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Stretching and Flexibility

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF FLEXIBITY!

NOTICE THAT I SAID FLEXIBILTY AND NOT STRETCHING.MOST PEOPLE VIEW THESE AS INTERCHANGEABLE WORDS BUT THEY ARE NOT. FLEXIBILITY IS THE ABILITY TO MOVE YOUR MUSCLES AND JOINTS THROUGH THEIR FULL RANGE OF MOTION.STRETCHING IS THE MEANS BY WHICH WE ACHIEVE FLEXIBILITY.WE WILL FOCUSING ON STRETCHING IN THIS EBOOK,BUT DO NOT BE MISTAKEN,FLEXIBILITY IS OUR ULTIMATE GOAL !

LET'S GET STARTED……

WHY SHOULD I STRETCH ?

I KNOW THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN FLEXIBILTY OR YOU WOULD NOT HAVE PURCHASED THIS BOOK. HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS ON WHY ANYONE SHOULD CONSIDER INCLUDING STRETCHING EXERCISES IN THEIR REGULAR WORKOUT.

INJURY PREVENTION

IT IS A FACT,A RELAXED MUSCLE OR A JOINT THAT HAS FULL RANGE MOTION IS LESS LIKELY TO BE INJURED IN STRENUOUS EXERCISES OR ACTIVITIES. THERE IS MORE GIVE IN A MUSCLE JOINT THAT HAS INCREASED FLEXIBILITY.

STRESS RELIEF

LET'S FACE IT, AFTER A GOOD STRETCHING ROUTINE, YOUR MUSCLES MAY BE A LITTLE TIRED,BUT YOU FEEL GOOD. STRETCHING COMBINED WITH THE DEEP ABDOMINAL BREATHING, BRINGS RICH OXYGEN INTO YOUR SYSTEM AND HEIGHTENS YOUR SENSE OF AWARENESS.

A RELAXED MUSCLE IS A QUICKER MUSCLE

ACCORDING TO TOP MARTIAL ARTISTS, A RELAXED MUSCLE IS A QUICKER MUSCLE. THE CONTRACTION IS QUICKER AND MORE EXPLOSIVE. FLEXIBILITY WILL HELP YOU INCREASE YOUR QUICKNESS.

A RELAXED MUSCLE IS MORE FLUID AND GRACEFUL

EVER SEEN SOMEONE STIFF AS A BOARD TRY TO DO SOMETHING ? BUT IF YOU HAVE EVER SEEN A BALLERINA PERFORM, THEY ARE THE EPITOME OF GRACEFUL AND FLUID.

PSYCHOLOGY OF STRETCHING

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF MUSCLE MOVEMENTS. THE ***AGONISTIC*** MUSCLES ARE THE MUSCLES THAT CONTRACT AND PERFORM THE MOVEMENT. THE ANTAGONISTIC MUSCLE IS THE MUSCLE THAT OPPOSES THE ACTIONOF THE AGONISTIC MUSCLE. EG: IF YOUR ARM IS AT YOUR SIDE AND YOU PULL YOUR HAND UP TOWARDS YOURSHOULDER BENDING YOUR ARM AT THE ELBOW, THE AGONISTIC PERFORMING THIS ACTION IS THE BICEP.THE ANTAGONISTIC MUSCLE RESISTING THIS MOTION IS THE TRICEPS. WHEN YOUR ARM RETURNS, THE ROLES ARE REVERSED, THE AGONISTIC MUSCLE IS THE TRICEPS AND THE ANTAGONISTIC MUSCLE IS THE BICEP.

REMEMBER , A MUSCLE ALWAYS PULLS, IT NEVER PUSHES.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU STRETCH?

MUSCLES ARE MADE UP OF THOUSANDS OF MUSCLE FIBRES. WHEN YOU STRETCH, SOME OF THE FIBRES WILL STRETCH AND SOME WILL TEAR (a good tear ,bear with me) .WHAT YOU NEED TO DO IS KEEP THE MUSCLE FIBRES THAT HAVE STRETCHED, KEEP THEM STRETCHED AND THE MUSCLE FIBRES THAT TEAR YOU NEED TO GIVE THEM TIME TO HEAL.

WHAT LIMITS FLEXIBILITY ?

THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS THAT LIMIT FLEXIBILITY. THE MORE COMMON FACTORS, IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER, ARE :

1. LAZINESS (OR TO BE POSITIVE, SOMEONE WITH IMPOTENT GOALS)

DOING THE WORK IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. I DON'T KNOW OF ANYONE BORN WITH EXTREME FLEXIBILITY. YOU HAVE TO HAVE A WORTHWHILE GOAL AND WORK TOWARDS THAT GOAL ALMOST EVERYDAY. THIS IS THE BIGGEST KILLER TO THOSE DESIRING FLEXIBILITY.

2. WEAK MUSCLES (CONNECTIVE TISSUE)

EVER FEEL SORE AFTER WORKING FLEXIBILITY ? IT'S GENERALLY BECAUSE YOU OVER EXERTED YOUR MUSCLES AND DAMAGED YOUR MUSCLES CONNECTIVE TISSUE. IF THIS IS THE CASE, YOU NEED TO INCORPORATE STRENGTH EXERCISES IN YOUR WORKOUT. YES, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, STRENGTHENING EXERCISES ACTUALLY ENHANCE FLEXIBILITY NOT DIMINISH IT. SEE THE SECTION ON STRENGTH TRAINING FOR MORE DETAILS.

3. A DISABILITY OR HANDICAP

OTHER THAN THE REASONS LISTED ABOVE, YOU CAN WORK FLEXIBILITY IN SOME FORM OR FASHION.

TYPES OF STRETCHING

YES, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRETCHING TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS THAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR. DEPENDING ON WHAT ACTIVITIES YOU INDULGE IN DETERMINES THE TYPE OF STRETCHING YOU SHOULD PERFORM. Eg: MARTIAL ARTISTS CAN BENEFIT FROM ALL THE STRETCHING TYPES. THEY CAN USE PASSIVE AND ACTIVE STRETCHING TO HELP MAINTAIN THEIR FLEXIBILITY. THEY USE STATIC AND ISOMETRIC STRETCHING TO ACHIEVE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FLEXIBILITY. THEY USE DYNAMIC STRETCHING TO BE ABLE TO DO HIGH KICKS WITH LITTLE TO NO WARM UP. A BASKETBALL PLAYER DOES NOT NECESSARILY NEED ISOMETRIC,ACTIVE OR PASSIVE STRETCHING, BUT CAN GREATLY BENEFIT FROM STATIC STRETCHING (just loosening up)

STATIC STRETCHING

PROBABLY THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF STRETCHING IS STATIC STRETCHING. STATIC STRETCHING IS PERFORMING A STRETCH FOR A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TIME. THE OBJECT IS TO STRETCH, HOLD THE STRETCH AND ALLOW THE MUSCLE TO RELAX INTO THE STRETCH.

PASSIVE STRETCHING

PASSIVE STRETCHING IS THE PROCESS OF STRETCHING WHILE USING A PARTNER OR A STRETCHING AID.
ONE NOTE ABOUT PASSIVE STRETCHING WITH A PARTNER ;

- THE GOOD THING IS YOUR PARTNER DOES NOT KNOW HOW FAR YOU CAN STRETCH.
- THE GOOD THING IS YOUR PARTNER DOES NOT KNOW HOW FAR YOU CAN STRETCH.

BE CAREFUL WHEN PARTNER STRETCHING AND LISTEN TO YOUR PARTNER.IF HE / SHE TELLS YOU TO ***STOP*** **,** THEN ***STOP,*** IF HE / SHE TELLS YOU TO GO SLOW , THEN GO SLOW !

ACTIVE STRETCHING

ACTIVE STRETCHING IS WHERE YOU ASSUME A POSITION AND THEN HOLD IT THERE WITH NO ASSISTANCE OTHER THAN USING THE STRENGTH OF YOUR AGONISTIC MUSCLE. AN EXAMPLE IS BRINGING YOUR LEG UP INTO A SIDE-KICK AS HIGH AS YOU CAN AND HOLDING THE LEG UP WITHOUT ANY ASSISTANCE.

BALLISTIC STRETCHING

BALLISTIC STRETCHING IS ALSO KNOWN AS BOUNCING. ALL I AM GOING TO SAY IS ***DO NOT DO THIS FORM OF STRETCHING !***

DYNAMIC STRETCHING

DYNAMIC STRETCHING IS LIKE BALLISTIC STRETCHING EXCEPT THE MOVEMENTS ARE CONTROLLED AND THE RANGE OF MOTION IS INCREASED ONLY AFTER REPEATED ACTIVITIES. Eg . BEGIN WITH A SLOW CONTROLLED FRONT RISING KICK WORKING UP TO FULL SPEED IN THE FULL RANGE OF MOTION.

ISOMETRIC STRETCHING (PNF STRETCHING)

THIS FORM OF STRETCHING IS CONSIDERED BY MOST EXPERTS AS THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD TO INCREASE FLEXIBILITY. ISOMETRIC STRETCHING IN THE MANOR WE ARE USING IT IS DEFINED AS STRETCHING A MUSCLE TO NEAR THE MAXIMUM STRETCH. AT THAT POINT, THE AGOSTIC MUSCLE IS CONTRACTED IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE THE MUSCLE TIRED. THE TIRED MUSCLE WILL TIRE AND RELAX MORE AFTER HOLDING THE CONTRACTION SEVERAL SECONDS. THEN THE STRETCH IS INCREASED AND THE CONTRACTION IS REPEATED A COUPLE OF TIMES UNTIL THE MAXIMUM STRETCH IS ATTAINED OR FATIGUE IS CAUSING UNSAFE STRETCHING ACTIVITIES.

THE DRAWBACK TO ISOMETRIC STRETCHING AS INDICATED IN THE LAST SENTENCE IS THAT ISOMETRIC STRETCHING WORKS THE MUSCLE AND CAUSES THE MUSCLE TO GET TIRED.WHAT THAT MEANS IS YOU MUST HAVE STRONG MUSCLES IN ORDER TO START ISOMETRIC STRETCHING. IF YOU PERFORM YOUR FIRST HARD ISOMETRIC STRETCHING ROUTINE AND YOUR MUSCLES ACHE OR ARE STIFF AFTERWARDS, IT MEANS YOUR MUSCLES ARE TOO WEAK FOR ISOMETRIC STRETCHING. YOU MUST STRENGTHEN YOUR MUSCLES FIRST BEFORE TRYING ISOMETRIC STRETCHES AGAIN.

PAIN

If you are experiencing pain or discomfort before, during, or after stretching or athletic activity, then you need to try to identify the cause. Severe pain (particularly in the joints, ligaments, or tendons) usually indicates a serious injury of some sort, and you may need to discontinue stretching and/or exercising until you have Sufficiently recovered.

Common Causes of Muscular Soreness

If you are experiencing soreness, stiffness, or some other form of muscular pain, then it may be due to one or more of the following:

torn tissue

Overstretching and engaging in athletic activities without a proper warm-up can cause microscopic tearing of muscle fibres or connective tissues. If the tear is not too severe, the pain will usually not appear until one or two days after the activity that caused the damage. If the pain occurs during or immediately after the activity, then it may indicate a more serious tear (which may require medical attention). If the pain is not too severe, then light, careful static stretching of the injured area is supposedly okay to perform. It is hypothesized that torn fibres heal at a shortened length, thus decreasing flexibility in the injured muscles. Very light stretching of the injured muscles helps reduce loss of flexibility resulting from the injury. Intense stretching of any kind, however, may only make matters worse.

metabolic accumulation :

Overexertion and/or intense muscular activity will fatigue the muscles and cause them to accumulate lactic acid and other waste products. If this is the cause of your pain, then static stretching, isometric stretching , or a good warm-up, or cool-down will help alleviate some of the soreness. It has also been claimed that supplements of vitamin C will help alleviate this type of pain, but controlled tests using placebos have been unable to lend credibility to this hypothesis. The ingestion of sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) before athletic activity has been shown to help increase the body's buffering capacity and reduce the output of lactic acid. However, it can also cause urgent diarrhoea.

muscle spasms:

Exercising above a certain threshold can cause a decreased flow of blood to the active muscles. This can cause pain resulting in a protective reflex which contracts the muscle isotonic ally. The reflex contraction causes further decreases in blood flow, which causes more reflex contractions, and so on, causing the muscle to spasm by repeatedly contracting. One common example of this is a painful muscle cramp. Immediate static stretching of the cramped muscle can be helpful in relieving this type of pain. However, it can sometimes make things worse by activating the stretch reflex , which may cause further muscle contractions. Massaging the cramped muscle (and trying to relax it) may prove more useful than stretching in relieving this type of pain.

Stretching with Pain

If you are already experiencing some type of pain or discomfort before you begin stretching, then it is very important that you determine the cause of your pain . Once you have determined the cause of the pain, you are in a better position to decide whether or not you should attempt to stretch the affected area.

Also, it is important to remember that some amount of soreness will almost always be experienced by individuals that have not stretched or exercised much in the last few months (this is the price you pay for being inactive). However, well-trained and conditioned athletes who work-out at elevated levels of intensity or difficulty can also become sore. You should cease exercising immediately if you feel or hear anything tearing or popping. Remember the acronym *RICE* when caring for an injured body part. RICE stands for: Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation. This will help to minimize the pain and swelling. You should then seek appropriate professional medical advice.

Overstretching

If you stretch properly, you should *not* be sore the day after you have stretched. If you are, then it may be an indication that you are overstretching and that you need to go easier on your muscles by reducing the intensity of some (or all) of the stretches you perform. Overstretching will simply increase the time it takes for you to gain greater flexibility. This is because it takes time for the damaged muscles to repair themselves, and to offer you the same flexibility as before they were injured.

One of the easiest ways to "overstretch" is to stretch "cold" (without any warm-up). A "maximal cold stretch" is not necessarily a desirable thing. Just because a muscle can be moved to its limit without warming up doesn't mean it is ready for the strain that a workout will place on it.

Obviously, during a stretch (even when you stretch properly) you are going to feel some amount of discomfort. The difficulty is being able to discern when it is too much. If you feel like saying "ouch!" (or perhaps something even more explicit) then you should ease up immediately and discontinue the stretch. You should definitely feel the tension in your muscle, and perhaps even light, gradual "pins and needles", but if it becomes sudden, sharp, or uncomfortable, then you are overdoing it and are probably tearing some muscle tissue (or worse). In some cases, you may follow all of these guidelines when you stretch, feeling that you are not in any "real" pain, but still be sore the next day. If this is the case, then you will need to become accustomed to stretching with less discomfort (you might be one of those "stretching masochists" that take great pleasure in the pain that comes from stretching).

Quite frequently, the progression of sensations you feel as you reach the extreme ranges of a stretch are: localized warmth of the stretched muscles, followed by a burning (or spasm-like) sensation, followed by sharp pain (or "ouch!" pain). The localized warming will usually occur at the origin, or point of insertion, of the stretched muscles. When you begin to feel this, it is your first clue that you may need to "back off" and reduce the intensity of the stretch. If you ignore (or do not feel) the warming sensation, and you proceed to the point where you feel a definite burning sensation in the stretched muscles, then you should ease up immediately and discontinue the stretch! You may not be sore yet, but you probably will be the following day. If your stretch gets to the point where you feel sharp pain, it is quite likely that the stretch has already resulted in tissue damage which may cause immediate pain and soreness that persists for several days.

CAN I DO THE SPLITS ?

IF YOU HAVE EVER SEEN SOMEONE DO THE FRONT SIDE SPLITS AND ASKED YOURSELF," I WONDER IF I CAN DO THAT ? ".
HERE IS THE TEST YOU CAN TRY TO SEE IF YOU ARE CAPABLE OF PERFORMING THE SPLITS.

SIDE SPLITS TEST :

STAND BESIDE A CHAIR AND PUT YOUR LEG ON IT AS SHOWN. MAKE SURE THAT YOUR HIPS FACE FORWARD. REPEAT THIS TEST WITH YOUR OTHER LEG. IF YOU CAN DO THE HALF SPLIT WITH EACH LEG, THEN YOU CAN DO THE FULL SLPITS.

FRONT SPLITS TEST :

STAND IN A DEEP LUNGE. IF YOUR THIGHS ARE NEARLY IN ONE LINE, IT MEANS THAT YOUR HIP JOINTS AND THEIR LIGAMENTS DO NOT PREVENT YOU FROM DOING THE FRONT SPLIT. ONLY TIGHTNESS OF YOUR MUSCLES MAY KEEP YOU FROM SITTING IN A FLAT FRONT SPLIT WITH BOTH LEGS STRAIGHT.

WARM-UP

SAY IT WITH ME," A GOOD WARM-UP IS ***CRITICAL*** " AND IT PERFORMS A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS THAT WILL AID NOT ONLY YOUR STRETCHING,BUT YOUR ENTIRE WORKOUT.

THE BENEFITS OF WARM-UP INCLUDE

- INCREASED BODY TEMPERATURE
- INCREASED BLOOD FLOW TO THE MUSCLES
- DECREASED MUSCULAR TENSION
- INCREASED HEART RATE
- INCREASED METABOLISM

A GOOD WARM-UP CONSISTS OF SIMPLE GROSS MOTOR MOVEMENTS LIKE JOINT ROTATIONS, BRISK WALKING, JOGGING, CYCLING, JUMPING ROPE, ROWING OR LIGHT CALISTHENICS. DURING WARM-UP AVOID STATIC STRETCHES, HARD CALISTHENICS AND FULL SPEED MARTIAL ARTS MOVEMENTS. YOU SHOULD NOT FEEL TIRED OR FATIGUE AFTER YOU WARM-UP,BUT YOU SHOULD BE SWEATING !

COOL DOWN

STRETCHING IS ***NOT*** COOLING DOWN! DO NOT END YOUR WORKOUT AFTER STRETCHING. YOU NEED TO PERFORM LIGHTER VERSIONS OF THE GROSS MOTOR MOVEMENTS OUTLINED IN THE WARM UP. WHY?

- ***COOLING DOWN REDUCES MUSCLE TIGHTNESS, FATIGUE AND SORENESS.***

THIS HAS TO DO WITH THE BUILDUP OF LACTIC ACID IN THE MUSCLE.

- ***COOLING DOWN REDUCES YOUR HEART RATE BACK TO NORMAL.***
- ***A COOL DOWN PROMOTES GOOD BLOOD FLOW BACK INTO THE MUSCLES***
- ***A GOOD COOL DOWN REMOVES EXCESS METABOLIC WASTE.***

COOLING DOWN FROM A WORKOUT IS VERY IMPORTANT.

BREATHING

WHEN YOU EXERCISE YOU NEED TO BREATHE.
WHILE STRETCHING, YOU NEED TO CONSCIOUSLY PROVIDE YOUR BODY WITH RYTHMIC OXYGEN. MUSCLES LOVE OXYGEN. YOU RELAX MORE AND SO DOES YOUR MUSCLE IF YOU BREATHE RHYTHMICALLY WHILE YOU ARE STRETCHING. JUST BREATHE NORMAL AND BE AWARE YOU'RE DOING SO. PLUS IT HELPS TAKE YOUR MIND OFF THE "UNCOMFORTABLE" FEELING OF THE STRETCH.

THE BEST TIME TO STRETCH

THE BEST TO STRETCH IS WHEN ***YOU*** FEEL LIKE IT. ***BUT,*** YOU HAVE TO FEEL LIKE IT ALMOST EVERYDAY ! THAT'S THE KICKER. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE FULL LOWER BODY FLEXIBILITY YOU HAVE TO MAKE A SERIOUS COMMITMENT TO THIS PROGRAM.

EARLY MORNING STRETCHING

THE PURPOSE OF THE EARLY MORNING STRETCHING ROUTINE IS TO BE ABLE TO PERFORM ACTIVITIES REQUIRING CONSIDERABLE FLEXIBILITY WITH LITTLE OR NO WARM UP AT ALL.THIS IS BEST DONE BY DOING YOUR NORMAL WARM UP, ADDING LIGHT STATIC AND VERY LIGHT DYNAMIC FLEXIBLITY EXERCISES AS PART OR YOUR EARLY MORNING RITUAL.

THE NORMAL WORKOUT

THE NORMAL WORKOUT IS DONE WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE IT. IF YOU ARE AN EARLY BIRD, DO IT IN THE MORNING. IF NOT, THEN EITHER DO IT IN THE AFTERNOON OR LEAVE IT TILL LATER ON IN THE EVENING. THE POINT IS MAKE SURE THAT YOU DO IT SOMETIME THROUGHOUT YOU DAY.
THE NORMAL WORKOUT IS ABOUT 30 MINUTES. REMEMBER,

THIS IS A NORMAL STRETCHING WORKOUT, NOT YOUR FULL SPORT SPECIFIC WORKOUT. THIS IS AN ADD ON TO WHAT YOU ALREADY DO.

STRENGTH TRAINING

A STRONG CORE IS ESSENTIAL FOR SOME FORMS OF FLEXIBILITY. MARTIAL ARTISTS MUST HAVE A VERY STRONG CORE IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH THE PHYSICAL DEMANDS MARTIAL ARTS PUT ON THEIR BODY. I THINK A STRONG CORE IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR OTHER SPORT ACTIVITIES, YET YOU WILL HAVE TO BE THE JUDGE BASED ON THE ACTIVITIES YOU ARE INTERESTED IN.

BASICALLY IN ORDER TO BUILD A GREAT BUILDING, A STRONG FOUNDATION MUST BE LAID. YOUR FOUNDATION IS YOUR ABDOMEN AND YOUR BACK. ABDOMEN AND BACK EXERCISES SHOULD BE TOP PRIORITY IN ANY EXERCISE PROGRAM YOU MAY BE STARTING. I AM NOT TALKING ABOUT 6 PACK ABS AND THE ABILITY TO DEAD-LIFT 1000lbs. YOU DO NOT NEED TO HAVE A BRUCE LEE BODY IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE FULL FLEXIBILITY. I HAVE MET AND SEEN SOME RATHER SPORTY OVERWEIGHT PEOPLE THAT WERE QUITE FLEXIBLE.

STRENGTH TRAINING IS ALSO VERY IMPORTANT TO THE MUSCLES YOU ARE STRETCHING. LEG CURLS WILL STRENGTHEN THE HAMSTRINGS. LEG BUTTERFLIES WILL STRENGTHEN THE ADDUCTOR MUSCLE GROUP. EXERCISES LIKE SQUATS, LEG RAISES, LEG CURLS, TOE TOUCHES AND LEG BUTTERFLIES ALL HELP TO STRENGTHEN THE VARIOUS MUSCLES USED FOR ATTAINING HIGH DEGREES OF FLEXIBILITY.

STRETCHING WEEKLY AGENDA

THE WORKOUT PLAN CHAPTER IS INTENTED TO GIVE YOU THE TOOLS TO INCREASE YOUR LOWER BODY FLEXIBILITY GRADUALLY. TO INCREAESE FLEXIBILITY, YOU MUST PERFORM THE WORKOUT BASED ON THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULES :

IF YOU ARE :

- **JUST STARTING OUT**
- **HAVE WEAK MUSCLES (SORE AFTER THE FIRST HARD WORKOUT)**
- **NOT IN GOOD SHAPE**

THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULE CAN BE USED :

MONDAY….. *WARM UP …LIGHT STATIC EXERCISES OR LIGHT / HARD ISOMETRIC EXERCISES*

TUESDAY…. *WARM UP … LIGHT STATIC EXERCISES*

WEDNESDAY…*WARM UP …STRENGTH EXERCISES…LIGHT STATIC EXERCISES*

THURSDAY….*WARM UP …LIGHT STATIC EXERCISES OR LIGHT / HARD ISOMETRIC EXERCISES*

FRIDAY…. *WARM UP… WARM UP*

SATURDAY…. *WARM UP … LIGHT STATIC EXERCISES*

SUNDAY…. REST !

IF YOU ARE :

- IN GOOD/DESCENT SHAPE
- DO NOT FEEL SORE AFTER THE FIRST HARD WORKOUT
- WORKOUT ON A REGULAR BASIS

THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULE CAN BE USED :

MONDAY….. *WARM UP …HARD ISOMETRIC EXERCISES*

TUESDAY….*WARM UP …STRENGTH EXERCISES…LIGHT STATIC EXERCISES*

WEDNESDAY….*WARM UP …LIGHT STATIC EXERCISES OR LIGHT / HARD ISOMETRIC EXERCISES*

THURSDAY….*WARM UP …STRENGTH EXERCISES…LIGHT STATIC EXERCISES*

FRIDAY….*WARM UP …HARD ISOMETRIC EXERCISES*

SATURDAY….*WARM UP … LIGHT STATIC EXERCISES*

SUNDAY…. REST !

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY.THIS SCHEDULE WORKS BUT YOUR BODY WILL TELL YOU IF YOU NEED TO LIGHTEN UP OR CAN PUSH HARDER.IT DEPENDS GREATLY ON THE SHAPE YOU ARE IN AND THE STRENGTH OF YOUR MUSCLES. ON THE HARD DAYS, REALLY PUSH IT,STRETCH THOSE MUSCLES. ON THE OFF DAYS, LET THOSE MUSCLES REST AND HEAL.

THE WORKOUT PLAN

OKAY, THIS IS WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR, THE MEAT AND POTATOES.
IF YOU ARE DOING THIS WORKOUT TO INCREASE FLEXIBILITY, YOU MUST ADHERE TO THE MINIMUM SUGGESTED SCHEDULE OUTLINED IN THE CHAPTER *STRETCHING TO INCREASE FLEXIBILITY.* THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF EXERCISES TO CHOOSE FROM. I HAVE INCLUDED A FEW TO HELP GET YOU STARTED, SEE THE SECTION ON EXERCISES.

WARM-UP

1. **JOINT ROTATIONS :**

The general warm-up should begin with joint-rotations, starting either from your toes and working your way up, or from your fingers and working your way down. This facilitates joint motion by lubricating the entire joint with synovial fluid. Such lubrication permits your joints to function more easily when called upon to participate in your athletic activity. You should perform slow circular movements, both clockwise and counter-clockwise, until the joint seems to move smoothly. You should rotate the following (in the order given, or in the reverse order):

- fingers and knuckles
- wrists
- elbows
- shoulders
- neck
- trunk/waist
- hips
- legs
- knees
- ankles
- toes

Aerobic Activity

After you have performed the joint rotations, you should engage in at least five minutes of aerobic activity such as jogging, jumping rope, or any other activity that will cause a similar increase in your cardiovascular output (i.e., get your blood pumping). The purpose of this is to raise your core body temperature and get your blood flowing. Increased blood flow in the muscles improves muscle performance and flexibility and reduces the likelihood of injury.

2. MASSAGE :

Many people are unaware of the beneficial role that massage can play in both strength training and flexibility training. Massaging a muscle, or group of muscles, immediately prior to performing stretching or strength exercises for those muscles, has some of the following benefits:

increased blood flow

The massaging of the muscles helps to warm-up those muscles, increasing their blood flow and improving their circulation.

relaxation of the massaged muscles

The massaged muscles are more relaxed. This is particularly helpful when you are about to stretch those muscles. It can also help relieve painful muscle cramps.

removal of metabolic waste

The massaging action, and the improved circulation and blood flow which results, helps to remove waste products, such as lactic acid, from the muscles. This is useful for relieving post-exercise soreness.

Because of these benefits, you may wish to make massage a regular part of your stretching program: immediately before each stretch you perform, massage the muscles you are about to stretch.

3. *LIGHT DYNAMIC STRETCH :*

Perform 3 sets with 10 reps for each leg. Start off easy then work to your maximum on the 3rd set. This should not be painful or uncomfortable at all.

- **Leg swings to the front**
- **Leg swings to the back**
- **Leg swings to the back**

WORKOUT

1. *relaxed static stretches*

perform 3 sets of relaxed side splits. Hold the contraction for a minimum of 10 seconds, but no longer than 30 seconds. Start off easy and slowly work back into your maximum stretch achieved by doing your previous isometric exercises.

- Relaxed side splits
- Relaxed front splits

HERE IS THE POINT WHERE YOU CAN DO YOU SPORTING ACTIVITIES, MARTIAL ARTS, RUNNING, FOOTBALL, ETC…

2. *Isometric Stretches*

Perform 3 sets of isometric side splits. Hold the contraction for a minimum of 10 seconds, but no longer than 30 seconds. Start off easy and then work to your maximum on the 3rd set. I know it hurts but the reward will be worth it.

NO PAIN… NO GAIN…

- Isometric side splits
- Isometric front splits

COOL DOWN

Stretching is *not* a legitimate means of cooling down. It is only part of the process. After you have completed your workout, the best way to reduce muscle fatigue and soreness is to perform a light *cool down*. You should start your cool down with about 10-20 minutes of sport-specific activity. In reality however, you may not always have 10-20 minutes to spare at the end of your workout. You should, however, attempt to perform at least 5 minutes of sport-specific activity in this case. The sport-specific activity should immediately be followed by stretching: First perform some light dynamic stretches until your heart rate slows down to its normal rate, then perform some static stretches. Sport-specific activity, followed by stretching, can reduce cramping, tightening, and soreness in fatigued muscles and will make you feel better.

Light cool down exercise immediately following maximal exertion is a

better way of clearing lactic acid from the blood than complete rest. Furthermore, if you are still sore the next day, a light warm-up or warm-down is a good way to reduce lingering muscle tightness and soreness even when not performed immediately after a workout.

Exercises

There are thousands of exercises to choose from. The following is just a quick list to give you the idea of what you need to do. Feel free to add your own personal exercises.

LEGS

ISOMETRIC SIDE SPLITS :

Keep your back straight. Push your butt to the back and hips forward. Bend your knees slightly. If your legs start to spasm or you can't hold the position, your legs need to be strengthened. When you contract, try to force your legs together. Then relax deeper into the stretch. This will help strengthen your adductor muscles also.

ISOMETRIC FRONT SPLITS :

Keep your back straight. Use a chair for balance.(my bar stool may be a bit big !!!) bend your back leg at the knee slightly. If your legs start to spasm or you can't hold the position, your legs need to be strengthened. When you contract, try to force your legs together. Then relax deeper into the stretch. This will help strengthen your hamstring muscles also.

ISOMETRIC FRONT LUNGE :

The object of this exercise is to stretch the top head of the quadriceps. You should feel it in the back leg in your hip. If your legs start to spasm or you can't hold the position, your legs need to be strengthened. When you contract, try to force your legs together. Then relax deeper into the stretch.

RELAXED SIDE SPLIT (1) :

Keep your back straight. Rest your elbows and relax into the stretch. Breathe normally. You can rock forwards and backwards a bit if it helps relax the muscles.

RELAXED SIDE SPLIT (2) :

This is a much easier version of the relaxed side stretch. Start off with this version if your legs are not strong enough for the previous version. Keep your back straight and point your toes upwards. Concentrate on working your stomach to the floor, rather than your head. This will keep your back straight. Work on rotating your hips forward.

RELAXED FRONT SPLITS :

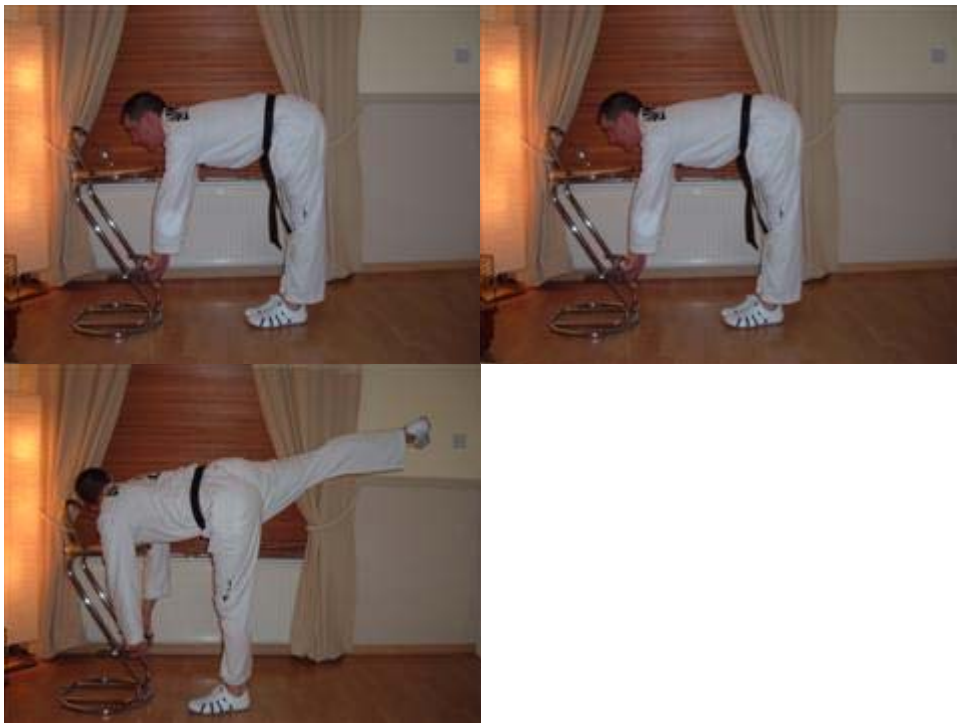
Start off in this version of the hurdler stretch. I am sitting on my back leg. Work your head to your chin, NOT the knee. Again, this helps you keep your back straight. Don't cheat! This is for the hamstring.

Now move your back leg out behind you with your toes pointed to one side, not down. Keep your knee bent. Now you should feel this stretch in both your hamstring and top head of the quadriceps.

LEG SWINGS TO THE FRONT :

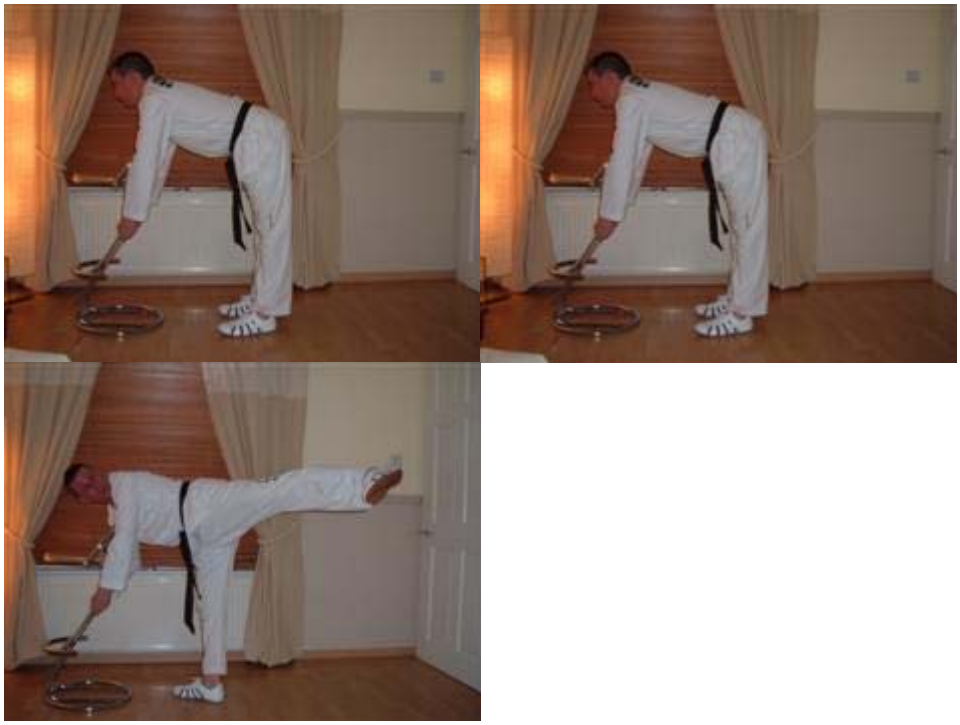
This is a dynamic stretch for the hamstrings and hip flexors. Start off slow and easy with your kicks. Kick as high and as fast as you can comfortably before increasing the height and speed of the kick.

LEG SWINGS TO THE BACK :



This is a dynamic stretch for the top head of the quadriceps, hamstrings and hip flexors. Start off slow and easy with your kicks. Kick as high and as fast as you can comfortably before increasing the height and speed of the kick.

LEG SWINGS TO THE SIDE :



This is a dynamic stretch for the adductors , hamstrings and hip flexors. Start off slow and easy with your kicks. Kick as high and as fast as you can comfortably before increasing the height and speed of the kick.

SQUATS :

Keep your back straight. Keep your knees over your toes, otherwise you can hurt your knees.

KNEE RAISES :

Alternate raising each knee to the opposite elbow. Watch your balance.

STANDING QUAD STRETCH :

Always use your opposite hand to perform this stretch. This guarantees you keeping your foot aligned with your knee.

GROIN STRETCH :

This is great for the hip flexors. Push your hips forward to really feel this stretch.

LYING V STRETCH :

This will get you a few strange looks, but it is great for stretching the adductor muscle group. You can, but don't have to, gently pull your legs down. This should be a relatively relaxing stretch.

BACK :

This is a great exercise for your spine. You should do this almost everyday. Really makes you feel good. This opens your body and stretches many muscles at the same time.

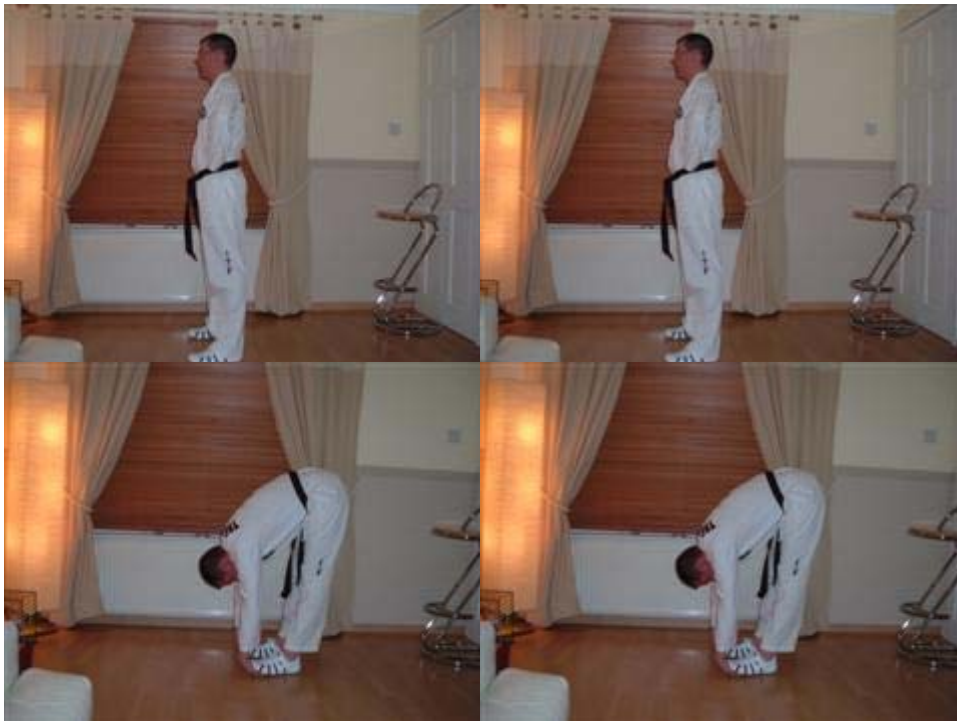
TRUNK TURNS :

Great warm up exercise for your lower back. I do this in my warm up everyday. Twist side to side increasing how far and how fast you go with each turn. Turn on the ball of your foot as shown to go even further.

SIDE BENDS :

This is great for your lateral obloquies, the muscles on the side of your rib cage.

BACK BEND / TOE TOUCH :



 **Good overall warm up and dynamic stretch. I can hear the snap, crackle and pop already.**

CAT STRETCH :



This is a milder version to help stretch the spine.

STOMACH

CRUNCHES :

Don’t put your hands behind your head. you can hurt your neck by doing this. Do not bring your lower back off the floor. Keep your feet flat on the floor.

LEG RAISES :

Lie flat on the floor with your hands by your sides, do not put your hands under your butt, this will just cause you to cheat!
Raise your feet 6 -8 inches off the floor. Raising your head will keep your lower back flat on the floor.

HIPS

SITTING BUTTERFLY STRETCH :

This is not a stretch, this is a relaxing exercise. Just pull your feet into your groin area and lightly flutter your knees up and down. You can force your knees to the ground using only your power of the agonistic muscles. Do not use your hands or elbows to force your knees down. Keep your back straight.

SLUMP STRETCH :

This is good for your hip flexors. Stand with one foot on the chair and the other flat and straight on the ground. Bend over and hang. You will feel this deep in your hips.

HIP ROTATIONS :

Stand up straight and rotate your trunk in wide circles. Try to keep your shoulders from moving too much.
This is a stretch not a dance!

FROG STRETCH :

You will feel this one.
This is another good exercise for the adductor muscles and hips. Relax into the stretch. Move forward and backward to work your entire hip joints and muscles.