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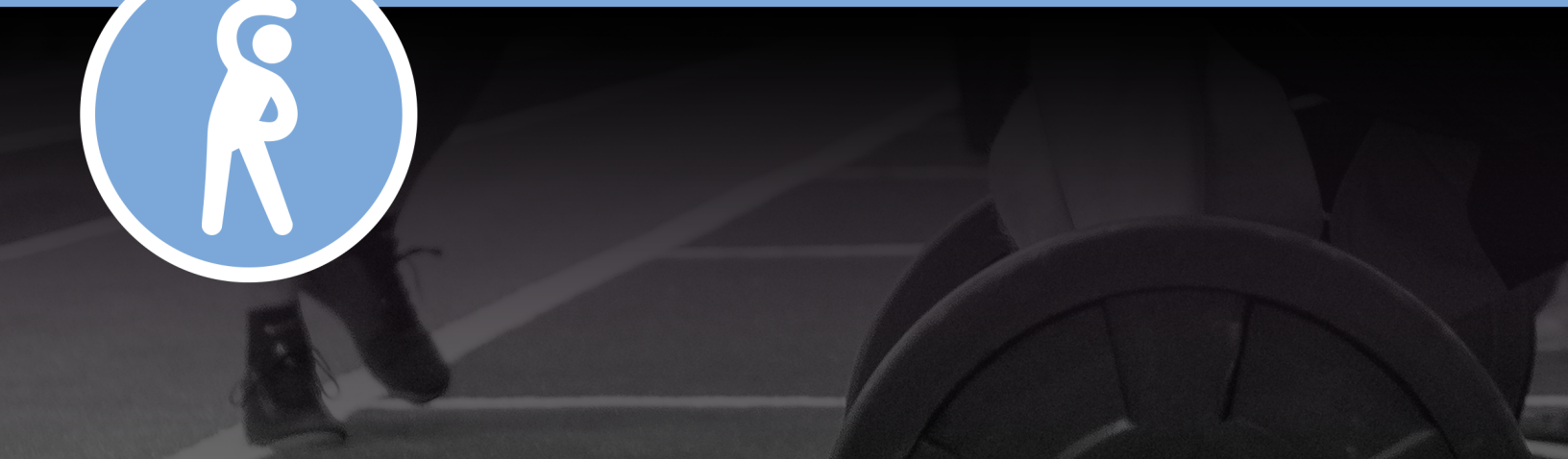
HOW TO EASE PAIN



INTRO

We're fairly sure the entire world can be divided into two groups.

Those who live their lives with a default posture of shoulders back and head up, or normal people who slouch over steering wheels, laptop screens and smartphones most of the time even though we totally buy into the idea that it's killing us slowly. Does this sound like you? If you're not raising your hand in agreement, it's probably because of poor range of motion, right? C'mon, everyone does it.

While many of us have made a lot of progress towards developing a healthy lifestyle, the truth is that most people still spend too much time in compromising positions. Why? Sitting and slouching feels kinda good.

Understand that slouching lies and that good feeling cannot be trusted! You know this becaue when you finally snap out of your hunchy stupor to prop yourself up straight, it feels so much better.

Thankfully, mobility work is now a common part of fitness regimens. Athletes now understand that it takes much more than weight training, anabolic conditioning and a solid diet to maximize fitness and performance. You also have to give a lot of time, effort and resource to self-maintenance and restoration.

A few minutes of foam rolling or unfocused stretching here and there just isn't enough. A more thoughtful approach starts with mobilizing a muscle that you probably haven't thought about in years – your diaphragm.

DIAPHRAM-ARAMA

The ability to breathe well and practice good posture has everything to do with your diaphragm. It's the large, mushroom cap shaped muscle that attaches to your lower ribs and spine. You are able to breathe because this muscle contracts powerfully and smoothly, moving downward during inhalation. But what happens during distress or shallow breath? How do you think the function of your diaphragm is changed by all those hours spend slouching?

An unfit diaphragm will be burdened with excessive tension. Further, rounded shoulders often cause uneven loading on the diaphragm which can lead to breathing dysfunction and poor fueling of the tissues. That's the last thing you want to experience during a tough WOD.

Better still, you might experience an improvement in mobility issues that have limited motion in your shoulders, back, hips, knees or ankles. The anatomy and action of the diaphragm directly affects everything above and below it. If it moves well and functions, YOU will move well and function.

Here are 3 movements from Jill Miller creator of the Yoga Tune up and author of The Roll Model, an excellent guide to mobility and self-care, that will make an incredible impact on your training and everyday life.

ABDOMINAL MASSAGE

This drill will restore slide and glide in and amongst the multiple abdominal layers, their associated fascias, and the connective tissues. It will also help your diaphragm to function better by removing inhibited and stiff abdominal muscles that can block to the diaphragm's dynamic motion.

As a bonus, this movement softens scar tissue, relaxes the fascial relationship between the diaphragm and the psoas (your deep hip flexor), and helps to relieve low back pain. And, it's as simple to perform as it looks.

- Place a "gushy" inflated ball in your abdomen and lie down on it. Inhale and hold your breath while contracting all the muscles in contact with the ball. Hold for 3-5 seconds, then exhale. Repeat this Contract/Relax breath for 10 rounds.
- Move the ball from side to side across your abdomen while breathing without tension or holding.
- Roll the ball up and down, from pelvis to sternum while deeply breathing into your gut.
- Shear your abdomen – Pivot your body around the ball to wind up your abdominal tissues into the ball. Once you can wind up no more, breathe deeply for several breaths, then spin yourself the other way.
- Perform 5-10 minutes of total massage.

THORACIC MOW

The thoracic mow can also be referred to as your back breath. A dynamic rib cage is KEY for healthy breathing.

Your ribs should rotate slightly with each breath you take. If they are too stiff, your neck muscles will hijack your breath and you will be destined to live in the choke-hold of stress breathing. This move will help the large and small muscles that stitch along your spine to be better hosts for the many rib joints they surround.

- Lie on the floor and place a pair of therapy balls on either side of your spine (with or without the mesh tote).
- Interlace your hands behind your head and slowly roll the balls up and down, right where your rib-cage meets the spine. Press your breath against the balls as you move from vertebrae to vertebrae. MOVE SLOWLY, this should take about 2-5 minutes.
- Begin to lean from side-to-side so that the more weight loads into one ball, than the other. Create this baby serpentine action while breathing deeply. This will help your vertebrae to improve side-bending and rotation.
- Take 2 minutes here.

SUPRA-CILAVICLE DETANGLE

This area is what Jill refers to as "the stress center of respiration" – it works overtime when your diaphragm and intercostals are dysfunctional.

This is a magic point that can soften the grip of the collar of muscles that drape like a tight muscular turtle-neck from the base of your skull and jaw to your shoulder girdle. These include the scalenes, sternocleidomastoid and trapezius. You may even help your first rib to settle into place.

- Nuzzle a small therapy ball into the hollow space above your collarbone and lean into a corner or doorjamb.
- Breathe in all the way, until you hit a "ceiling." Take about 5-10 breaths to familiarize yourself with this odd position.
- Move your shoulder, arm and head around in every possible direction. Continue to breathe deeply.
- After 2-5 minutes switch sides and repeat. That should get you feeling much better.