



NOTES FROM LISA

It was this time last year that Steve and I welcomed our daughter Stella Pearl into the world.

So many things have changed for us in this past year. We learned how to become parents to Stella. She taught us how to be more patient, to live for the moment, and to forsake computer and tv time for playing peek-a-boo and rolling around on the floor.

She has brought such laughter and smiles into our lives.

With so much change, it's a comfort to know that Solo Fitness is a constant yet growing endeavor. I want to give a huge thank you to the real Solo Fitness, my other family. To the trainers, it is you who have kept us going. They have one straight forward mission; making fitness an accessible goal in many people's lives. We've been doing this now for 15 years and I look forward to the constant growth and inevitable changes the next 15 years have in store for us.

Have a wonderful summer!

Lisa

Training Your Abs

by Lynn Millar, Ph.D., FACSM

Abdominal training is popular these days, but don't forget it is one part of a well-balanced program including exercises that focus on the back muscles, as well as the abdominal muscles. Abs are just one part of your "core" or trunk. Why strengthen your abs? Strong abdominal muscles help provide trunk stability — the ability to keep the trunk stiff — which allows better movement control and strength for the arms and legs. The abdominal muscles help support and protect the internal organs and aid in breathing, especially exhaling. Finally, these muscles work with the back to control trunk motion, such as twisting and bending.

Like any muscle in the body, the abdominal muscles can work in different ways. If you are trying to keep the trunk still while moving the legs or arms, the abs may use an isometric contraction — the abdominal muscles contract without causing movement within the trunk. On the other hand, if you want to twist or bend your trunk, such as during a golf swing, the abdominal muscles work concentrically (shortening) and eccentrically (lengthening). Thus, a good training program for the abs should include both types of contractions. In addition, there are several muscles that make up the abs, and as each of them runs in a different direction, their function will be slightly different.

Traditional abdominal crunches are an excellent training exercise that works all of the abdominal

muscles. Start by lying on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the ground. Raise your upper chest slowly off the ground, just a few inches, and then return to the starting position. The pelvic tilt (reverse crunch) is a variation of the crunch that tries to emphasize the lower, front portion of the abdominal muscles. While lying on your back, bring your hips and knees to 90 degrees. Tighten your lower abdominal muscles, while trying to raise your bottom straight up. You will not be able to raise your hips more than an inch or two off the ground, and you should not be increasing the angle at your hips. Lower, then repeat.



To emphasize the oblique muscles, a twisting motion is necessary. Using the same position as the crunch, raise and twist your chest, bringing one shoulder towards the opposite knee. Only one shoulder comes off the ground, just enough to clear the shoulder blade. Return to the starting position, then repeat in the opposite direction. If you are just starting, put your hands at your side, and as you become stronger, progress by crossing them over the chest. The most advanced position uses hands behind the neck (do not pull at your neck). During any of these exercises, the movement should be slow and controlled.

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Fit to Give

On Wednesday, February 2nd all proceeds from our clients' workout went to UNICEF's Tsunami Relief Fund. We are pleased to report that we exceeded our expectations. We had more sessions scheduled on that day than any other day in our 15 year history.

Training the Trainers



2005 was kicked off with a dynamic workshop by **David Ganulin**. He is the CEO of KettleBell Concepts: the Ultimate Workout. Unlike machines and traditional weight training, kettlebells teach you how to use momentum to your advantage. The key to its effectiveness is the "U" shaped handle which creates additional momentum, an inherent characteristic in all human movement. If you would like to experience significant improvement in your sport, or if you are just looking for a strong, lean and agile physique — please give David a call at: 646/424-0877. More info can be found on their website: www.kettlebellconcepts.com.



Dr. Jeff Linder of Bryant Park Chiropractic led a workshop on Cross Posture Syndrome. This is a very common muscle imbalance especially for people who spend most of their day at a desk. It consists of rolled shoulders with chin slightly sticking out, along with tight hamstrings and a tight lower back. We reviewed some simple stretches and strengthening exercises that can relieve upper and lower back pain. For more information on how to relieve your tight muscles and improve your posture, please contact Dr. Linder at: 212/768-4078

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To work the abs isometrically, you need to do activities that emphasize controlled motion of the trunk as a whole, moving either from the hips or from the shoulders, or contracting the abs without moving the trunk. Many of the Pilates exercises, as well as others, use these types of techniques. There are three excellent activities that can be done by someone at any fitness level. The first is called abdominal hollowing and can be done lying on your back or standing. For this exercise you will contract your abs without altering your back or rib positioning, thus pulling the stomach in. The goal is to hold the contraction for 60 seconds, while breathing normally. For this, you may need to start with shorter contraction times. The next exercise works the back and abdomen together. Start on your elbows and knees, then straighten the knees (they will come off the ground while the feet become the contact point). At the same time, contract the abs as much as possible, and try to hold this position for 15-60 seconds. If your back feels stressed, make sure you are contracting the abs and reduce the time. The last exercise uses controlled leg movements while working the abs. Lie on your back and place your hands part way under your low back. Contract the abs maximally; as you do so, the pressure on your hands will increase. Use this pressure to monitor your performance of the exercise — if the pressure starts to decrease then the abs are not able to control the motion and you should stop that repetition. Bend both knees, bringing the feet off the ground, then slowly straighten one leg up, and lower the leg to the ground very slowly (up to 10 seconds per leg). Bring the leg back to the starting position and repeat the motion with the other leg. Remember to breathe normally throughout the motion.

Now that you have some idea of types of exercises, we can design a training program.

When we strengthen the abs, we are usually developing both strength and muscular endurance. Using your own body weight for the resistance and advancing the number of repetitions is the traditional method of strengthening the abs. If you have never done any strengthening for your abs, start with one set of 20 repetitions for each of the traditional exercises. For the isometric activities, you might try starting with a 20 second hold or five reps of limb motion. If you are using body weight only, you can usually do these types of exercises everyday. I suggest alternating type of exercises; day one is traditional exercises, day two isometric exercises. This will keep the routine from becoming too boring. In order to improve, you need to increase the intensity of a program. To progress the intensity you can increase the number of sets and/or reps, length of hold or resistance. I generally find it easiest to increase the number of reps first, usually up to 30, and then increase the number of sets. Again, you can increase the resistance initially by changing the position of your arms. If you are at a gym, you can increase resistance by working against gravity, such as on a tilt board. Ultimately, you can add weights for resistance, either through the use of a machine or a weight while you perform the exercises. A good program should be regular and should not cause pain in the back or neck. The benefits of good abdominal strength are numerous, so let's get started now.

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New Faces...

After a career as a Pre-K and Kindergarten teacher, **Maddie Dietrich** decided it was time to take her teaching skills to adults. Since receiving her personal training certificate, she has been honing her skills as a personal trainer in New York City for the past 3 years. Maddie also specializes in Pre-Natal and Post-Partum exercise. She is thrilled to have the opportunity to work with a diverse group of clients in all fitness levels and needs.



Kostia Rubchinsky comes to us from a diverse background in psychology, education, theater direction and playwriting. His success as a motivator and coach has naturally led him to a career as a personal trainer, receiving his certification from the East Coast Instructor Training School. Kostia is dedicated to his clients' total fitness needs thru a program of holistic training.



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fitness

Pass It On!

Share your enthusiasm for health. Clients, refer a friend and receive your next session on us. We appreciate your support for our future! Call us for program details.