

SIMPLE CORE TRAINING AT HOME

**A safe And Effective Abdominal
And Back Exercise Program**



MARK TOLLE

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Program

Mark Tolle, MS, ATC, CSCS

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a safe and effective core exercise program. Exercise is essential to maintaining your health. For over thirty years, I have worked in the health field promoting wellness and fitness. It has been my experience that starting an exercise program is not easy. But then again, it's easier than you think. This book is designed to guide you in building strength and endurance in your abdominal and back muscles. Anyone looking to improve athletics, strength and prevention of back pain will benefit from stabilization training.

It is also for anyone of you who feels frustrated with your overall health and needs the guidance of exercises beneficial to improving your health. Strengthening your core will enable you to prevent and help alleviate present and future health issues.

I understand that you may not be ready or willing to work with a personal trainer to get started, but I strongly recommend it. I am writing this book as a home guide for building a stronger core, possessing appealing abdominals and preventing lower back pain.

For these reasons, I have put together this simple and proven plan for you to implement. It is a program that will motivate you to start the correct way and provide you with the knowledge to progress and move forward. This is a plan that can give you fundamental principles that can be implemented today.

There are many reasons why you may be hesitant in starting an exercise program or performing a workout at home. I am going to discuss some principles for motivation, as well as present some of the challenges and frustrations you may experience with beginning a regular exercise program. I want to give you some practical strategies that you can quickly execute.

There is a chapter defining core training and the reasons you should utilize it. Based upon my own research and experience, three different and practical plans will be explained and easy to follow. Included are photos coupled with written directions. In addition, links to my YouTube channel are also included so you can follow along with video demonstrations.

One of my primary goals is to gather all of the complicated information you have seen online concerning core exercise and dispose of them. This is practical and research-based information that is easy to follow and implement. So, let us get started!

CHAPTER 1 - COMMIT TO A CORE EXERCISE PROGRAM

Just like anything in life, having the motivation to start a task can oftentimes be challenging. I totally understand because I, myself, have experienced finding the motivation to exercise and make healthy choices overwhelming. I am not an expert in motivation or psychology, but my experience in the health and fitness world has provided me with some insight into the challenges you may encounter to obtain a healthier lifestyle. Here are a few suggestions that I have seen work. Give them a try and see what works best for you.

Mindset

Success in anything begins with your mindset. Mindset is about having internal beliefs in what you want to accomplish. Your thoughts, attitude, and beliefs shape your commitment and habits of working towards a result. Having a proper mindset towards exercise and health will enable you to get through any challenges or roadblocks that you may encounter on your journey.

To help develop a proper mindset for exercise, I want you to diligently make a commitment. The commitment I want you to make is to ask yourself some questions. I want you to dig deep into yourself to find answers. Why did you get this book? Why are you considering or currently exercising? Why is exercise important to you? How does it benefit you? Before you continue, sit down and write out the answers to these questions. Then continue to read.

Answering these questions will not only give you a healthy mindset, but can help you in establishing exercise, fitness, and health goals. To develop goals,

you must look into the future and understand the big picture. There are things that you have done in the past that have gotten you to where you are today. There are things that you are going to need to start doing immediately if you want to change your present situation. Then there is the future; the rest of your life. There are specific practices and rituals that you are going to need to put into place if you want to look better, feel better, and make the changes you desire.

So, develop a better mindset, set your goals, commit to them, and know you can make these small sacrifices to accomplish your goals.

Commit to your core program

An essential step is making a dedicated commitment to your program and resolving yourself to regularly working out. This may sound pretty basic, but it is possible that you may not reach your goals. Commitment begins with believing in yourself and your ability to obtain a goal and accomplish it.

We all have times in our lives when we have difficulty in making commitments or decisions regarding one thing or another. Often, it is because of built-in fears, faulty beliefs, or lack of attaching a strong emotion to the accomplishment of the goal. That is why it is essential for you to answer the questions presented earlier.

I believe involving your mind and belief system with utilizing self-talk; then the commitment to accomplishing your goals is less intimidating. A beneficial equation for you to remember is "**Thought + Emotion = Commitment and Commitment = Results.**" After all, results are what we are looking for, and results do not occur without a purposeful emotional thought, commitment, and effort.

Excuses are the roadblock to committing to an exercise program. Excuses are mostly beliefs which prevent you from accomplishing results. It is imperative that you recognize the reasons you are using as excuses and leave them behind. Without understanding the excuses that slow you down, you will not overcome them. That is a fact! Next time you skip your workout, ask yourself why and explore how easy it is to come up with an excuse. Then ask yourself why you did not try harder to overcome the reason.

Earlier I alluded to *the number one reason people don't get what they want is*

that they genuinely don't know what they want. You must have a clear set goals or results that you want to accomplish with your exercise program and then continually focus on it.

You must also know, on an emotional level, why you want to achieve this particular result. How will it make you feel when you accomplish it? The more you analyze it, the stronger it becomes. This thinking elicits a strong emotion or a certain level of satisfaction. That is when you know that you are serious regarding your commitment.

Consistency, another important principle, is closely related to commitment and must be present to succeed with your fitness program. When I review fitness research, firstly, the major component for success that I see, is that each activity is performed for a minimum of three times per week. Secondly, it is essential that it be executed for more than eight weeks.

The bottom line is that in order to make improvements in any area of fitness, you must consistently do the work for an extended period of time. It is common for people to perform exercises one to two times per week or stop after a few weeks. We live in a society of instant gratification. We all want results now and we want them with as little effort as possible.

I am here to tell you that in order to see results, you need to do the work on a regular basis. Permanent change requires daily exercise, especially when trying to correct movement patterns, change muscle function, or recover from an injury. Success is the little things we do every day. It is a process and has a cumulative effect on our bodies.

Remember, Commitment and Consistency will Produce Results!

Try This: I know that you do not feel like exercising. Your warm bed in the morning is so much more appealing. I totally understand this. A little trick I suggest to some of my clients when they experience these situations or are experiencing low motivation to workout is this. Start using the 5-second rule along with reversing your thoughts. The 5-second rule was created and written about by Mel Robbins. Robbins is a personal development author and a speaker that I personally recommend you reading her book and/or watch her on YouTube/TV.

Lack of time is the primary excuse for being unable to accomplish everything

that is presently occurring in your daily life. This is probably the number one excuse I get from people who don't exercise or cook nutritional meals. I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME!

Here are some of my thoughts on the subject:

When you look at the concept of time, do you look at it as time spent or time invested? That may seem like semantics, but it is not. When you spend (time/money/resources) ON something, your mindset is generally more focused on the limitation, or waste of it. When you invest (time/money/resources) IN something, your mindset is usually concerned with a growing abundance or improvement. That is the reality. If I had to choose spending my time working out or emptying boxes that are of little or no importance to me, the choice is a no brainer. Exercise is going to give me a much better return.

Of course, that doesn't mean you should only spend time on the things you want to do or bring you the most return. Although, when you think about those tasks, they do have a specific accomplishment. It all comes down to goals and priorities. A long time ago I heard that you can always tell what your preferences are by examining your calendar and your checkbook. Where are YOUR priorities?

It is realistic to understand that you, at times, experience difficulty in managing your time. We all have the same 24 hours in the day. Earl Nightingale, a famous motivational author and speaker, explains that what you CAN manage is ACTIVITY. What Nightingale asserts is that you have to schedule your activities and then stick to your schedule. This has become more difficult because of all of your challenging and time-consuming modern-day distractions: social media, hundreds of TV channels, cat videos on YouTube, and such. One example of time crunching is the fact that kids today are WAY overscheduled. Parents are also overscheduled and tend to neglect their own health & wellbeing, putting their children's needs before their own.

The simple fact is that if you want to get fit and stay healthy, you have to lead a lifestyle that maximizes these results. Working out regularly and eating well is critical to your health. If you do not provide for this in your schedule (invest your time), then you will have a difficult time accomplishing your

goals. Quite frankly, they are not goals, just worthless wishes.

Are you spending your days working towards your goals, or are there hours/days lost on things that appear less important? If you were more organized, would it help you do things faster? Can you put a better system in place to review your goals, your objectives, and schedule your tasks? Can you make these sacrifices, as previously mentioned? Try minimizing, delegate, and put a time limit regarding other responsibilities.

Think of it like this: You can spend a little time now taking care of your health OR a lot of time later taking care of your illnesses!

You can argue with me and fool yourself, but the bottom line is you have one life; there's no getting it back. There are only 24 hours (16 if you're getting proper sleep) in your day to get things done.

EVERYTHING IS A CHOICE. You choose your schedule. Are you spending time or investing it? If you're investing it, then are you satisfied with the return you're looking to achieve?

You are in charge. Your first active step is to spend 15 minutes on a Sunday evening looking at your calendar for the week ahead. Then plan your exercise sessions. Write it on your calendar and do not prioritize other responsibilities or obligations over your exercise plan.

CHAPTER 2 - THE TRUTH ABOUT CORE TRAINING

I am going to describe the functions of the abdominal muscles (anterior chain), the back muscles (posterior chain) and how they operate. Included are pictures that you can visualize and refer to as I discuss them.

The **rectus abdominis** is the most superficial and is described as the six-pack muscle. It travels from the sternum down to the pelvis and it is partitioned into sections. The function of the rectus abdominis is to flex or bend the trunk and spine. However, an additional function that is frequently overlooked is its ability to slow down and resist extension backwards as well as control the position of the pelvis.

Researches often categorize the rectus abdominis as having a global muscle function when it comes to stabilizing the spine. This means it aids in balance and dissipates forces that move through the body in your daily functioning and dynamic sporting activities.

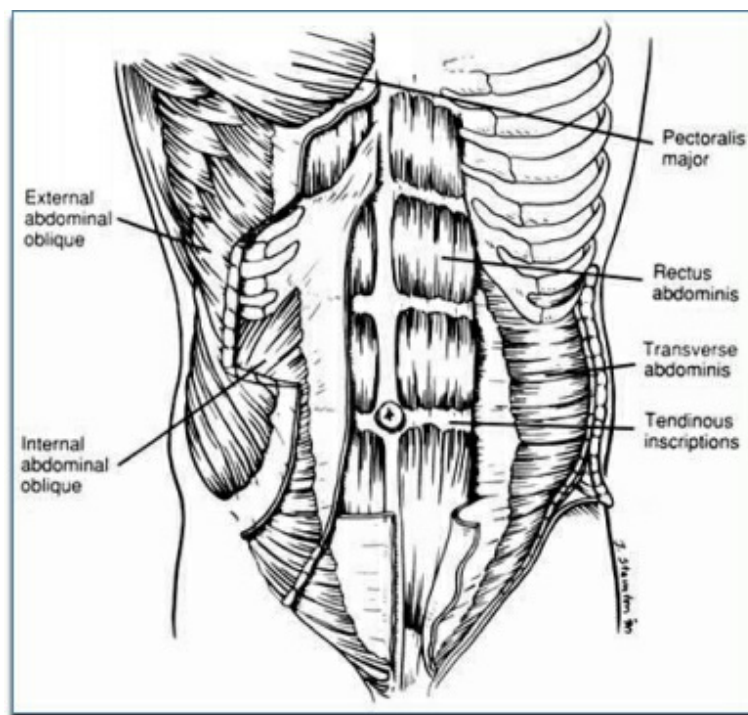
The next abdominal muscles are the **external obliques**. They are on both sides of the body beginning with the rib cage and connecting to the pelvis. They are involved in twisting and flexing the trunk and spine. However, their main function is to decelerate and control rotation and to control the position of the pelvis. Again, this muscle is integral in controlling and dissipating forces during functional activities.

Similar muscles called the **internal obliques** also aid in trunk and spine rotation, but on the opposite side of the body. For example, when the body is rotating to the left during the golf swing, the right internal obliques need to contract to decelerate the motion and protect the spine. The internal obliques

are very important when it comes to stabilizing and protecting the lumbar spine.

The internal obliques work closely with the last and deepest abdominal muscle called the **transverse abdominus**. This muscle originates from fascia along the spine, the ribs, the side of the pelvis and then attaches to the front of the pelvis and additional fascia.

Put more simply, in describing this muscle, think of it as a corset that circles the midsection. It is a deep muscle that supports the abdominal organs and gives a substantial stabilizing effect on the lumbar spine. The transverse abdominus not only helps in preventing lower back pain; it helps in making you appear trim and thin through the midsection.



As you read through the above muscle descriptions, you probably notice a general theme when it comes to abdominal muscle function. That theme is stabilization, control and deceleration. Even though the abdominal muscles are responsible for flexing, side bending and rotating the trunk, it is in performing daily functional activities that its role actually changes. Through research, the abdominals, as part of the core that we are continually training, plays a major role in controlling movement in all three planes of human

movements rather than producing these movements.

This is worth repeating. The role of the core is to control and decelerate the movement and spinal forces while performing functional activities. Since the abdominals are a major component of the core, your training should focus on control. The following exercise programs will exemplify this.

Abdominal Training (Anterior Chain):

Now that we understand the function of the abdominal muscles and the core, we need to put them into practice.

Let us first respond to this question. Why do we, or why should we, train the abdominal muscles? Generally speaking, most people train the abdominals to make them look better, improve sports performance or to rehab their back pain. When I refer to training, I mean you are trying to strengthen or improve endurance and control of the abdominal muscles. It does, however, depend upon the goals of the abdominal training. For example, if it is being done for the prevention of back injury, your focus should be on endurance. If it is for having six pack abs, remember that diet actually plays a more important role. For our purposes here, I will explain a general approach so that a basic foundational understanding of core training is established.

As I previously mentioned, research validates that the primary job of the abdominals during human movement is to control the forces and movement through the spine. Its secondary function is to assist in trunk movement. This means is that when starting a core exercise program, you should first learn to control the neutral position of the pelvis and lumbar spine for a period of time. You need to learn how to find a neutral pelvis and lumbar spine, and then develop the abdominal control, strength and endurance to hold that position. If you are able to hold this position with these fundamental exercises, then you can progress to a more difficult level safely.

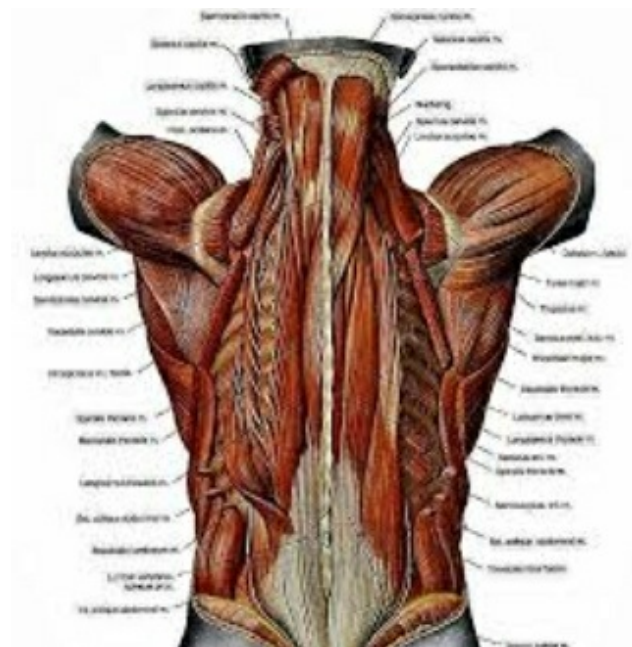
As you know, there are hundreds of progressions and ways to perform core exercises. My main concern is to make sure you have a quality position and control of the pelvis and low back before you progress to more challenging

exercises. Frequently, when someone attempts to perform an exercise that is too difficult for them, and do not perform it correctly, most likely they will surely end up hurting themselves. This bothers me because your safety is my primary concern when performing these exercises

Posterior Chain:

We need to also focus upon the back of the body, referred to as the posterior chain of muscles that are also very important. Posterior chain exercises are often forgotten or are not emphasized because typically people desire a “six pack,” and focus on the abdominals. The posterior chain involves the back musculature: (as shown in this picture) the hips, gluteal muscles, hamstrings, and calves.

The back is comprised of numerous muscles. Some are larger than others such as the Latissimus Dorsi, Trapezius, and the long (and short) erector spinae. Some are smaller like the multifidi, quadratus lumborum. They come in all shapes and sizes and function as stabilizers and extensors of the spine. This picture below helps you appreciate the complexity of the back musculature. In my exercise descriptions when I am referring to back extension or control of extension, it is these muscles that are being activated.



CHAPTER 3 - BAD BACK?

READ THIS

If you currently have back pain or have a history of back pain this chapter is a must read. Back problems come in all shapes, sizes, type of complaints and levels of discomfort. It can cause severe pain all the time, pain only after certain activities, or mild tightness on an occasional basis.

Back pain is one of the most common orthopedic complaints around the world. Back pain also has many causes however, we know prevention is paramount. If you have good functional posture, good mobility, good strength and endurance and good biomechanics you are less likely to suffer from low back pain.

One of the major purposes of this book is to help you, the reader, understand that strength and endurance of the core is an important component for everyone, but more so if you have back pain. However, please do not overlook what I stated above regarding posture, mobility, biomechanics and good movement patterns. Move a lot and move well!

Treatment of low back pain can come in all forms, many of which are very helpful. I have worked in health and wellness for over thirty years, including physical therapy and Sports Medicine, and I have encountered all kinds of treatment protocols. You may have tried one or more of the following:

- Orthopedic surgery
- Injections
- Pain management
- Physical Therapy
- Chiropractic

Acupuncture
Yoga
Massage
Posture therapy (Egoscue Method)
Total Motion Relief (TMR)
Stretch therapy
Exercise
Muscle Activation Technique

You may have gotten relief from one of these or a combination, or even from something not listed. The ones I tend to use are TMR, Egoscue and Exercise. However, the one approach that is usually integrated into back pain treatment is exercise in the form of core training. That is why I put this book together.

So, if you have read through the previous chapter, you now understand the basics and function of core training. Here are some important points to remember and take into consideration when training your abdominals or doing any kind of core training.

- Listen to your body. With what you may already understand about your body be aware if something does not feel right or puts an uncomfortable strain on your back.
- Make sure you master the Level 1 Program before moving on to the next level.
- Don't forget the other important aspects of fitness such as cardiovascular exercise, mobility, posture and balance. If you need more information look for my book "Simplified Exercise" sold on amazon.
- Focus on good biomechanics such as lifting through your hips, that you will learn in this book. This concept is important for improving a basic movement pattern.
- Don't over train. Start out easy to see how your body reacts then progress as you improve.
- Keep moving and stay active!

CHAPTER 4 - LEVEL ONE PROGRAM

This first group of core exercises are important to perform so that you have a foundation to build upon. Practice these and go watch the videos to ensure you are learning and developing proper technique.

I created two Level One Programs. You can alternate between program A and program B.

Work these programs into your normal weekly exercise programs or activities that you participate in. Start by performing this group of exercises two or three times a week and progress to four or five times a week before moving on to the next level.

This level one program is intended for:

- Anyone that currently has back pain
- Anyone that may be transitioning from a healthcare practitioner to exercising
- Anyone with a history of back pain or may need a refresher on the basics of stabilization training
- Everyone because there are exercises that work the core in all 3 planes of motion

NOTE: if you have pain with any of these exercises stop and consult your healthcare practitioner. Delayed onset muscle soreness is common but you may need to adjust the sets, reps, duration or frequency

LEVEL 1 PROGRAM:

Program “A”

Pelvic tilts, neutral position and abdominal brace

90-90 alternate heel touches

90-90 alternate leg extension

Modified side plank

Bird Dog

Pelvic Tilt, Neutral and Abdominal Brace

The purpose of this exercise is to learn how to activate the deep core muscle in a neutral or comfortable position. Lie in the position shown and relax. Place a hand/fingers on each pelvic bone in front. Gently tilt your pelvis forward and backward. As you do this your low back will arch and flatten gently.

- Tilt your pelvis about 10 times then stop in the middle of those 2 extreme positions. We call this lumbopelvic neutral or the position in which we like to start training stabilization. This position has the least amount of stress on the spine.
- Now for the abdominal brace, place your fingers on your stomach right above those pelvic bones. Become aware of your breathing and when you exhale gently tighten your stomach muscles. You should feel them contract under your fingers. Make sure to keep breathing as you do this. This is not a sucking in movement, just contract.
- Practice contracting and relaxing in this manner. So, tighten and hold for 10 seconds (breath) and relax. Repeat this sequence of 10

reps 1-2 times. You will learn to become more aware of your abdominal muscles with this exercise.

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



90-90 Alternate Heel Touches

This exercise helps develop the strength and endurance of the stabilizers that prevents the lumbar spine from going into extension.

Position 1

- Start in the bent knee position shown in the above picture
- Find your neutral position and brace as previous explained
- Then lowly raise one hip and knee up to 90 degrees, then the other as seen below



Position 2

- Slowly lower and tap one heel to the floor then back up to 90 degrees
- Then slowly lower and tap the other heel to the floor and bring it back up
- Alternate up and down between each side until you perform 10 taps with each leg
- Start with 2 sets of 10 reps and progress to 3 sets

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



90-90 Alternate Leg Extension

This exercise is a progression of learning to stabilize and brace the lumbar spine. By holding the spine with an isometric contraction of the abdominals, you develop strength and endurance in the core. This is considered an anti-extension exercise as you prevent the lumbar spine going into extension against the weight of the leg as it is extended out.

Position 1

- Start in the knee bent position shown in the first picture

- Find your neutral position and brace as previous explained
- Slowly raise one hip and knee up to 90 degrees, then the other



Position 2

- From this position you will slowly extend one leg straight out and back (2nd picture below)
- Then slowly extend the other leg out
- Alternate out and back until you perform 10 repetitions
- Start with 2 sets of 10 reps and progress to 3 sets

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Bird Dog

Bird dog is a basic stabilization exercise that activates spinal stabilization in a safe position. The pole down your back helps you recognize when there is too much movement in the spine. You are learning to control rotation, flexion and extension of the lumbar spine.

- Start on your hands and knees as shown
- Ensure your hands & shoulders are under each other
- Ensure your knees and hips are also in a straight line
- Place a long pole down the middle of you back

- Slowly extend one arm straight and opposite leg out
- Make sure not to let the pole fall or the low back arch increase
- Alternate out and back until you perform 10 repetitions on each side
- Start with 2 sets of 10 reps and progress to 3 sets



Program “B”

High Plank

Prone extension

Seated hip hinge

Standing hip hinge extension

Split stance hip hinge extension

Tubing (cable) anti-rotation

High Plank

- Get in to a push-up position as shown
- This is also called a high plank position
- Hands directly under the shoulders and feet in line with the hips
- Just hold this position for 15-20 seconds then go back down to the floor and rest
- Make sure to hold the pelvis level and a small arch in the low back
- Don't sag down
- Perform five 20 second holds and progress to ten

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Prone Extension

This exercise is designed to work the entire posterior chain (back of the body) which often times does not get exercise very much. With all the crunches and sit-ups being done in the fitness world this tends to be forgotten.

Back extension is used for disc problems in rehabilitation and for developing overall posterior strength and endurance. If you have been diagnosed with spinal stenosis I tend to stay away from this exercise. This type of exercise has many versions but I prefer this one first, especially if you have a history of low back issues and/or starting a prevention program. Again, this is an isometric hold which I tend to favor for my clients.

- Start by lying face down with your forehead on a couple towels.
- Place a yoga block between your knees if you have one
- Bend your knees slightly and push the feet together
- Keep your face looking down at the floor and lift the back up as shown.
- You do not want to look up or extend through the cervical spine (neck)
- Pull the elbows down toward the feet as you lift
- Hold for 15 seconds then return to the floor
- Start with 5 or 10 repetitions and progress as you tolerate

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Modified Side Plank

A side plank can often times be difficult for individuals. However, I put it in this level one program because it is an easy at home exercise that doesn't need any equipment. It is one of the movements that puts demand on controlling the spine in the frontal plane of motion. It is what we call anti-side bend for the spine.

This modified version is safer for everyone if done correctly. It not only requires stability in the low back, but it works stability in the shoulder and hips.

Position 1

- Lie on your side with both knees on top of each other with hips & knees bent
- Prop up on your elbow and forearm with it directly under the shoulder



Position 2

- Try to ensure that your spine is in line with the hip, upper leg and is not twisted
- Hold for 10 seconds and then sit back to the start position
- Switch to the other side and perform it the same way
- Perform 2-3 times on each side

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Seated Hip Hinge

The hip hinge is a fundamental movement pattern that serves as the foundation of a lot of exercises. I added it here because it is essential for some core exercises, specifically the next one I will show.

The hip hinge helps teach you how to perform hip dominate exercises, engage the gluteal and hamstring muscles, and help protect the back and front

of the knees.

- Start by sitting in a chair or on a bench as shown
- Sit up tall and roll you pelvis forward so there is an arch in your low back
- Lift your chest as well which will keep your spine straight
- Place your hands in the crease where the hips meet the pelvis
- Then slowly lean forward but keep the back straight by doing the above steps
- Practice moving forward and back for several repetitions

Note: the individual in this picture should actually be a little more upright through the chest & spine
Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Standing Hip Hinge With Extension:

This next exercise is a hip hinge and back extension in a standing position. It

is a progression of making this pattern more functional but adds a greater demand on the body. It has 2 positions which provides a different spinal mobility demand. This can be difficult for many especially if you have limited upper back mobility.

Position 1:

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart
- Push your hips back as if you are sitting down similar to the bench hip hinge above
- Feel that your weight is in the heels of both feet and tilt your pelvis forward (butt up)
- Lift through the chest which is helpful in putting your spine straight & in extension
- Take both arms back to your side and rotate them outward (external rotation)
- Hold this position for 15 seconds



Position 2:

- Then bend both elbows up and extend the arms straight up next to your head
- Keep the elbows straight and close to the ears
- This is difficult because it requires mobility through the shoulders and upper spine
- Push the chest up, keep the spine straight and the head/neck straight
- Hold for 15 seconds and then return to standing up straight
- Try to repeat this sequence 2-3 times and progress as you tolerate

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Split Stance Hip Hinge With Extension

Position 1:

- Place one leg back in to a split stance as shown
- Place the back foot up on your toes with little weight on it
- The front foot should have the majority of the weight in the heel
- Push the hips back in to a hip hinge and tilt the pelvis up
- The back is straight and chest up just like the previous exercise
- You should feel the front hip/hamstring loaded (right in this picture)
- Place the elbows bent next to your side and head at same angle as your back
- Hold 4-5 seconds then transition to the next position



Position 2:

- Slowly move the bent elbows up as shown
- Straighten the elbows and keep the arms close to the side of your head
- Keep your spine in alignment, lift the chest and tilt the pelvis to arch the back
- Keep the weight in the front heel and load the front hip
- Hold for 15 seconds and repeat on the other side
- Try to perform 2-3 times on each side

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Tubing (cable) Anti-rotation

This exercise is the last in the level one program. You can use a cable column machine in a fitness club or at home you can use tubing attached to a door or some other non-movable object.

For this exercise there are several different positions to perform but in level one we are staying with a neutral standing position.

Position 1

- Set up a cable attachment or tubing so it is perpendicular to your chest
- Make sure your feet are shoulder width and your pelvis neutral



Position 2

- From this position slowly extend the cable straight out and hold for 5 seconds
- Then return to the middle of your chest
- Perform 10 of these repetitions on each side
- Start with 2 sets of 10 and progress as tolerates

Go ***HERE*** to watch the video



Here are examples of tubing and door attachments you can use to perform some of the core exercises that I demonstrate in these programs. A wide variety can be found on Amazon, and you can order several different resistances. Start easy and progress to a more difficult level when appropriate.



Tubing
Attachments

Door

CHAPTER 5 - LEVEL TWO PROGRAM

The level two program is considered an intermediate program that builds on the earlier exercises. This program is for individuals that do not currently have back problems or are ready to be challenged a little more. I have created an “A” Program and a “B” Program so that that you can alternate between the two of them.

I also designed these 2 programs to be simple and quick so that you can work it in to your normal daily exercise programming. As you will notice these exercises create a greater demand on stability throughout the body in all three planes of motion.

Level Two Program:

PROGRAM “A”

Forearm front plank

Hip Bridge with alternate leg extension

90-90 leg extension with tubing shoulder pull down

Tall kneeling cable/tubing anti-rotation

Half-kneeling cable/tubing anti-rotation

Forearm Front Plank

- This front plank tends to be a little more difficult than the high plank
- Elbows are under the shoulders and put your weight through the entire forearms
- Keep feet in line with the hips
- Keep a slight arch in the low back
- Keep the hips level or slightly up
- Don't let the hips sag too low
- Hold 15-20 seconds and repeat 5 times

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Hip Bridge With Alternate Leg Extension

Position 1

- Start in the bent knee position with your arms on the floor
- Push up through your heels and lift your hips up off the floor



Position 2

- Remain stable and slowly extend one leg out
- Return it to the floor and extend the other
- Alternate leg extension for 10 reps on each side
- Keep the hips up high through the entire 10 reps
- Perform 2 sets of 10 reps alternating sides

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



90-90 Leg Extension Tubing Shoulder Pull-down (3 pictures)

Position 1

- This exercise gives a greater demand on stabilization by using tubing
- Attach the tubing in a door or use a person as shown



Position 2

- You are then going to pull down with the tubing with both arms
- Pull down to your side and reach toward your feet
- After you have engaged with the tubing bring one leg up then the other
- Keep your back in neutral and brace the abdominals
- This is the starting position for the actual exercise

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Position 3

- Slowly extend out one leg and bring it back
- Then extend the other leg out and back
- Keep your arms down and reaching, this engages the lats
- Alternate legs for ten reps on each side
- Return to a relaxed position
- Perform 2-3 sets

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Tall Kneeling Cable/Tubing Anti-rotation

Position 1

- Kneel on the floor as shown in this picture
- Use a cable machine or fixed tubing perpendicular to your position



Position 2

- Slowly extend the tubing away from your body and hold for 5

seconds

- Bring the tubing back to the start position
- Repeat 5 times
- Make sure to turn and perform on the other side
- Perform 2 sets of 5 reps

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Half-kneeling Tubing Anti-rotation

Position 1

- Go on the floor in half-kneeling position as shown in this picture
- Use a cable machine or fixed tubing perpendicular to your position



Position 2

- Slowly extend the tubing away from your body and hold for 5 seconds

- Bring the tubing back to the start position
- Repeat 5 times
- Make sure to turn and perform on the other side
- Perform 2 sets of 5 reps

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



PROGRAM “B”

High plank alternate leg lift

High plank alternate arm raise

High plank alternate arm/leg raise

Hip bridge leg extension tubing pull-down into extension

Hip bridge leg extension tubing ant-rotation

High Plank Alternate Leg Lift

Position 1

- Begin by going up into a push-up position or high plank position
- Hands are directly under the shoulders and feet straight back from the hips
- Keep your back straight with a natural arch in the low back



Position 2

- Hold and slowly raise one leg up a couple inches from the floor
- Make sure not to drop your level hips or twist through the back
- You may need to brace to ensure a stable back and hips
- Alternate legs for ten repetitions. If challenging try move your feet wider
- Then return to the floor
- Perform 2-3 sets of ten alternating lifts

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



High Plank Alternate Arm Raise

- You must first get in the position of a high plank
- When you feel stable slowly lift one hand up off the floor
- Ensure that the pelvis and low back are stable and do not shift or twist
- Hold the arm up for 1-2 seconds or longer if able
- Alternate arm lifts and complete ten repetitions on each side
- This exercise requires stability through the entire body

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



High Plank Alternate Arm/Leg Raise

- Here you are putting the above two exercises together as one
- This requires lifting the opposite arm and leg together
- If you are unstable spread the feet and brace the abdominals
- Hold each lift for 2-3 seconds before alternating
- Adapt this exercise based on your stability control and endurance
- Your goal is two sets of ten repetitions

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Hip Bridge Leg Extension Tubing Pull-down

Position 1

- This exercise has a greater demand on stabilization by using tubing
- You can attach the tubing in a door, or use a person as shown
- You are then going to pull down with the tubing with both arms
- Pull down to your side and reach toward your feet
- Bridge up pushing through both heels
- This is the starting position for the actual exercise



Position 2

- In this bridge position slowly extend one leg out
- Hold for 2-3 seconds and return the leg back to the floor
- Then extend the other leg out and back
- Perform ten repetitions on each side before coming down and resting
- Your goal is 2 sets of ten repetitions without the hips dropping

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Hip Bridge Leg Extension Tubing Ant-rotation

Position 1

- Attach tubing to a fixed point and lie down perpendicular
- Adjust your position or resistance based on your ability
- Ensure you feel a pull from the tubing



Position 2

- Bridge up and prevent the tubing from pulling you over



Position 3

- When up in the bridge position slowly extend one leg out
- Hold for 3-5 seconds and bring it back
- While maintaining the bridge extend out the other leg the same way
- Perform 10 reps with each leg before lowering back to the floor
- Turn to the other side and repeat
- Try to perform 2-3 sets from each side

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



CHAPTER 6 - LEVEL THREE PROGRAM

This last group of core exercises builds on the first two levels and integrates a greater level of demand on the entire body. As you probably can imagine there are even more variations and progressions that can be incorporated into your core training.

Level Three Program:

Forearm plank alternate leg lift
Forearm plank alternate arm lift
Modified side plank with horizontal tubing pull
Stability ball hip bridge arms up
Stability ball plank circles
Cable/tubing overhead press

Forearm Plank Alternate Leg Lift

- Get in the plank position on your forearms as demonstrated earlier
- Slowly raise one foot up off the floor about 2-3 inches
- Hold for 3-4 seconds and then place it back to the floor
- Continue to hold the plank and do the same on the opposite leg
- Alternate leg lifts for ten reps on each side
- Don't wiggle through the hips and back and don't raise the leg very high
- Try to complete two sets of ten repetitions

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Forearm Plank Alternate Arm Lift

- Get in the plank position on your forearms as demonstrated earlier
- Slowly raise one arm up off the floor about 2-3 inches
- Hold for 3-4 seconds and then place it back to the floor
- Hold the plank and do the same on the opposite arm
- Alternate arm raises for ten reps on each side
- Don't wiggle through the hips and back and hold a stable trunk position
- Try to complete two sets of ten repetitions

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Modified side plank with horizontal tubing pull

For this side plank you will have two different positions using a tubing or cable attachment. You will need to modify the pull of the tubing by your position. This helps train stability in the frontal plane by being in the side plank, and the transverse plane by the rotational pull of the tubing.

Position 1-pull from behind

- Attach tubing to a fixed point as shown or in a door
- Move away from the fixed point to create a moderate pull from the tubing
- Grab the tubing and get in the modified plank start position
- Move up and forward with your body and hold your arm up as shown
- Hold for 5-10 seconds then return to the start position
- Perform 5-10 repetitions on each side
- Progress as tolerates

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Position 2 – pull from the front

- Attach tubing to a fixed point as shown or in a door
- Move away from the fixed point to create a moderate pull from the tubing
- Grab the tubing and get in the modified plank start position
- Move up and forward with your body and hold your arm up as shown
- Hold for 5-10 seconds then return to the start position
- Perform 5-10 repetitions on each side
- Progress as tolerates

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Stability Ball Hip Bridge Arms Up

Position 1

- Place both feet on a stability and lie down with your arms up in the air



Position 2

- Bridge your hips up off the floor with your arms up in the air
- Hold for ten seconds then return to the floor
- This arms up position requires stability through the entire body
- Perform 5-10 repetitions
- Progress as tolerates

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Stability Ball Plank Circles

- Perform a plank on a stability ball as shown
- Push your body up off the ball and stay stable through the trunk
- Slowly roll the ball in circles with your arm
- Perform five circles in each direction, then rest
- Perform 2-3 times

Go [HERE](#) to watch the video



Cable/Tubing Overhead Press

This exercise in standing integrates more of the entire body. Standing is a more functional position and the pull of the cable (or tubing) requires stability in the frontal plane and transverse plane of motion. Your job is to stay as stable as possible resisting the pull of the cable.

Starting position

- Stand perpendicular to the pulling force with your hands in the middle of your chest



Position 2

- Slowly raise the arms up overhead like a shoulder press
- You need to resist the pull of the cable
- Hold at the top for five seconds
- Return to starting position
- Perform ten repetitions on each side
- Perform 2 sets and progress as tolerates



CHAPTER 7 - YOUR SIMPLE CORE EXERCISE PROGRAM

We have reached the end of the workouts so let me discuss a few things which should answer any questions you may have.

These programs were developed in a progressive sequence because many of you need to learn, and build a foundation first. I wanted those with a history of back pain, or currently experiencing some, a chance to start pain free and build the basics for higher level exercises.

Here is a review of some important concepts to remember and apply when performing the programs:

- Ensure that you learn and apply the process of finding lumbar neutral especially with the first group of exercises.
- Make sure you understand the abdominal brace is an isometric contraction not sucking in. Practice using it with the first group of exercises. After you use it for a while it should automatically occur.
- Watch the videos several times if you have difficulty performing any of the exercises
- Take your time in performing the exercise. Don't rush through it.
- Hold the exercise for the specific amount of time as instructed, but you can use your own judgement on how long you can hold for a quality repetition.
- The sets and reps can be changed based on your ability to perform them. If an exercise appears easy, increase the number

of reps or sets.

- If any of the exercises cause discomfort then stop performing it.
- Perform your core program at least three times a week and progress it to four or five if possible
- Work the program in to your other exercise activities as time allows. It doesn't matter if you do it the same day as your cardio or the same day as your other strength exercises.
- Don't forget to implement some mobility exercises each week
- Above all "Keep It Simple"
- BEST OF LUCK!

CHAPTER 8 - MESSAGE TO MY READERS

Dear Reader,

Thanks so much for giving *Simple Core Training* a read. I hope you enjoyed my safe and effective home core training program.

Level One...got you through your back pain (if you had any) and definitely established a foundation which to build upon.

Level Two and Three hopefully met your expectations of a fun challenge to not only jump start your journey to greater core strength and endurance, but to improving your athletic skill.

As I'm sure you recognize, these exercises will enhance your other exercise programs to help you look, move and feel better.

If you or a friend would like more of my simple approaches to exercise and fitness, stop back at amazon and look for my [*Simplified Exercise*](#) book or if you are into golf my [*Ultimate Guide To Golf Fitness!*](#)

Get them now!

Best Wishes On Your Journey!

Sincerely,
Mark

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to my family, friends, mentors, teachers, clients and coworkers that have contributed to my overall educational development and experience over the last thirty years.

I also want to give a special thanks to my photographer/videographer Gerry Piergalski and exercise model Cristian Levia. They were significantly important in assuring concise examples of these many exercises.

I also want to thank Anne Wold for her support, encouragement and editorial review of my book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Who is Mark Tolle? You may be wondering. Well, I consider myself one of the many professionals dedicated to improving the health and wellness of as many people as possible.

I have to admit that I wasn't a fitness fanatic from a young age, even though I did participate in many sports growing up. Even as a young adult, I was focused on getting a college degree and finding a good job. I did that in an unrelated field, but in my thirties, it came to me that it was more important to make a difference in people's lives.

So, I went back to school and received a degree in Athletic Training (sports medicine) with a Masters Degree in Exercise Science. I was fortunate to obtain a position with a sizeable Physical Therapy company in a metropolitan area. While employed in that setting, I gained significant knowledge and experience working alongside very talented physical therapists, orthopedic surgeons, and exercise specialists.

I had the opportunity to spend time at the Olympic Training Center in Lake Placid and on the specialized Fitness Van for a Ladies Professional Golfers Association tournament.

I eventually left health care to work primarily in the area of health and fitness. After several additional certifications and hundreds of continuing education hours, my goal had changed to applying my knowledge in a non-medical and preventative setting, where I believe there is a great need. I feel now I can reach people before they need medical care.

Please go back to amazon and leave an honest review, as it will help with my future books.

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