

Tips for Dancer on Anxiety

What do dancers need to know about anxiety?

Anxiety can be considered a normal and natural response to life's challenges. Most dancers can recall at least one episode of performance anxiety. Anxiety is an interior cognitive reaction to an anticipated future event or situation that does not exist or is unlikely to exist. By recognizing the difference between pre-performance jitters, performance anxiety, and other anxiety disorders dancers are better able to understand and control anxiety. Every dancer should know when and how to respond to the more serious signs of anxiety.

What are the symptoms of anxiety?

General Anxiety Symptoms

Performance Only Symptoms

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Racing pulse, heart palpitations• Shortness of breath and dry mouth• Blushing and mottled skin• Nausea, vomiting, appetite disturbance• Trembling, shaking, and muscle tension• Dizziness• Hot flashes, sweating or chills, clammy hands• Difficulty with sleep• Social withdrawal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catastrophic and negative thinking• Fear of forgetting• Fear of criticism or disapproval• Distractibility• Irritability• Procrastination• Self-sabotage• Emotional volatility• Feeling out of control
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What causes Anxiety?

Anxiety disorders are not the “fault” of the person experiencing them. These disorders are most likely a combination of biological and psychological factors. Biological/physical factors include genetic factors or familial factors and changes in brain chemicals. Psychological factors include the ways dancers learn to think about certain situations or cues, the fears they associate with events and the amount of control they believe they have over situations. Some childhood experiences can have an impact in adulthood reactions to events and shape the way adults deal with anxiety. Anxiety symptoms can be induced by medication and certain substances such as caffeine, alcohol, and drug use, as well as certain medical conditions.

What are types of anxiety related disorders?

Generalized Anxiety Disorder : excessive worry (apprehensive expectation) and anxiety lasting more than six months on most days.

Panic Attacks: can occur with out warning and are sudden feelings of terror. The physical symptoms predominate. It may include fear of losing control or going “crazy”, fear of dying, or fears of unreality and being detached from oneself. When a person avoids certain situations fearing a panic attack may take place this reaction is called Agoraphobia. There are Specific Phobias with dread and overwhelming anxiety when a feared object, situation or activity is present.

Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia) is a paralyzing feeling of self-consciousness about social situations and an intense fear of doing something wrong in front of others or of being observed. Performance only Social Anxiety Disorder commonly referred to as “stage fright” can be distressing and disabling condition that affects performers. At least half of all artists, regardless of age gender and talent or experience report problems associated with performance anxiety. There is a conflict between the need to display one’s artistry publicly and the fear of proving inadequate and suffering humiliation and rejection. It may be situation specific such as rehearsing with new choreographers, auditions, or opening nights.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder are disorders that may have a significant anxiety component but are not considered anxiety disorders.

What can be done about performance anxiety or anxiety disorders?

1. Good Preparation: Dancers need to prepare for a performance in every way possible.
2. Active Stress Management: Minimizing stresses, anticipating interruptions, positive self-talk can reduce anxiety.
3. Arousal Management : Meditation, Yoga, breathing training, Mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation training, taught by an accredited provider who is registered with a professional organization.
4. Social Support and outlets; a hobby and social relationship can help to release muscle tension, distract oneself and remind oneself of what else is important in life. Dancers who develop positive social support systems have less performance anxiety. However, the extent to which a dancer shares the details of his or her anxiety symptoms is their own prerogative. Sharing with company management and staff may depend on many factors including the nature of the dancer's contract. The dancer has to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure carefully.
5. General Health and Wellness: Healthy nutrition, dietary supplements and good sleep hygiene. Lack of sleep is related to poor concentration, mistakes and injuries. Some physical illnesses such as thyroid conditions are associated with anxiety. Regular medical screening through company screening or with your own medical team is vital to a dancer's health. Dancers without a company physician or family physician should consult their local dance protection organization for advice on health services that understand the needs of dancers.
6. Medications: Prescribed medications may be recommended by health professionals to target the brain neurochemicals that are altered in anxiety states. B-blockers have been prescribed for use, successfully, in some artists such as musicians and actors. However, further research is suggested before recommending their use in dancers as these medications may interfere with muscle tension and performance.

References:

<http://athletesandthearts.com/performance-anxiety/> May14/2013

<http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/the-psychology-of-performing-arts-stage-fright-and-optimal-performance> May 14/2013

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/> June 6/2013

American Psychiatric Association: Desk Reference to the Diagnostic Criteria From DSM-5 Arlington, VA, American Psychiatric Association, 2013.

Disclaimer

The information on traveling tips listed above are to help guide and inform the dancer and training staff while traveling, it is not meant to take the place of the advice of a medical professional. This information is provided by Dance/USA Task Force on Dancer Health.

Tips on Depression for Dancers

Everyone feels sad, worn out or listless from time to time. That's normal, especially for dancers because of the high demands of high levels of athletic endeavor, long hours, touring and performance demands. It is also normal to feel disappointment or emptiness with personal loss such as disappointment with casting. The experience of failure or disappointment often results in temporary feelings of worthlessness or even negative feelings about oneself.

However, when these emotions increase in intensity, persist for more than a few weeks and start to interfere with a person's life or performance, it may be an indication of depression. Depression is the most common mood disturbance.

What are the signs of depressive illness?

- Low mood lasting most of the day nearly everyday.
- Decreased interest in almost all activities that you normally enjoy.
- Significant changes in weight and/or appetite.
- Sleeping more or less than usual nearly every day.
- Others notice that you seem agitated or have a loss of energy.
- Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day.
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt nearly every day.
- Having difficulty concentrating or trouble making decisions.
- Thoughts of death and thoughts of suicide with or without a plan.

Depression with a Seasonal Pattern

Winter weather and diminished sunlight can sometimes affect mood. Some people react more to shortened days or other seasonal changes and this can trigger a type of depression. This pattern needs to occur for two consecutive years with no other depressive episode in between seasons to be confirmed. The chemical messengers in the brain called neurotransmitters, that regulate sleep, mood and appetite may be altered causing depression. The depressive symptoms associated with change of season are similar to the list above and can also include cravings for foods high in sugar, increase sleeping and weight gain. Seasonal pattern depression occurs more frequently at higher latitudes.

Help can make a difference

Anyone who has signs of depression lasting for more than a few weeks should seek help. A dancer may try to handle these feelings alone for fear of being criticized, rejected, not cast, or replaced. Some people try to cope by using alcohol or drugs. If left untreated a person can become so withdrawn they simply can't get out of bed or worse contemplate self-harm or even suicide. They may need the support of friends and family to get help from a health care professional. This may include medication, counseling, family support and self-help groups.

When should you tell someone at work?

Once a qualified health care professional has diagnosed depression and treatment has begun the dancer needs to make a decision whether to discuss this with someone in the company administration or the artistic staff. Mood disorders affect one in ten people. Therefore, most companies have had previous experience with employees with a depressive illness. If a dancer needs to be absent for treatment or rehabilitation (especially if the depression accompanies an injury), it may be wise to discuss the illness with the appropriate company administration. Dancers may want to seek advice regarding re-hire policies from an outside resource such as a Dancer Resource Transition Centre or an Artist Health Centre available in larger cities.

Recovery

The dancer may be able to take class, rehearse and even perform while in treatment. However, the dancer should be cautious if the symptoms persist or worsen. Furthermore, the symptoms of poor sleep and disturbed eating patterns may put the dancer at risk for injury. Early treatment is the best course of action as it will hasten the return to a full workload.

Additional Information

National Mental Health Association Hotline

800-273-8255

www.nmha.org

Depression & Bi-polar Support

800-273-8255

www.dbsalliance.org

Canadian Mental Health Association Mood Disorders

www.cmha.ca

The information in this article is based on the latest edition of the APA. DSM-5.

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Self-Compassion:

- An inner friend who cares about us no matter what
- A way to motivate one's self through respect and kindness
- An approach that can be cultivated and practiced

- *Do you often criticize yourself in order to excel and get things done?*
- *Are you hard on yourself when things go wrong?*
- *Do you value yourself primarily based on performance and accomplishments?*
- *Do you tend to pay more attention to the well-being of others than yourself?*
- *Do you believe you have to be special and above-average in order to be worthy of love and happiness?*

If your answer to any of these questions is “yes,” you might benefit from cultivating self-compassion. Research shows that self-compassion – the ability to be kind and caring to ourselves even in the face of imperfection and difficult feelings – is associated with well-being and positive action. Although many of us learn that in order to be successful we must criticize ourselves, the reality is just the opposite: We are more effective at motivating ourselves through an approach that is self-compassionate rather than negatively critical.

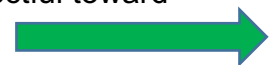
The good news: Self compassion is a way of thinking, being, and acting that can be learned and strengthened through practice. On the other side of this page are resources for learning and practicing self-compassion.



Some Ponderings on Self Esteem and Self-Compassion:

For many years self-esteem has been considered all the rage. After all, it feels great to think and feel positively about one's self. However, there is a potential pitfall: Self-esteem can be a fair-weather friend when it is dependent on being perfect, being better than others, and/or always succeeding. All of us, including highly skilled, gifted, and successful people, have experiences of not being the best, not performing well, or feeling lonely, angry, and/or sad. Self-esteem tends to plummet at such times, leaving us to suffer alone with self-doubt and even self-hatred. In contrast, self-compassion is the kind of friend who can always be there, even when we have “failed” at something, or don't win the prize. It is a way of relating with self that creates safety in being who we are. With self-compassion, we can still motivate ourselves to do our best and to move with enthusiasm toward our most important goals. However, the motivation comes from self-liking and self-care, rather than self-criticism.

Self-compassion is often not easy to learn, especially for those of us with very powerful inner critics. Yet, there are tried and true ways of learning to be kind and respectful toward ourselves. Please turn the page to learn more!



Resources for Learning and Practicing Self-Compassion

Note: This list is only a starting place!

Books

1. The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion by Christopher Germer -
2. Self Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself by Kristin Neff
3. The Mindful Self Compassion Workbook by Kristin Neff
4. Self-Compassion - I Don't Have To Feel Better Than Others to Feel Good About Myself by Simeon Lindstrom

General Internet Resources for Self Compassion

1. <https://self-compassion.org/>. This is the website of Dr. Kristin Neff, co-creator (with Christopher Germer) of the Mindful Self-Compassion training. This website contains many resources including *multiple free audio practices, written exercises, announcements about workshops, research related to self-compassion, and a questionnaire/test to learn how self-compassionate you are.*
2. <https://chrisgermer.com/>. This is the website of Dr. Christopher Germer, co-creator (with Kristin Neff) of the Mindful Self-Compassion training. This website contains *free audio recordings and written instruction for formal and informal self-compassion practices, training information, and information related to self-compassion and psychotherapy.*

Articles

1. The five Myths of Self-Compassion (*Greater Good Magazine*):
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_five_myths_of_self_compassion
2. Why Self-compassion and beats Self-Confidence (*New York Times*):
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/28/smarter-living/why-self-compassion-beats-self-confidence.html>
3. How To Cultivate More Self Compassion (*Psychology Today*):
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/nurturing-self-compassion/201703/how-cultivate-more-self-compassion>
4. Why Self-Compassion is the New Mindfulness (Mindful):
<https://www.mindful.org/self-compassion-new-mindfulness/>

YouTube Talks and Practices

1. The Three Components of Self Compassion with Kristin Neff (6:18 minutes):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11U0h0DPu7k>
The Space Between Self-Esteem and Self Compassion with Kristin Neff (TEDx talk, 19 minutes):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvtZBUSplr4>
2. Misconceptions of Mindful Self Compassion Practice with Christopher Germer (13:55 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOaKuGNO1DM>
3. Paul Gilbert: Strengthening the Mind Through the Power of Self-Compassion (49:38)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GKVMILwzdY>
4. Kristin Neff: Overcoming Objections to Self-Compassion (12:23 minutes):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFhcNPjIMjc>
5. Self Compassion Part 2: Self-Kindness with Kristin Neff (4:39 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjvYhd34fgc>
6. Tara Brach: The RAIN of Self-Compassion (10:42 minutes) <https://www.tarabrach.com/meditation-the-rain-of-self-compassion/>

My own all-time personal favorite self-compassion practice: The Self-Compassion Break. See:

- <https://chrisgermer.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Self-Compassion-Break-13-min.mp3>
http://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/self-compassion.break_.mp3
<https://chrisgermer.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/MSC-Self-Compassion-Break.pdf>
<https://self-compassion.org/exercise-2-self-compassion-break/>

This flyer was created by Ruth Q. Leibowitz, Ph.D. (Dr.Leibq@hotmail.com, 503-927-5714). Ruth is a psychologist and trained teacher of Mindful Self Compassion (MSC) in the Portland, Oregon area. She offers full MSC trainings (eight weeks, plus a half day retreat), and can create shorter programs on mindfulness and self-compassion tailored to your organization or individual lifestyle. There are MSC teachers all over the country and world. To find one in your area: <https://centerformsc.org/find-a-teacher/>.



Sleep Your Way to Better Performance



After a late night gig or a long day at work many of us blow off steam by noodling around on social media, playing games on our cell phones or binge watching television. Lately, however, scientists warn **against using these “blue” light-emitting devices before bed.**



WHY? The light from our devices is “short-wavelength-enriched,” it affects levels of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin more than any other wavelength. **This shift in our sleep patterns can have devastating health effects on our body.**

DANGERS OF NOT GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP



Not getting enough sleep results in a higher risk of heart attack, stroke, depression, high blood pressure, and infections. Weight gain and risk of type-2 diabetes is also related to a lack of sleep.

www.healthline.com/health/sleep-deprivation/effects-on-body

HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU NEED?

According to Sleep Health: The Journal of the National Sleep Foundation.

ADULTS (18-64): 7-9 hours

OLDER ADULTS (65+): 7-8 hours



WHY YOU NEED SLEEP

Did you know that while you sleep, your brain releases hormones to build muscle mass, fight infection, regulate your weight and repair tissues?

Good sleep improves memory and impacts hunger and our ability to feel full after meals. *(When we haven't slept well it “triggers” our brain's reward center causing food cravings.)*

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU GET ENOUGH SLEEP?

You feel refreshed upon waking and remain alert all day.

Contact your health provider if you are having trouble sleeping.



Sleep Your Way to Better Performance



Expose yourself to lots of bright light during the day, which will boost your ability to sleep at night, as well as your mood and alertness during daylight.



Make sure you have 30 minutes of physical activity every day: dance, go to the gym, take a walk!

TIP: Relax in dim light and listen to soothing music for 15-30 minutes before you go to bed.



Don't drink any caffeinated beverages within 5 hours of the time you wish to go to sleep.



Avoid tobacco and 2nd and 3rd hand smoke, as it causes you to sleep lightly and wake up early.



If you must look at electronic devices at night, consider wearing blue-blocking glasses. Avoid looking at bright screens beginning 2-3 hours before bed.

TIP: Use dim red lights for night lights. (Red light has the least power to suppress melatonin.) Avoid turning on lights for middle of the night bathroom trips. Instead have dim light sensor night lights.



Never drink alcoholic beverages at night. Alcohol prevents deep sleep and tends to wake you up in the middle of the night when the effects wear off.



Eat your largest meal in the middle of the day. Heavy meals within 3 hours of your bedtime can cause indigestion and disrupt sleep.

Tip: Magnesium is calming so eat yogurt or nuts an hour before bed. Tart cherry juice is another natural sleep aid.



Watch your intake of all liquids before bed, as frequent middle of the night bathroom visits disrupt the quality of sleep.



Improve your sleep environment. Make your bedroom a sanctuary from stress, free of computers, cell phones and distractions. A hot bath in Epsom salts can be a relaxing way to ease into sleep.

TIP: Keep your bedroom dark and cool. Dim lights set the stage for sleep. Have a comfortable mattress and pillows.



Establish a bedtime routine so your body associates your bed with falling asleep. Avoid your bed when you are not sleepy. Instead of tossing and turning, get up, go into another room and read until you are tired.



Basic Nutrition Tips for Dancers

Dancers need to nourish their bodies for strength, stamina, performance and aesthetic. With a busy life full of class, rehearsal and performance, it is crucial to eat healthfully and well to sustain your instrument, your body. Below is a starting point for dancers to build from in how to approach meals and meal planning.

1. Eat breakfast - start your day off with a combination of complex carbohydrate and some protein to fuel you for technique class
 - Examples are plain greek yogurt with fruit, whole grain toast with peanut butter and banana slices, scrambled eggs with chopped veggies and ½ sweet potato
2. Snacks are important - having a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack with between 100 and 250 calories sustains your muscles and brain through busy rehearsal and performance schedules
 - Examples are carrot sticks with hummus, almonds or walnuts with a piece of fruit, small whole grain tortilla with black beans, salsa and 1tbsp dairy or cashew cheese
3. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate - keep your muscles and brain alert with plenty of water. Drink a little over 2 cups of water prior to exercise, then sip on water through classes and rehearsal with a goal of 5-10 ounces for every 20 minutes of activity.
4. Eat from all the food groups - your body needs nutrients from carbohydrates AND proteins AND fats. Eliminating foods completely from any of these groups takes away the building blocks your body needs for proper metabolism, including muscle recovery and strength. Nutrition experts recommend 10-12% of daily calories come from protein, 20-35% of daily calories come from fats, and 60-75% of calories from complex carbohydrates.
5. Focus on eating “whole foods” - meaning food that is unprocessed and closest to its usual form. This ensures you are getting the most nutrients from your food and saves empty calories from the added sugar, salt and preservatives in processed foods.
6. Build in at least 5-6 vegetable and fruit servings each day. A serving is equal to one medium piece of fruit, ½ cup of cooked vegetable or 1 cup of fresh fruit/veg.

Quick meal ideas:

Overnight oatmeal - ½ cup rolled oats

½ cup of milk, yogurt or your favorite non-dairy alternative

½ cup of berries

2 tbsp of sliced almonds for crunch

Mix oats and milk together in a jar/bowl before you go to bed, cover and refrigerate overnight. Stir it up again in the morning, add a splash more of milk or yogurt to thin the texture if desired, then add your berries and nuts when you are ready to eat!

Easy portable salad - ½ cup garbanzo beans

1 cup of your favorite chopped veggies (example dark greens, peppers)

⅓ medium avocado

Pinch of salt, pepper

1 tbsp of fresh herb like basil, parsley or thyme

1 tbsp of lemon juice or balsamic vinegar

Small splash of olive oil

Mix together in a jar and bring for mid-day meal to have with a slice of whole grain bread or ½ cup of cooked grain like brown rice

For more detailed information, the Nutrition Resource Paper available online through IADMS is a great resource with sample menus and meal plans. The [Nutrition Resource Book](#) by Emily Harris, RD is also a great place to find more specifics, particularly if you are trying to follow a vegetarian/vegan diet.

Handout prepared by Julia H. Becke, MD, Internal Medicine

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Exercise List

1. CARDIO FITNESS

To increase aerobic (endurance) fitness, you need to do the following:

20 minutes of high impact exercise that elevates your heart rate to 80% of maximum and do this 3 times per week.

Options: Running, elliptical, cycling - or just put some music on & dance non-stop for 20 mins.

To calculate your heart rate goal, do the following:

Subtract your age from 220. This is your maximum heart rate.

Calculate 80% of this figure. This is your heart rate goal for your 20 min exercise routine.

You can use a heart rate app (there are many free ones) to check your heart rate during exercise.

2. HIP MUSCLE CONTROL

a. Clamshell Exercise (Gluteus Medius Muscle)

Lying on side: knees bent to 45 degrees, feet underneath the hips, ankle bones together.

Make sure pelvis is not rotating forwards or backwards.

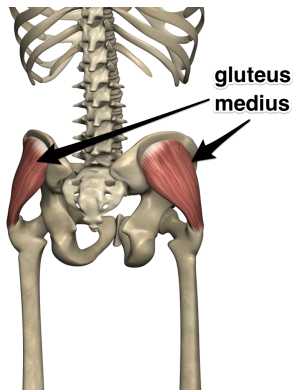
Rotate the upper thigh outwards, keeping ankle bones in contact.

Aim for rotation of the thigh bone as the knees open rather than lifting the top leg.

15 repetitions with a 10 second hold in the open position.



The gluteus medius muscle is located on the side of the hip just below the crest of the pelvis. If this muscle is tight, you can release it using a massage ball.



b. Gluteus Maximus

Lying on your front with a pillow under the stomach to keep the spine neutral

Bend one knee to 90 degrees, foot pointing to the ceiling.

Raise the foot towards the ceiling while maintaining a neutral spine. Engage the abdominal muscles as you lift to support the spine.

Hold the raise for 10 secs (build up to this gradually if you are not able to control it well).

Repeat 5 times each leg.



c. Inner Thigh (Adductor) Muscles

Lying on your side, underneath leg straight.

Bend top leg & cross over lower leg to place foot on floor in front of it.

Make sure the feet are aligned straight under the hips & your spine is in neutral.

Lift the lower leg with the foot flexed, making sure the leg remains parallel.

15 repetitions with a 10 second hold at the top of the motion.



3. ABDOMINAL MUSCLE CONTROL

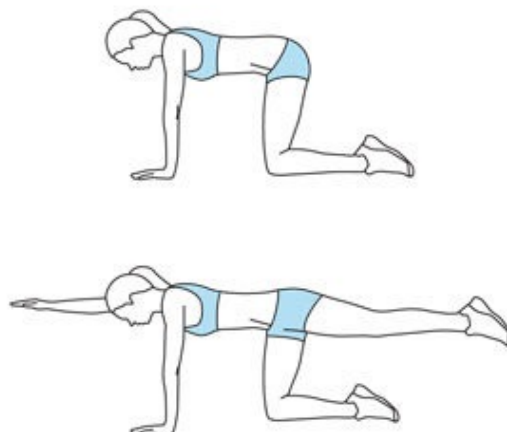
a. Bird Dog Exercise.

Kneeling on all fours. Engage abdominal muscles & make sure spine/ neck are in neutral.

Extend one leg to back in line with spine. Extend opposite arm in front in line with spine.

Aim to keep the pelvis and ribcage stable - do not aim for leg height.

Do 5 - 10 repetitions, alternating sides.

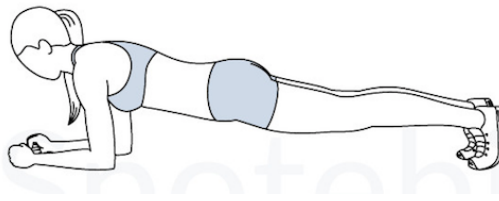


b. Plank

Support weight on forearms. Make sure spine is in neutral and neck aligned.

Keep shoulder blades anchored to a V at the base of the spine (shoulder blades in your back pockets). Minimize any tension in the shoulders & neck.

Keep the abdominal muscles lifted. Hold the position until you are unable to maintain your form.



c. Pelvic Control Bridge Exercise

Lying on your back, knees bent and feet on the ground.

Engage abdominal muscles and lift the pelvis off the floor. Aim for a slow controlled movement.

Slowly control the lowering back to the table.

Aim to have a controlled lift and descent without any extra moments.

Progression: Once you can control this well with both legs, repeat raising one leg to the ceiling at the height of the bridge.



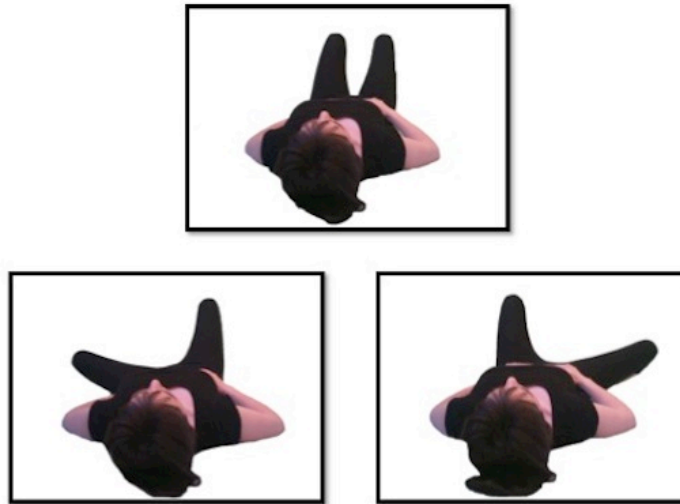
d. Pelvic Control Knee Fallout Exercise

Lie on your back with knees bent, feet planted on floor.

Allow one knee to fall out to the side while maintaining control of the pelvis.

Return to neutral and repeat with other leg.

Repeat 5 times each leg, alternating legs.



Progression: When you can achieve the above exercise with a stable pelvis, progress to having the hips and knees bent to 90 degrees off the floor and repeat exercise.



4. FOOT CONTROL

a. Foot Doming

Lift the “knuckles” of the toes (under the metatarsals).

Do not allow toes to curl under or crease.

Keep the big toe, pinky toe, and heel in contact with the floor.



b. Releve with ball

Stand with feet in parallel and place a pinky/ massage ball between the ankle bones.

Do a slow releve while aiming to keep the ball in place.

Lower heels keeping ball in place. Focus on using the inner thighs as well as the ankles for control.



5. SHOULDER CONTROL

Envisage a V-shape from the lower points of your shoulder blades to a point at the base of your spine.

Draw shoulder blades down to this position and engage the muscles of the back to stabilize arm movements - put your shoulder blades in your back pockets.

Lie on your front, arms by your sides. Keep head in neutral.

Engaging the V-shape from shoulder blades to lower back, lift your back off the floor keeping the shoulder blades controlled against the back of the rib cage.

Keep the abdominal muscles engaged as you lift and keep the neck in line with the spine.

Don't aim for a high position/ arched back.

Lift and hold for 10 seconds, then lower. Repeat 5 times.

Progression: once this is comfortable for you, repeat with arms in open 5th line.

If you notice strain in your neck, stop the exercise.

See also Plank exercise above - Ex. 3b.

6. BALANCE CONTROL

Place a pillow or cushion on the floor. Stand on it on one foot. (Have a wall or piece of furniture nearby in case you need to stabilize yourself).

Make sure your other leg is not in contact with the standing leg.

Work towards being able to stand in a calm balance on the challenging surface.

When you can balance easily, progress to closing your eyes.

Stop exercise when you break the balance.

If one side is weaker, do this more often on the weaker side until it matches the other.

Progress to using a wobble board, if available.

7. KNEE CONTROL

Stand with both feet in parallel in front of a mirror. Check your natural knee alignment.

If the knees have a tendency to point slightly inwards, engage your turn-out muscles to bring the knees to face straight forwards.

Stand on one leg. Using the turn-out muscles and inner thigh muscles to align the leg in parallel, do a slow, controlled plie and return to straight leg.

Make sure that the knee tracks over the foot and that your pelvis remains level.

Aim for a controlled descent with no knee deviation or wobbles. Repeat slowly 5 times each leg.

Also see clamshell exercise for gluteus medius control above - Ex 2a.

If your gluteus medius muscle is tight, you may need to release it with a massage ball or your hands before doing these exercises.



8. HAMSTRING STRETCH

Lie on your back, both knees bent with feet on the floor.

Extend one leg to the ceiling & hold around the thigh.

Tilt your pelvis away (i. e. arch your back a little) while drawing the leg towards you.

DO NOT pull the leg up to your chest or over your head - **THIS DOES NOT STRETCH YOUR HAMSTRINGS!!**

For a true hamstring stretch, the leg will not pass much more than 90 degrees - you increase the stretch by tilting the pelvis.

Hold the stretch for 30 - 60 seconds - do this after your last class of the day.

DO NOT ENGAGE IN STRETCHES FOR MORE THAN 30 SECONDS EITHER BEFORE OR DURING CLASS. Prolonged stretching causes the muscles to relax to the point where they are not ready for rapid movements. If you still require the muscle to provide power, ensure your stretches are short (20 seconds maximum). Save the longer stretches for the end of the day.

9. HIP FLEXOR STRETCH

Deep lunge position with front knee bent & back leg resting on the floor behind you.

Make sure that your head is directly aligned over your hips.

To increase the stretch push forwards from your lower back - **DO NOT TILT YOUR BACK FORWARDS - STAY UPRIGHT.**

To increase the stretch into the knee extensor muscles, bend the back knee & draw your foot towards your buttocks.

Make sure to place something soft under the back knee.

Hold the stretch for 30 - 60 seconds - do this after your last class of the day.

DO NOT ENGAGE IN STRETCHES FOR MORE THAN 30 SECONDS EITHER BEFORE OR DURING CLASS. Prolonged stretching causes the muscles to relax to the point where they are not

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