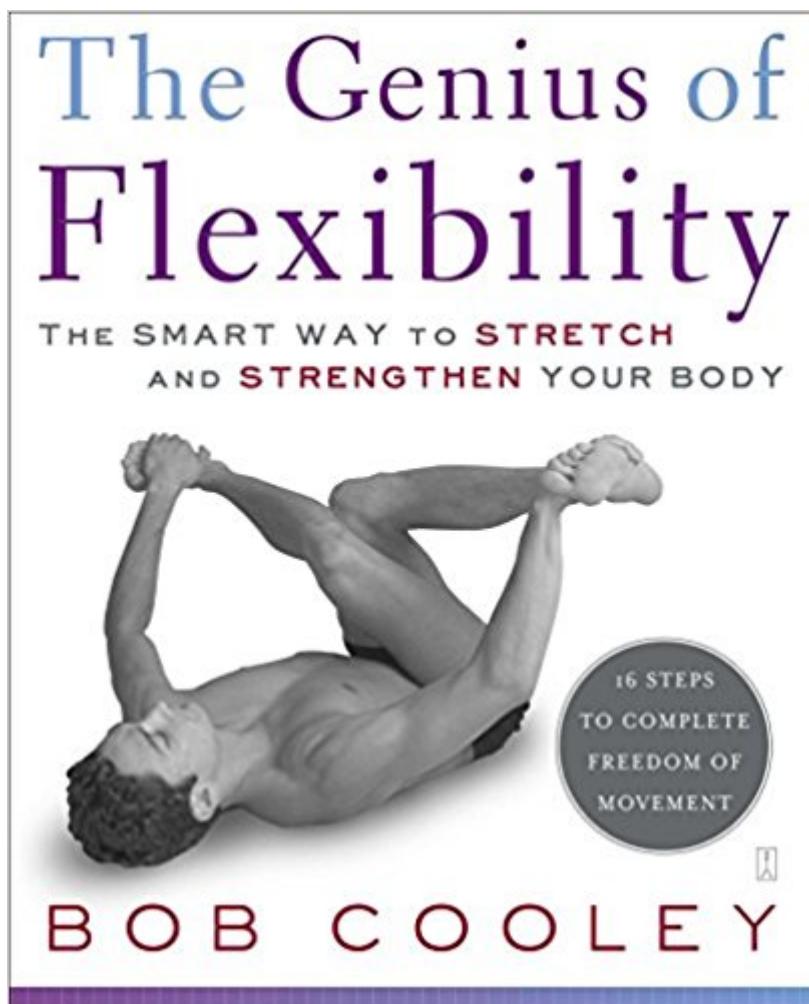


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# The Genius Of Flexibility: The Smart Way To Stretch And Strengthen Your Body



## **Synopsis**

Stretches for sixteen unique muscle groups with physiological and psychological benefits. The Technique: RESISTANCE STRETCHING® offers immediate, cumulative, and permanent increases in flexibility, takes the pain out of stretching, and protects you from injuring yourself by overstretching.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

An enriching view on staying flexible, mentally, emotionally, Spiritually, and physiologically well. The lessons on resistance stretching in this book can give you a sense of muscle control and empowerment. The book is connected to aspects of Internal Martial arts like Tai Chi & Bagua in healing associations. remember simple basics are the keys in all endeavors and so-called advanced moves are just the basics mastered. Bob Cooley (The Author) has produced a gem of basics to advanced on The principles of true flexibility for life. When I read the peek inside feature the book reached out and embraced me with love and light. Spiritual Wisdom touches your soul, allow your inner detective to investigate this book and be rewarded.

These stretches are nothing like what you have seen before. They only look similar to what you know as stretches. In order to understand the purpose, meaning, and value of these stretches, you should look at this book in a historic perspective. The author, Bob Cooley (B.C.), was unfortunate to get into a major accident which lead to a long path of recovery and regaining flexibility limited by consequences of the trauma. In the book, he describes his path of exploration of stretches and their relationships to the Chinese medicine, yoga, and spiritual world. This is an evolving knowledge. At the time when the book was written, B.C. knew from his personal experience and experience of his clients that his stretches work, but he could not quite explain why. In the 10+ years since this book was written, the understanding of what they do and why they work has increased significantly. His web site contains more details on this and (for a fee) offers access to videos with (at the time of this writing) of 197 stretches (compared to 36 stretches described in the book). The book is a great introduction but not the complete story.

**HOW THESE STRETCHES ARE DIFFERENT.** B.C.'s stretches are not something that you likely saw before. They are resistance stretches. In order to achieve a resistance stretch, you go through the range of motion of a fully tensioned (contracted) muscle. For example, if you wanted to stretch your biceps, you would bend your arm in the elbow (all the way, to the position with the wrist almost touching your shoulder), would tension your biceps as hard as you can (as if you wanted to bend your arm in the elbow even more), and would use your other hand (or an assistant) to gradually and slowly extend your biceps against its resistance. You do not need to go to the fully extended position, and you never reach the condition of the "pull" on the fully extended muscle known from traditional stretches. It is not about reaching the limit of the muscle's range of motion or pulling the muscle to make it longer, it is about creating a lot of tension within the muscle within its comfortable range and stretching this contracted muscle against its resistance. As an added benefit, you can combine stretching with strength training as you contract a muscle and counteract this force at the same time.

**HOW DO THESE STRETCHES WORK.** This was not covered in the book, but is discussed on B.C.'s web site. The trick is in the part of our body known as "dense fascia". This notion was totally unknown in the world of fitness and exercise until some 6-8 years ago. Now, there are even annual international symposia on fascia, and many training schools known as "fascia stretching" or "facial stretching". Just Google for them. Fascia is a connecting tissue which forms a network in our body which also envelopes our muscles. It is strong and flexible and it is an important part of our body which keeps it connected and strong. Fascia has many forms and "faces" and is a very complex medical / anatomy subject. For the purpose of stretching, dense fascia formed within our muscles is important. As we age and as we accumulate consequences of microtraumas, overuse, and injuries, deep fascia starts growing between the

fibers of our muscles. It prevents the fibers from sliding freely along each other and both, reduces the length of the muscles, and reduces their ability to contract. This leads to a reduced flexibility. This type of fascia has no sensitivity associated with it. It is also much stronger than our muscle tissue and very hard to stretch. When we put our body (e.g., leg) in a stretch position, reach the limit of the range of motion, but feel no usual "pull" sensation in any muscle as we try to go further, it means that this motion is limited by dense fascia. When we have asymmetries in flexibility in our body, there is also a good chance that a past injury to a certain muscle resulted in preferential growth of dense fascia in one muscle or muscle group on one side of our body. Traditional stretches will fail because dense fascia is too strong to be stretched by traditional means. In fact, it is 2 to 8 times stronger than the muscle fibers (which traditional stretching techniques focus on). Resistance stretches use the huge strain inside of the contracted muscle while it is stretched and extended against its resistance to dislodge and break apart this detrimental dense fascia and get rid of the scar tissue. Traditional stretches do not work against dense fascia (and consequently do not work at all if you are limited by dense fascia) because the stretching force which can be safely used in traditional stretches of relaxed muscles is not sufficient to break apart the dense fascia in your muscle. You can pull strong enough only when you contract your muscle. While dense fascia can grow anywhere and can affect any of our muscles, our legs (especially upper legs) tend to accumulate the most of dense fascia. This is why lower back and legs, especially in people past their teen-age or after minor or major injuries, could greatly improve in flexibility when resistance stretches are used. The only other way to reduce tissue density and affect fascia (that I know of) is foam rolling. Dean Somerset has excellent lectures on how fascia impacts our mobility and how to handle fascia related issues through form rolling.

**HOW THESE STRETCHES ARE SIMILAR TO OTHER TECHNIQUES.** Only visually. Yoga exists for thousands of years, and Yoga asanas evolved to put our body in a position which enables us to maximally elongate certain muscles along their path from contracted to extended. Traditional stretching drills overlap with many yoga poses. B.C.'s stretches oftentimes use same or similar positions, but the action is completely opposite to what you would do in Yoga. Also, complex Yoga asanas are not used in B.C. techniques. Many yoga poses put you in a position in which you just can't contract your muscles enough, which contradicts the idea of resistance stretching. Most beginner and intermediate stretches are easy enough for everyone.

**ASSISTED STRETCHES.** The book has a total of 36 stretches. The web site has a total of 197 stretches, 31 of which are assisted. In regular stretching, assisted stretches are risky because the muscles are held at their extension limit and too much pull from the assistant (who has no immediate feedback and do you feel the level of pain in your muscles) may lead to

injury. With resistance stretching, the muscles are not extended to their limit, the majority of stretch happens in the beginning when muscle is contracted, and assistance is safe. Your assistant only exerts force when you resist and he feels how much you resist. Since assisted stretches enable one to generate more tension in the muscle than you can do on your own, they are considered very efficient. However, there are plenty of stretches (the majority of them) which one can do on his own. Out of 197 stretches on thegeniusofflexibility web site, only 16% are assisted.

**CONNECTION TO THE EMOTIONAL WORLD.** B.C. discovered that when he gets his muscles through their range of motion in fully tensioned condition, the energy dissipated in the muscle and the effort creates effect similar to point massage or acupuncture. It stimulates the energy meridians known for thousands of years from traditional Chines medicine. The effect is even greater than in Yoga or traditional stretches. While it is not the ultimate purpose (flexibility is), B.C. wants his students to be aware of these connections. He personally values them so much that he even groups the stretches not by the muscles which they stretch but by the associated energy meridians. The first thing which I experienced when I started doing his energy series was not the flexibility change but immediate and remarkably pronounced reduction of craving for food and sugars and weight loss. I did not believe any of this emotional/mental stuff, and was shocked to find out that it actually worked. The idea that stretches can affect energy meridians is not entirely new. For example, Shiatsu uses massage and stretches (some of which match stretches in B.C.'s system) to stimulate points along the energy meridians to affect health condition and well being of a person who is not medically sick yet, but out of balance, energetically speaking.

**WHAT DOES THE TITLE MEAN?** "The genius of flexibility" is not the name which B.C. calls himself (and it is not his picture on the front page), despite the impression which some of the reviewers of this book who flipped though the pages think. B.C. associated 16 energy meridians with certain personality types, certain traits of character, which are present in different degree in all people and can be developed. He calls these types of character "geniuses". Since resistance stretches provide a way to impact all of them to a certain degree, by helping our body to develop the desirable features, he puts flexibility sort of on top of this system, as a unifying factor, and calls it the 17th genius, "the genius of flexibility". This is a reference to our ability to be flexible.

**COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS.** You need to read the book carefully and, if you can, watch the videos on the web site to understand how these stretches work. You do not go to the end of range of your muscles. You do not feel the usual "pull" on the muscles. But you need to generate as much tension in your muscle during the stretch as you can. It is difficult to achieve on first attempt. You've got to continue practicing the stretches for at least a couple of weeks to get the feeling of what developing this full tension means. It is not difficult, it just totally opposite to the

traditional idea of stretches in which one needs to relax the muscle instead of contracting it as hard as one can. The harder you contact and the stronger is the resistance, the more efficient is the stretch. It is very easy to do the wrong thing (or rather not do what you are supposed to do) if you try any of B.C.'s stretches without knowing what you need to do, or if you apply your "standard" understanding how stretches work and just go through the range without resistance. Some people dismiss this school because B.C. claims that stretches could cure certain health conditions. There is some truth in it, but only partial. Resistance stretches can cure to the same extent as acupuncture or point massage can. It is the same as homeopathy. It may be able to help with some persistent but not life threatening conditions which are annoyance to you. But it does not replace medical treatment in serious situations. B.C. claims that he was able to stop development of appendicitis and avoided surgery. This was his personal experience, he does not push it on other people and does not promote in the book that everyone should do stretches instead of going to a doctor.

**SIMILAR SCHOOLS AND SOURCE OF INFORMATION.** "Fascia stretching", "Facial stretching", and "Resistance Stretching" mean more or less the same thing (or at least the same basic idea), and it is a quickly developing way of thinking about stretching. Still a minority, but growing rapidly. You can get on two DVDs with Dara Torres who is B.C.'s student and follows his school. I watched the first DVD in that series, it has a good explanation on how the stretches should be done. You can also find some videos on the internet using these key words. These videos may be of certain value. However, B.C. remains the "father" of this stretching technique, with more experience than anyone else. As I mentioned before, there are connections to traditional Chinese medicine and shiatsu when it comes to energy meridians.

**SHOULD I USE IT?** I got the impression that it is a great addition to any stretching routine. If you are limited by dense fascia, no traditional stretching will help you. This is the best source of information available. In contrast, if you do not have too much dense fascia related mobility restrictions (which especially applies to younger people), you may find that yoga or traditional stretching is as efficient or (I think but do not know for sure) maybe even more efficient. By any means, this book is about a unique stretching method which can be complementary to anything else that you are doing, but does not overlap with or duplicate any of these traditional stretching methods.

**OVERALL OPINION AND SOME WEAKNESSES OF THE BOOK.** It is a very honestly and personally written book. A very interesting read on its own. Quite inspiring. Plenty of "food for thought". Makes you think about a bigger picture. Worth a read regardless of whether you will use these stretches or not. It has some weaknesses, either real or conceived. Many people, myself included, get the impression that personal views on life and emotional impact of stretches and the model of 16 meridians / geniuses overshadow the

discussion of basics (stretches). B.C. could've described the stretches better. He probably could've explain what they are for much clearer if he had written this book last year and not in 2005. The system has evolved quite a bit beyond the book, as one can see from his web site. Everything in the book holds true, but there is much more to it than the book covers. However, the book is a necessary start to learn the system, and the only available in print comprehensive source of information on resistance stretches. Weaknesses of the book in the area of description of stretches can be compensated by the explanations on geniusofflexibility, in videos available on B.C.'s web site and to some (smaller) extent in Dara Torres's DVDs. Another aspect which many people find inconvenient is that all stretches are categorized by the associated energy meridians rather than by muscle groups which they stretch. It goes against the traditional way of looking at stretches. The reason for this is the importance of the energy flow sequence in B.C.'s "world". It appears that he thinks not in terms of the muscles, but in terms of the energy meridians in the upper and lower body. The irony is his trainers featured on the videos on his web site do make regular references to specific muscle groups along with the energy meridians, probably because they recognize that for most people it is easier to think that way. Web site does contain lookup charts to link stretches to muscle groups. So, the idea of references to the muscles does fit into his school, but did not find place in the book. It is confusing, at least initially. Not only you are not expected to feel the usual "pulling" sensation during the stretch because you do not actually pull the muscle at its extension limit, but also noone tells you what muscles you are stretching (or removing dense facia from). It is not difficult to figure out, though. After 2-3 weeks, the logic falls back in place. One realizes that the links between muscle groups are so complex that one has to go through all muscle groups anyways (or at least upper and lower body groups), and classification by the meridians makes it much more manageable. There are 16 meridians, which limits the number of stretches which one needs to do to cover the whole body to a reasonable number which can be accomplished within 35-45 minutes. Imagine what you would have to do if you had to stretch each of 100 muscles one at a time referring to each of them by its name and how long it would take? Meridians have a fairly good association with a certain location on your body (e.g., front of the thigh, front-outside, front-inside, inside, outside, etc.) and are easy to use with some practice. P.S. I am not a convert or a devoted follower of Bob Cooley and I never met him in person. I am experimenting with several methods in parallel, including Yoga, Pilates, and Paul Zaichik's kinesiological stretching method. I read books written by other well known flexibility experts, like Pavel Tsatsouline and Thomas Kurz. They are all different (distinctively different, if you read in depth) and I see value in each of them. But I do believe that this method must be an integral component to any efficient flexibility program because it addresses the

limiting factors which no other program does. Five star rating is well deserved in this case.

Great book in which autor to give us a new approach and perspective that what's true stretching and flexibility and why it's so important in your general health.

I'm a yoga teacher, so already sold on the power of stretching but Bob's research has taken my knowledge to a whole new level. I couldn't wait to hook into his resistance stretches. My body feels different already. I will no doubt need to re read the book to understand all the rest of the personality connections. I'll most certainly buy his next book.

Some of the ideology is goofy but some of it makes sense. It was entertaining at least to read.

This seems to be a more natural way to stretch muscles. I've been doing P90X for several years and wanted to supplement that with a better stretch because although I am way more flexible than when I started the P90X I'm still not where I want to be. Although the meat of this book is worth the price, I do have a few criticisms<sup>1</sup>. A lot of the book seems to be devoted to linking stretching to everything in life, both mentally and physically. Maybe, but it seems more like one of those programs where the authors / developers want it to solve everything from statistics, to world hunger, make you live longer, etc. It's stretching. If it ends up meaning more to you then that's great. Seemed more like filler to me.<sup>2</sup> Some of the stretches are hard to envision which way you are supposed to push or pull. I found a video, Resistance Stretching with Dana Torres which does a good job with explaining the stretches...but only covers a few of those listed in this book. Anyway, I think it is worth the money to try something new just don't worry if some of the mind-body-spirit stuff isn't your thing and stick to the couple of chapters that explain the stretches.

great concepts, but I felt a large part of the book was could have been summed up by saying "hey this helps everything!" However, I felt the techniques in the book are well developed and thought out. As mentioned the explanation of WHY this helps everything could be developed in a much more informative way. Worth the exercises, just not written particularly well. IMO.

The concept makes sense to me but the stretches are difficult to do on your own and from a book. I would take a class to learn but using the book is not helpful.

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