



GOLD MEDAL BODIES
Focused Flexibility Training Manual

GMB Focused Flexibility Training Manual

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THE GMB CURRICULUM

Welcome to Focused Flexibility.

This program is part of the Gold Medal Bodies (GMB) curriculum, where our goal is to provide accessible gymnastic-style training to everyone from the person just starting to work out, to the seasoned athlete who wants to get that extra edge in performance.

We've found that gymnastic movements not only develop the attributes most athletes want (power, mobility, control) but are also great at teaching a very important skill: the skill of learning new movements.

Focused Flexibility is part of our supplemental curriculum, which is aimed at complementing our core or strength and skill building programs. FF can be performed on its own, but can also be added to any of our other programs.

What makes our system unique compared to the various other programs out there?

Primarily, the background of the authors. With a diverse and detailed laundry list of gymnastic, martial-art, rehabilitative, performance-enhancement, and health qualifications, our

experience lends itself to a different approach to training from your average program.

As such, we have different goals and expectations for results when we develop our curriculum.

FIVE TRAINING TRUTHS:

- ★ Fitness is a skill.
- ★ Size without strength is a shame.
- ★ Strength without skill is a waste.
- ★ Being "tough" isn't always enough.
- ★ Training can (and should) be fun.

GMB programs are organized around progressively challenging techniques and routines. These training sessions were designed to help you develop high levels of practical strength. By "practical," we mean the full body strength we can use in everyday and recreational activities, not just in lifting a heavy weight up and down several times, or repeating the same movement over and over again.

Our definition of fitness is the capability to perform well in your chosen activities.

What do you like to do? Shoot hoops a couple times a week? Get outside and go hiking on the weekends? Or simply play with your kids without tiring out or pulling something?

Whatever way you choose to spend your free time, you want your body to be able to keep up with you. You've heard the line that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"? Well, we're here to get your body moving to wherever your spirit wants to go. Why? Because that is exactly what we want for ourselves and what we like to train for – and we believe that is what you want, too.

In our GMB Manifesto (included in your download), we presented our overriding philosophy of training, and we also made a few promises.

Two of those promises are directly applicable here:

PROMISE NUMBER ONE:

- ★ You will improve your fitness level for doing the things you love to do. You'll develop skills and strength that seemed nearly impossible when you first started. You'll develop control and precision. You'll develop a greater sense of your body and what it's capable of and apply these skills in everything you do.

PROMISE NUMBER TWO:

- ★ You will love your body. Whether or not you ever actually win a gold medal in anything, you'll know that your body is worthy of the distinction. You may never have a six pack or bulging pecs, but you'll most definitely have the confidence that comes from knowing your abilities and your limits. Limits are okay when you know you're expanding them. They're okay when you know that your body is working for – and not against – you.

When your skills improve with every training session, how much you can lift will become irrelevant. You'll soon stop comparing your "scores" and "numbers" with others; instead, you will truly be proud of what you can do with your body.

We are so happy you've chosen to accompany us on this journey, and we believe you will gain so much from it because we've found so much benefit from this type of training ourselves.

We are excited to share our concepts with as many people as possible.

Thanks for joining our Posse!

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations and welcome to

Gold Medal Bodies Focused Flexibility!

Since we started Gold Medal Bodies, we've gotten wonderful feedback from our amazing customers and clients, and one of the most common success stories has been people achieving higher levels of flexibility and freer movement.

The specific cool-downs after each program and the Flexibility Module presented in **Floor One** have helped many to either regain their limberness or have taken them beyond what they thought they could do. It's a nice thing to hear from people.

Yet, along with those successes there was plenty of other feedback from people wanting more detailed explanations of proper stretching, and those who were having trouble with some of the more advanced work we are presenting.

As always, we take our clients seriously and set about to create the program you have in your hands right now.

What is Focused Flexibility?

Just as in all of the GMB programs, we emphasize specific, goal-oriented training. We believe that if each part of your training is *focused*, then you'll get the results you want much faster and with less frustration along the way.

We noticed a common problem with a lack of focus in a lot of stretching/flexibility programs. You are either given a hundred different movements to do, or else a seemingly random series of yoga postures. Of course there is nothing inherently wrong with this; if you have some good experience then you can certainly take what you need and make your own program. But we understand how confusing this could be if you'd like to address your own specific concerns without guesswork.

This is where **Focused Flexibility** comes in.

In this program we provide you the tools to assess your current needs, along with an efficient protocol and exercise selection to change your condition.

Our Method

You've probably noticed that there are a few styles of flexibility training out there. Static holds, ballistic movements, PNF, yoga, etc. Each has their own proponents and there are good reasons for each style.

Unfortunately, there's often a dogmatic belief that one particular style or set of movements is THE answer for every goal.

The FF protocol presented here incorporates and enhances the best aspects of flexibility training. It has been proven to work with many of our clients and patients over the years, so we know it will work for you.

This combination of dynamic and static work has much in common with the principles of Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF) in that the proper performance of the exercises teaches your muscles to work in your newly gained range of motion. This can be a problem in doing simple static stretches, as many see a lack of retention of gains from session to session. Static stretching is very useful for relaxation, but is not as useful for adaptations in dynamic movement.

Rather than the isometric contraction style that many programs are using (more properly called "Hold Relax" in the PNF system), we use a short range dynamic contraction, in which you move in and out of the chosen position. Many people report less pain and discomfort in this style, and it is actually less stressful and can be safer than an isometric muscle contraction at your limit range.

There are a lot of experts teaching "stretching," "mobility," and "flexibility" from a variety of perspectives. We've purchased many of their programs and used them with varying degrees of success.

Focused Flexibility is not based on secret or proprietary methods. It's based, like everything else in the GMB Curriculum, on good technique.

Rather, it's a compound method assembled from current scientific knowledge and proven in clinical work by our own resident flexibility expert, Jarlo Ilano, a physical therapist (MPT) since 1998 and board certified orthopedic clinical specialist (OCS) with the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties.

Speaking of that guy...

AFTER SCHOOL SPECIAL: THE JARLO ILANO STORY

By Jarlo Ilano

A Fighter and A Healer

My interest in fitness and martial arts started, like a lot of kids, with the typical community center karate classes, but I guess I just stuck with it. Karate led to boxing, then taekwondo, chinese internal martial arts and wushu, and finally to Filipino martial arts, mixed martial arts, and Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

Martial arts training has informed most of my physical activities, along with weight training and yoga, and might seem paradoxical to my career as a physical therapist, though I've always approached martial arts training for more than just fighting.

This active physical self development has kept me grounded throughout the many stresses of life that we all experience, from work and daily life, to my role now as a father to young children.

As a student, I was initially choosing between medical school and therapy and job-shadowed at a physical therapy clinic.

Unlike a lot of my therapy colleagues, I had never undergone any therapy before choosing the field, so this was my first experience.

The activity and skill of the therapists at the clinic was incredible! I had no idea that one job could involve so much, and the hands-on work in helping people struck a chord with me.

Having taught martial arts since I was a teenager has helped me in my role as a physical therapist, as much of what I do involves teaching my patients to resolve their restrictions and maintain their health.

Aside from the obvious cases of trauma and post surgical work, many people have pain that “just happened” and is really a loss of awareness of their body and a neglect of the active lives they had when they were younger. I approach physical therapy treatment as a jump start to move people out of pain quickly and teach them how to be active, mobile, and strong again.

I graduated from the University of Puget Sound with a Master's degree in Physical Therapy in 1998 and have continued specialized education in exercise and manual therapy since then, with thousands of hours in classes and studies. In 2011, I passed my board exams as an Orthopedic clinical specialist.

One of the great things in therapy is, just as in martial arts and physical training, learning is a never ending process, and continuing education keeps me fresh and interested in working.

In my martial arts training, I am currently certified under Burton Richardson as an instructor in his Mixed martial arts for the Street system (Level 2), Battlefield Kali (Filipino martial arts) Stick (Level 2), and Knife (Level 1), and am a Purple belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

Gold Medal Bodies Genesis

It was during my attendance of various training seminars that I met Ryan Hurst.

We became good friends with our mutual approach to physical training and development. We both had a strong emphasis on training for health and strength in a balanced way, after many years of hard competitive training. We real-

ized that we were now training for the long haul of real life and family responsibilities.

After several years of training and teaching together, we formed Gold Medal Bodies and started the company with Andy Fossett. We are all very happy with the positive response and support we've received and are extremely excited for the future.



CHAPTER ONE: THE FF PROTOCOL & THE BASIC ASSESSMENT

How to Perform the Exercises

Focused Flexibility is actually a very simple system. First, you will assess your specific needs. Then you'll prioritize an area of focus to train using the protocol below. After some time, reassess and repeat.

THE FOCUSED FLEXIBILITY PROTOCOL:

- ★ Get into the position
- ★ Short hold 10 to 20 seconds
- ★ Dynamic contraction of muscles being worked 10 repetitions
- ★ Short hold 10 to 20 seconds
- ★ Another dynamic contraction of 10 repetitions
- ★ For this last hold, you may choose to hold for a longer period, 30 seconds to greater than a minute.
- ★ To get out of the stretch, perform the same dynamic contraction to maintain tension as you return to neutral

The protocol is explained and demonstrated thoroughly in the introductory videos, so be sure to watch those carefully before jumping into the tutorials.

Basic Assessment

We all probably have some idea of what feels tight in our bodies and movement, from the ever present tight hamstrings to a stiff neck from time to time. But it's nice to have a framework to determine what particular area needs the most work, and a way to judge if your training is helping.

This basic assessment provides that framework.

These basic body positions provide these assessment tools, and are also postures that we believe everyone should be able to do for the most freedom in their daily physical activities.

ONE WAY TO SEE HOW YOUR FLEXIBILITY IS IMPROVING IS TO:

- ★ Assess your comfort level in each of the following positions. Rate it on a scale of 1 to 10.
- ★ Choose two of the most difficult positions to work on.
- ★ Perform the necessary flexibility exercises for those positions.
- ★ Recheck the positions weekly.

BAP! (Basic Assessment Positions)

For most people, we've found that the following eight positions are a consistent indicator of unrestricted general movement ability.

THE EIGHT BASIC ASSESSMENT POSITIONS:

1. Squat - Heels down, upper body line vertical
2. Crosslegged sitting - Switch sides
3. Longsitting - Legs straight, toes up towards you
4. Supine hip/knee flexion - Lying down on your back, bring one knee to your chest with the other leg straight.
5. Hooklying crossleg hip rotation - Pelvis stable and level. Low back without excessive curve.
6. Shoulder combined motions
 - Touch the middle of your back with your hand both from above and below.
 - Keep back flat
 - Sit crosslegged
7. Prone backbending - Elbows bent or elbows straight.
8. Neck motions - Neck flexion, sidebending, extension, rotation.

These are basic, functional movements and positions. So if you find yourself going through these with flying colors, then look to specific positions in your sport and other recreational activities. Use those positions as your baseline measurements and work on improving that way.

It is very common for there to be a difference between one side and the other, either from an injury or from the general way we move from day to day. A little bit of difference is okay, a significant difference can mean an issue that can lead to more problems. Pay special attention to inequalities from side to side, and work on leveling those out.

Perfect symmetry is probably not going to happen, but a major asymmetry is a good clue that you need to get cracking on something.



Corresponding stretches for the Basic Assessment Positions

For each of the BAPs, we've selected exercises that specifically address a lack of mobility in that position.

We'll use these exercises to focus on the precise areas of resistance that you discover are most preventing you from moving as you'd like. Once you've made measurable improvement, you can assess again and choose the next areas of focus.

This reduces the redundancy inherent in a lot of flexibility/mobility methods and results in more efficient practice with quicker results.

Squat

- ★ Supine Hip Rotations
- ★ Modified Pigeon
- ★ Modified Downward Dog (for calf emphasis)
- ★ Kneeling Quadriceps Stretch
- ★ Spinal Combined Motions

Crosslegged Sitting

- ★ Supine Hip Rotations
- ★ Modified Pigeon
- ★ Frog
- ★ Pancake

Longsitting

- ★ Supine Hip Rotations
- ★ Hamstring Variations
- ★ Longsitting Stretch
- ★ Seated Forward Fold
- ★ Modified Downward Dog (for calf emphasis)
- ★ Half Pancake
- ★ Pancake

Supine Hip/Knee Flexion

- ★ Supine Hip Rotations
- ★ Kneeling Lunge A
- ★ Kneeling Lunge B
- ★ Modified Pigeon
- ★ Frog
- ★ Pancake

Hooklying Crossleg Hip Rotation

- ★ Supine Hip Rotations
- ★ Modified Pigeon
- ★ Frog
- ★ Kneeling Quadriceps Stretch
- ★ Camel
- ★ Pancake

Shoulder Combined Motions

- ★ Prone Scaption Rotation
- ★ Lounge Chair
- ★ Posterior Shoulder Opener
- ★ Shoulder Internal Rotation (in extension)
- ★ Neck Combined Motions

Prone Backbending

- ★ Cobra
- ★ Supine Hip Rotations
- ★ Kneeling Lunge A
- ★ Kneeling Lunge B
- ★ Kneeling Quadriceps Stretch
- ★ Camel
- ★ Spinal Combined Motions
- ★ Upper Thoracic Extension
- ★ Seated Mid Thorax Rotation

Neck Motions

- ★ Neck Combined Motions
- ★ Posterior Shoulder Opener
- ★ Seated Mid Thorax Rotation

CHAPTER TWO: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

What is stretching exactly?

It's very interesting (to us anyway!) how much of a controversy there is surrounding the practice of stretching and increasing flexibility.

It seems pretty simple:

If you want to get flexible, you gotta “stretch it out!”

The main issues are the physiological processes involved in improving range of motion. There is conflicting research over what is happening with changes in flexibility, what in particular is being lengthened, and whether anything is being lengthened at all. It's enough to make your head spin. If you think about it too much.

So our advice is not to dwell on it. Focus on the changes you see within yourself, establish some kind of baseline measurement (such as we provide in the Basic Assessment Positions) of your condition, go through a program for a reasonable period of time, and assess how you feel after that.

Odds are you'll be doing and feeling better, and that's the bottom line.

With that in mind, there are a few fundamental aspects of stretching that seem to be agreed upon by most researchers.

A lot of the quicker gains in flexibility appear to be from a change in the default tone in your muscles. The nervous system input to your muscles controls the state of your muscles and how much it is contracted or relaxed. There is a certain level of this tone whenever you are awake and moving around.

Stretching appears to affect this nervous system input, so that there is less resistance to lengthening changes. This has a lot to do with the phenomenon of people that are just “tight”. The ones who seem to be bound up and have difficulty with flexibility as a rule, and even more difficulty in trying to change it. Perhaps because of a combination of genetic predisposition, habitual patterns, and personality, they are quite a bit less flexible than “normal”.

Actual soft tissue (tendon, ligament, muscle, fascia, etc..) change is the much debated part of this conversation. Imagine screaming and flying fists at national conferences. (Well, maybe not that bad...)

It is reasonable to say though, that the scarring and adhesions that happen from soft tissue damage can be affected through exercise. Either earlier in the time after injury, when the tissue is more pliable, or in the case of chronic issues, actually restarting an inflammatory cycle so that the tissue can heal in a better fashion.

But again, whatever the case, worry less on the exact particulars, and focus on making the changes for your goals.

That's the most important thing.

What stretches should I do?

YOU HAVE A COUPLE OF OPTIONS:

- ★ Use the **Basic Assessment Positions** to figure out what you need to work on the most. Pick two or three of the corresponding exercises.
- ★ Use your experience from your sport/recreational activity. You probably already have a feeling of what needs to be worked on. Hips/back/shoulders, etc. Pick two exercises per body area.

You can also refer to the Sample Programs below to get you started. The most important thing is to *focus*. More is not better.

When should I do the exercises?

It's best to perform the stretches when you are adequately warmed up.

If you are just planning on doing the stretches outside of a workout, then a little light rope jumping, walking, etc., for 5 to 10 minutes would be beneficial before you stretch. To add stretching on as part of your workout, perform them at the end of your training when you're nice and warm.

The only time we would recommend these stretches before your exercise sessions is when you've identified particular issues in your form and technique that are related to decreased flexibility. If you feel "bound up" and aren't able to move as easily as you would like, then stretching beforehand may be a good idea.

A good way to start integrating this into your routine and to assess whether it would be helpful is to choose just one training day out of your week to do the stretches prior to your session. Use this as a comparison day and take note of your performance and whether the stretching changes it.

How much should I do?

Start with performing the protocol one time through per exercise and per side of the body. You may do more, but it is best to just do it once daily for a minimum of a week before attempting to add volume.

Stretching in the way we present here can be surprisingly stressful, so it's best to ease into both the intensity and the frequency of performance.

When should I expect results?

Pretty quickly. As we've noted earlier, a fair amount of the improvement in flexibility is getting the nervous system to "relax" the muscle tension. This may happen within just a few days of doing the flexibility exercises. Longer periods of time are needed for changes in the soft tissue that had adhesions and/or scarring from prior injuries or other trauma.

A good rule of thumb is about four weeks of consistent training for noticeable improvements in your baseline measurements and your chosen physical activities. It may be quite a bit shorter, or longer, for some people based on their history and current condition, but a noticeable difference should be seen within a few weeks.

Do I have to do it everyday?

When you first start your flexibility training, we encourage you to be very consistent and do at least a little bit every day. This initial consistency pays off in the end as your body adapts and learns from the training. You will also notice that there are variations in your flexibility level, some days you'll feel loose and free, and maybe the next day you'll feel as tight as you've ever been. This is a normal occurrence and has a lot to do with the body's natural resistance to change.

Steady and patient persistence will get you through it.

After two or three weeks you can be less consistent, and after many weeks (or after you've reached your goals for particular positions) you can be fairly irregular and still maintain a lot of your gains. However, most people come to enjoy the habit of regular stretching, and find the right balance between time spent and what they wish to maintain.

As you progress and learn from your training, you'll be able to figure out what is best for you.

CHAPTER THREE: FOCUSED FLEXIBILITY EXERCISE LIST

The Focused Flexibility program consists of a total of 22 exercises in addition to the BAPs. Of course, you won't be performing all of them - just the ones that correspond to the specific positions you discover you most need to improve.

As always, please refer to the videos for detailed instructions on exercise performance.

One note as you review the videos: be careful not to compare yourself to the demonstrations. In the past, we've received a great number of questions from people telling us they couldn't perform certain exercises as demonstrated. Our answer is usually that they will... with practice.

You may have more or less flexibility in certain ranges than Amber demonstrates in the videos. That's OK. Work with what you've got and apply the instructions to your own abilities, and you'll be sure to make progress.

After the list of exercises on this page, you'll find the key points for each exercise. These are the same key points noted in the video tutorials, printed here for quick reference and convenience.

THE EXERCISES:

1. Supine Hip Rotations
2. Hamstring Variations
3. Kneeling Lunge A
4. Kneeling Lunge B
5. Modified Pigeon
6. Seated Forward Fold
7. Modified Downward Dog (for calf emphasis)
8. Frog
9. Pancake
10. Half Pancake
11. Posterior Shoulder Opener
12. Prone Scaption Rotation
13. Lounge Chair
14. Kneeling Quadriceps Stretch
15. Camel
16. Shoulder Internal Rotation (in extension)
17. Neck Combined Motions
18. Seated Mid Thorax Rotation
19. Spinal Combined Motions
20. Upper Thoracic Extension
21. Long Sitting Stretch
22. Cobra

Key Points

Supine Hip Rotations

MUSCLES: HIP ROTATORS, HIP EXTENSORS

- ★ Low back flat on ground to keep pelvis neutral (no rotation).
- ★ Knee bent rotations have two variations:
 1. Toes pointing straight ahead.
 2. Toes pointed out at an angle.
- ★ Dynamic action is either:
 1. Rolling knee outwards.
 2. Moving straight leg in half circle.

*These exercises are variations based on movements taught by the [Institute of Physical Art](#), and also by Joe Wilson.

Hamstring Variations

MUSCLES: HAMSTRINGS, BACK EXTENSORS

- ★ Arched back in extension, hinge forward at the hip, pull upper body over the leg.
- ★ Dynamic action is pushing heels and back of the knee into the ground, arching chest, whilst hinging at the hip.

Kneeling Lunge A

MUSCLES: HIP FLEXORS, QUADRICEPS, HIP INTERNAL ROTATORS

- ★ Maintain a flattened lumbar spine (posterior pelvic tilt). Front leg foot out far enough so that when you shift forward, your knee is in a comfortable position. Hips and shoulders square.
- ★ Dynamic action is either:
 1. Straightening back knee and lengthening heel backwards. Upper body is still and stable.
 2. Engaging hip flexors by pulling your knee into the ground.



Kneeling Lunge B

MUSCLES: HIP FLEXORS, QUADS, HIP INTERNAL ROTATORS

- ★ Same position as Lunge A.
- ★ Dynamic action is lateral motion and rotation of back leg, finding your areas of restriction.

Modified Pigeon

MUSCLES: HIP ROTATORS, HIP EXTENSORS

- ★ Front leg bent and shin parallel to hips (90 degree knee angle). Chest up, hinge forward at hip and pull your body over the leg.
- ★ Dynamic action is pushing the side of your lower leg into the ground.

Seated Forward Fold

MUSCLES: HAMSTRINGS, BACK EXTENSORS, CALVES

- ★ Arched back, legs bent to allow proper torso position.
- ★ Dynamic action is pushing heels down into ground.

Modified Downward Dog (for calf emphasis)

MUSCLES: HAMSTRINGS, CALVES

- ★ Downward Dog position, but with feet closer together and one leg forward for stability and weight shift.
- ★ Dynamic action is to press the back leg's heel down, whilst lifting arch up (weight on the outside of the foot). Play with keeping the knee straight or knee slightly bent.



Frog

MUSCLES: HIP ADDUCTORS

- ★ Careful about possible knee strain, adjust knee/calf angle as needed.
- ★ Dynamic action is squeezing knees together into the ground

Pancake

MUSCLES: HAMSTRINGS, HIP ADDUCTORS, BACK EXTENSORS

- ★ Bring legs apart wide. Back tall and upright. Hinge forward at the hips.
- ★ Dynamic action is pushing heels down into the ground and knees together while rocking forward and back (hip hinge). You can also try keeping your hands flat in front of you and contracting abdominals, as if you are trying to do a “sit up” in that position.

Half Pancake

MUSCLES: HIP ADDUCTORS, BACK EXTENSORS, HAMSTRINGS, OBLIQUES, INTERCOSTALS, LATISSIMUS DORSI

- ★ Arched back in extension, rotate away from outstretched leg to line shoulders/torso with leg.
- ★ Dynamic action is breathing with a slight pulling of the ribs down towards the bent leg's hip.

Posterior Shoulder Opener

MUSCLES: POSTERIOR DELTOIDS, LONG HEAD TRICEPS, RHOMBOIDS

- ★ Shoulders square, point of elbow directly in front of sternum.
- ★ Dynamic action is pivoting off of elbow, attempting to pull arm into the ground.

Prone Scaption Rotation

MUSCLES: CHEST, DELTOIDS, BICEPS

- ★ Arm out at ~45 degrees, find the angle where you feel no anterior shoulder pinching.
- ★ Dynamic action is rolling the front of shoulder into the ground.



Lounge Chair

MUSCLES: ANTERIOR SHOULDER, CHEST, BICEPS

- ★ Sit in front of an elevated surface that you can comfortably place your hands behind you.
- ★ Keep chest up and squeeze your shoulder blades together.
- ★ Dynamic action is squeezing the shoulder blades together while pushing down through your hands and breathing in deeply.

Kneeling Quadriceps Stretch

MUSCLES: QUADRICEPS, HIP FLEXORS

- ★ Sit kneeling in front of a stable, elevated surface, with your knees and feet together. Lean back as tolerated.
- ★ Dynamic action is pushing your feet into the ground.

Camel

MUSCLES: HIP FLEXORS, ABDOMINALS, CHEST, ANTERIOR SHOULDERS, BICEPS

- ★ Sit kneeling in front of a stable, elevated surface, either on the balls of your feet or on your insteps. Reach back with palms facing forward. Push your hips forward and keep your chest high.
- ★ Dynamic action is pushing hips forward, lifting chest up, and pushing down through your hands.

Shoulder Internal Rotation (in extension)

MUSCLES: SHOULDER EXTERNAL ROTATORS, ANTERIOR SHOULDER, CHEST

- ★ Hand behind your back and up as far as tolerated. Keep chest up and shoulder blade pulled down and in.
- ★ Dynamic action is squeezing your shoulder blades together and lifting elbow up and back.

Neck Combined Motions

MUSCLES: NECK, UPPER SHOULDER GIRDLE

- ★ Be aware of the proper pivot points. Neck flexion is around the ears, neck sidebending is the

around the nose. Rotate your head once you are in the proper positions.

- ★ Dynamic action is either:
 1. Neck pressure into hand at end ranges.
 2. Hold head steady and bring arm up, to the side and back.

Seated Mid Thorax Rotation

MUSCLES: SPINAL ROTATORS, RHOMBOIDS, OBLIQUES, ABDOMINALS

- ★ Sit tall and emphasize middle and upper back rotation, chest up and back in extension.
- ★ Dynamic action is squeezing shoulder blades together while rotating further to the side.

Spinal Combined Motions

MUSCLES: ABDOMINALS, OBLIQUES, BACK EXTENSORS, QUAD LUMBORUM

- ★ First variation in square position, hands and shoulders in line, knees and hips in line. Then hips either forward or rocked back to localize different areas of the spine.
- ★ Dynamic action is trunk sidebending in either extended or flexed position.

Upper Thoracic Extension

MUSCLES: CHEST, ANTERIOR SHOULDERS

- ★ Sit kneeling in front of a stable, elevated surface. Reach forward as far as tolerated. Keep a tight stomach, pull ribs in and down to avoid overstretch at the shoulders and localize force to the mid and upper back.
- ★ Dynamic action is squeezing shoulder blades together or alternately lifting hands up



Long Sitting Stretch

MUSCLES: CHEST, SHOULDERS, BICEPS, THORACIC SPINE, HAMSTRINGS

- ★ Spine flat or in extension, fingers facing forward placed just behind the hip joints, rotate elbows outward, squeeze shoulder blades together, lift chest up and out.
- ★ Dynamic action is all the above and also squeezing glutes and pushing knees into ground.

Cobra

MUSCLES: ABDOMINALS, HIP FLEXORS

- ★ Keep the front of your hips down flat on the ground, raise your chest up and forward. Relax your glutes and low back. Pull through your hands as if trying to bring yourself forward.
- ★ Dynamic action is pushing your knees into the ground and pulling down through your hands.

SAMPLE EXERCISE SELECTIONS FOR COMMON NEEDS

Directions

Perform each exercise as per FF protocol once (per side as applicable). Do this **daily for at least two weeks**, then you can cut down to every other day or three times a week.

The routines are best performed after a light whole body warmup of 5 to 10 minutes, or after your regular workout. You don't have to do all the exercises at the same time. If you need to, break them up as you have time.

Deskbound

For anyone who works at a desk or behind a steering wheel.

1. Cobra
2. Kneeling Lunge A
3. Camel
4. Spinal Combined Motions
5. Upper Thoracic Extension

Runners

Running is as much a lifestyle as an activity for many people, so it goes without saying that repetition breeds some common ailments. These movements should help.

1. Supine Hip Rotations
2. Kneeling Lunge A
3. Kneeling Lunge B
4. Spinal Combined Motions
5. Modified Downward Dog (for calf emphasis)

Posture

If you've constantly battled with poor posture, start here.

1. Cobra
2. Long Sitting Stretch
3. Spinal Combined Motions
4. Upper Thoracic Extension
5. Lounge Chair

Tight Hips

Quite possibly the most common physical complaint we're asked about from our clients.

1. Supine Hip Rotations
2. Kneeling Lunge A
3. Kneeling Lunge B
4. Modified Pigeon
5. Frog

Tight Shoulders

Another very common issue, especially with those who have done significant weight training.

1. Prone Scaption Rotation
2. Lounge Chair
3. Shoulder Internal Rotation (in extension)
4. Seated Mid Thorax Rotation
5. Neck Combined Motions

General Daily Stretches

Basic program for all-over basic flexibility. This is a great routine for maintenance after addressing any trouble areas reveal by the BAP assessment.

1. Long Sitting Stretch
2. Seated Mid Thorax Rotation
3. Kneeling Lunge A
4. Modified Pigeon
5. Shoulder Internal Rotation (in extension)
6. Camel

Of course, the sample selections above are just examples intended to show that you don't need to do a ton of exercises to get results. Remember: focus is key.

Use the BAP assessment to discover your weak points, then choose just a handful of movements to make specific improvements where you need them most. You'll end up with a short routine you can do consistently and get results as efficiently as possible, with little wasted time or effort.

CHAPTER FOUR: TROUBLESHOOTING

There's an excellent chance that this is not the first time you've tried to improve your flexibility. Most people involved in physical training of any kind have at least tried a couple of different stretching routines looking for better performance and freedom of movement.

And you've probably found yourself frustrated with poor progress.

There are a lot of possible reasons you might not see rapid improvements. Following are some of the most common, along with ideas for making corrections.



Sequencing

There are relationships between certain body areas where you will see common patterns. If one area is tight, odds are that another is less flexible as well. Some examples are: Hamstrings and calves, hip flexors and low back, neck and shoulders. The patterns have a lot to do with the habitual postures and movements we do everyday as well as the anatomical structural relationships.

Because of this, it is helpful to work on some areas first. Proper sequencing can save you some time and trouble. In general, work the areas closer to the center of the body first, then move on further out.

So: neck and midback before shoulders and arms. Hamstrings before calves. Hip muscles before working on the knees. One exception I've found is working on opening the hips first helps before exercising the back.

Play with different orders of exercise in your routine and see what works best for you.

Overstretching

It seems counterintuitive to talk about being too flexible in some areas in a program designed to increase your flexibility, but, you definitely can have too much flexibility.

Commonly called, *hypermobility*, it's a condition where your range of motion is greater than your corresponding strength and stability at those joints. The FF protocol includes dynamic actions during the stretch so you can keep and even increase strength in your new improved ranges of motion, but even with this it is possible to overstretch and go too far. Especially in certain people and in particular body areas. Shoulders, knees, and the low back are especially susceptible. For the great majority of you reading this, it will not be an issue, but for some you need to be wary of crossing into extreme ranges of motion.

I'm still getting nowhere!

The first things to look at are the intensity of your stretching and your technique. Don't be afraid to err on the side of using less force than you think is necessary. It's tempting to "just push a little more" and try to force gains to happen. But as I've said before, it's much better to be patient. Remember that improvements are a combination of relaxation and soft tissue change. Yoga practitioners often call this having "self

compassion", this may sound like some new age woo woo, but pushing too hard can be counterproductive for many reasons such as an increased chance of injury and an increased resistance to stretch since the excessive force can activate a stretch-reflex contraction. There's a fine line between doing what you need to do, and overdoing it. You have to find the right side of that line.

Proper positioning and form in these exercises are also part of that thin line. As many clients can testify, small changes in technique can be the difference between success and failure. Look over the videos carefully (and definitely more than once!) to find the cues that will help you perform the exercises correctly. Find the correct pivot points and the right dynamic actions that will work the body areas in the right way.

Another possibility for difficulty in retaining flexibility gains from session to session may be from lack of "setting" the muscles in the new length. The dynamic actions in the FF protocol were designed to achieve this, but it is also very helpful to perform more active muscle work after your stretching sessions. A good way to do this is to actively move in and out of the Basic Assessment Positions that you wish to improve. You can also do easy movements and exercises that correspond to your chosen sport/recreational activity.

OUTRODUCTION

Throughout this program, we've emphasized the importance of a clear, specific, and focused approach to flexibility training.

You could do every exercise we've shown you here if you wanted, but you don't really need to. Unless of course you are just inflexible in every part of your body! And if you really are that inflexible, it would be better to choose the most difficult areas first and cycle through the others after a period of time.

Though we know that **Focused Flexibility** will provide you with the fastest progress possible, please realize that it isn't a race.

A client of ours told us about his many years of training towards his goal of performing the splits. He noted that he was working hard and intensely for 15 years but had not progressed past a certain point. He discovered Gold Medal Bodies a few months ago and incorporated our concepts of proper technique and patience and his progress improved dramatically.

Often with patients I give only two or three exercise or concepts, and present it relatively quickly, focusing only a few key points, because I fully expect them to not get it at all the first time.



I've found that sending people home and having them play with it and then refining their form at the next visit is much better than beating them over the head and expecting them to get it right away. The next time we meet, we review and adjust their form and the light bulb turns on and they retain the information.

Play with this program a bit first and let it sit in your head awhile and come back to it, review the videos again, re-read the descriptions, and you'll get that a-ha! moment and you'll think "there it is!".

It takes time, so please feel free to give yourself that time.

Thank you. We hope to see you soon!

The GMB Team

Ryan, Jarlo, Andy, and Amber

