



*5th Healthy Cities: Working
Together to Achieve Liveable Cities*
Conference

Steve Garland

Landscape Designer
Steve Garland Landscapes

*Creating Relaxing and Enjoyable
Landscapes*



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Stress

Physical Tension

- Short, shallow, irregular breath
- Accelerated or irregular heartbeat
- Impaired gastro-intestinal function
- Tense, contracted or rigid posture
- Headaches
- Excessive muscular tension
- Poor quality sleep

Emotional Tension

- Substance abuse:
- Smoking
- Drinking
- Illicit drugs
- Over-the-counter drugs
- Prescription drugs
- Excessive comfort eating

Increased susceptibility to disease



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Tension and Relaxation

Relaxation

Ability to move freely in any direction
Mind open, positive, creative, lateral
More flexible, simple and direct
Positive emotions
Breath deeper and slower, pulse slows
Enhanced sensory awareness
Capable of responding to situations

Tension

Constrained to one line of movement
Fixed ideas
Circuitous, obsessive, negative thought
Emotions guarded and negative
Tense forehead, fixed, tense posture
Vision narrows, senses numb
Capable only of reaction to stimuli



Tension and Relaxation

Relaxation and tension are relative

Experienced by moments and by degrees

We have a mutual influence on each other



Moments and Change

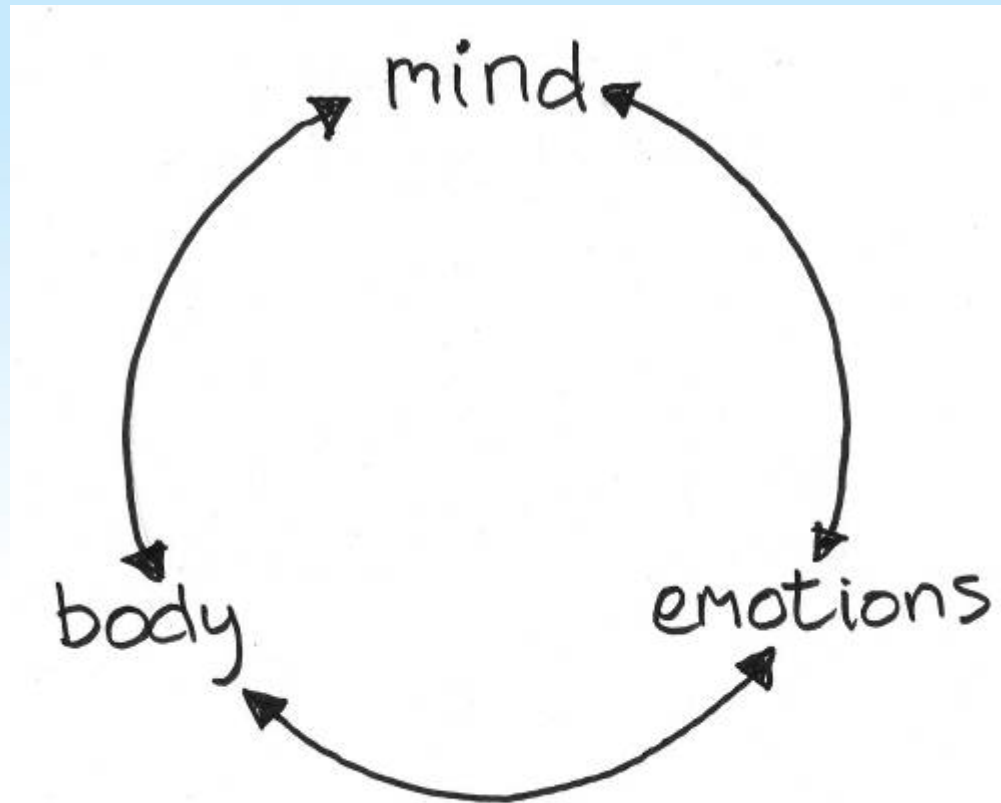
We live our life by moments

Some moments can leave lasting influence

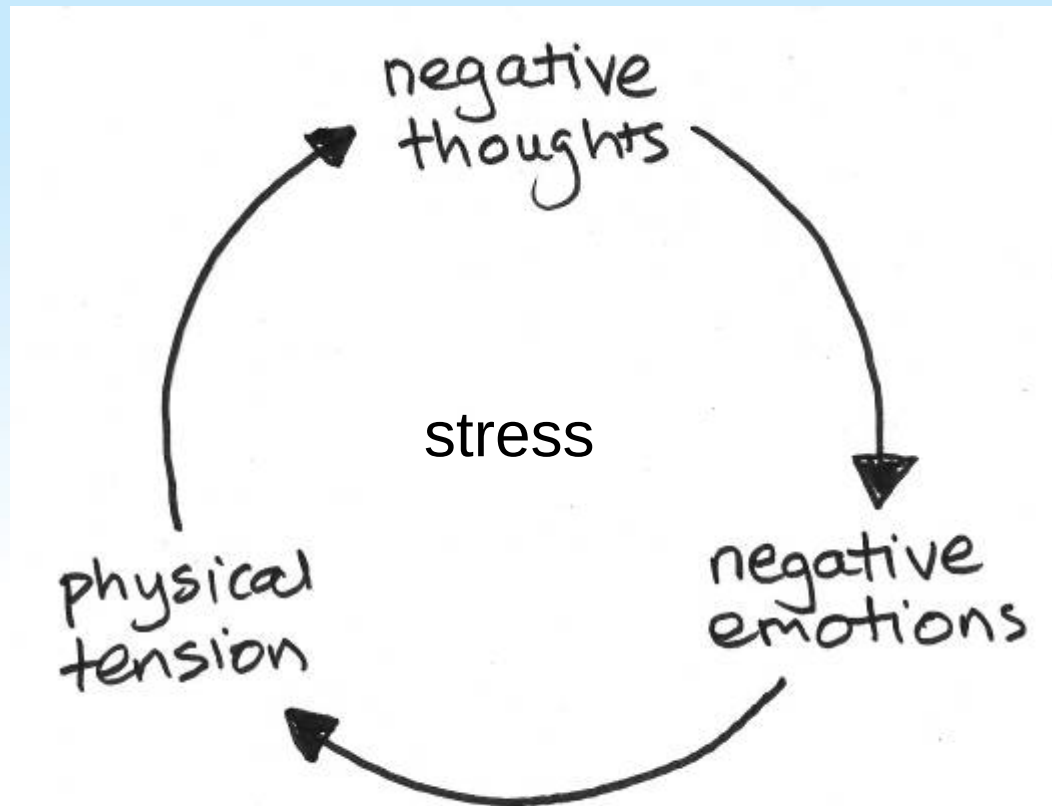
More frequent moments of relative relaxation =

More overall relaxation increases

Moments and Change



Moments and Change

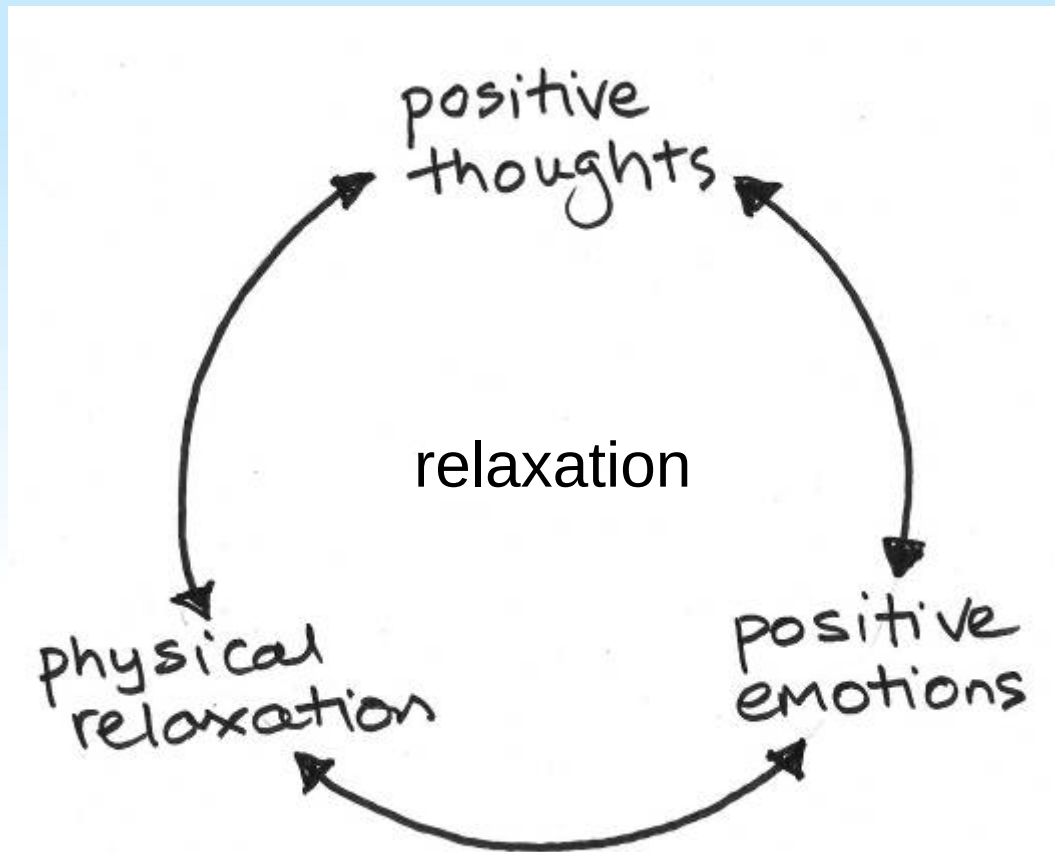


Trigger:

Internal stimulus

External stimulus

Moments and Change



Trigger:

Internal stimulus

External stimulus

How can we create conditions that are more conducive to relaxation?



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

What Helps Us Relax?

Relaxation is characterised by moments of a more open, positive attitude

This can be triggered by things that make us smile, feel happy, or laugh

Pleasant surprises can make us pause, smile and become interested in our surroundings

Doing things we enjoy can help us relax



What Helps Us Relax?

Many of us feel drawn to nature in order to relax

In everyday life we may enjoy gardening or keeping pets,
or even befriending freeloading wildlife

What Helps Us Relax?

Many of us feel drawn to nature in order to relax

In everyday life we may enjoy gardening or keeping pets, or even befriending freeloading wildlife





5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

What Helps Us Relax?

Many of us feel drawn to nature in order to relax

In everyday life we may enjoy gardening or keeping pets, or even befriending freeloading wildlife

Recreational activities, such as bushwalking, surfing, fishing, scuba diving, skiing and sailing, all bring us closer to nature

Nature tends to awaken our senses

We can learn a lot from nature



Learning from Nature

What is it about nature that helps us relax?

Learning from Nature

There are no straight lines or perfect geometric forms in nature

Gentle, relaxed curves, rounded edges and soft lines





Learning from Nature

All living things have a mutual influence on each other which is stronger in close proximity

We find a sense of timelessness, continual movement and change that is masked in our day-to-day lives





5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Learning from Nature

Japanese landscape design draws heavily from nature

Appreciation of rocks and feeling expressed by their placement and attitude towards each other

Aesthetic of wabi-sabi – intentional placement of imperfections to give character and life

Concept of borrowed scenery lifts attention beyond garden

Paths and changes in direction used to draw attention to features of the landscape



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Learning from Nature

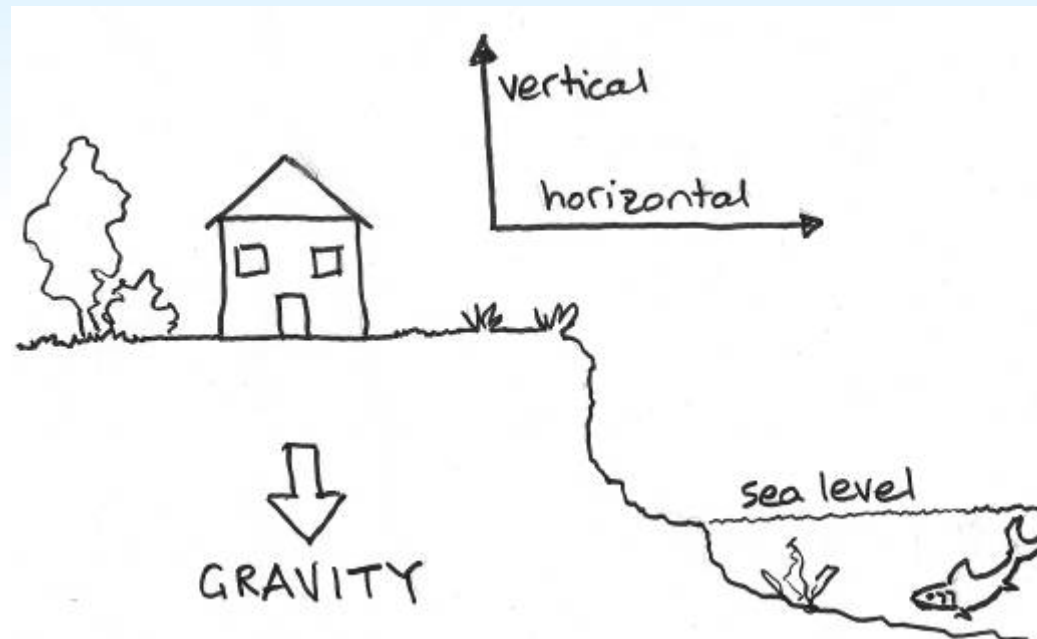
The same rocks, placed in different arrangements, can create quite different impressions



Movement

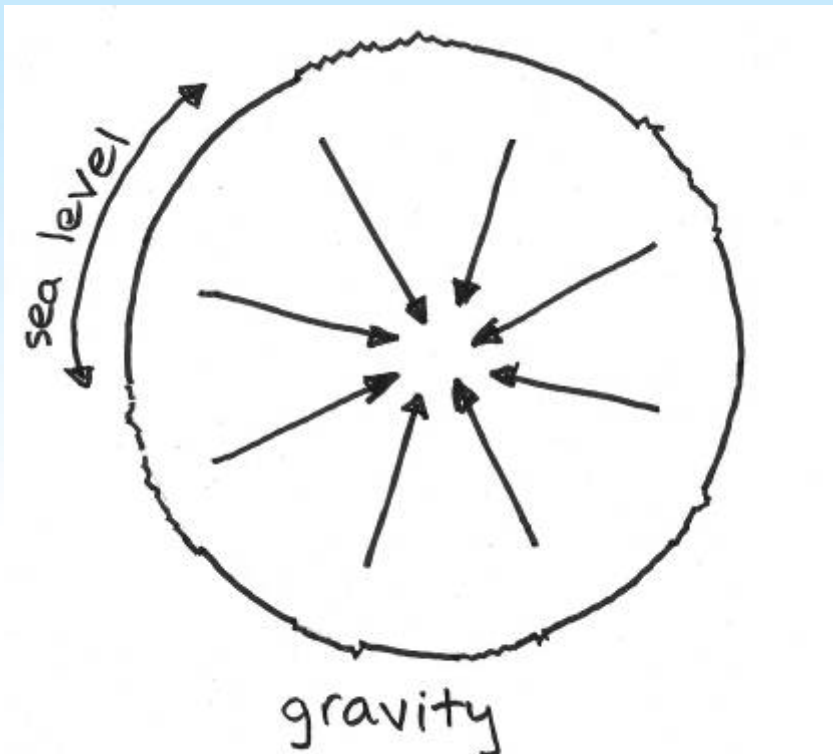
We perceive the world as a construct of stationary objects and relative movements

We design and build with the concepts of vertical and horizontal lines and reference our heights as elevations above sea level



Movement

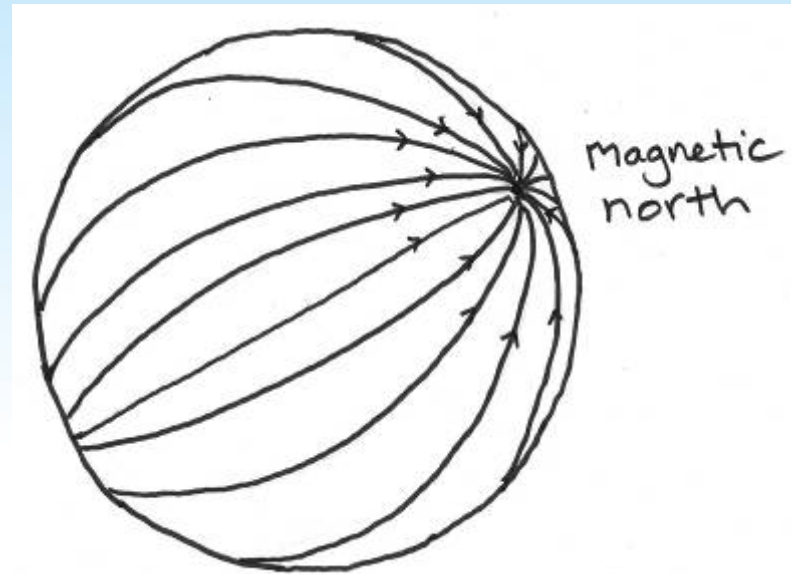
All of these are gravity referenced measures, and gravity is a purely radial force



Our lines aren't exactly horizontal and vertical

Movement

We orient buildings based on magnetic north, which is slowly moving and radially concentric



Our parallel lines aren't exactly parallel



Movement

Everything in life is moving and filled with movement

Even rocks

Are composed of atoms with orbiting electrons

Expand and contract

Soften and harden as they wet and dry

Weather, oxidize, erode

Exchange ions with their surroundings



Movement

The most fundamental and prevalent form of motion is rotation

From the sub-atomic to the astronomic. Everything rotates and orbits and we measure this in terms of cycles

Electrons orbit nuclei

Our bodies exist thanks to circulation and cycles

We live on a planet that rotates and orbits the sun

Light, sound, electromagnetic radiation are all measured in cycles per second

Even time is measured by cycles



Movement

Knowledge of the importance and significance of cycles is not new

Ancient Egyptians had the symbol of the ouroboros

Native Americans, the medicine wheel

Mandalas, the yin yang, even stone henge



Movement

There needs to be circulation in our landscapes as well

It's a lot more relaxing to follow paths that circulate through the landscape rather than reach stagnant, dead ends

It's never as enjoyable to have to turn around and head back the way you came



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Creating Relaxing and Enjoyable Landscapes

The more appropriate a landscape is to its function, the more relaxing a space we create

The best landscapes are an expression of functional aesthetics – all functional requirements are intrinsically satisfied within a cohesive design

Design elements need to be multifunctional

Hopefully having fun in the process!



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Creating Relaxing and Enjoyable Landscapes

Increasing density of housing and workplaces in cities means increased pressure to provide multi-functional landscapes where space is the limiting factor

Not practical to provide areas of bushland within cities

Need to incorporate those features of nature that we find appealing and relaxing into our built landscapes



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Creating Relaxing and Enjoyable Landscapes

Need to incorporate those features of nature that we find appealing and relaxing into our built landscapes:

Relaxed curves and softened edges

Circulation and relaxed lines of movement

Intentional imperfections

Lots of life, colour, movement and change

Pleasant surprises and unexpected details

Above all else, fun



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Creating Relaxing and Enjoyable Landscapes

The groundwork of any landscape design is satisfying the functional requirements within the constraints provided

Once these are clear, analysing lines of movement through the landscape is a good place to start:

This is simply looking at where users may be coming from, and where they may want to go

It is the designer's job to facilitate this progression rather than obstruct or impede it

Users need to feel free to move in the direction they want, otherwise they create their own access out of frustration



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Getting Curves Right

Curves are often poorly executed in landscapes. They vary from rigid combinations of arcs to random wavy lines that lack fluency and serve no function

Curves need to be appropriate to their function. There is no point in having a curved path if it isn't the most comfortable access from one area to another

A curve should draw your eye along it. This inherent sense of movement requires that the start and finish need to make sense



Getting Curves Right

Curves need to be appropriate to their function



The curve at left seems disjointed and random, whereas the path gently winding past trees makes perfect sense



Paths and Paving

Paths and paving reinforce the principle lines of movement through the landscape

They enable us to create circulation through the landscape, giving the user a sense of always moving forward

We don't move in straight lines and turn in right angles

We tend to follow economic, organic curves to change direction





5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Paths and Paving



Paths can also present an opportunity for a bit of fun while still satisfying function



Rest Areas

Physical requirements of rest areas:

Adequate space to accommodate anticipated users

Comfortable seating, including informal seating

Shade in summer

Wind protection and sunny location in winter



Rest Areas

Psychological requirements of rest areas:

Planting, screening, or walling behind our backs

Seating on level ground or facing downhill

More than one entry and exit route

Set slightly apart from main access routes

Enjoyable views or details



Retaining Walls

Retaining walls can be multifunctional elements:

Enable terracing and levelling of sloped sites

Raise soil levels to enhance plant growth

Raise ground level to comfortable height for working on vegetable gardens, or to better appreciate smaller or scented plants

Provide informal seating

Be a thing of beauty in their own right

Retaining Walls

Its more relaxing not to have high walls adjacent to paths

A slope, or batter, on walls tends to feel more comfortable and increases the structural stability of the wall

The top of retaining walls can be curved to make them less serious and imposing





Planting

There is nothing relaxing about being in the company of dead and dying plants



Plant selection is one of the hardest aspects of landscape design

Plants have an annoying habit of growing and changing, or even worse, not growing and dying



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Planting

Designers need to spend time understanding the plants they use better

How they behave

What climate and rainfall do they need?

What aspect and soil suits them best?

Observe the conditions where they thrive (including soil type and depth)

Ask specialist growers and experienced gardeners – they're always more than happy to share practical knowledge



5th Healthy Cities: Working Together to Achieve Liveable Cities Conference

Change and Unexpected Detail

The more familiar we become with something, the less we really see it

Highlights a need for change in the landscape to constantly trigger fresh impressions

Can be achieved by choosing planting to show different features throughout the year

Our modern landscapes tend to be more architectural and foliage based, and less alive with flowers





Change and Unexpected Detail

Landscapes that look different from different views arouse interest and provide a pleasant surprise



The same small garden viewed from different sides gives totally different impressions thanks to slightly raising the ground level towards the middle of the yard. The fish tail is a timber bridge tuned to sound the notes of the octave when walked on (bridge by Hugh Jones).



Change and Unexpected Detail

Unexpected details can help waken a childlike curiosity and interest to see what else we can discover





Conclusion

The more appropriate a landscape is to its function, the more relaxing a space we create

The best landscapes are an expression of functional aesthetics – all functional requirements are intrinsically satisfied within a cohesive design.

Design elements need to be multifunctional



Conclusion

We need to incorporate those features of nature that we find appealing and relaxing into our built landscapes:

Relaxed curves and softened edges

Circulation and relaxed lines of movement

Intentional imperfections

Lots of life, colour, movement and change

Pleasant surprises and unexpected details

Above all else, fun