

Body Conscious Design

Faculty:

Gourab Kar

Body Conscious Design (BCD) means designing objects, environments and experiences from the point of view of how well they serve human bodies. *Western* culture and design standardise and restrain our bodies in movement and posture. But humans come in a wide range of sizes, and worldwide, humans assume at least 1,000 named postures in their daily lives. So first, BCD means designing for a greater range of body sizes and postures. Second, because humans are physical, emotional, and mental beings interacting with one another, designing for the body also means designing for emotion and culture that intertwine with physical sensation. Treating the body and mind holistically as a system requires personal and cultural awareness, hence the term BCD.

BCD is urgent. Rethinking sitting is particularly crucial: studies show that sitting for more than three hours daily causes premature mortality from heart attack, stroke and cancer - more than being old, fat, or smoking! But changing sitting means transforming *habitus*, a serious challenge, given the inertia built into our ubiquitous culture of chair-sitting. Standardised chairs, shoes and clothing designs, and home, work, school, and transportation structures restrain movements and reduce postural diversity. Therefore, we must transform our lifeways to encourage intermittent movement and frequent posture changes. For change to happen, we need to build *affordances* for movement into the physical environment and *re-train* our body and mind to be active and mobile again. BCD can be the catalyst to usher in this positive change.

This a call to designers and physicians who care about physical well-being and to researchers and movement practitioners who care about the design of the physical world. Too often, they are separate - designers do not understand anatomy and physiology, while physicians and movement practitioners do not appreciate the built environment's role in shaping human behaviour. I invite academics and students from architecture and design, human factors and ergonomics, industrial engineering, occupational health and safety, disability prevention, health policy and allied fields, as well as clinicians, including physicians, physiotherapists, kinesiologists, clinical psychologists, and occupational therapists – and everyone interested in sedentary behaviour and health – to participate in this experiential workshop.

Learning Objectives:

By participating in this workshop, you will:

1. Learn about the deleterious effects of sedentary behaviour on health and the need to change posture frequently and increase physical movement.
2. Be introduced to configurations of computer workstations which enable alternatives to chair-seated computer work.

3. Perform guided exercises in experiential anatomy to help them become conscious of their bodies. Three exercises will focus on the body's optimal alignment in standing, chair-seated and supine positions.
4. Explore how to create body-friendly lifeways at home and in the workplace.
5. Discuss crucial questions regarding the relevance and effectiveness of BCD regarding anatomical issues, social acceptability and work performance.

About Our Speaker:

1. Gourab Kar

Gourab Kar, PhD is an architect, designer and human factors researcher based in New Delhi, India. His areas of design expertise include human factors and ergonomics, sedentary behaviour and health, universal design, environment-behaviour research and body-conscious design. Gourab teaches design at the Department of Design, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. Previously, he was a postdoctoral scholar at the Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces at the University of California at Berkeley. Gourab has a Ph.D. in Human Behaviour and Design from Cornell University and has taught design at Cornell University and the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad.