

Exercise ONE – lower body

Key Points

- sink between feet
- knees always over feet for a safe structure
- last inch gives ten times the benefit
- slow coming back up

For this exercise, I'd like you to get onto a big, fat, grain fed, barrel-chested mare. This visualization will keep your knees in the proper position as you begin the exercise. (If you are sitting on a horse and you are knock-kneed -- you have a very sick horse ☺).

Standing tall, feet slightly more than shoulder width apart.

Relax, and let your body sink down between your feet -- not behind your feet.

If you sink behind your feet, you can almost sit on your heels and still not get a stretch.

But if you actually sink down between your feet, pushing your knees directly over your toes -- you'll keep your knees strong and get a significantly better hip stretch.

And then come up – but come up SLOWLY, slowly, slowly to increase the exercise potential.

At this point, as you go up and down -- the exercise doesn't feel that profound. This is where we incorporate a secret from tai chi practice. "The last inch gives you 10 times the benefit". If you feel strong, if your knees feel fine, then when you get to the bottom of this exercise -- totally relax all of your leg and bum muscles so that you sink another inch or two. The last inch is where you'll start to increase your flexibility. The last inch is where you will find benefits.

(Do the squats a few times and then move on).

Exercise one – upper body

Key Points

- shoulders always relaxed
- squeeze shoulder blades together to exercise “stress muscles”
- do not push arms too far forward

Now let's do the upper body. Bring your palms up, and bring your elbows straight back. And then push the arms forward.

Now once again -- this doesn't seem too profound. So we need to incorporate the last inch rule. How many of you carry your stress in your shoulders and your neck? (Almost everybody does). In most cases, when you are stressed, the trapezius and rhomboid muscles are in spasm. And one of the best ways to reduce the spasm is to exercise those muscles. But how do you do that?

This time, bring your elbows straight back, and *squeeze* your shoulder blades together. See if you can make them meet in the middle of your back. If you are wearing a shirt with buttons, feel as if you were going to pop the top button. In this posture, you are exercising the "stress" muscles and also opening the chest.

Now as you start to push forward -- this is the one place we do not want to incorporate the "last inch" rule. If you push the arms out too far, then your shoulders rise and you end up doing the "Ed Sullivan" approach to 4 Minute Fitness. (How many of you have even heard of Ed Sullivan?)

Exercise one – add breathing

Bring your elbows back and, as you inhale deep into your belly - feel the shoulder blades squeezing together.

As you push your arms forward, exhale

Exercise one – all together

Bring your elbows back with a big inhale, then as you begin to exhale -- sink between the legs (feeling the stretch as you near the bottom).

As you begin to rise, inhale and squeeze the shoulders together as the elbows come back. (Repeat several times.)

Nicely done. Can you feel the difference and potential?