

# The Power of Getting Back to the Basics

By Jill Cascarano

## Your physical core

For any physical activity that you do, whether it be using the computer, walking upstairs, unloading groceries, or taking a spinning class, health and fitness experts agree you need to begin with a strong core.

What exactly is the core? Simply put, it's your mid-section which includes the abdominals, back, and muscles around the pelvis. This area is the base of stability, mobility, strength, and power. Conditioning your core muscles, as part of a regular exercise routine, is highly recommended to reduce risk of injury, keep the body balanced, and support optimal health.

## The holistic self

Now think about the core on a more holistic level. It's the epicenter of who you are as a multi-dimensional human. Taking good care of your whole being is just as essential as maintaining a healthy physical body. Later in this article we'll discuss the power of "getting back to the basics" to release and let go of blockages that may be preventing you from leading the best possible life. But first we need to understand what it means to be blocked.

## Feeling blocked

On Merriam-Webster's online synonym discussion, it states that "BLOCK implies interfering with or obstructing the activity, passage, or progress." As strong, resilient women, we're not always fully aware of moments when we may be blocked in one or more areas of our life. For instance, you might experience feeling stuck, trapped, or overwhelmed in your career and/or personal life during certain periods and situations (i.e., a new boss, changing jobs, increased workload, child care issues, a medical flare-up, going through a divorce, a family member's death).

"Often when people are blocked, things are falling apart on all levels...mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually...it's about releasing those blockages so your life can begin to flow...you need to get the base strong." - Hayley Mermelstein, licensed acupuncturist, energy healer, creator of Tong Ren Chakra Balancing, and owner of Integrative Acupuncture, Amherst, Massachusetts

## Strengthening your foundation

So what can you do to release some of those blockages that may be holding you back? Begin by taking small daily actionable steps to restore your fundamental core. This means attending to all aspects of yourself – mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. By taking good self-care, you'll be ready to bring more positive energy into all facets of your life – and that begins a pathway to renewal and joy.

Remember to think holistically. In other words, the power comes from nurturing your WHOLE self – mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Try making a daily conscious effort to spend 10 minutes quietly reflecting and reevaluating. Ask yourself, "Do I need to begin developing or further strengthening my core?" If that inner guiding voice is screaming "YES, YOU DO!" then begin laying the groundwork by scheduling in small chunks of time to work on yourself. Positive changes are sure to follow.

## Self-care tools

You can begin to work on releasing any blockages that may be hindering your well-being by getting back to the basics which consist of incorporating elemental self-care tools into your days.

Try incorporating these suggestions:

- Choose healthy eating. You can develop sound habits and still enjoy eating – it simply requires a little determination, positive thinking, and creativity. MyPyramid.com recommends including daily servings of whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and low-fat dairy foods. With so many options today, it's quite easy to find many delicious and nutritious foods for you and your family.

- Make exercise part of your routine. Schedule in your fitness. Just like you schedule a doctor's visit, business meeting, or dinner plans, do the same thing with exercise. Mark it on your calendar at work and home. Include physical activity as part of spending quality time with family. Besides improving fitness, research has shown that exercise can aid in managing stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as improve

energy and sleeping patterns. Your days are most likely jam packed, so try doing exercise in short bursts. Do 10 minutes of exercise in the morning, mid-day, and early evening. On days off, aim to do 20-minute workout interval sessions. Be sure to change up your exercise routine and make it fun. Don't forget to condition those core muscles! Do light stretching in the morning and before workouts.

- Get plenty of sleep. At least 7 hours a day of quality sleep is recommended for your body to regenerate itself. Try going to bed even just 20 minutes earlier than usual several times a week and see how much better you feel upon waking up. Before bedtime, avoid eating heavy meals and drinking caffeine, and don't watch anything on television that will scare, upset, or worry you. Make your sleeping environment dark, quiet, comfortable, and slightly cool. Do something relaxing a few minutes beforehand.

- Stay ahead of the curve. Preventive care is critical for your well-being. Schedule and keep appointments for annual physical exams and recommended health screenings. Don't ignore signs of prolonged or serious illness. Schedule an appointment with your doctor. For acute symptoms, get checked out immediately. Better safe than sorry. Be your own best health advocate, and play an active role in your care.

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*"Use whatever time you have... by taking baby steps you'll begin to feel better... think about what you can do today to move yourself closer to what you need."*

*- Hayley Mermelstein*

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- Practice daily gratitude. Dictionary.com defines gratitude as "the quality or feeling of being grateful or thankful." Try practicing gratitude upon waking and before retiring to bed. Think of reasons you have to feel appreciative. Keep a daily gratitude journal. In addition to writing in the moment, you can refer back to prior entries as gratitude reminders. Even simple gestures you do for others and having a roof over your head with food on the table are reasons to count your blessings. Being grateful allows you to stay happier in the moment and brings more positive energy into your life.

- Surround yourself with positivity. Spend more time with uplifting people. Seek out those friends and family members who put a smile on your face and inspire you to be your best self. Change scenery periodically. Go for a ride and explore new things. This doesn't require spending lots of money. Just taking a long walk in nature's beauty can inspire you. Browsing in a fabulous old country store can soothe your soul. Playing and laughing with your children can do wonders. Let more light into your world.

- Reframe your outlook. In your journey through life, instead of looking at the glass as half empty why not see it as half full? If you're struggling with a challenging situation, trust your inner guidance and have faith it is going to be okay. Believe that everything happens for a reason. Use experiences as an opportunity for growth and learning. If something isn't coming together as you had planned or you're feeling anxious and worried about an issue, reframing is a way of viewing and experiencing events, thoughts, and emotions to find more positive alternatives.

Disclaimer: This article is not meant to replace professional medical advice or service. Always consult your regular healthcare providers for personal health and fitness concerns.

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*Jill has always had a passion for both writing and well-being. She has an extensive professional background developing and implementing employer health and wellness programs and writing employee health communications. She possesses an M.A. in Human Resources Management and a B.A. in Communications. She's currently a student in the Health Coach Training Program at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. Jill can be reached at: JillCascarano16@comcast.net.*