

YOGA FROM THE FEET UP WORKSHOP

EXERCISES

AWARENESS EXERCISES

STANDING FOOT AWARENESS

Stand on hard, even surface

Close eyes

Stand on towel

Close eyes

Roll on ball, and...

Repeat...

Wu Mei Qi Gong - Standing feet together; lift arches, engage quads, lift pelvic floor, rotate tailbone under, roll shoulders back, pull head straight back; with everything engaged, take 3-6 deep, slow breaths, then relax

TOE AWARENESS EXERCISES

Sitting - feet flat on floor, lift and lower just big toe without lifting ball

Lift all four toes without collapsing arch

MOBILITY EXERCISES

BEGINNING MOBILIZATION

- a. Ankle rotation
- b. Toe flex/extend
- c. Splaying - big toe/little toe; manually spread each two toes and/or fingers interlacing toes
- d. Standing Toe Lifts - altogether and then alternate big toe and all others

TOE EXTENSION

Quadruped (table pose) position - toes curled under, rock forward and back several times, then sit back

PRONATION (flattening inner arch) AND SUPINATION (lifting inner arch)

Standing, start with one foot forward; forward foot weight on outer heel; lean forward, and knee starts to move forward, relaxed knee as it bends; weight transfers laterally to inside heel, inner arch descends (pronation), foot flattens and spreads, accepting force through a wider surface.

BIG TOE STRETCH

Put a yoga block against the wall and go to outside of block, put foot behind block and put big toe in flexion against block; other toes rest on floor to outside edge of block; bend knee for greater sensation; supinate (lift inner arch)/ pronate (flatten inner arch) foot for greater sensation

BALANCE EXERCISES

BALANCE VARIABLES:

Wide/Narrow Base

Stable/Unstable surface

Upper body movement

Direction of gaze & eyes closed

Asymmetrical weighting

Single leg versions

BASIC BALANCE DRILLS

Standing and swaying, feet shoulder width; body fully upright, lean in all directions; make a slow circle, leaning all the way around

Tadasana - standing, raise arms and heels slowly moving onto balls of feet; return slowly; move gaze; hold light weight in one hand, then the other; stand on rolled towel

Leaning and reaching, feet close together; bend and reach both hands forward, to each side, same with one hand, twist and reach to each side

One foot forward, one foot back and balance; bend/straighten knees; move upper body; move gaze

One foot behind the other and balance; bend/straighten knees; move upper body; move gaze

Single leg stand, bend and reach as above; move gaze; move lifted leg in different directions

STRENGTHENING EXERCISES

BANDED TOE EXERCISES

Big Toe - Foot on band, slide front of band (near toes) over to cradle big toe only, and lift toe up (or up and medially, for bunion), and press toe into band, to the floor; 40 - 50 x's

Four Toes - cradle 4 toes with band and lift toes; press toes forward and down to floor; 40 - 50 x's

Pinky Toe - Same thing, cradling pinky - it's hard and it's hard to do in isolation

*Should see tops of toes "wink" throughout the banded exercises

INTRINSIC TOE STRENGTH

Stand 8"-12" away from a wall; Tightly roll towel up to about 3" of height; toes all rest on towel, feet on floor behind it; toes and sole of foot now under stretch; lean forward and feel intrinsic muscles activate, feel medial arch engage, 5 seconds and lean to upright; 15 - 20 x's

HIP ABDUCTION

Mild horse stance, band wrapped just below knees; press into one big toe mound and keep that connection as you abduct/externally rotate from hip; 10 x's

ARCH STRENGTHENING

Feet hip distance; rotate knees in, then out; keep effort of external rotation but set knees parallel, forward; press toes into ground (not clawing or curling, but pushing down)

a. Second phase lift one leg while the grounded foot is working, external hip rotators and metatarsal flexors

b. 3rd phase, swing foot of lifted leg to cross in front and tap outside of grounded foot, then swing around to cross in back and tap - knee of grounded foot stays stable

BASIC BATH OR BEACH TOWEL EXERCISES

1. Lateral walk along arches for mobilization (use dowel or broomstick through middle of towel)

2. Ball lateral walk - use wall if you need it. Vary heel height

3. Toe extension - unroll towel a bit; on foot, toes on rolled portion, balls just behind; step forward with other foot; feel a stretch, lifting back heel as necessary; step back and forth 10 x's; can be done in down dog for static version; higher towel is more challenging

4. Calf raises - balls on rolled towel (adjust height as necessary), engaged core, lift and lower heels slowly; 20 x's

ADVANCED EXERCISES

MIDFOOT STRENGTHENING EXERCISE

Rest on one foot, knee slightly bent; slide opposite foot back, lift heel, rest lightly on toes; Stay here 20 - 30 seconds - soleus will fire, and more muscles will recruit up the kinetic chain; keep inner arch soft, pronating (if that's not possible, go back to Pronation exercise above)

More advanced to really fire soleus (deep calf muscle) - press toes into floor and make them wink.

TIMED CALF RAISES

Set metronome to 1 beat per second. Raise heels each beat; continue until you can't follow the beat.

SINGLE LEG CALF RAISES

On a wall, lift both calves, lean into balls and note height; single leg raise should clear the same height as one can on both feet.

Then lift one foot off floor; raise grounded heel and lower to maximum height; 3 sets of 8 each foot.

To achieve maximum height, it can help to slide calf-raising-side hand up wall to full distance above head.

More advanced, use a kettle bell.

More advance, do metronome drill (1 lift per second) to failure

TIBIALIS ANTERIOR (shin muscle) STRENGTHENING

Heels on towel, toes on floor; use a wall; lift balls of feet off ground; 20x's