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Chapter 1

Warm Up with the ABC Exercises

The ABC exercises are like vitamin supplements, boosting your immune system and helping children and you feel great!

These are non-competitive, “internal” warm-up exercises. You will immediately see children’s concentration, relaxation and strength improve.

What are the ABCs?

- **Alignment** exercises line up the bones and help make it easier for joints and muscles to move.
- **Breathing** exercises nourish the muscles.
- **Centering** core stomach muscle contractions replenishes organs.

How do they help?

- They help students feel calm.
- They improve kids’ ability to concentrate on their school-work.
- They help children relax after being in a stressful situation, such as an argument with a sibling.
- They help when children are sick.

Putting the ABCs into everyday use:

- When it gets close to lunchtime and the class gets “wiggly,” stop for a moment. Spending just a few minutes with the ABC exercises will help children breathe deeply and make them calm and more focused.
- By incorporating movement into the lesson, kids will have a broader understanding of the subject. The ABC exercises let you discuss the skeleton (**The As: alignment**), the respiratory system (**The Bs: breathing**) and the muscles (**The Cs: centering abdominal movements**).

How do the ABCs work to create a lifetime of healthy habits?

Alignment, Breathing and Centering are elements that are not only essential for every efficient dance, sport and fitness movement, they are also some of the key ingredients for increasing your energy level. This can lead to an acceleration of the body’s natural healing process after an injury or illness. The same ABCs that help a dancer appear to be floating can be used to help elevate your energy to re-establish body harmony.

You can build your energy level through **Breathing** and/or involving your core abdominal muscles. This is accomplished by giving your respiratory system and internal organs additional blood and oxygen!

The **Breathing** exercise balances and calms your nervous system. The **Centering** exercise strengthens your deep abdominal muscles. This core strength provides you with great posture, back support, internal organ health and efficiency of motion. Plug the powerful **Centering** exercise directly into any sport, martial art, dance or fitness movement to get the following benefits:

1. Safety
2. Play at your best “in the zone.”
3. Boost your immune system.

These healing tools are helpful not only when the body is stressed or out of balance. They can be done anytime, anywhere and in any position—standing in the lunch line, sitting at your desk or waiting for the bus!



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

A is for Alignment:

The Pelvis as a Fish Bowl Exercise™

1. Begin by standing. Pull your stomach muscles inward toward your spine. Visualize your navel moving toward your spine.
2. Picture your pelvis as a fish bowl.
3. The rim of the fish bowl is your waistline. Place your hands on your waist to feel the top of your fish bowl.
4. Slightly tip your hips forward. Visualize water dumping out of the top of your fish bowl in front of you. The lower back arches. (Figure 1)
5. Tilt your fish bowl backwards. Slosh water on the floor behind you. The lower back rounds. (Figure 2)
6. Now balance your pelvis as a fish bowl. Not a drop of water spills. (Figure 3) You have a slight “natural curve” in your lower back. Tightening your stomach muscles, too, helps keep the fish in the bowl.
7. Keep your fish bowl level while you stand up, walk and sit down. Try it! Did the fish fall out when you were standing, walking or sitting?
8. Tighten your abdominal muscles while performing Pelvis as a Fish Bowl. Try the exercise again while standing up, walking and sitting down. Notice that by contracting your abdominal muscles you take the pressure off your knees, hip joints, back and neck. The weight of your body lifts upward from your legs and away from the floor. You are moving through space from your center abdominal muscles like a martial artist!

Float in the air!

When you contract your abdominal muscles, you take the pressure off your knees, hip joints, back and neck. The weight of your body lifts upward from your legs and away from the floor!