

# Physical Expressions

## Connecting to your Core & Water Exercise

One of the most important skills we can learn is “core” or pelvic and back stability. This is the ability to keep the pelvis/back or core area in a neutral position while at rest and moving. A pain free back is dependent on having good core stability and adequate range of motion/ flexibility.

### —The Facts —

- The core consists of deep trunk muscles that work together to give the spine stability.
- In the non-injured, non-painful spine, core muscles turn on before your body performs any movement.
- The core creates a stable base for flowing and efficient movement of the entire body.
- Poor posture, bad habits, unbalanced exercise or strength training, pain or injury can cause improper functioning of the core.
- Having a strong core lessens the chance of injury and back pain.
- Research shows that in people with low back pain, the core muscles turn on too late or not at all. It is as if the brain gets “disconnected” from the core.
- Research indicates the core muscles do not automatically start working properly after back pain goes away – your brain can stay “disconnected” even if you feel better.
- The brain needs to send a message to the core to activate before engaging the limbs or back for work.
- Retraining the core takes ***focus*** and ***practice***.

*Having a strong core makes our entire bodies stronger.*

## Methods of targeting your core in class

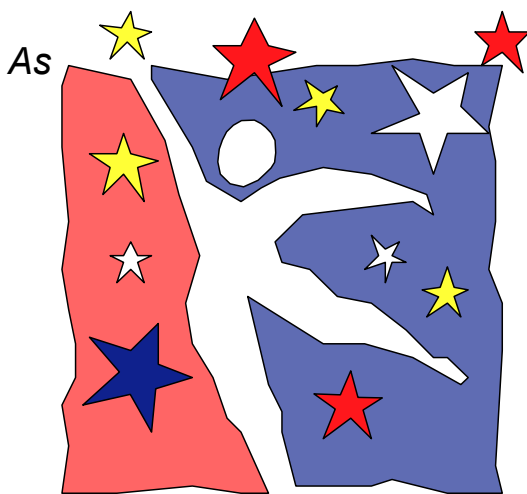
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1. Make it a **focus** to target your core. Think about it constantly.
2. Become **aware** of what good alignment is. This can be done by tilting your pelvis forward and back for reference points and then finding the “neutral” position. Practice finding and keeping this neutral position. (Note: it will feel good, but can be difficult to maintain)
3. Activate your core stabilizers by bringing you navel towards your spine (small move) without adjusting any other body parts. Watch for the rib cage getting overly mobile. This is referred to **isolation**. Keep the navel gently “retreated” with the in-hale and exhale. Practice activating this area and then work on maintaining this position.
4. While performing movements in the water, **maintain** proper alignment. Keep hips and shoulder square. This requires refraining from the urge to twist while performing movements. This becomes more difficult with travel.

## Visualization

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*Imagine the area from your hips to your shoulders (your core) as a tree trunk. Your trunk is magnificent and strong and even though there are strong winds, your trunk has the strength to keep the entire tree stable and firmly rooted in the earth. As the branches of the tree (comparison to your arms and legs) move in the wind, your trunk provides reinforcement, stability and does the majority of the work. Imagine and “feel” your core as this tree trunk - **supporting, uplifting, stabilizing and protecting**.*



As you learn to pay attention and master this skill, you are connecting your mind and body as an integrated whole. To enjoy this process is a conscious choice of care and respect toward your body. Next class or whenever you remember, take the time to “check in” and “feel”.

### Motivational Quote:

All beginnings are somewhat strange, but we must have patience, and little by little, we shall find things, which at first were obscure, becoming clearer.

Vincent De Paul (c. 1580-1660)  
French Missionary