

Help Your Health – The Weekly Review Summer Session 2018 – #4

Spine, Hips and Lower Extremities – Core Stability

Compared to the upper extremities, which are built for mobility and relationships, the lower extremities are built for weight bearing, locomotion and stability. The problem with the hips is that they tend to be too stable. They become tight/stiff, we lose mobility and end up with arthritis and other problems, eventually leading to surgery, hip replacements, or problems in the knees, ankles and feet.

In addition, the angle that the head of the femur (the ball of the ball and socket hip joint) connects to the pelvis can vary greatly, this means there is a vast person-to-person difference in hip mobility. This partly has to do with how the lower extremities develop.

Hip poses we do: Camel, Gate, Warrior 1 & 2, Triangle, Squat, Alternative Pigeon.

Think of: Engaging the glutes, the large gluteal muscles produce power. Most people do not put themselves in situations where they have to use lots of power to extend the hips. Instead they use the hamstrings. You know if you are engaging the hamstrings instead of the glutes if your hamstrings cramp while you are doing bridge. Try to engage the glutes first. Your hamstrings will thank you. Just remember G comes before H in the alphabet.

EXPLORATION

Activating the Glutes

Do all the following from a face down position, place the hands on top of each other and let your forehead rest on them.

1. Bend the knees and flex the feet. Keeping equal weight in the front of the pelvis, squeeze the left buttock to lift the lower part of the thigh off the ground and slowly lower it back down, Focus on control and fluid activation rather than height. Repeat on the right side and alternate sides for a count of 10 on each side.
- 2 . Bend the knees and bring them out toward the edge of the mat with the heels touching. Squeeze the glutes to lift the knees and the lower part of the thighs off the mat. Do not lift the upper part of the body off the mat. I suggest you engage the core/belly first to protect the lower back. Don't be surprised or disappointed if nothing lifts, concentrate and keep at it until it happens. Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 5 times.
3. Extend the legs straight behind you. Initiate the action of lifting the left leg by focusing on the place where the bottom of the left buttock meets the upper thigh. Lift and pause. Repeat on the right side. Alternate side to side for a count of 10 on each side. As mentioned in #1 keep the weight equal in the front of the pelvis and do not lift a hip or roll to the side.

Pelvis and Spine Series

This series focuses on moving the pelvis and asks you to pay attention to the relationship between the entire spine and the floor as you move. After feeling comfortable in the reclining position with the knees bent and feet on the mat, you can also try them with the legs straight or the soles of the feet together and the knees opened out to the side. See how the different hip positions change your experience.

1. Posterior and Anterior Tilt

Inhale to slowly roll the front of the pelvis toward the feet/anterior tilt, creating space between the low back and

the floor. Exhale to roll the front of the pelvis toward the head/posterior tilt, connecting the low back to the floor. Repeat 5-10 times.

2. Core Engagement with the Strap

Using your strap, place it under your back at the top of the buttocks (about where the dimples would be if you have them). Take the strap in both hands with the arms as much as possible on the mat. Engage the posterior tilt/core belly and push down on the strap so you would not be able to pull it to the right or left. The engagement should be so strong that the strap does not move as hard as you try to pull. Do not pull up but out trying each side. Gradually as you succeed, move the strap (strap width) up the back until it is slightly above the waist line/belly button. You will find it becomes progressively harder as it moves upward. This little work will give you an idea of true core engagement.

2. Side to Side

Exhale to shift weight into the right side of the pelvis as the left side begins to lift away from the ground but don't actually lift it. Inhale back to center. Exhale to shift weight to left side of the pelvis, allowing the right side to begin slightly lifting. Repeat 5-10 times, moving from side to side.

3. Circular (Down and Flashlight)

Visualize a circle under your low back, the bottom of the circle at the tip of the sacrum and the top of the circle under the navel, right and left your hips. Move the pelvis forward, backward, and sideways to trace the imaginary circle. Repeat 5-10 times and then trace the circle in the opposite direction.

Switch the focus to the front of the body by visualizing that you are drawing a circle on the ceiling with a flashlight in your navel. How does the movement or awareness change when you focus on the front instead of the back of the body? Now play with making your circle smaller or larger, noticing how that changes the movement for you.

Spine Series – Bridge/Cat & Cow/Cobra

Spinal articulation from a supine, kneeling and belly-down position.

Perform the movements slowly while visualizing each vertebra as a pearl on a string, each pearl moving when it is ready. As you explore, see whether you can focus on creating a fluid quality of movement in the spine as you come in and out of the shapes.

1. Bridge

Start in a reclined position with the knees bent, feet on the mat, arms by the sides of the body, and palms down while pressing lightly into the mat. Bring the feet hip-width apart, heels under the knees with a block between the knees.

Inhale to roll the front of the pelvis toward the head and pick it up off the ground. Continue the movement into the mid-spine, allowing each vertebra to lift off the ground, one after the other. Stop the articulation when the pelvis is in line with the thighbones. Think of the buttocks as the first pearl, and not to forget the order of firing the muscles, buttocks first and then begin the lift.

Exhale to reverse the movement, starting with the mid spine back down the ground. As you land, let the front of the pelvis roll toward the feet and create a small space between the low back and the floor. Repeat 5-10 times. If you want to do more you can stay up in the bridge and at the same time either lift a heel up or the entire foot 1 inch off the mat, feel the engagement happening. Try one heel first before you progress to both heels so you can really feel the work. You can also walk the feet a few inches away from the buttocks and lift the toes, one foot and then the other before both.

You can continue to a one time hold in the elevated position with the arms either in steeple or the isometric push

down with the elbows bend. Always follow a bridge with a forward fold, hugging the bent legs into the body with the arms rapped around the shins.

2. Cat-Cow

Position yourself on all fours with hands under the shoulders and knees under the hips. Keep space between the knees.

Exhale to roll the pelvis under the body, continuing the movement into the mid-spine and neck, slowly articulating into roundness. Press the hands into the floor to help spread the shoulder lades apart at the tope o the movement.

Inhale to reverse the articulation, slowly articulating the pelvis, mid spine and head in the opposite direction into a back bend. Repeat 5-10 times.

We continued in class with Balancing Cat R/L.

3. Cobra Articulation

Start in a belly-down position with the leg straight behind the body. Bend the elbows and bring them in line with the torso, lightly pressing the palms into the mat with the fingertips in line with the shoulders.

Inhale to lift the breastbone, slowly peeling the front of the body off the ground, keeping the neck in line with the rest of the spine.

Hold and then lift the hands an inch off the mat. Pause then exhale to slowly articulate the front of the body down to the mat. Repeat 5-10 times.

Reclining: Foot, Leg and Hip Series

In this series we will focus on pairing different ankle and hip movements with core stability. As you explore keep equal weight in the pelvis, both buttocks on the ground, activating the core and maintaining pelvis stability as you move through the hip joint. We did this series with the strap but you can also do it hands free, I believe the strap is more demanding.

1.Plantarflexion and Dorsiflexion

Start in a reclined position with both knees bent and both feet on the mat. Bring the left knee in toward the chest and place a yoga strap across the ball of the left foot, holding each end with a hand. Draw the strap taut as you raise the left leg toward the ceiling. Keep the shoulders relaxed and supported on the mat.

Articulate through the ankle as you point the foot away from the shin/plantar flexion into the light resistance of the strap, and bring the foot toward the shin/dorsiflexion with the assistance of the strap. Repeat 5-10 times.

2. Ankle and Hip Circles

Keep the strap where it is, continue to pull it taut. Circle the ankle into the feedback of the strap, exploring how the pointing, flexing, and sis-to side action come together to crate the feeling of circling. Repeat 5-10 circles in each direction.

Moving the strap to the arch of the foot, continuing to pull it lightly. Focus on where the thighbone connects to the pelvis. Us the strap to guide a small circular hip action, maintaining equal weight in the pelvis as you move. Repeat 5-10 time and then switch directions.

3. Inversion and Eversion

Keep the strap on the arch of the foot, roll the ankle sideways, bring the outside of the foot toward the outer edge of the right leg as the inside of the foot comes away from the inside of the leg/eversion. Hold and feel the work happening in the leg, you can also slightly move the leg to feel more stretching.

Return to center and bring the inside edge of the foot toward the inner leg line and the outside of the foot away

from the ousted elf the leg/inversion.

Repeat a few times on each side, slowly moving and holding to you can feel the intensity of the stretch.

Leg-Stretch Variation with Strap

This series can be short and just deal with the hamstrings or you can go farther and deeper into the possible stretches. Always be careful of the back as some of these moves become a twist unless you keep the sacrum and lower back firmly planted on the mat. As each leg goes across or opens you can also keep the strap taut and keep bringing the leg more towards your body, this becomes a mighty hamstring stretch. Never lock the knee, always keep a minimal/soft bend which is hardly noticeable.

1. Supine with the right leg reaching skyward with the strap over the arch, left leg is straight on the mat securely keeping contact if you do not have a back issue. If the back is an issue please bend the leg as needed. As the right leg goes from bent to straight stop straightening the knee when you start to feel the hamstring stretch in the back of the leg. Pause there for a few breaths without trying to straighten or draw the leg closer to the chest. Holding both straps with the right hand. Hold for 1-2 minutes just feeling the stretch and how far you can go in the stretch.

Pain it is not gain, be mindful of all movements.

2. Pull the strap taut to support the weight of the leg against gravity and open the leg 3-5 inches to the right of the belly button, hold. This is a hamstring stretch. Continue releasing as you desire, going slow and stopping when it becomes too much. Do not allow the leg to touch the floor hold it up with the elbow on the mat. Always being mindful that the other side of the body stays in touch with the mat, do not let it lift.

Engage the core and with the help of the arm and leg, bring the right leg back to center, switch hands on the strap and cross over the bellybutton/mid-line 3-5 inches for a hamstring stretch, hold and breath. Continue the descent of the leg while lifting the right hip but keep the right shoulder on the mat. Again engage and use the arm and leg to come back to center.

Switch strap to left leg over the arch and repeat.

We finished most classes this week with a few Chair Sun Salutations and then in some classes continued to Standing Sun Salutations. The cobwebs cleared very quickly so I believe most students have these in their memory for quick retrieving. Congratulations. Plus they looked good!

General Class:

Restorative with the Breath: *Legs on the chair with blanket across and lengthwise.*

Attunement/Starting Pose/Supine: *Morning Wake-Up Stretch, Hip Openers with Bent Legs (Small Circles Together, Circles Apart and Large, In/Out Together)*

(See Listing above for details of the class)

Chair: Sun Salutations (also standing)

Savasana: Supine and Relaxed

Essential Oil: doTerra "Forgive" the Renewing Blend -Spruce, Bergamot, Juniperberry, Myrrh, Noutka Tree, Arborvitae Wood Oil, Thyme, Citronella

Helps to counteract emotions of anger and guilt while promoting the liberating feeling of contentment, relief and patience.

Please see my weekly newsletter for more details. It will also cover Deep Blue from last week since it was 'baby arrival' week and I didn't get to do it.

Music: Deuter "Reike Healing"

Quote: Whatever the present moment contains accept it as if you had chosen it. -Eckhart Tolle

Miscellaneous:

1. Printable Link to **Morning Wake-Up Stretch** on my website:

https://yogatherapyalacarte.com/2018/01/20/morning_wake_up_stretch/

2. [Printable link to Attunement / warm-up](#) for all general classes.

This is the first section of each class, explained in detail, which we usually repeat every week.