

# The Need For a Balanced Workout

**The Dilemma:**

How do we remove the current obsession from abdominals and balance the workout focus to involve the whole body, the mind and the spirit?

**The Solution:**

- Ongoing education of the instructor and the participant.
- Putting theory into practice in the fitness class.
- Embracing the whole person, rather than component parts at every possible opportunity.
- Celebrating healthy active living and our body through the messages we send while leading classes or interacting with participants outside of the fitness class.

By Charlene Kopansky

**Where do we start?**

By ceasing to perpetuate the obsession with abdominals and focus our energy on educating our clients about the need for balanced fitness and the absolute necessity to engage the mind in the movement experience.

Instructors are obligated to understand movement mechanics and then to share the information with participants. Knowledge is power. When people understand what the exercise is for, why the exercise is important and how to do the exercise effectively then there are many positive outcomes. From a leadership perspective: the act of leading the classes becomes more rewarding, more meaningful. From a participant perspective, exercise execution becomes more effective, more meaningful.

Focus on abdominal, back and core conditioning within the context of training the whole body.

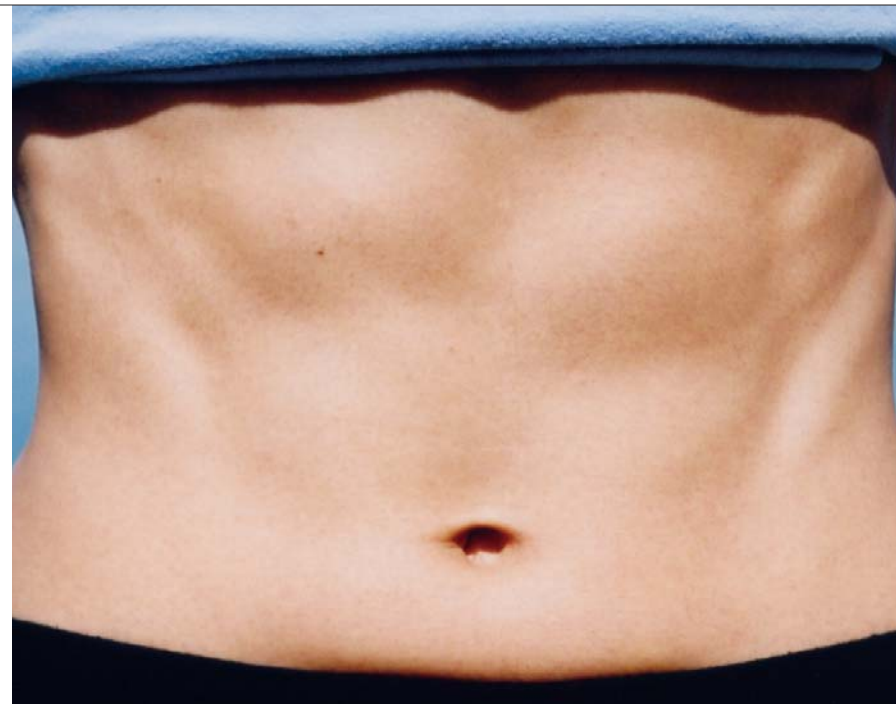
With this knowledge the instructor understands why and how to do specific exercises and can educate the participants, over time, during the class.

Take time to share the Functional Significance of a Strong Body Core with your class participants to:

- protect vital inner organs
- move with ease, grace and agility
- keep pelvis level, square, in line
- prevent excessive curvature in the lumbar spine
- diminish the prevalence of, or prevent, low back pain
- improve postural alignment
- provide stability and flexibility for the body

Take time to explain how to condition the global and core trunk muscles from a biomechanical perspective that makes sense to participants:

- Discuss the “pelvic bowl” or “cup” in



relation to creating a balance between the stretch and strength capabilities of the muscles surrounding and influencing the final position of the pelvis. Reinforce the need to condition the muscles to be able to maintain a level pelvis.

- Utilize the “headlights” analogy to create a visual picture of what neutral pelvis looks like. Place fists on anterior hip-bones. Imagine the fists are headlights (low beams,) on a car and ensure the lights are shining straight ahead.

- Play with the positions of the pelvis, by having participants try various pelvic positions, first with eyes open then with eyes closed so that they can feel neutral pelvis. Do a ‘hula hoop’ style hip circle: including

anterior tilt, excessive lumbar curve (lordosis), lateral tilt to the right, posterior tilt, or pelvic tuck, flat back, no lumbar curve and lateral tilt to the left. Then assume a level pelvis, with a natural lumbar curve. Add hips rocking side to side through neutral pelvis. Add hips rocking forward and backwards, through neutral pelvis. Then find and maintain neutral pelvis. Keep the knees slightly soft throughout and move at a comfortable pace.

- Name and identify the muscles which affect the position of the pelvis including the global and inner unit or core muscles. Use diagrams, or show the muscles by indicating where they are on your body as you teach.

When an instructor is able to meet the following objectives, they are then well equipped to integrate the mind, body and spirit when leading classes.

- 1) Understand the anatomy and biomechanics of the body core.
- 2) Know the importance of integrating real life functional abdominal work into the class.
- 3) Learn specific aqua movements that strengthen the body core.
- 4) Practice visual and verbal technique tips and cues to encourage safe and effective exercise execution.
- 5) Understand the importance of stabilizing the body in relation to core strength.
- 6) Experience core strengthening movements in the water themselves.
- 7) Practice utilizing the specific cues and exercises to ensure clients understand ‘the why are we doing’ and ‘the how to do’ each exercise.

8) Practice pre-choreographed abdominal routines in the water and on deck, and then introduce them slowly and thoughtfully to the class.

**TO ACHIEVE ABS-OLUTE RESULTS;**

**KNOW**

- i) the structure of the specific body region - \*determines function/action
- ii) the location (origin and insertion) of the muscles - \*determines function
- iii) the line of pull of the muscles - \*determines function
- iv) the real life function of the abdominals including the: rectus abdominus, external oblique, internal oblique and the transverse abdominus

**KNOW** - the muscle actions and roles of the abdominals

- i) stabilizer role
- ii) prime mover role
- iii) assistant role (secondary mover)

**KNOW** - the importance of upright posture (sitting and/or standing) for effective training of the abdominals

**KNOW** - the order of recruitment of the abdominal muscles for optimal condition in the upright posture (bottom to top)

**KNOW** - how to build active strength and endurance required for activities of daily living; quality time versus quantity of repetitions.

**\*TOP TEN AQUA ABDOMINAL EXERCISES:**

Create a strong base for all movements. Cue participants to activate the muscles of the pelvic floor, draw the navel towards the spine, maintain a level pelvis, long tall spine and continue to breathe comfortably while exercising.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) repeater sartorius jogmarch with sartorius arms        | 7) anchored narrow jogmarch with unison cross country ski arms  |
| 2) flamingo swivels with bow and arrow arms               | 8) narrow tuck with jumping jack arms                           |
| 3) mogul tuck   | 9) tuck-jack-tuck-ski combo                                     |
| 4) kayak arms - variety of legs & different ‘phase focus’ | 10) pumping karate kick with unison arms reaching away from leg |
| 5) abdominal jack with reverse breast stroke arms         |   |
| 6) recumbent to sitting to vertical to triathlon cycling  |   |

(\*Excerpts from Maximum Aqua Abs workshop – Charlene Kopansky 2001)

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# THE ABS OBSESSION

## Charlene's Top Ten Aqua Abdominal Exercises



- 1 a)** Start with inner unit activation and a powerful stance with global muscles activated
- b)** Lift knee towards chest, focus on activating the spinal flexors, during hip flexion
- c)** Keep forearms parallel, in front of chest in a strong isometrically activated position
- d)** Feel powerful and stable
- e)** Think about activation of the abdominal and back muscles while stabilizing the body
- f)** If in chest deep water, keep the knee on the standing leg slightly bent, in deep water - suspended, keep the 'standing leg' straight and unlocked at the knee.



- 2 a)** Maintain inner unit activation
- b)** Continue to lift knee towards opposite shoulder while moving the ribs towards the hips by activating the oblique abdominals
- c)** Reach elbows powerfully towards the sides of the body
- d)** Take control while pushing and pulling the limbs through the water to increase exercise intensity
- e)** Option : Change the hands from a fist to a flat-paddle position to increase surface area and the work done.

"Core training, while physical in nature, is more effective when the 'doer' understands the mechanics of the movement and feels the 'work' of the body. This is holism in action: body doing, mind thinking, spirit feeling."

Pumping Side Karate Kick, on the beaches, Lake Ontario, Model: Charlene Kopansky, Photographer, Alistair Parkes, 09/22/04



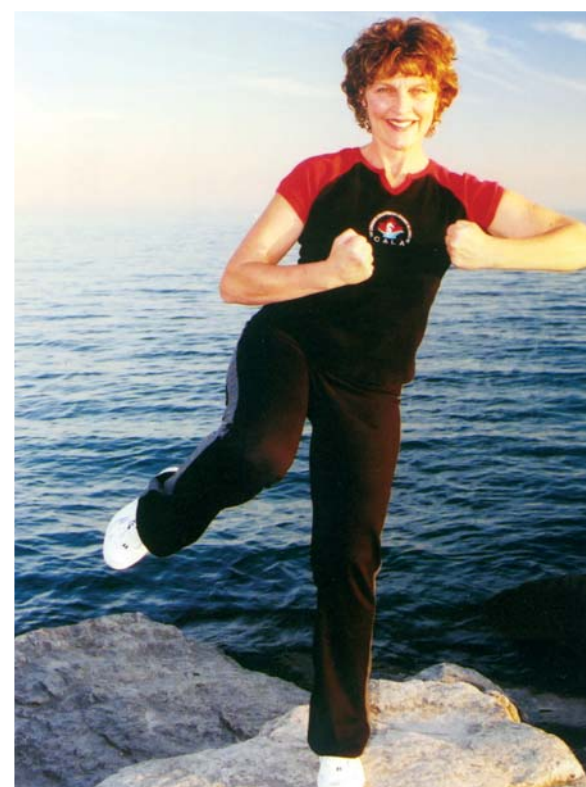
- 3 a)** Reach dorsi-flexed foot to the side of the body by extending the knee
- b)** Simultaneously reach both hands/arms away from the leg, to opposite side of body by extending the elbows
- c)** Maintain inner unit and global muscle activation and a powerful, stable posture throughout



- 4 a)** Continue to push the heel away from the body to full leg extension (soft knee)
- b)** Also, continue to push both hands/arms away from the body to full elbow extension (soft elbows)
- c)** Keep the standing leg slightly bent if in chest-deep water, with foot on the floor
- d)** Put the mind into the muscle by visualizing the work of the inner unit and global muscles.



- 5 a)** Bring the 'working' knee towards the chest/opposite shoulder and pull the front elbow towards the 'working' leg
- b)** Maintain a powerful stance, keep the other arm out to the side of the body, under the surface of the water in a strong position

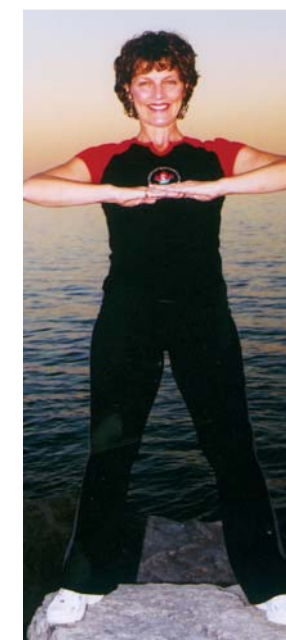


- 6 a)** Continue to bring the knee across the body towards the opposite knee
- b)** Bring the 'outside' arm towards the chest by flexing the elbow
- c)** Repeatedly 'pump' the foot and arms towards the body, then away from the body while using the resistance of the water and activating the muscles to maintain a stable posture and perform the movements effectively.

- 7 a)** Start with inner unit activation and a powerful stance with global muscles activated
- b)** Lift both knees towards chest, focus on activating the spinal flexors, during hip flexion
- Note : When demonstrating this position from the pool deck, the instructor often performs a squat, indicating to the participants that both feet are lifting towards the chest to a suspended position in the water
- c)** During this spinal/hip flexion phase, press both hands towards the ankles ( elbow extension)



- 8 a)** Continue inner unit and global muscle activation
- b)** Straighten both legs (hip and knee extension) and return to a standing positions (spinal extension) with legs apart (hip abduction) as in a jumping jack position.
- c)** During this spinal/hip extension phase lift both hands towards the chest, with elbows pointing to each side.
- d)** Feel powerful and stable throughout the movement
- e)** Think about activation of the abdominals and inner unit muscles during the 'tuck' phase of the movement
- f)** Focus on activation of the inner unit and back muscles during the 'jack' phase of the movement
- g)** For maximum results, push and pull water with the body



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Narrow Tuck/Jack Combination Move, on the beaches, Lake Ontario, Model: Charlene Kopansky, Photographer, Alistair Parkes, 09/22/04