

*art of motion*



contemporary movement education

Contemporary Pilates

# Pilates & Props

## Progress and Release

A warm welcome to Progress & Release: a contemporary further education course in Pilates Props & Mat

Progress & Release continues and extends contemporary usage of the Pilates Roller, Toning Balls and Magic Circle. It also complements and enriches the various Pilates mat courses.

Similar to the Further Education Course Pilates Props I & II, Progress and Release is practice-orientated and is a complete module in itself with a repertoire that can be applied within lessons at a variety of levels. Thus the advanced Progress exercises can be adapted easily to less advanced lessons, whilst the nature and adaptability of the Release exercises makes them applicable for all levels.

The focus of Progress and Release is practical. It builds on your familiarity with a broad spectrum of Pilates repertoire, as well as your experience as a Pilates instructor within both the field of applied functional anatomy, as well as mechanical and philosophical principles of Pilates methodology. The day begins with the usual theme-orientated contemporary Pilates lesson, after which your knowledge of various stretching and release techniques will be freshened up, leading you into the repertoire of Progress and Release.

Each exercise and its corresponding sequence is clearly illustrated by a detailed series of photos. You'll find that many of the exercises' breathing and movement sequences can be easily followed without the aid of detailed written instructions. Where necessary, I've included supplementary instructions in note form. Exercise goals of direct relevance to Progress & Release have been listed, along with exercise variations and any main muscles involved. In addition to this, I've also supplemented the Release-Repertoire with related stretching and release techniques. Each section is rounded off with concluding theme specific instructions. As this is an advanced course, common mistakes and correction strategies have not been included. But of course, you'll probably have certain questions as you familiarize yourself with the various aspects of Progress & Release. Your tutor is there to support you during your course, so if you do need anything clarifying, don't hesitate to ask.

Enjoy yourself!

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Principal & Educator

art of motion  
training in movement®



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## THE COURSE

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### COURSE GOALS

- Increased understanding of various stretching and release techniques.
  - Integration of these techniques into contemporary Pilates.
  - Variation of techniques for different purposes.
- Extension and implementation of advanced Pilates & Props repertoire with following small equipment:
  - Roller.
  - Toning Balls, golf balls, tennis balls, diamond balls, over balls.
  - Magic Circle.
  - Exercise bands.
- Extension and implementation of stretching and release repertoire.
- Familiarization and implementation of contemporary Pilates sequences.

### DAILY ROUTINE

This daily routine is only a guideline and can be adapted by the tutor to the needs of the participants.

- 9:00h Welcoming Session
- 9.15h Contemporary Pilates Progress & Release Lesson
- 10.30h Pause
- 10.45h Repertoire
- 13.00h Midday Break
- 13.45h Stretch and Release Techniques
- 14.00h Repertoire
- 15.30h Pause
- 15.45h Repertoire
- 16.45h Conclusion
- 17.00h Finish



## THE MANUAL

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### THE MANUAL

As mentioned above, this course and manual have been designed for experienced Pilates instructors.

You will already be familiar with both the basic principles of the exercises and the relevant applied mechanical and philosophical principles. In addition, this level of study also presumes an extensive knowledge in the application and instruction of functional breathing patterns.

As you know, every type of exercise can be taught in a variety of ways. So depending on the specific goal and context of an exercise, it can be changed or adapted, be it in the choice of the initial starting position, alignment of the limbs, range of motion, rhythm, instruction focus and intention. Because of this, an attempt to list such a variety of exercise goals and their purposes would not only be beyond the bounds of this course but would also make little sense. The exercise goals listed are, therefore, all relevant to the field of Progress & Release. Feel free, however, to draw on your own knowledge and experience as well as the information from other manuals to extend and complement the exercises as you require.

This manual is intended to:

- Serve you as a source of reference.
- Provide you with ideas.
- Encourage you to complement and extend its contents.

### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Muscular<br>Structural | <p>This section lists the purpose and benefit of an exercise.</p> <p>“Muscular” and “Structural” in the grey section refers to the benefit to muscles, fascia and bones/joints.</p> <p>Sometimes additional muscles are given in parenthesis following a listed muscle group. Although not main active muscles, these are nevertheless relevant to the exercise and its context.</p> <p>Certain muscles are written in italics, indicating that though active, they are not the main contributors to a particular exercise.</p> |
| Proprioceptive         | <p>This section lists the various proprioceptive and kinesthetic benefits.</p>  |
| Technique              | <p>“Technique” refers to the applied stretching and/or release techniques.</p> <p>We’ll be applying the following techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Progressive stretching.</li> <li>▪ Progressive release through breathing / Release through breathing.</li> <li>▪ Stretching through counter traction.</li> <li>▪ Flossing.</li> <li>▪ Indirect stretching.</li> <li>▪ Active release.</li> <li>▪ Passive release.</li> <li>▪ Massage.</li> </ul>   |
| Special                | <p>This section gives additional advantages of an exercise.</p>   |

### KEY

TFL: Tensor fascia latae

ITB: Iliotibial band

ASIS: Anterior Superior Iliac Spine

REPertoire PROGRESSIONS

ARM FLOAT – on Roller with Balls



Breathing and Movement Pattern

- Inhale* Slight protraction of the shoulder blade.
- Exhale* Horizontal abduction; the shoulder blade remains stable.
- Inhale* Horizontal abduction; the shoulder blade remains stable.
- Exhale* The shoulder blade slides back into a neutral position.

Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Muscular       | Improves core stability.<br>Improves dynamic scapula stability. Strengthens Serratus anterior. Releases pectoral and anterior shoulder muscles. |
| Proprioceptive | Improves balance. Creates awareness of imbalances.  |

Advice for Instructors

- Use minimum force during shoulder blade protraction.
- Stabilize the shoulder blade during horizontal abduction and adduction (avoid retraction).
- Control eccentric action of the shoulder blade into a neutral position.
- Extend out from the little finger and relax the thumb.
- Allow the pelvis to sink down into the Roller.
- Relax the feet as much as possible.

Variations

- Arm variations: ARM CIRCLE, HELICOPTER, MONKEY, ANGEL ARMS, etc.
- DEAD BUG: Place one foot on the floor, the other leg in Table Top position.

Notes

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**DOLPHIN & REVERSE – with Roller**



Starting position



Bend legs (diamond position)



Lower toes to floor



Stretch legs



Left legs

**Breathing and Movement Pattern**

*Inhale* Bend the legs in Diamond Position (lateral rotation of hip joints).

*Exhale* Lower, extend and lift the legs.

**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Muscular       | Strengthens the abdominal muscles.   |
| Structural     | Strengthens ( <i>eccentric and concentric</i> ) and releases the hip flexors.<br>Improves adductor control.<br>Mobilizes the hip joints and opens up the anterior hip joint capsule. |
| Proprioceptive | Improves rhythm and movement flow.   |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Maintain dynamic lumbopelvic stability throughout the exercise.
- The pubic bone pulls towards the sternum during hip joint extension and leg lift.
- The knees are shoulder width apart in the Diamond Position.
- Maintain an even movement and breathing rhythm throughout the exercise.

**Variations**

- Integrate exercises: See ROLLOVER.

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LEG WORK – on Roller with Band

Starting Position



FROG



OPEN & CLOSE



HELICOPTER



LEG WORK – on Roller with Band

SINGLE LEG STRETCH



PAS DE CHAT



HUNDRED VARIATIONS



GRAND BATTEMENT





**SIDE BEND – with Roller & Ball**

**SIDE BEND with Roller**



Hands behind head with fingers interlaced and legs bent at a slight angle



Arms and legs extended

**SIDE BEND & TWIST with over Ball**



**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Muscular | Strengthens oblique abdominal muscles as well as back muscles.<br>Strengthens and releases diaphragm and intercostal muscles. |
|----------|---|

**Advice for Instructors**

- Keep the legs held together.
- Maintain axial elongation.
- Stabilize the shoulder girdle.
- Move with even and fluid motion (avoid abrupt movement).

**Variations**

- Use either a soft Roller or place a towel or soft mat over the Roller.
- Use a half cylinder.
- Combine exercise variations: Move into lateral flexion with hands behind the head, extend arms, interlace fingers behind the head again and lower the upper body slowly.

## ROLLOVER & PREPARATION – with Roller and Balls

### ROLLOVER Preparation with Overball



#### Breathing and Movement Pattern

- Exhale* Lower the legs slightly from the vertical position; stabilize the pelvis.
- Inhale* Move the pelvis into a posterior tilt lifting the legs diagonal over head.
- Exhale* Dorsiflexion.
- Inhale* Plantarflexion. Lift the legs into an upright position.

### ROLLOVER PREPARATION with Roller



### ROLLOVER with Toning Balls



**ROLLOVER & PREPARATION – with Roller and Balls**

**ROLLOVER and OPEN & CLOSE on Roller with Balls**



**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Muscular Structural | Strengthens abdominal muscles and hip flexors ( <i>adductors depending on variation</i> ). Improves eccentric control of hip and spine extensors. Strengthens and stretches spine extensors, gluteal muscles and Hamstrings. Improves segmental movement and stabilization of the spine. |
| Proprioceptive      | Improves balance and awareness of imbalances. Improves awareness of segmental restrictions and/or mobility, as well as stability.  |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Maintain lumbopelvic stability in the starting position.
- The leg movement is secondary to the pelvic movement when rolling over.
- Keep the distance between the abdomen and legs as great as possible.
- Control the eccentric phase (avoid collapsing in the lumbar spine).

**Variations**

- Integrate exercises:

**BICYCLE**



SINGLE LEG STRETCH • OPEN & CLOSE • HELICOPTER • DOUBLE LEG CIRCLE • SCISSORS • etc.

**Notes**

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## LEG SERIES – with and without Roller

### LEG SERIES with Roller



Pelvis in slight posterior tilt



Bend the leg controlling movement



Extend the leg



Turn the leg out



Bend the leg in turned out position



Extend the leg and turn parallel



Lower the leg

### LEG SERIES without Roller



Analogous to Band Variation

### SINGLE LEG STRETCH

### FROG, etc.





## SIDE BEND • AROUND THE WORLD • TRICEPS

### SIDE BEND



Hold the band, elongate the spine



Rotate the spine



Side bend

### AROUND THE WORLD



Starting position



Rotate the spine



Bend sideways



Bend over and straighten up over other side

### TRICEPS



Bind one strap around foot and take hold of other

### Notes

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SIDE BEND • AROUND THE WORLD • TRICEPS

TRICEP SAW



Bind one strap around foot and take hold of other

Final Stretch



TRICEPS IN GATE POSE



Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Muscular   | Strengthens oblique abdominal muscles.  |
| Structural | Strengthens neck muscles, posterior shoulder muscles and Triceps brachii.<br>Mobilizes the spine. |

Advice for Instructors

- Maintain lumbOpelvic stability throughout the entire exercise.
- Maintain scapula stability throughout the entire exercise.
- Maintain axial elongation.
- Extend the arm and reach out of the little finger. Keep the thumb relaxed.

Variations

- Tailor's Seat.
- Vary resistance of exercise band.



**GYMNAST – with 2 Rollers**

Position on Roller



**GYMNAST**



**Breathing and Movement Sequence**

*Exhale*      Tilt the pelvis posterior and draw it backwards and upwards.

*Inhale*        Return to the starting position.

**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Muscular | Strengthens abdominal muscles.<br>Strengthens the shoulder muscles (stabilizers and depressors). |
|----------|--|

**Advice for Instructors**

- The shoulder girdle and chest remain broad.
  - o Avoid excessive scapula retraction in the starting position.
  - o Avoid excessive scapula protraction during flexion.
- Keep the neck long and shoulders down.
- Initiate movement from the abdominal muscles.
- Control eccentric movement phase.

**Variations**

- Replace the Roller underneath the hands with two Yoga blocks.

**Notes**

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DOLPHIN & REVERSE – with Roller

DOLPHIN



Wrists on Roller in starting position



Extend the spine



Flex the spine and roll down

Breathing and Movement Pattern

*Inhale* Extend the spine fully.

*Exhale* Tilt the pelvis posterior and flex the spine. "Dive down" head first with the pelvis touching the floor last.

REVERSED DOLPHIN



Wrists on Roller in starting position



Abdominals initiate movement



Extend the spine and roll down

Breathing and Movement Pattern

*Exhale* Tilt the pelvis posterior and draw the abdominals back until the spine is in flexion.

*Inhale* Extend the spine and roll down one segment at a time.

PORT DE BRAS & DOLPHIN





## SWAN DIVE – with Roller

### SWAN PREPARATION



Place wrists on Roller



Extend arms



Extend the spine segmentally

### SWAN I



The spine and hip joints are extended: keep arms extended and lower and lift upper body



### SCHWAN II

The spine and hip joints are extend; extend and bend arms

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <p>Muscular<br/>Structural</p> | <p>Strengthens spine and hip extensors, posterior shoulder muscles (stabilizers and depressors) and Triceps brachii.<br/>Improves segmental spine stability in extension.<br/>Massages the Quadriceps (depending on variation).</p> |
|--------------------------------|---|

#### Advice for Instructors

- Stabilize the shoulder girdle.
- Keep the neck long and shoulders down.
- Place weight lightly towards the outside of the hands.
- Maintain axial elongation.
- Maintain a smooth and even rhythm.

## CANCAN – with Magic Circle and Roller

CANCAN and variations with Magic Circle supported on lower arms



CANCAN and variations with Magic Circle supported on hands



CANCAN and variations supported on Roller



Closed/sudo-closed chain

Open chain

### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Muscular   | Strengthens abdominal and leg muscles.        |
| Structural | Releases lumbar muscles. Mobilizes the spine. |

### Variations

- Replace the Magic Circle with a ball. Place the Magic Circle between ankles.
- Place a ball underneath the sacrum.

## REPERTOIRE ACTIVE STETCHING, RELEASE & RELEASE

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### APPLIED STRETCHING AND RELEASE TECHNIQUES

When it comes to the subject of stretching, how best to go about it and its various benefits, opinions differ considerably. In our experience, different stretching techniques can be beneficial depending on the exercise, goal or person in question. The following applied stretching and release techniques are recommendations which have proven themselves to be effective and can be adjusted and changed according to your own experience and judgement.

Some of the following techniques are "movement classics"; you'll find descriptions of these in the relevant literary sources. Others, however, are somewhat less conventional. So although you may find that certain reference books describe similar stretch and release methods, the particular characteristics of these techniques won't be provided. Enjoy!

### Reciprocal Inhibition

Reciprocal inhibition coordinates muscle contraction and reduces resistance of movement. In case of the flexor reflexes and their corresponding extensors, it can be seen that the contraction of a muscle group is connected to the inhibition/relaxation of the opposite set of muscles. The term "reciprocal" (two-way) refers to the fact that the system functions in both directions. When the flexor contracts the extensor relaxes and vice versa.

Example: HIP FLEXOR RELEASE



Engaging hip extensors to release the hip flexors

### Reciprocal Action

The phenomenon of reciprocal action refers to the tendon spindle reflex. Here, the muscles react in response to signals from a tendon spindle. The so called muscle spindle reflex or stretch reflex causes a contraction of the muscles in response to an increase of muscle length. The effect of the tendon spindle reflex, however, is quite the opposite, bringing about a sudden release of muscle tension in reaction to a release or stretch after a muscle contraction.

Example: HAMSTRING STRETCH



Isometric activation of hamstrings for 8 to 10 seconds, followed by release and stretch

## Progressive Stretching

The term progressive stretching refers to the stretching of muscles in gradual stages. As you know, muscles have an elastic quality, allowing them to return to their original length after having been stretched or contracted – a quality which we make use of within the technique of progressive stretching.

In coordination with the breath and without force, muscles are momentarily stretched to their limit, after which they are slightly relaxed and then stretched once more. The principle/intention behind this method is to progress two steps forward whilst taking one step back.

An additional benefit is the slight joint mobilization the minimum effort required.

Example: PSOAS & QUADRATUS LUMBORUM RELEASE



## Progressive Breathing Release/ Breathing Release

The technique employed in progressive release and breathing release is based on the same principle as that of progressive stretching. Here, however, the stretch (two steps forward) occurs with the breathing and often during inhalation; the release/relaxation (one step back) with the exhalation.

Example: LUMBAR RELEASE IN CHILD'S POSE



## Stretching with Countertraction

The principle behind this technique is based on a two-way pull. This is often an oppositional pull between muscle attachment points – or for those of you familiar with the myofaszialen Meridianen, an oppositional traction within a single meridian.

This technique combines itself particularly well with push and pull techniques.

Example: HAMSTRING STRETCH



# art of motion

## Flossing

This technique is based on progressive release of muscles and fascia, in order to optimize their ability to glide. Stretching one side of a myofascial chain whilst releasing or activating the other brings about a forward and backward gliding motion of the various layers of tissue. The gliding movement helps to release the sticking of tissues improving the tone and elasticity of individual tissue layers.

The structures we are working with are surrounded and penetrated by a webbing of nervous tissue. Because of this, flossing can be particularly intensive. In the case of hyper tonicity, a considerable degree of attentiveness and care is needed.

Example: FLOSSING



## Active Release

In the context of Progress & Release, active release refers to movement employed to release. Active release is always coordinated with conscious breathing and the integration of an appropriate breathing pattern.

Depending on the particular exercise, movement can be dynamic and rhythmic or slow with deep breathing - though no matter which version you choose, energy expenditure should always be kept to a minimum.

Example: SPIRAL



Example: HIP RELEASE



## Passive Release

Passive release is achieved with the aid of gravity, the weight of the person involved and/or supporting equipment. Conscious breathing is again particularly important.

Example: CIRCLE with band



Example: THAI GODDESS





## PLANTAR FASCIA RELEASE – with Ball



### Choice of Props

- Golf balls, diamond balls, Franklin balls, tennis balls, etc..
- A broomstick or rounded wooden pole can also be used, though lengthwise only.

### Movement Pattern and Awareness

#### Starting Position

- Exercise can be carried out standing or sitting on a chair.
- Place the ball under the balls of the foot.
- A variety of ankle positions can be used, from relaxed plantarflexion to active dorsiflexion.

#### Movement

- Slowly roll the ball between the first and second metatarsal bones (channel between the bones behind first and second toes) towards the heel. Then roll the ball through the 2., 3. and 4. channel.
- Finish by slowly rolling the ball from side to side under the ball of the foot, arch of the foot and around the heel.
  - Adjust pressure and flexion of ankle according to muscle tone and feeling.
    - Stronger massage can be achieved by increasing pressure and dorsiflexion.
- Carry out movement for a few minutes.

#### Awareness

- Remove the ball and place both feet hip width apart on the floor. Compare.
  - Stance, surface of floor, contact with the floor, volume, length and alignment of the body, general body awareness.
- ROLL DOWN. Compare.
  - Leg length, Alignment of the pelvis and spine, connectedness of the femur in the hip joint, elasticity of posterior leg muscles and spine extensors, the volumen in legs and back, neck muscle tone.

#### Movement

- Then repeat release exercise on other side.

#### Conclusion

- Standing awareness.
- ROLL DOWN.



## ACTIVE HIP FLEXOR STRETCH

### HIP FLEXOR STRETCH



#### Breathing and Movement Pattern

- The pelvis is lifted (intention: posterior tilt).
- The lumbar spine is elongated (maximum distance between pelvis and ribs).
- If the right leg is forward, the right hand stabilizes the right knee.
- The left hand presses the left hip bone (Ilium) in a slight diagonal towards the right knee.

*Exhale*            Activate abdominal and gluteal muscles of the left leg.  
                          Press the right heel into the floor and then release (isometrical action).  
                          Shift the pelvis slightly anterior (maintain the posterior tilt of the pelvis).

*10 Seconds*      Maintain the isometric action for approximately 10 seconds.

*Exhale*            Relax and loosen.

Repeat 3 times. Incorporate awareness exercise into sequence or simply change the side.

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Active stretch of the iliopsoas and other hip flexors.                |
| Technique | Reciprocal inhibition and countertraction.                            |
| Special   | Strengthens ipsilateral Gluteus maximus and contralateral Hamstrings. |

#### Breathing and Movement Pattern II

- Analogous Variation I.

*Exhale*            Activate abdominal muscles and gluteal muscles of the left leg.  
                          Push instep of the right foot into floor and lift the ipsilateral knee slightly.

*10 Seconds*      Maintain the isometric action for approximately 10 seconds.

*Exhale*            Relax and loosen.

Repeat 3 times. Incorporate awareness exercise into sequence or simply change the side.

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Direct and indirect (via myofascial meridian) strengthening and release of hip flexors. |
| Technique | Reciprocal action.  |
| Special   | Strengthens Quadriceps in an eccentric position.  |

**AKTIVE HIP FLEXOR STRETCH**

**ILIOPSOAS & QUADRATUS LUMBORUM STRETCH**



**Breathing and Movement Pattern**

- The pelvis is lifted (intention: posterior tilt).
- The lumbar spine is elongated (maximum distance between pelvis and ribs).
- If the right leg is forward, take up left lateral flexion. *Optional:* hold on to the left wrist with the right hand and “lengthen” left arm and whole side of the body.

*Exhale*            Activate abdominal muscles as well as gluteal muscles of left leg.  
                          Press the right heel into floor and then pull back (isometric action).  
                          Shift the pelvis slightly anterior (maintain the posterior pelvic tilt).

*Inhale*            Open the ribcage laterally and lengthen the spine upwards.

*Exhale*            Allow the ribs to close and a natural recoil to occur.

Repeat over 8 to 10 breaths. Incorporate an awareness exercise into the sequence or simply change side

**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Active stretch of the Iliopsoas and Quadratus lumborum.  |
| Technique | Reciprocal inhibition / progressive stretching.  |
| Special   | Eccentric strengthening of the Iliopsoas.<br>Strengthens and releases the oblique abdominal muscles and the Quadratus lumborum.<br>Strengthens and releases the diaphragm. |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Keep pelvis lifted, if possible in a slight posterior tilt.
- Activate abdominal and gluteal muscles equally.
- Shift the pelvis slightly anterior during the stretching phase.
- Intentionally medially rotate the femur slightly.
- Create and maintain maximum length in the lumbar spine.
- Allow the diaphragm to sink fully during inhalation. “Breath” into the Psoas.

## ACTIVE HIP FLEXOR STRETCH

### QUADRICEP & ILIOPSOAS STRETCH



#### Breathing and Movement Pattern

- The pelvis is lifted (intention: posterior tilt).
- The lumbar spine is elongated (maximum distance between pelvis and ribs).
- Bend one leg and hold on to the foot with either one or two hands.

*Exhale*      Activate the abdominal muscles as well as the gluteal muscles of the back leg.  
 Use the hands to pull the superficial tissue of the top of the foot towards the toes.  
 Shift the knee gently forward (isometric).

*10 seconds*      Maintain isometric action for approximately 10 seconds.

*Exhale*      Relax and loosen.

Repeat 3 times.

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Stretches Quadriceps and hip flexors.  |
| Technique | Countertraction and reciprocal inhibition.   |
| Special   | Strengthens the ipsilateral Gluteus maximus.<br>Stretches Iliopsoas and Tibialis anterior (directly and via fascia). |

#### Notes

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**THAI GODDESS**



**Breathing and Movement Pattern**

Sit on the heels with the toes curled under (toe extension).

*Breathe freely*            Maintain the position for a few breaths.

**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Stretches toe flexors and plantar fascia.  |
| Technique | Passive stretching.  |
| Special   | Releases rarely stretched and often neglected muscles. Encourages optimum muscle tone of pelvic floor. |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Maintain lumbopelvic stability.
- Spread out the toes as much as possible.
- Keep the heels relatively close together.
- If possible, allow the body weight to rest on the heels.
- Breath regularly and easily.

**Notes**

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## HAMSTRING STRETCH –with Magic Circle and Floor

### VARIATION I



### Breathing and Movement Pattern

- Place a Magic Circle around the balls of the foot (or around the mid foot/heel if the stretch is too strong).
- Guide the leg until the limit of the stretch is reached.
- Dorsiflex the ankle.

*Exhale* Plantarflexion whilst simultaneously pressing the leg away and down (approx. 50% effort). Use the Magic Circle to provide resistance.

*8 seconds* Maintain the isometric action for approximately 8 – 10 seconds.

*Exhale* Relax and loosen, followed by dorsiflexion and stretching until the new limit is reached.

Repeat 3 times.

### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Active stretch of Hamstrings and calf muscles ( <i>Gastrocnemius</i> ), <i>plus gluteal muscles</i> . |
| Technique | Reciprocal action.  |
| Special   | Strengthens and stretches posterior leg muscles.  |

### Advice for Instructors

- The pelvis is neutral or in slight anterior tilt.
- Maintain lumbopelvic stability.
- “Reach” forward from the sit bone (ischial tuberosity).
- If flexible enough, press the femur diagonally forward and down.
- Release after the isometric action, follow up with a stretch.

### Notes

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## HAMSTRING STRETCH

### VARIATION II



#### Movement Pattern

- Place the Magic Circle around the balls of the foot (or around mid foot/heel if the stretch is too strong).
- Place the thumb in the crease of the hip joint. Slide the thumb diagonally down to “anchor” the pelvis in a neutral position and to open the hip joint posteriorly.
- Guide the leg until the limit of the stretch is reached.
- Dorsiflex the ankle.
- Medially rotate and adduct the femur.
- Activate Quadriceps.

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Active stretch of Hamstrings and calf muscles ( <i>Gastrocnemius</i> ), <i>plus gluteal muscles</i> . |
| Technique | Reciprocal inhibition.  |
| Special   | Strengthens Quadriceps. Stretches posterior leg muscles and ITB.                                      |

### VARIATION III



#### Breathing and Movement Pattern

- Keep the knee slightly flexed.
- The ankle is in dorsiflexion. Use the hands to lift the lateral side of foot (slight pronation). Extend and spread the toes.
- Intention: anterior pelvic tilt, slight lumbar extension and flexion of the hip joint.
- The Femur can be medially and laterally rotated to promote gliding.

*Exhale* Press the heel into floor while pulling back slightly (no movement). Reach diagonally up with the sit bones.

*Inhale* Maintain the stretch or slightly release the pull of the heel.

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Progressive stretch of Hamstrings, calf muscles ( <i>Soleus</i> ), plantar fascia <i>and gluteal muscles</i> . |
| Technique | Progressive stretch and countertraction.   |
| Special   | Promoting gliding of Biceps femoris and Semimembranosus, Semitendinosus.                                       |

#### Notes

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LUMBAR RELEASE –CHILD’S POSE • GATE • SPIRAL

LUMBAR RELEASE IN CHILD’S POSE



Breathing and Movement Pattern

- Starting from the child’s pose, side bend your spine.
- The ipsilateral hand and ischial tuberosity lengthen away from one another (countertraction).

*Inhale* Expand the lung (posterolateral).

*Exhale* Empty the lung entirely.

Maintain over a period of 10 breaths and then change sides.

*Option:* remain for a moment in child’s pose and compare sides.

Conclude with 5 to 10 breaths (bilateral) in child’s pose.

Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Stretches and opens the lateral torso, particularly the lumbar muscles (Quadratus lumborum, Erector spinae, Latissimus dorsi, thoracolumbar tissue), as well as the intercostal muscles. |
| Technique | Use the breath to progressively stretch.   |
| Special   | Strengthens and releases the diaphragm.  |

Advice for Instructors

- Ipsilateral hand and ischial tuberosity lengthen away from one another (countertraction).
- Breathe deeply down into bottom and back of the lung.

LUMBAR RELEASE FROM GATE POSE



Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Progressive stretch of lateral torso, particularly lumbar muscles. |
| Technique | Progressive stretch through breathing/passive release.             |
| Special   | Strengthens and releases the diaphragm.                            |

Advice for Instructors

- Rotate the plevis “up” when the ribs rotate “down”.
- Reach the upper hand towards the lower hand.
- Breathe deeply down into bottom and back of the lung.

LUMBAR RELEASE – CHILD’S POSE • GATE • SPIRAL

SPIRAL



Breathing and Movement Pattern

Begin sitting on the heels.

*Exhale* Relaxed upper body rotation from side to side; flexion and rotation.  
 "Reach" towards the heels with the hands, maintaining easy and relaxed manner.

*Inhale* Pause or keep the movement going.

Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Muscular   | Progressive release of the back extensors and rotators. |
| Structural | Mobilizes the spine.                                    |
| Technique  | Active release.   |

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## HIP RELEASE – with Band, Roller and Mat

### CIRCLE with Band



Band around ball of foot or heel



Cross gesture leg over supporting leg



Lower leg, draw femur into hip socket



Guide gesture leg outwards



Guide gesture leg into vertical position

### Variations

- PENDULUM (adduction and abduction).
- GRAND BATTEMENT (flexion and extension).
- CIRCLE in opposite direction.
- Integrate medial rotation during adduction.
- Replace exercise band with a yoga belt.

### CONDUCTING EXERCISE

- Before starting the exercise, lie stretched out on your back and consciously take note of the underlying surface, as well as the volume and length of the body.
- The exercise can begin with the PENDULUM, followed by GRAND BATTEMENT and then CIRCLES in both directions.
- After a few minutes, place the gesture leg on the floor, remove the band and compare the two sides of the body.
- Follow by releasing second side of body.
  - Conclude by comparing the two sides of the body, noting any changes in comparison to the first awareness check in terms of the underlying surface as well as the volume and length of the body.

### Notes

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**HIP RELEASE – with Band, Roller and Mat**

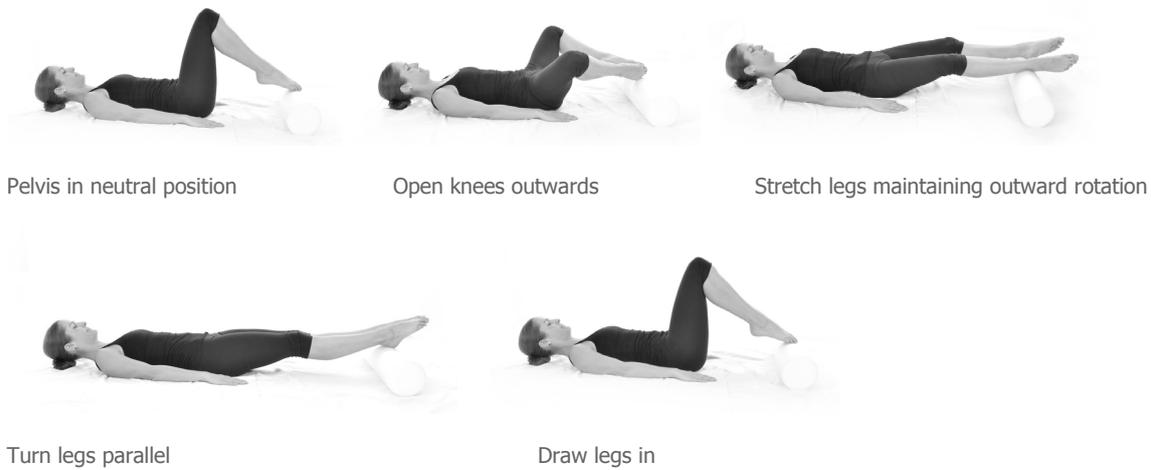
**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Muscular Structural | Releases hip joint muscles (Hamstrings, Rectus femoris, Iliopsoas, Adductors, gluteal muscles, Tensor fascia latae, Pectineus, Gracilis, Sartorius, deep lateral hip rotators). Mobilizes the hip joints. |
| Technique           | Passive release.  |
| Special             | Breathing supports the release. The exercise supports breathing.  |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Use the band to “sink” the femur down into the hip joint.
- Allow the pelvis to “sink” down heavily into floor. The pelvis may move slightly during the exercise, resulting in weight transference.
- Relax the leg muscles completely; allow muscles to “fall from bones”.
- Conduct the leg movement with support of arm and band.
- Move slowly breathing deeply.

**HIP RELEASE with Roller**



**HIP RELEASE**







ROTATOR RELEASE – with and without Ball

GLUTEUS MAXIMUS & PIRIFORMIS  
RELEASE with Ball



Choice of Props

Franklin ball, golf ball, tennis ball, diamond ball.

Movement

Sitting with a ball placed under one buttock, release the muscles by moving the ball in slow, small circles. Roll the ball around the sit bone.

Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Releases the Gluteus maximus and deep lateral rotators (Piriformis, Obturator internus and externus, Gemelli superior and inferior, Quadratus femoris). |
| Technique | Massage.  |

Advice for Instructors

- Breathe even and naturally.
- Circle over the ball slowly, pausing if necessary.

GLUTEAL & LATERAL ROTATOR STRETCH



Position

The front leg is bent with the heel approximately level with the contralateral ASIS (anterior superior iliac spine). The knee can be adjusted to a greater or lesser angle according to the degree of mobility and flexibility.

Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Stretches the gluteal muscles and deep lateral hip rotators. |
| Technique | Passive stretching.  |

Advice for Instructors

- Allow the pelvis to sink.
- Allow the contralateral sides of the torso to “melt”.
- Extend the body to maximum length: reach the hands forward whilst extending the back leg behind.

CROSS STRETCH

CROSS STRETCH



Position

- Adduct and cross the legs.
- Knee angle as open as possible.
- Keep the pelvis either neutral or tilt it anterior.
- Elongate the spine and raise the sternum.
- Fold from the hips.

Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Stretches abductors (Gluteus medius and minimus, <i>TFL</i> ) and posterior pelvic floor triangle as well as deep lateral hip rotators. |
| Technique | Passive stretching.   |

HALF LOTUS POSITION



Position

- Cross one leg over the other.
  - o Roll the calf "out of the way", if possible resting instep on the contralateral thigh.
- The pelvis is either in neutral or an anterior tilt.
- Elongate the spine and raise the sternum.
- Fold from the hips.

Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Stretches abductors (Gluteus medius and minimus, <i>TFL</i> ) and posterior pelvic floor triangle as well as deep lateral hip rotators. |
| Technique | Passive stretching.   |

Advice for Cross Stretch and Half Lotus Position

- Both ischial tuberosities stay in contact with the floor.
- The pelvis is either neutral or an anterior tilt.
- The pelvic floor remains relaxed.

Notes

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## ADDUCTOR STRETCH

### ACTIVE ADDUCTOR STRETCH Supine



### Breathing and Movement Pattern

With legs in adduction, place your hands on the inside of thighs.

*Exhale* Press the legs gently against the hands, resisting the leg movement with the hands.  
Optional: without using pressure against the hands, simply lift the legs five centimeters.

*10 seconds* Maintain isometric action for 8 – 10 seconds.

*Exhale* Relax and close the legs; the movement can be supported with hands. Follow up by opening the legs again and increasing the stretch.

Repeat 3 times.

### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Stretches the adductors.  |
| Technique | Reciprocal action.  |
| Special   | Strengthens the adductors.<br>Active dynamic pelvic floor training. |

### Advice for Instructors

- Stabilize the lumbopelvic area.
- Initiate lifting the legs from pelvic floor.

### Notes

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## ADDUCTOR STRETCH

### ACTIVE ADDUCTOR STRETCH in Supported Position



With either one or both legs bent

#### Breathing and Movement Pattern

The legs are abducted. The forearms are supported on the floor.

*Exhale*            Activate adductors by slight isometric "drawing in" of the legs.

*10 seconds*        Maintain isometric action for 8 – 10 seconds.

*Exhale*            Relax and increase the stretch.

Repeat 3 times.

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Stretches the adductors.  |
| Technique | Reciprocal action.  |
| Special   | Strengthens the adductors.<br>Active dynamic pelvic floor training. |

#### Advice for Instructors

- Stabilize the lumbopelvic area.
- Integrate active dynamic floor training and visualisation.
- The pelvis or femur position can be varied.

#### Notes

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## EXTERNAL & INTERNAL ROTATOR RELEASE

### RELEASING MEDIAL HIP ROTATORS



### Movement Pattern

Prone with the legs bent in abduction and lateral rotation.

- Stretching can be maintained passively.
- Stretching can be carried out actively by pressing knees down and releasing (reciprocal action).
- Stretching can be additionally varied by changing the angle of hip and knee joints (shift feet forward and back).

### LATERAL HIP ROTATOR RELEASE with Ankle Weights



Neutral spine



Thoracic extension

### Movement Pattern

Prone with the knees bent and adducted. Open the lower legs by laterally rotating at the hip.

- Stretching can be maintained passively.
- Stretching can be carried out actively based on reciprocal action.
- Dynamic stretching can also be achieved progressively by coordinating closing and opening of legs with breathing rhythm.

### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Stretches medial or lateral hip rotators.   |
| Technique | Variable.                                   |
| Special   | Strengthens lateral or medial hip rotators. |

### Advice for Instructors

- Pelvis in neutral position (pubic bone in contact with floor).

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**NECK RELEASE – with and without Balls**

**NECK RELEASE with Balls**



**Movement Pattern**

Roll one ball sideways tilting head to the side (lateral flexion) and lifting the ear towards the ceiling.

- The neck can take on varying degrees of upward or downward rotation (in lateral flexion).
- The upper arm can be laterally or medially rotated.

**NECK RELEASE**



**Movement Pattern**

- Tilt the head to side (lateral flexion) rotating slightly and lifting the ear towards the ceiling.
- Extend the arm from a lower diagonal to a horizontal side position (abduction) and stretch the wrist (extension).
  - o The neck can take on varying degrees of upward or downward rotation (in lateral flexion).
  - o The upper arm can be laterally or medially rotated.

**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Stretches the side of the neck.<br>Stretches the wrist- and finger flexors. Lateral rotation stretches the pectoral muscles. |
| Technique | Countertraction.   |
| Special   | Neuromuscular stretch.   |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Equal "reaching" of the ear towards the ceiling and the hand to the side.
- Maintain slight rotation of the cervical spine.

## NECK RELEASE – with and without Balls

### NECK RELEASE



### Movement Sequence

- Turn the head to the side.
- Lift the arm sideways (abduction) and stretch the wrist (extension).
  - o The cervical spine can take on varying degrees of rotation.
  - o The upper arm can take on varying degrees of lateral and medial rotation.

### STRETCHING & FLOSSING

#### STRETCHING



Press heel of hands out and away pulling fingers tips up

#### FLOSSING



Alternate extending and flexing of wrists

### Movement Sequence

Extend arms sideways at shoulder level.

- Extend wrists and reach with the finger tips towards the ceiling while pressing the heel of the hands away.

Optional: Rotate head slowly from side to side.

### Movement Sequence

Extend arms sideways at shoulder level.

- Alternate extension and flexion of the wrists.
- Conclusion: Both wrists in extension; relax and flex the wrists; make loose fists; circle the wrists allowing the arms to sink slowly.

### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Stretches posterior arm muscles, wrist and finger flexors. |
| Technique | Countertraction & Flossing.                                |
| Special   | Neuromuscular stretch.                                     |

### Advice for Instructors

- The stretch can be increased by further extending the wrist and pressing the heel of the hand outwards.
- The stretch can be intense but should not cause pain.
- Allow breathing to flow calmly and evenly.

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**PECTORAL & SHOULDER STRETCH**

**HAPPY DOG**



**Breathing and Movement Pattern**

Kneeling with arms stretched out over head, place the hands with open palms flat on the floor, the fingers relaxed and long.

- Exhale*            Lift the coccyx diagonally up and back. Lengthen forward from the finger tips.
- Inhale*            Release traction slightly and open through the ribs.

**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Stretches the pectoral muscles and Deltoideus anterior. |
| Technique | Countertraction / Breathing.                            |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Despite stretching, the humerus remains anchored in the shoulder socket preventing an anterior slip.
- Put slight pressure on the outside of the hands. The thumbs remain relaxed with slight contact to the floor.
- The ischial tuberosities remain open.

**EAGLE**



**Movement Pattern**

- Kneeling, cross upper arms in front of the chest (maximum protraction of shoulder blades), bend the elbows crossing the lower arms with the palms pressing against one another.
- Lower the shoulders, lift and extend the elbows slightly if possible.
- Optional: Extend and bend the elbows slightly in coordination with the rhythm of the breath.

**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Stretches the Rhomboids, middle Trapezius and posterior Deltoid. |
| Technique | Progressive or passive stretching / breathing.                   |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Keep the shoulders down.
- Inhale down deeply between shoulder blades.

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## PECTORAL & SHOULDER STRETCH

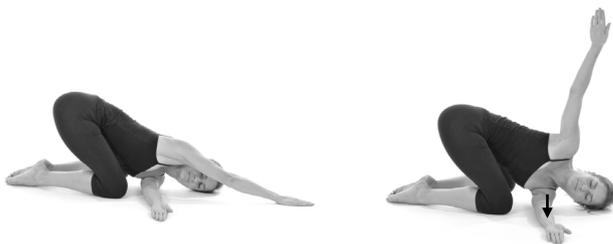
### SHOULDER STRETCH Bilateral



#### Movement Pattern

- Kneeling with the arms crossed in front of the chest.
- The arms are placed on the floor. Reach the arms out slowly and without force.

### SHOULDER STRETCH Unilateral and with rotation



#### Movement Pattern

- Kneeling with one arm stretched out horizontally on the floor to opposite side. Rotation of the spine.
- The other arm can either be stretched out in front (over head) or extended up towards the ceiling (horizontal abduction).

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Stretches the Rhomboids, middle Trapezius and posterior Deltoid.<br>Unilateral variety: stretches Pectoralis major and Deltoideus anterior. |
| Technique | Progressive or passive stretching / breathing.  |

#### Advice for Instructors

- Keep the shoulders down.
- Inhale down deeply between shoulder blades or up underneath the armpit.

#### Notes

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**DIAPHRAGM RELEASE – with Ball**



**Choice of Props**

- Toning ball, Franklin ball, active ball, tennis ball.

**Movement Pattern**

- One ball is placed under the lower lateral ribs.
- Roll the ball slowly along the ribcage. You can roll towards the sternum, as well as the spine.
- Pause whenever necessary, putting the head and shoulders down while massaging a particular region with small movements.

**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Muscular  | Releases the sternal portion of Pectoralis major, superior portions of external oblique abdominals, the intercostal and back muscles of this area. |
| Technique | Massage.   |
| Special   | Enables increased activation and release of the diaphragm.   |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Allow breathing to flow calmly and evenly.

**Notes**

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## SHOULDER & PECTORAL RELEASE – with and without Ball

### SHOULDER & BACK RELEASE with Ball



#### Choice of Props

- Overball, toning ball, Chiball, Franklin ball, tennis ball.

#### Breathing and Movement Pattern

Lying on the side with one hand on the ball.

*Exhale* Roll the ball as far forward as possible; the shoulder joint “opens” anteriorly and the spine rotates.

*Inhale* Roll the ball back while drawing the shoulder back; avoid excessive retraction of the shoulder blade.

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Releases Pectoralis major and scapula retractors.<br>Mobilizes the shoulder joint, pectoral girdle and the spine. |
| Technique | Active release.   |

#### Advice for Instructors

- Move with minimum exertion. Enjoy the experience!
- Stabilize the lumbopelvic area.

### CHEST/SHOULDER STRETCH



#### Movement Pattern

Lying prone with one leg extended, the other leg bent and the arms stretched out to the side. Roll onto the side.

#### Caution

Contraindicated for those with hypermobility and certain shoulder pathologies.

#### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Stretches pectoralis major and deltoideus anterior. |
| Technique | Passive stretching.                                 |

**HIP RELEASE – with Ball**



Place bent knee on ball



Move pelvis forward



Move pelvis back



Extend leg on ball; foot softly pointed



Move pelvis forward



Move pelvis back; dorsiflexion

**Choice of Props**

- Overball, toning ball, Chiball.

**Breathing and Movement Pattern**

Lying on the side with one leg on the ball.

*Exhale* Shift the top hip bone forwards, rotate the spine while rolling the ball as far forward as possible; the hip joint “opens” anteriorly.

*Inhale* Move the pelvis back rotating the spine. Dorsiflex the ankle.

**Purpose and Benefits of Exercise**

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Muscular  | Mobilizes hip joint and spine<br>Releases the muscles around the hip joint. |
| Technique | Active release.   |

**Advice for Instructors**

- Move with minimum exertion. Enjoy the experience!
- Initiate “push” and “pull” of the pelvis from the sit bone.

**Notes**

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THORACIC RELEASE – with Balls

CURL UP with Toning Ball



Place toning ball between shoulder blades

CURL UP with Golf Balls



Place two golf balls underneath Erector spinae

BUTTERFLY with Toning Ball



Toning ball between shoulder blades



Close elbows



Forward contraction



Open elbows



Close elbows



Roll down and open elbows

CURL UP with Overball



Place Overball between shoulder blades

Notes

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## THORACIC RELEASE – with Balls

### Choice of Props

- Overballs, toning balls, Chiballs, tennis balls, golf balls, squash balls.

### Breathing and Movement Pattern

- Lying supine with one ball between the shoulder blades or two balls next to the spine.
- The height can be varied when using one ball; approximately above T7 and below T3.
- The height can also be varied when using two small balls.
  - T7/T8 often marks the crossing point of the lower Trapezius and Latissimus dorsi, and can consequently be particularly sensitive.

### Purpose and Benefits of Exercise

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Muscular   | Releases the Erector spinae, middle Trapezius and Rhomboid.<br>Releases Pectoralis major and Deltoideus anterior. |
| Technique  | Massage.  |
| Additional | Strengthens abdominal muscles.  |

### Advice for Instructors

- The massage can be intense but should not be painful. If necessary, use a softer, thicker mat or a softer ball.
- Movement should be slow and fluid.

## HEART OPENER



### Position

Lying supine with a ball between the shoulder blades, the arms stretched out sideways.

### Advice for Instructors

- Enjoy!

### Purpose and Benefits of Exercises

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Muscular   | Releases Pectoralis major, anterior Deltoideus, Rectus abdominis and oblique abdominal muscles. |
| Technique  | Passive stretching.   |
| Additional | Activates and vitalizes.  |

Dear Movement Teacher

I hope you've enjoyed your further education in Contemporary Pilates Progress & Release and that it's been of benefit to you, both professionally and personally!

Thank you for your interest and participation in art of motion Pilates. I wish you all the best and every success on your continued movement journey.



**Karin Gurtner**

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