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## THE SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE EXERCISE

*Perform frequently while sitting anytime, anywhere  
— at your desk, watching TV, or on an airplane.*

### Preparation for The Sit Up and Take Notice Exercise

*Start with the shoulders and neck. This is where most of us have muscular tension.*

1. Lift your shoulders way up toward your ears. Then drop them down. *Scrunch your shoulders up several times.* Add plenty of muscular tension. Relax them back down. Are you breathing deeper as you loosen up your muscles?
2. Sit tall, perched on top of your sit-bones. These are the bones you sit on. They are located at the base of your pelvis. Find them by rocking side to side.
3. Like building blocks—stack your hips, ribs, chest and head on top of each other.

### Start The Sit Up and Take Notice Exercise

#### THE VISUAL IMAGERY GUIDE

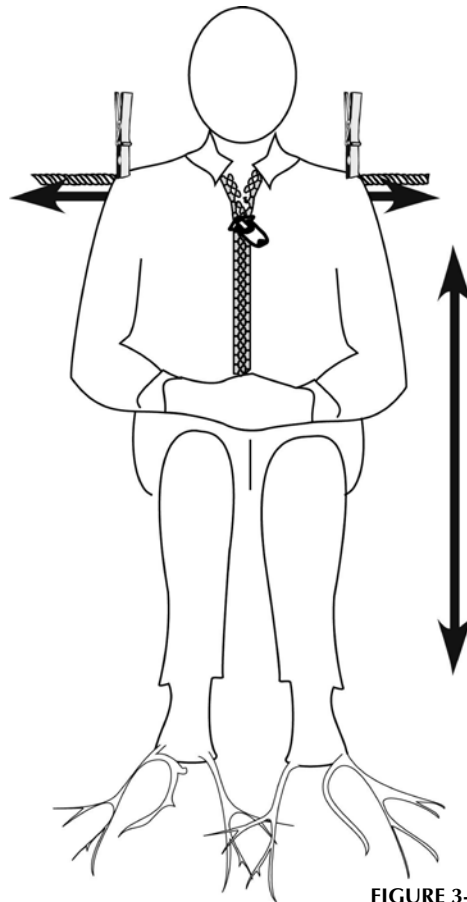
1. Picture your shoulder girdle as a shirt. Visualize it hung wide on a clothesline (FIGURE 3-1). The shoulder girdle consists of the region surrounding the collarbone and shoulder blades. Your collarbone is located in the front of your upper body, at the neckline. Your shoulder blades are at each side of your upper back.
2. Gently draw your shoulders backwards.
3. Spread your collarbone wide to the “east and west coasts.” *Take several slow, deep, even, and tranquil breaths.* Visualize your inhales filling an imaginary balloon. The balloon is located in between your shoulder blades. Lengthen your inhalations as you picture the balloon expanding. Feel your shoulder blades stretching apart like warm taffy.
4. Imagine your shoulder girdle sliding like molasses into your ribcage.
5. Drop and melt your armpits into the earth.
6. Sense your ribs oozing into your hips like molten lava.
7. Feel your hips melting into your feet like warm butter.
8. Picture your feet sinking deep into the earth growing roots that intertwine and grab onto the earth. (FIGURE 3-1)
9. *Now, gently lengthen your body upwards in the opposite direction.* Picture the

top of your ears stretching up to reach for the stars.

**10.** Tighten your abdominal muscles. Picture a zipper for your abdominal muscles. See the zipper closing up your stomach muscles, beginning from your pubic bone and ending at your ribs. (**FIGURE 3-1**) Exhale with force. This helps you contract your stomach muscles in toward your spine. *Try this several times.*

**11.** Squeeze your buttock muscles and press your inner thighs together. Notice how this helps you to tighten your stomach muscles even more.

**Repeat this exercise several times.**



**FIGURE 3-1**

Do you feel the weight of the world coming off of your shoulders? *Take a few slow, relaxing inbales and exhales.* Enjoy this new sense of freedom in your upper body. *Try lifting your shoulders up high. Now let them go.* Do you feel lighter? You have just experienced the power of using visual imagery to connect your mind to your body.

Take frequent breaks from sitting for long periods of time with the **Sit Up and Take Notice Exercise** for improved health.

## THE EXTRA EDGE

### FOR THE SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE EXERCISE

#### *To Highlight the Pilates Principle of Oppositional Lengthening*

Oppositional lengthening is an important Pilates technique. It involves the use of lengthening the body in opposite directions. During **The Sit Up and Take Notice Exercise**, parts of your body are connecting into the earth (toward your feet), while other muscles lengthen away in the opposite direction (toward your head). This stretches your body and decompresses your spine.

- Good posture facilitates your ability to contract your core. Oppositional lengthening helps you activate the stabilizing muscles of your trunk, particularly the abdominal muscles.

Now try **Sit Up and Take Notice** again pressing your feet down while sitting taller. Use the concept of oppositional lengthening by visualizing your body gently stretching apart like a rubber band. The legs and head lengthen away from the trunk. This promotes the engagement of your core trunk stabilizers toward the central axis within the body.

- You will discover throughout all of your exercises that your center abdominal area is not something you “grab onto” to hold a position. Instead, centering involves an ongoing interchange of motion from the abdominal muscles to the limbs and back again.

## OPPOSITIONAL LENGTHENING

*Oppositional lengthening improves misalignments and muscular imbalances. It increases the resistance of movements to tone your body.*

## HOW IT HELPS

- **The Sit Up and Take Notice Exercise** corrects trunk alignment and enhances good posture.
- **Sit Up and Take Notice** helps to lengthen and decompress your spine. The top of your head stretches vertically away from your tailbone. When you lift your head—which weighs approximately 11-13 pounds—gently towards the sky, your body feels lighter. Your head is aligned on top of your spine. The head does not fall forward taking your shoulders with it.
- Your upper trunk is horizontally wider. This makes more room for the lobes of your lungs. It allows you to take deeper breaths. This enhances the health of your respiratory system. Oxygen creates energy for our cells, even our brain cells. Therefore by improving our posture we have better concentration and more physical energy.
- The shoulders slide down away from your ears. Your neck and shoulder muscles have more room to relax.
- This is an excellent exercise for the office, traveling on a plane, or anywhere.