

## BALANCE and POSTURE

You get best results when you challenge your balance many (try 2-3) times a day!

### **Wall Posture Practice - 2-3 times DAILY and whenever you feel the need**

1. Find a wall or wall-substitute.
2. Stand about 6 inches away. Reach back with your hands and settle your back onto the wall.
3. Keep knees bent softly, as if you were sitting upon a tall stool.
4. Press your **tailbone** flat, into the wall. Hold in place. [This is a core exercise!]
5. **Breathe easily (both in and out)!**
6. Press back of head to wall, or toward the wall as close as you can.
7. **Keep back/tailbone in place. Keep breathing.**
8. Keeping head on wall, slide head upward like an elevator, as high as possible.
9. **Breathe easily. Keep arms relaxed.**
10. Feel the wall, and how you are “stacked”, with your head over your hips.
11. Stay in place at least 30 seconds, feeling things unwind and re-organize.

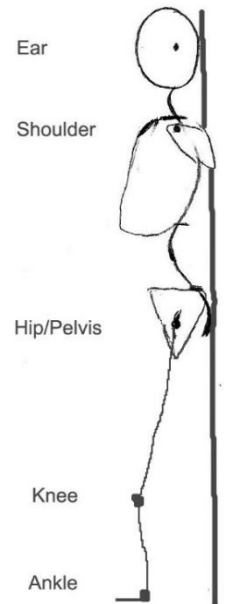
### **TIPS**

- You may feel a **stretch in your neck** and even into your upper back. Slide head only to the point where you feel a stretch without increasing pain.
- It may be **hard to keep your back/tailbone in place**. That’s a sign that practicing is a good thing! Both posture and core strength practice will be helpful!
- **Make it better:** Imagine your head is extending upward toward the sky, your feet are extending downward into the earth.

### **WHY DO THIS?**

To practice good posture and core strength. Use this as a reminder to your body when you are:

- Sitting
- Driving
- Standing and walking and running
- Exercising
- Shoveling, raking, walking dogs
- Bowling, dancing, playing sports

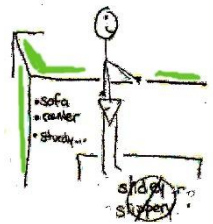
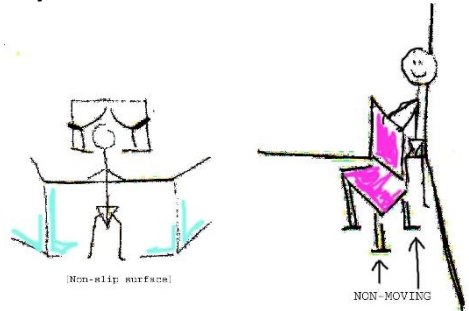


**STACK YOUR BLOCKS!**  
[Pelvis, Shoulder, Ear]

**BALANCE EXERCISES**

**TIPS**

- **Always practice near something you can grab safely if you lose your balance.**
- Make sure feet/floor surface are not slippery. If you are not having trouble with balance exercises, you are not challenging your balance – make sure it takes effort so your body and brain know how to make it better!
- **They should be a little difficult!** If you aren't just a little shaky or wobbly, you aren't challenging yourself! [See "PROGRESSION" below.]
- Stand tall. Extend top of your head toward the sky and imagine your feet rooting into the ground.
- Keep eyes and face forward. **Where your head goes, your body will follow!**
- Keep legs apart -- not touching -- when standing on one foot.
- If you feel like you might lose balance, use fingertips/hands to steady yourself, rather than touching your leg down.
- **Breathe** easily and **focus** on the task. Keep head up, facing forward.
- **To save time**, consider practicing some of them while waiting – in line, for something to cook, while brushing teeth, etc.
- **Snack** on exercises throughout the day. Think of them as little treats! They are still **effective!**



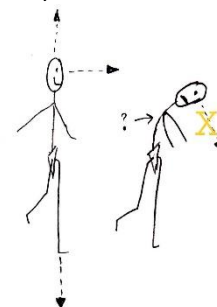
Standing Toe Elevation *This strengthens and coordinates the muscles on the front of the lower leg to help lift toes to clear them while you walk and do the stairs.*

- 1) Stand facing a sturdy object that is about waist-height or so (sofa, countertop, sink, etc.).
- 2) Slowly flex ankles, lifting toes off of the floor (3 count). Pause briefly.
- 3) Slowly lower back to the ground. (3 count) Repeat 10 – 20 times.
- 4) NOTE: There should be very little body movement except at the ankle. Avoid sticking out your behind or rocking.



Standing Balance Exercises – Single Leg Stand

- 1) Stand facing a sturdy object that is about waist-height or so (sofa, countertop, sink, railing, etc.) OR stand in a corner, just away from the walls, with a sturdy object in front of you (e.g. heavy chair).
- 2) Shift weight to one leg, lifting the other off of the ground.
- 3) Balance for 30 seconds.



Heel-Toe (“Tightrope”) Walk Exercise

- 1) Stand sideways to a sturdy object that is about waist-height or so (sofa, countertop, sink, wall, railing, etc.). Lightly touch with fingertips or hand.
- 2) Walk forward slowly by placing the heel of your front foot right against the toe of the back foot. Continue forward heel-to-toe.
- 3) Keep face and eyes forward. When you reach end of object, turn around and continue forward in the other direction.
- 4) Keep going! 10 – 20 steps or more.



**WAIT! Maybe why walk when we could DANCE...!**

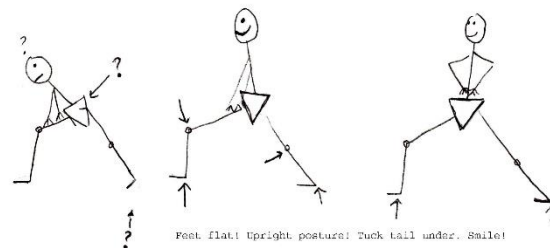
**OTHER EXERCISES THAT HELP WITH BALANCE**

**ANKLE RANGE OF MOTION**

Doing calf stretches, ankle circles, and more keeps ankles as full of movement as possible. Stiff ankles have a harder time adjusting to challenges in balance. Keep them warm and flexible!

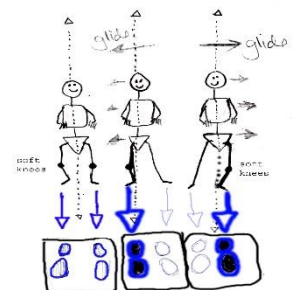
**HIP FLEXOR STRETCHES**

- 1) Do a standing forward lunge.
- 2) Move upper body so it is tall and upright.
- 3) Press lower back outward (which will help tuck hips slightly under).
- 4) You should feel a good stretch in the front of the hip of the leg that is stretched back. If you do not, check for upright posture, tighten the back knee, or tuck the hips under a bit more.



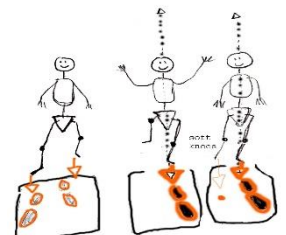
**TAI CHI: SIDEWAYS WEIGHT SHIFTING** (“Bear Rooting”) *Breathe easily throughout.*

- 1) Shift weight entirely over one foot. Body remains upright, head and face forward. Let arms hover, as if over a low countertop. Think:
  - a. “Stack your blocks” (head, chest, hips)
  - b. “Glide your body” (head, chest, hips)
- 2) Knee of the leg you are standing on is bent.
- 3) Lift the un-weighted foot slightly off the floor for balance challenge. Keep toe touching lightly if this is very difficult. Breathe easily throughout.



**TAI CHI: FLYING CRANE** *Breathe easily throughout.*

- 1) Stand with feet in diagonal position (“Horse Stance”).
- 2) Shift weight entirely to one leg and lift knee of the un-weighted leg.
- 3) Raise “crane arms” as the knee lifts. Keep toe touching down lightly if needed.
- 4) Arms and leg raise and lower together. Knee of the leg you are standing on is bent, tailbone tucked, shoulders relaxed, and back straight.
- 5) Now, switch legs, lift the opposite leg, and repeat.



**PROGRESSING BALANCE EXERCISES** – How to adjust balance exercises to make them either easier OR more challenging.

**GOAL:** 20 – 30 seconds holding a position without extra help

**Pick a balance exercise and progress through the categories below! Once you have reached the goal, make it more challenging by moving to the next step in one or more of the categories.**

Surface

Flat and level  
Cushioned/soft (rug, foam, pillow)  
Uneven/movable surface  
Sloped surface

Arm and hand position

Both hands touch for balance  
Fingertips only touch  
One hand/fingertips  
No hands touching  
Arms out from sides (like tightrope walker)  
At sides  
Over chest  
Moving around, especially overhead

Eyes

Open  
Closed

Foot position

Apart sideways and slightly staggered front to back  
Apart  
Tight together  
Semi-tandem (toes of one foot at arch of the other, and touching), each foot practices being in front  
Tandem (heel-to-toe like a tight rope walker), each foot practices being in front  
Single leg

Environment

Quiet and still  
Busy with obstacles

Moving

Forward  
Sideways  
Backward  
Turning

***Example 1: Standing on one leg***

***Start:*** Standing on one leg on linoleum floor, with one hand lightly touching a countertop, eyes open, alone.

***Easier option:*** Standing on two feet close together, no hands, next to countertop.

***Progression option:*** Standing on one leg with both arms crossed over chest, eyes closed.

***Progression option:*** Standing on one leg, eyes open, on a sofa cushion, arms out to the sides.

***Example 2: Heel-toe (“Tightrope”) walk***

***Start:*** At countertop, flat floor, lightly touching with fingertips, walking forward, heel-to-toe walk, eyes open.

***Easier option:*** At countertop, flat floor, lightly touching with fingertips, walking forward, feet squeezed close next to each other, eyes open.

***Progression option:*** At countertop, flat floor, arms out to sides and not touching, heel to toe, moving forward, eyes open.

***Progression option:*** At countertop, flat floor, on hand touching, heel to toe, moving forward, eyes closed.

***Progression option:*** At countertop, on thick rug, eyes open, arms crossed over chest, heel to toe moving backward.