



SCORE: IMAGERY for Economy of Teaching **Extension**

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Mat/Spine Correctors/Power Point

This workshop will involve lecture and movement. There will be PowerPoint slides for visual image reference as well as exercises and notes.

Extension is a challenge to teach. When observing most clients during the first hour, teachers may notice kyphosis of the thoracic spine and attendant poor body alignment. These postural changes are often due to age, injury or related to work and lifestyle. Lack of extension in the thoracic spine and the relationship of the lumbar and cervical spine are difficult to navigate. Clients often respond better to images that are equal to anatomical or postural cues. An image can project a sensation that promotes integration of form within exercises. For the teacher, images can be taught and distilled to one word for economy of time. Experiential change is the goal, and imagery is a great tool combined with Pilates exercise. This leads to progression and satisfaction of accomplishment when the client can feel the Swan.

Thoracic Extension: A challenge to do and to Teach!

- Observe when clients present with thoracic spine misalignment.
- Prepare for introducing thoracic and cervical extension.
- Prioritize postural organization education with new clients.
- Apply Pilates principles for progression and organization.
- Introduce foundation exercises when necessary.
- Include spinal mechanics for client ability to integrate cues.
- Encourage progress as the client gains strength for extension.

Common Causes for Thoracic Kyphosis:

- Habitual poor posture.
- Work
- Age
- Injury
- Smart phones and electronic devices: Hunching, Slumping and Cradling.
- Teaching Pilates – repetitive work injury.

Postural Assessment in kyphotic client:

- Forward head position.
- Anterior ribcage becomes narrow.
- Shoulders round forward.
- Humerus rotates internally.
- Scapula are protracted and elevated.
- Anterior core muscles are short and weak.
- Posterior back muscles are long and weak.
- Ribcage slides downward in front and upward in back.
- Organ compression.

Anatomy and Pilates: Information become a lecture rather than a cue?

The Pilates Teacher: Personal knowledge for your teaching.

- Anatomical knowledge is emphasized during training.
- Anatomical knowledge equals skill in program development.
- Anatomical knowledge applied to exercise cues creates progress.

The Client:

- Anatomical knowledge is not necessary to learn exercises.
- Anatomical cues may not be useful if misunderstood or complex.
- Anatomical information may become an annoying distraction.

Imagery Applied to Anatomy - Effective Imagery fosters communication:

- Stimulates the client when the cue is something familiar.
- Evokes a positive change in performance when equal to anatomy.
- Requires some explanation initially for efficiency in cuing.
- Reduces the image to a short word or phrase maintains flow.
- Promotes awareness through comparison of the change.
- Develops efficiency of communication as exercise advances.

Necessary steps that facilitate extension:

“Begin with the A, B, C’s” - Clara Pilates

- Observe alignment.
- Determine primary goals.
- Understand that extension is a primary element that is difficult.
- Practice the patience required to get the client to that goal.
- Emphasize core strength and flexibility that is necessary.
- Introduce extension with compassion and encouragement.
- Develop cues in your toolbox for success that include imagery.
- Plan the selection of extension exercises for everyone.

Neutral Pelvis Organization: Necessary for Extension

- Assists with alignment when moving from supine to prone.
- Promotes client awareness of precision required in extension.
- Increases extension in the thoracic spine.
- Avoids compression of the lumbar and sacral disks.
- Challenges core strength and control eccentrically.

Neutral Pelvis Organization: Necessary for Extension

- Pubic Symphysis is slightly forward.
- Asis is slightly behind.
- Sacrum is nutated.
- Lumbar spine is extended.
- Sacrococcygeal joint is the connector.
- The coccyx has independent motion but is attached to the sacrum as it moves.
- The coccyx has 5 – 20 degrees of motion with the average of 13 degrees.
- This joint is why we can cue the tailbone.

Triangle Image on Pelvis:

- Connects the right and left ASIS and Pubic Symphysis.

Anchor Image:

- Assists with direction of gravity in space, specifically standing and prone exercises.

Triangle and Anchor Images assist with:

- Neutral pelvis maintains natural lumbar extension.
- Control of neutral pelvis requires core strength.
- Thoracic extension is promoted when the lumbar and sacrum are neutral.
- The anchor image promotes correct space holding.
- Assists with the concept of “holding space” and movement in the spine.

Pat's Seated Extension Exercise: Practical for all clients.

- Hip joint flexion is easier for holding pelvis.
- Holding the neutral pelvis encourages thoracic extension.
- Neutral pelvis prevents excess lumbar extension.
- Exercise can be modified by sitting on a chair or box.

Client can find neutral pelvis with the following cues:

- The seated position places the pelvis in neutral.
- The client can be cued to hold the pelvis in place.
- The ischial tuberosities remain weighted and do not move.
- The image of the eye is cued to help spinal extension.
- The tendency to extend the lumbar spine is restricted.
- The benefit is that some clients can begin to find sitting tall.

EXTENSION IMAGERY ANTERIOR

THE EYE ON THE CHEST

- Find the Coracoid Process
- Use imagination to draw an eye from right to left side.
- Draw an eyeball and choose any color for fun and engagement.
- Close the eye and the chest will narrow and the shoulders will come upward and forward.
- Open the eye and the chest will widen with better shoulder alignment.
- Ask the client which eye they choose, open or closed.

Landmarks of the Eye:

Cues for shoulder girdle organization:

- Middle Cervical Vertebrae
- Sterno Clavicular Joint
- Upper Sternum
- Scapular Landmark of Coracoid Process
- Glenoid Fossa and the Coordination of the Shoulder Joint

The Equivalency of the Eye Image and the muscle attachments = Functional Postural Organization.

Coracoid Process Muscles Attachments = Corner of Eye

- Pectoralis Minor
- Coracobrachialis
- Biceps Brachialis

Eye Image Exercises:

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The Spine Twist – Preparation for cue to be taken into extension,
Pat's Seated Extension
The Backbend - Lip of Spine Corrector

THE FLASHLIGHT IMAGE:

- The Flashlight is position on the middle of the sternum, and the beam follows the body.
- Location is on the sternum over the heart.
- Position the flashlight forward toward the wall in extension.
- The position on the wall may be lower or higher depending on the relative extension in the spine.
- Lower the body to the mat.
- Avoid using the head to cue extension.

Flashlight Image Exercises:

The Swan Dive – Spine Corrector
The Cat and Cow Standing
The Swan Dive - Mat

THE TREE IMAGE:

- The tree roots grow downward to support the upward =
- The roots are the strength of the muscles of the core.
- The canopy grows and spreads from the roots =
- The head lifts from the center upward.
- The truck is the flow of nutrients from roots to leaves =
- The neck connects the core and the head.
- **As the canopy grows upward the roots need to dig deeper.**

Tree Image Exercises:

The Spine Stretch - Mat
Swimming – Spine Corrector
Full Backbend – Spine Corrector

EXTENSION IMAGERY POSTERIOR

THE WING IMAGE

- The bird has a scapula that is located on the back side of the thoracic spine which is part of the shoulder girdle.
- The birds shoulder girdle has a connection of the coracoid and humerus to form the shoulder joint.
- The similarity of the anatomy of the bird and the human supports the image of flying wings.
- The wings are a common image to which all clients can relate.
- Many clients have little or no awareness that the scapula move.
- Progression in Pilates extension exercises requires 3-dimensional movement.

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- Good cuing requires basic awareness exercises and patience.

Wing Image Exercises to Introduce the Cue:

- Teach the three dimensions in simple exercises.

Elevation and Depression

Protraction and Retraction

Upward and Downward Rotation

Encourage the client to feel these movements.

Include scapula movement for the strength required in extension.

Progression in Pilates extension exercises requires 3-dimensional movement.

Improvement in extension exercises progresses slowly for many due to posture.

Diligence and practice will build the flexibility and strength required.

Bruce King: “Muscles move bones, if bones do not move there is not correct muscular development.

Wing Image Exercises:

Side Lying Scapular Awareness - Spine Corrector

The Double Kick - Mat

The Teaser – Spine Corrector

The Boomerang – Mat & SC

THE KITE IMAGE:

- The Kite Image Cues for Extension: tight neck and upper back muscles.
- Many clients have chronic neck pain due to this kind of postural pattern.
- The lower triangle represents muscles that are too long and weak.
- The kite cue is a full body awareness image.
- The teacher may find it useful to draw a kite
- The client may need some tactile feedback.
- When the upper triangle becomes small it represents a
- Cue the client to feel the kite gently pulled from the end of the line.
- This cue can release the neck and position the scapula and shoulder joint for extension.

Kite Image Exercises

Swan Dive Preparation – Spine Corrector

The Swan Dive – Spine Corrector

The Plank into Swan - Mat

YODA EARS IMAGE: Energy is pulled upward from the ribcage to the ear.

- The Yoda image of the ears is growing upward extends the cervical and thoracic alignment.

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- The image is fun and familiar.
- Two ears encourage the equilateral lengthening of the right and left side of the spine.
- The ears and the kite images extend the length of the line in extension from both ends of the body.
- The ear landmark provides a better cue for extension from a posterior perspective.
- Growing the ears in extension encourages downward rotation and retraction of the scapula.
- Some of the muscles involved in the image are:
 - Rectus capitis posterior minor and major
 - Rectus capitis superior and inferior oblique.
 - Levator scapula
 - Erector spinae (Not shown in drawing)

The Yoda Ear Image Cues for Extension:

- Ask the client to find the ear pit located just under the ear and nod the head from this axis.
- Touch the top of the ear and give a gentle pull upward.
- Touch the top of the ear and give a gentle pull upward.
- Many clients are not aware of the muscle connection from ribcage to head.
- Cuing the ears often leads to better alignment than cuing the eyes, nose, or chin.
- The client may need some tactile feedback.
- When the teacher notices head misalignment, ask ~~the~~ the client to lengthen both ears.
- The Yoda Ear cue can be effective in all spine movement to prepare for extension.

Yoda Ear Image Exercises to introduce the cue.

The Backbend with Arms – Spine Corrector

The Leg Kick - Mat

The Rocking – The Spine Corrector and Mat

IMAGERY FOR SUCCESS!

- Keep it simple.
- Build your toolbox slowly.
- Introduce images that work for you.
- Understand that not all images work for everyone.
- The image works if the client progresses.
- The image works if the client and teacher enjoy the process.
- Mix up images to keep teaching fresh.
- Have fun and be creative.

