Imagery can be categorized in several ways. These sometimes overlapping classifications illuminate the many applications of imagery.

SENSORY IMAGERY

When we hear the term imagery, we usually think of pictures in our mind’s eye. But an image need not be visual, it can be located in any one of our senses. Often the most powerful imagery is composed of a variety of senses. If you imagine yourself standing under a waterfall you may have the sensory experiences of seeing and feeling the water pouring down your body, hearing it thundering all around you, smelling its fresh scent as well as tasting it in your mouth. By using many senses you begin to enrich the image, which makes it more effective. This is not always easy, because most of us prefer to image in one or two senses. Notice which type of sensory imagery feels least comfortable to you and gradually add these elements into your imaging practice.

Visual

Most people are familiar with this the type of imagery. When you see your fingers extending into space or your head floating up like a helium-filled balloon, you are using visual imagery.
Kinesthetic

Kinesthetic imagery involves the physical "feel" of a movement. For example, you may imagine how the body feels in the air in a split jeté before actually performing one, or imagine the space around you to be soft and cushiony. Noticing kinesthetic changes is a very important tool for realignment as well as for accomplishment of any movement.

KINESTHETIC IMAGING

Take a few minutes to move one of your feet in many different ways. Imagine it to be as malleable as a piece of clay. Wiggle it, shake it, circle it, tap it against the floor, pick up and release an imaginary towel with your toes. Then stand up and compare the feeling in your left and right foot and leg. You may notice that your legs feel as though they are aligned differently. One leg may seem to have more volume, or to be straighter than the other.

Tactile

Tactile imagery is closely related to kinesthetic imagery. In fact, the two are sometimes combined under the joint heading of "tactile-kinesthetic." I like to distinguish the two because purely kinesthetic imagery need not be elicited by touch, but it is a prerequisite for tactile imagery. If you can remember how a teacher adjusted your pelvis to correct its alignment, you can repeat the process in your mind's "tactile eye." In this way, you can reinforce the image until it becomes ingrained in your nervous system. Practicing imagery with a partner is aided by specific tactile imagery of where, how, and when you touch or are touched by your partner. You may also conjure imaginary massaging hands to release shoulder tension.

Proprioceptive

Proprioception, the sense of body position, is not usually considered in its own category. However, I do so because there is imagery that is proprioception-specific.

PROPRIOCEPTIVE IMAGING

1. Stand with your weight equally distributed on both feet. Lift one foot off the floor and balance for a moment. Do the same with the other leg. Lift one leg again and imagine that a clone of that leg is still standing on the floor. Notice the difference between your ability to balance when using and not using this image.

2. Lift your arms overhead and bring them back down to the sides of your body. Repeat the movement. Now imagine that you have a pair of imaginary arms placed overhead. As you lift your real arms, lower your imaginary ones, and vice versa. How do lifting and lowering your arms feel different with or without this proprioceptive imagery?
Olfactory

The sense of smell, very important for animals, is less important for humans than the visual and auditory senses. Yet olfactory images can be powerful. A smell can instantly conjure the distinct ambiance of a place visited long ago. Smells attract and repel us like no other sensory stimulation. Try the olfactory image of moving through a space filled with the scent of a luscious perfume and notice how it affects your posture.

Auditory

Auditory (aural) imagery can be used by musicians to hear beforehand the sound they want their instruments to produce. Dancers can hear the music in their "mind’s ear" while practicing certain dance sequences. Before doing a pirouette, it is helpful to have a sense of hearing your turning rhythm. Jaclyn Villamil, ballet teacher and Laban Movement analyst, once suggested the auditory image of hearing an ascending scale as you raise your leg into extension. In alignment practice, you can "hear" the strength of your central axis, imagining it to be a powerful geyser. You might also remember the pitch and timbre of a helpful correction you received in class and can store it in your auditory memory for future use.

Gustatory

Gustatory images govern the realm of taste. A good cook can imagine how a sauce will taste before mixing the ingredients, or how the taste of a soup will change depending on what spices are added. An actor might imagine the tastes his or her character encounters during a lunch scene. Clay Taliferro, original member of the José Limon dance company who is famous for his role in Limon's choreography of The Moor's Pavane, directed the dancers at a workshop in France to be involved in the movement as if tasting it, as if chewing on a sweet, succulent carrot.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMAGERY

Direct imagery is a nonverbal representation of an actual movement (Overby 1990). You are using direct imagery when you visualize your fingers extending into space. Indirect imagery is metaphorical; an external event or object is projected onto and used to clarify a process or movement. When you envision your scapula rotating as you elevate your arm, you are using direct imagery. When you picture your scapula as a wheel, you are using indirect imagery. Visualizing an arm cutting through space is direct imagery. Once the arm cuts through space as a sword, the imagery becomes indirect.

ABSTRACT AND CONCRETE IMAGERY

In her book Moving from Within, Alma Hawkins (1991), founding chair of the UCLA Dance Department, distinguishes between concrete and abstract images. Images such as stretching an elastic band are concrete, whereas the image of
something unpleasant pushing you down is abstract. Abstract images readily allow you to develop their content. They are psychological in that they depend on what bubbles up from your inner reaches. Concrete images are fixed by general consensus. Everyone will agree on the basic look of a snake, even though snakes have different lengths and color patterns. When dancers are motivated by "a force" pulling them to the same spot on stage, they are using an abstract image.

INNER AND OUTER IMAGERY

Imagery can also be categorized by where it is located. Children can transform their outer reality by conjuring an imaginary forest or beach. In dance, you can place your image inside your body, on the surface of your body, in the near or intimate space surrounding you, in your slightly larger personal space, or on the whole stage, even the entire world.

Images are used extensively in sports psychology to paint a vivid picture of a goal you would like to achieve as if it has already been achieved. These images can have both internal and external components, such as the crowd cheering and how your body feels once you have succeeded.

Inside the Body

These are images that improve alignment, such as visualizing the central axis inside your body. Inner imagery may also be used to modify your movement quality, such as imagining that you are made of molasses. Many interesting images can be explored in this area, such as imagining a wind blowing inside you or imagining that you are filled with water. You will find many other examples in the section on improvisation in Dance Imagery for Technique and Performance.

I hope that you never fracture a bone or tear a muscle, but if you do, you may be able to use inner imagery to speed your recovery. Gerald M. Epstein, MD (1989), in his book Healing Visualizations, reports of mending a bone with imagery in three weeks instead of the expected three months. He had the patient visualize the ends of the bone knitting together for three minutes at three- to four-hour intervals. There is no scientific explanation for this dramatic increase in speed of recovery, although many similar cases have been reported.

Outside the Body

As previously mentioned, images that control the external environment can likewise change the body’s alignment and energy. Because you can mentally transport yourself, you suddenly look, feel, and move differently.

VAST PLANE—SMALL ROOM

Imagine yourself on a vast plane at sunrise. See and feel the sun coming up over the horizon. Then imagine yourself stuck in a small room without any windows. Notice how the images affect your posture, your alignment, even your breathing.
Two of the first highly acclaimed athletes to apply mental rehearsal imagery were French Alpine skier Jean Claude Killi and high jumper Dick Fosbury (Dardik & Waitley 1984). Killi would picture himself skiing down the slope, seeing all the bumps and curves and planning precisely how he would pass through the poles. Fosbury visualized himself clearing the height he had selected. Employing a similar technique, a dancer might imagine going through a dance routine with perfect ease or finding the through-line of an entire dance by running through it mentally.

**SPONTANEOUS IMAGERY**

This book contains hundreds of images for you to practice and hone your imagery skills. Ultimately, you will be creating your own imagery, or, as I experience it, you will be discovering imagery. Many of the images that I use in a class setting or when training myself come to me “out of the blue.” They suddenly and most appropriately appear on the screen of my mind’s eye (or any of the other senses). Obviously, this is a highly intuitive function, but I believe that the years of training with “outside” imagery enabled the mind/body to “understand” my training and teaching needs and create an ongoing link between the task at hand and the image that will be most helpful in the specific situation.

Even when working with an image that you have not discovered yourself, the specific way in which you experience an image is highly individual. No two people experience the same image identically. Therefore, the descriptions of the images in this book, as well as the drawings, should not be considered absolute, but as a starting point for your individual explorations. In this sense you are always using your own imagery. Sometimes imagery appears as a spontaneous flow, a free association of images. Sometimes these images seem very related, at other times they seem to be jumping from one topic to the other. Here is an example of spontaneous free association imagery that I experienced recently:

Shoulder blades bouncing, as if on a physio ball, ... they are socks filled with sand that now pours out, ... they are fluffy like feather-filled pillows, ... the eyes are yawning, they seem crooked, ... sending breath into the sockets, ... the sockets gently cradle the eyes, like a cherry sitting in pudding, ... pelvic floor expands as I inhale, sitz bones widen, parting like curtains in a draft of wind.

How does such a spontaneous chain begin? It seems that the mind/body “calls” you to the right spot, linking the areas that need attention, creating new imagery to keep the input into the mind/body system fresh and stimulating.

**SELF-TEACHING IMAGERY**

Certain types of imagery are helpful in providing feedback on the status of your alignment and body balance. Usually it takes a considerable amount of practice before one can use imagery in this fashion. Examples of this kind of image are:

- While in a supine position, imagine yourself to be floating on a magic carpet. As the carpet lands on the floor, do both sides of the carpet touch down at the same time? Does the right touch down before the left? Does the bottom part touch down before the top? The way the carpet lands can inform you of imbalances and preferences in the use of your body halves.
• While in a supine position, imagine the pelvis to be a burlap sack filled with rice. There is an open seam on either side of the sack. Let the sand pour out of the left and the right sides of the sack. Does it flow out of both sides equally or does it seem easier to visualize the flowing on one of the sides? If it is easier to image the flow on the right side as opposed to the left, this could indicate increased muscular tension on the left side of the pelvis.

• Imagine you can exhale through your sitz bones, as if they were straws. Does it feel like you can do this equally on both sides? If a sitz bone “does not want to exhale,” this could indicate tension in the musculature surrounding the sitz bone and most likely the corresponding hip joint.