



MOBILITY MADE EASY

A Beginner's Guide to Better Movement

SC
SUPPLEMENTS.CO.NZ





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CONTENTS



04

AN OVERLOOKED ASPECT OF FITNESS

Let's face it: we're a society obsessed with looking all kinds of sexy.



05

WHAT IS MOBILITY?

My aim with this book isn't to go into deep and confusing detail about anything



07

WHY IS MOBILITY IMPORTANT?

At this point, I wouldn't blame you for still not caring about mobility



08

MOBILITY PROBLEM AREAS

It's important to maintain good levels of mobility across your entire body



10

METHODS FOR BUILDING MOBILITY

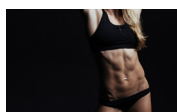
One of the most important things to understand about mobility is that it's best tackled with multiple approaches



12

YOUR NEW GO-TO EXERCISES

We've touched on the basics of mobility, why it's important, potential problem areas in the body



24

WRAPPING IT UP

I'm hoping that you've learned two things from this book.



AN OVERLOOKED ASPECT OF FITNESS



Let's face it: we're a society obsessed with looking all kinds of sexy. We thrive on buzz phrases like lean muscle, hard abs, and slim figure. I hate to generalize, but if you don't believe me, just grab the latest issue of Fitness Magazine XYZ off the shelf and see for yourself. This line of thinking is everywhere.

Of course, the people who love fitness – and really take the time to sink their teeth into it – know that there's much more to the equation. I'm not disputing that the average person wouldn't be happy achieving lean muscle, hard abs, or a slim figure, but fitness isn't just about being lean. It's also about being strong, powerful, conditioned, and prepared for the activities of daily living.

Even if people manage to look past the buzz words to any of those aspects, there's still something missing. With so much attention given to the more enjoyable and rewarding sides of the fitness game, it's easy to glide right by the little details – the stuff that doesn't seem like it matters, but plays a much larger role than most will ever realize.

Just in case the title didn't give it away, I'm talking about mobility. This term is frequently misunderstood and as a result, largely ignored, at least by the everyday gym goer. I feel like I'm stating the obvious, but that's not okay. A significant part of the problem is that there's still not enough information about how to tackle this overlooked area of fitness, or even what it is and why you should pay attention to it.

We're going to crush that in this book, but we have to start from the beginning.



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UNLIKE OTHER FITNESS ATTRIBUTES LIKE STRENGTH AND POWER, MOBILITY IS OFTEN TRAINED SIMPLY BY DOING MOVEMENT.

WHAT IS MOBILITY?



My aim with this book isn't to go into deep and confusing detail about anything. Instead, I'd much rather arm you with a practical understanding that allows you to put theory into practice. That means you don't have to worry about reading through walls of difficult words and confusing theories – go ahead, rejoice. I won't discourage you from seeking out more complex information if you find that you love mobility, but it's not at all necessary.

With that said, let's jump into the most basic facets of mobility. At its root, mobility describes the ability to comfortably move through a full range of motion. It doesn't necessarily center around a single joint or a single muscle. Rather, it's concerned with being able to move in a more general sense. Pain-free, functionally, and fully.

I bet I can guess what you're thinking: isn't that flexibility? You're right, but you're wrong at the same time – and I mean that in the nicest way. Try to think of flexibility as a component of mobility. You can be exceptionally flexible in a certain muscle group, but not be able to move through the full range of motion of an exercise that uses that muscle group. Mobility takes into account a host of other factors, making it more dynamic in nature.

Unlike other fitness attributes like strength and power, mobility is often trained simply by doing movement. Any movement. This is a big plus, and certainly makes achieving adequate levels of mobility that much easier. And trust me – you want good mobility, and I'm about to tell you why.

WHY IS MOBILITY IMPORTANT?

At this point, I wouldn't blame you for still not caring about mobility. I get it – it's just not that exciting, and it doesn't seem that important. I've met plenty of people with poor mobility in certain areas that get along just fine. It's kinda like, why mess with something that isn't creating pain?

I have a hard time arguing with that, and honestly, sometimes it's better to leave it be. But, more often than not, it's going to come back to bite you – and it's gonna bite hard – later in life. While poor mobility isn't always the culprit, it is responsible for a lot of the tweaks and twinges that the average person experiences during movement. In many ways, it's a precursor to good movement.

I'll roll through a short example to give you an idea of what I mean. Let's pretend you're in your kitchen, trying to grab something from the highest cabinet. You're on your tippy-toes, reaching as far as you can. You're almost there, but then something occurs to you: this really hurts. It hurts, even though you hit the gym at least twice a week. Well, what gives?

As it turns out, you're a desk-worker, too. You spend most of your day hunched over a keyboard in a position that ultimately hinders movement. After years of sitting at a desk, you've lost a big chunk of mobility in your upper back and the surrounding areas.

If you're don't start to deal with this problem, you're probably going to end up like this:

Believe it or not, that's not just a symptom of old age. If you pay attention to your movement quality and take action to improve it early in life, you're going to be better off as you age. That's all there it so it.



MOBILITY PROBLEM AREAS

It's important to maintain good levels of mobility across your entire body, but there are a number of "problem areas" that tend to require the most attention. As you might expect, they're centered around major joints that play a large role in daily life. They are, in no particular order: the shoulder; the thoracic spine; the hip; and the ankle. I won't spend too much time here, and I definitely don't want to limit how you view mobility, but breaking a tough concept down into pieces is a good strategy for understanding it.



LET'S TAKE A QUICK LOOK AT THESE MAJOR PLAYERS.



SHOULDER

The shoulder is really a series of joints, and not all of them are meant to be mobile. I won't go into that, but just know that good shoulder mobility is an essential part of any activity that has you reaching, raising, or rotating your arms.

THORACIC SPINE

The spine isn't usually seen as being mobile, but parts of it are. The Thoracic Spine – or T-Spine, for short – is a mobile portion of the spine. Remember our example from earlier – the office worker slumped over the keyboard? That's a perfect example of the T-Spine being mobile, although in the wrong direction.

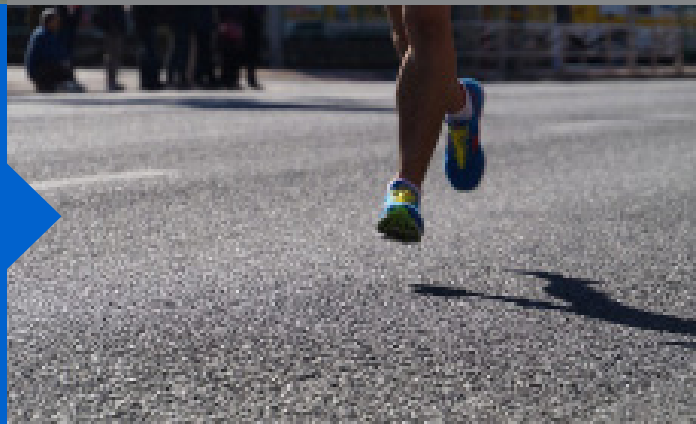


HIP

Your hips create all kinds of movement. They're an essential part of movements like walking, sitting, standing, and kneeling. With poor hip mobility, one (or more) of these movements will eventually start to suffer.

ANKLE

Your ankles take part in many of the same actions as your hips, and that shouldn't be surprising. They're also play a major role in mitigating impact during running and jumping movements. Hint: that's super important.



Understand that mobility is certainly not limited to these areas. Remember, it's more of a general term that describes your ability to move through a wide range of activities. These four areas, however, are generally considered to be mobile – they're designed to move. If you sit down and think about your day, you'll probably realize that you move all of them quite a bit.

METHODS FOR BUILDING MOBILITY

One of the most important things to understand about mobility is that it's best tackled with multiple approaches. If you want to get stronger on the bench press, you have to bench press, right? But there's more to it – you also have to strengthen the individual components that help you press more weight. You do triceps, delt, chest, and upper back work, too.

Well, mobility is the same way. At least until you know what the root cause of your problem is, it's best to implement more than one strategy on your quest to improve your mobility.

There are three primary ways to promote mobility: static stretching; dynamic stretching; and soft tissue work. I won't go into deep detail about each of them, but I'll take a second to touch on the basics.

Static stretching is as it sounds – stretching in a static position. It used to be a big deal and just about everyone did it to improve flexibility. Major fitness organizations and fitness professionals from around the globe recommended it. Over time, however, we've learned that static stretching isn't always the best option. While it's still an effective way of increasing length in a specific tissue, it's not the only way.

Enter **dynamic stretching**. It's a perfect expansion on the idea that mobility presents a big picture view of movement, and that flexibility is only one component of it. Unlike static stretching, dynamic stretching adds movement to a stretch. In other words, it's a stretch that does a better job of mimicking muscle use in situations that you might encounter in everyday life.

Finally, there's **soft tissue work**. It's known in the industry as myofascial release, but more commonly referred to as foam rolling. The idea is that by creating pressure on your soft tissue - with a foam roller or lacrosse ball or other hard object – you can ease out knots that restrict movement.





MOBILITY IS ALL ABOUT GOOD MOVEMENT, AND YOU CAN'T HAVE GOOD MOVEMENT IF YOU DON'T MOVE IN THE FIRST PLACE. DON'T FORGET THAT.

All of these methods are viable options for increasing your mobility. It's possible that one will be more effective than others, but it's highly dependent on your personal situation. As with many other aspects of fitness, experimentation is part of the process – try everything, then narrow it down to what works the best.

I do have one final bit to say about methods for improving mobility. Stretching and soft tissue work are great options, but sometimes the answer is much simpler. Sometimes you just need to get out and move more. Mobility is all about good movement, and you can't have good movement if you don't move in the first place. Don't forget that.

YOUR NEW GO-TO EXERCISES

THIS SECTION DETAILS
TEN EXERCISES THAT
CAN HELP YOU IMPROVE
YOUR MOBILITY.





We've touched on the basics of mobility, why it's important, potential problem areas in the body, and methods for moving better. Now that you're armed with the theory, it's time to expand into action.

This section details ten exercises that can help you improve your mobility. You need to know that this is a broad approach that doesn't center on any single muscle or joint group. I like to think that this exercise selection is balanced and touches on the major areas, but it's far from perfect.

Which Exercises Should I Do?

I'd say it's pretty likely that most, if not all, of these exercises are worth doing, regardless of your current situation. But, in an ideal world, you'll take the time to browse the list and choose the movements that are most applicable to your situation. If you have hip problems, you'll probably benefit from doing the Hip CAR exercise. On the other hand, if you struggle with upper back problems, you might want to start with the T-Spine Roller and Mid-Pushup Hold.

Frequency

You can do these exercises as often as you want. Typically, mobility exercises are low-intensity and won't interfere with any pre-existing workout program. Do them consistently, do them at a low volume, and don't use them to try to beat yourself up.

Sets & Reps

Aim for one or two sets of each exercise during your mobility sessions. One set works well as a warm-up, but don't think you can't use two if you need the extra work. As for reps, they vary quite a bit. I'd recommend using time instead – go for 30 to 60 seconds per exercise.



TOY SOLDIER

What It Does: Gives you a nice stretch through your entire posterior chain – basically, from your upper back down to your ankles.

How-To: Start in a standing position. Kick one leg out in front of you, making sure to keep it as straight as you can. As you kick, reach with your opposite arm and try to touch your foot. Alternate sides as you go.

HIP CAR

What It Does: Takes you through all of the major hip movements – flexion, external rotation, internal rotation, and extension – in one motion.

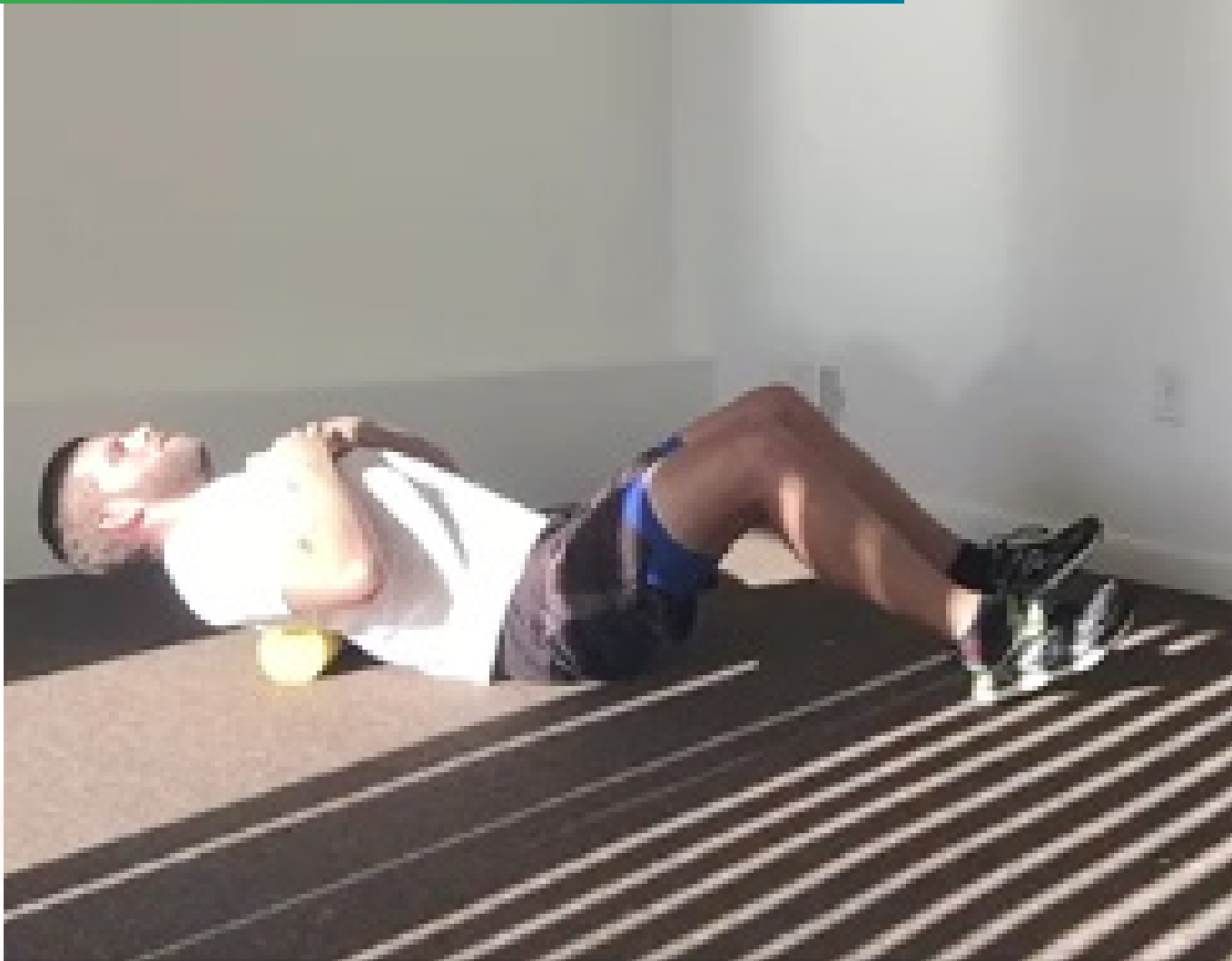
How-To: Stand in front of a wall and press your hands flat against it. Flex one hip to pull your knee up towards your chest. Now, while holding this position, move your leg out to the side as far as you can – that's external rotation. For internal rotation, push your knee towards the floor and raise your feet away from the floor. Finally, for extension, push your leg straight back behind you.



T-SPINE ROLLER

What It Does: Improves the ability of your thoracic spine to extend, or bend backwards. The pressure from the foam roller also constitutes a mild form of soft tissue work, and that's always a plus.

How-To: Grab a foam roller and place it on the floor. Lay down on top of it so that it's horizontal and flat against your mid-back. Keeping your lower back nice and flat, push against the foam roller so that your upper back moves closer to the floor. Keep going as long as it's comfortable. Slide the foam roller up your back in tiny intervals, repeating at each spot.





ROCKING ANKLE

What It Does: Works your core while taking your ankles through the full range of motion.

How-To: Drop down into a pushup position. Place one ankle on top of the other, so that only one foot is touching the floor. Use the top foot to push down on the bottom foot, with the end goal of touching your bottom heel to the floor. You'll have to adjust your feet forward or backward to find the sweet spot.





GROINER WITH REACH

What It Does: Mobilizes two big areas – your hips (with the step) and your thoracic spine (with the twist and reach).

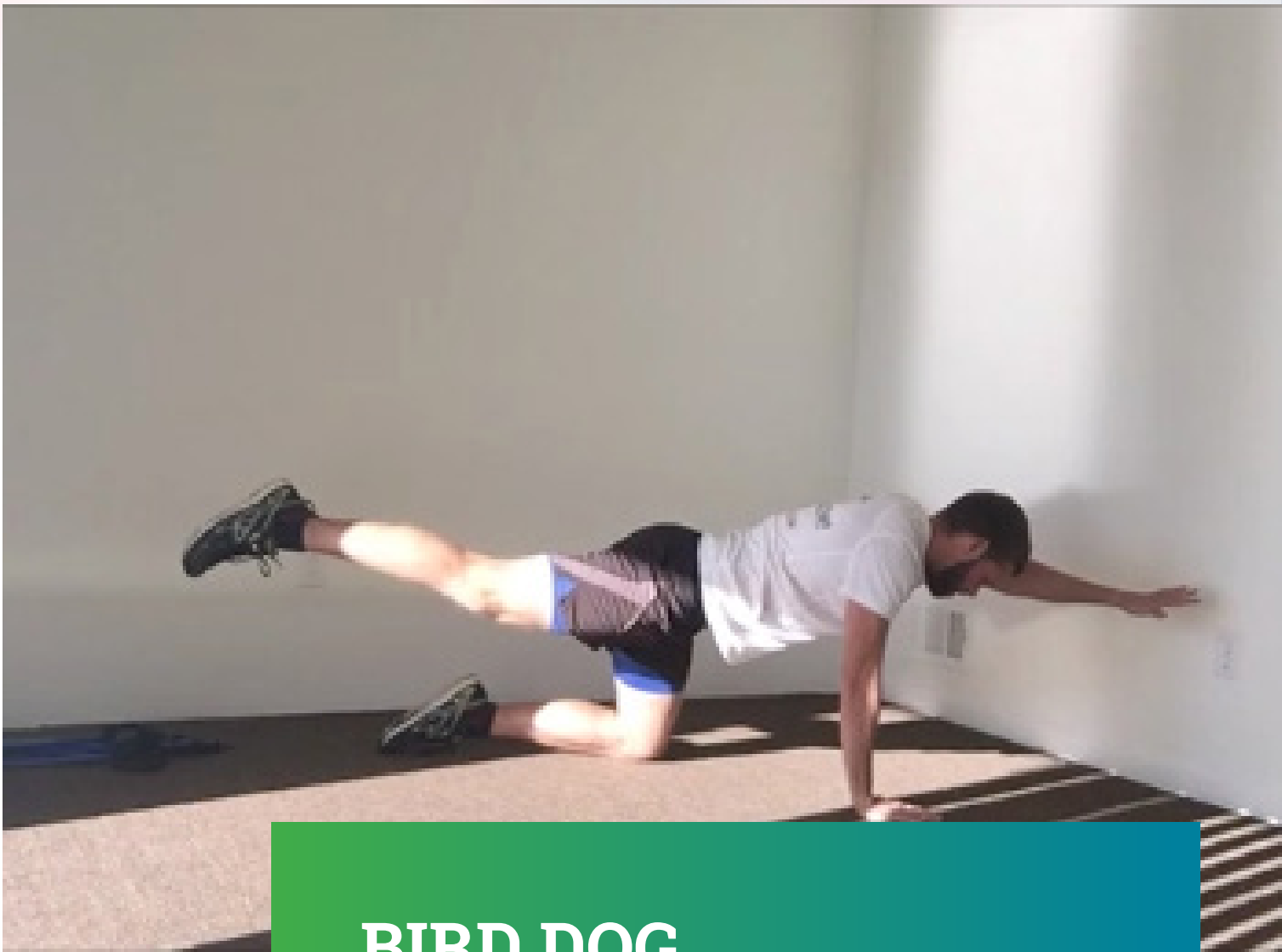
How-To: Start by getting into a pushup position. From here, pull one foot up as far as you can – try to pull it all the way to your chest – and place it flat on the floor. Now, with the hand on the same side,



SEATED 90/90

What It Does: Stretches out tight muscles in your hips.

How-To: Sit down on a box or chair. Grab one foot and pull it over the opposite knee, letting your ankle rest on your knee. Gently pull up on your foot while pushing down on your other knee.



BIRD DOG

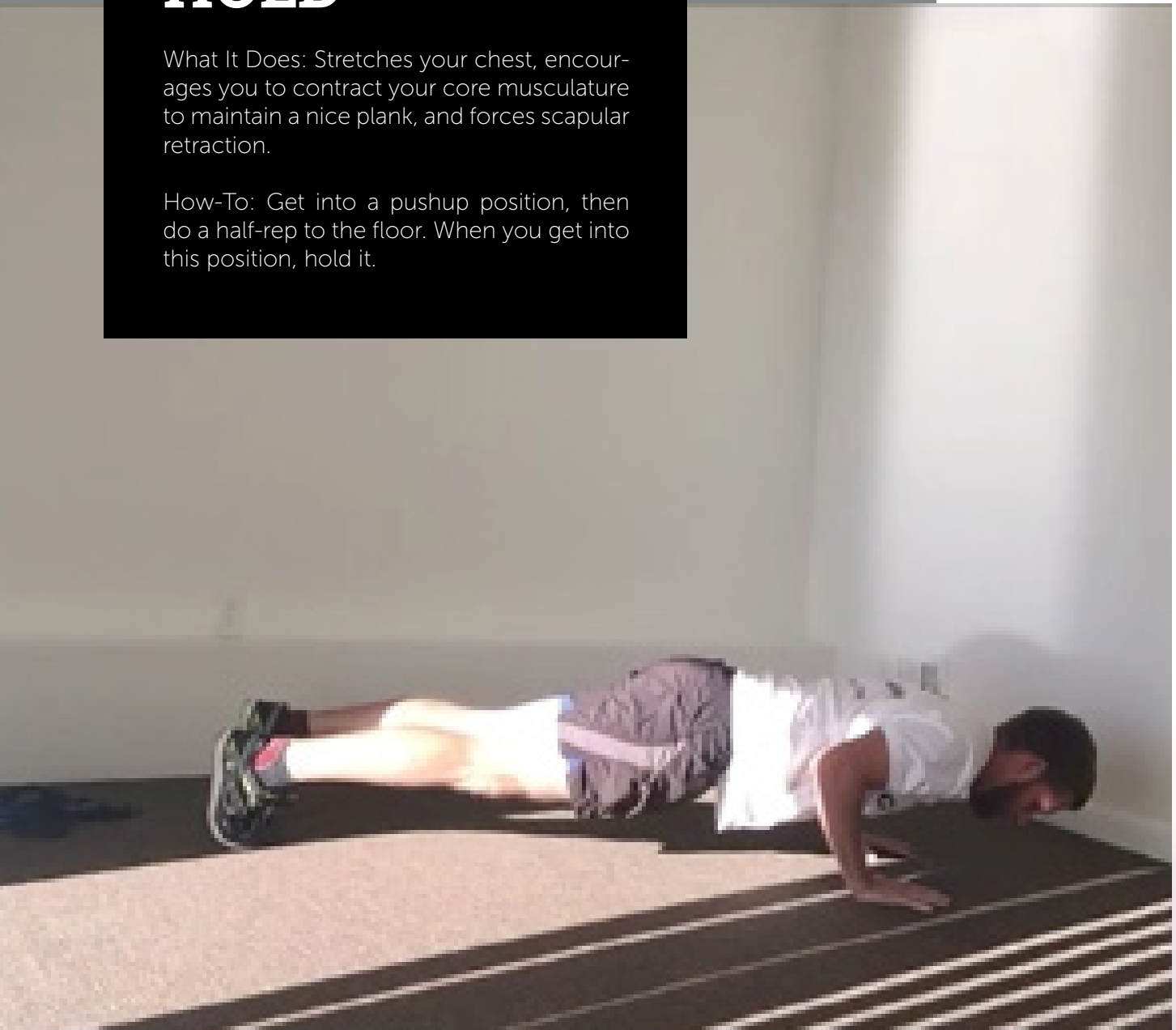
What It Does: Activates your glutes and teaches you what it feels like to extend your hips with the right muscles.

How-To: Get down on the floor on all fours – this is called the quadruped position. Slowly extend one leg out behind you, using your glutes. At the same time, extend the opposite arm out in front of you. You should be able to draw a straight line from your hand, across your back, to your foot. You'll alternate sides as you go.

MID-PUSHUP HOLD

What It Does: Stretches your chest, encourages you to contract your core musculature to maintain a nice plank, and forces scapular retraction.

How-To: Get into a pushup position, then do a half-rep to the floor. When you get into this position, hold it.

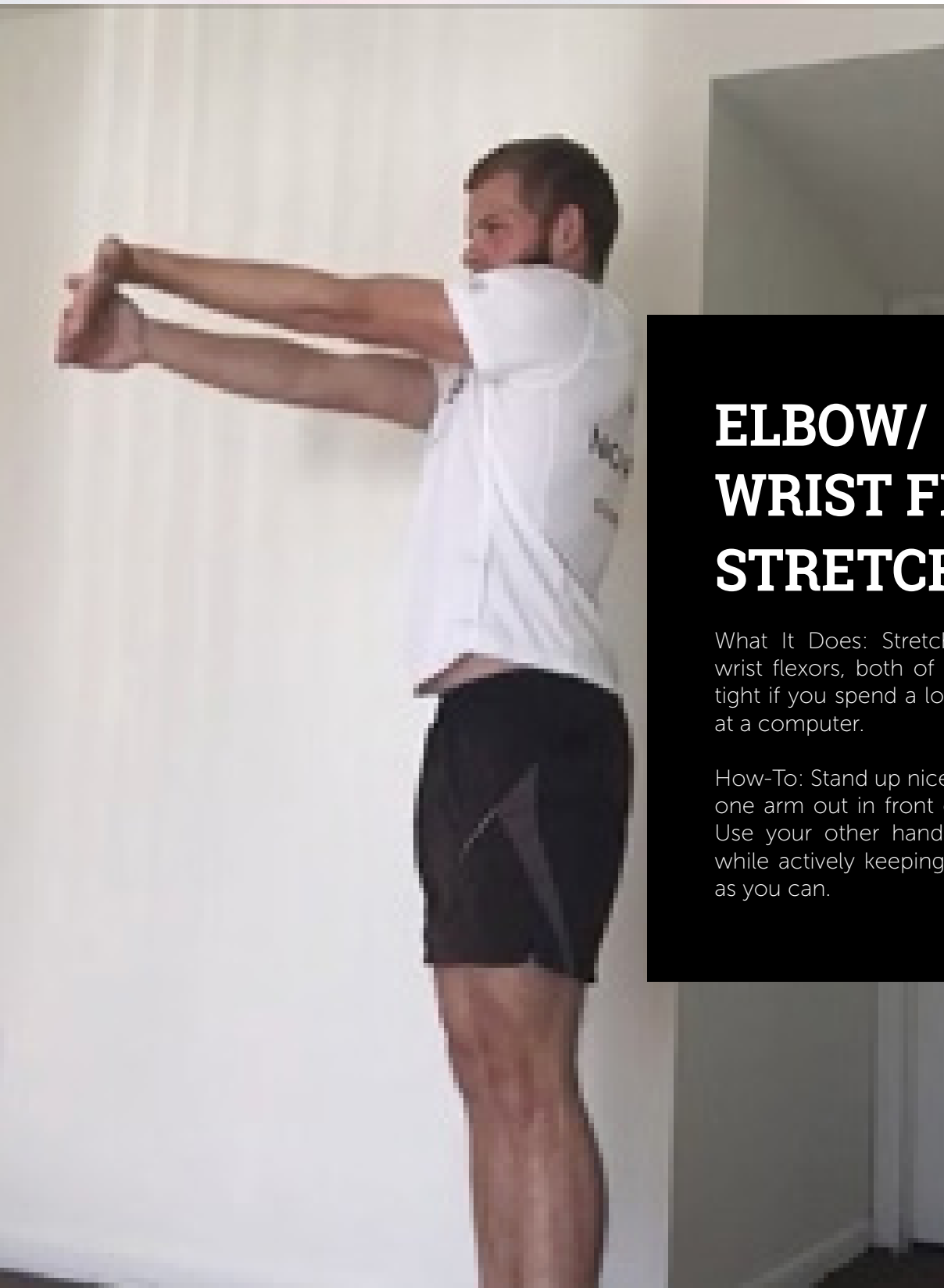


DOOR- WAY PEC STRETCH

What It Does: Stretches the muscles of your chest

How-To: Stand in the middle of a doorway and hold one arm up in the shape of an L. Press the arm to the wall on one side of the doorway. Now, take a small step forward and start to turn your body away from your raised arm.





ELBOW/ WRIST FLEXOR STRETCH

What It Does: Stretches your elbow and wrist flexors, both of which can get pretty tight if you spend a lot of time typing away at a computer.

How-To: Stand up nice and tall, then stretch one arm out in front of you with palm up. Use your other hand to pull your fingers while actively keeping your arm as straight as you can.



WRAPPING IT UP

I'm hoping that you've learned two things from this book. First, that mobility is worth spending the time to improve. You now know that it plays a role in just about everything you do in life – don't take that lightly. And second, that mobility doesn't have to be complicated. It certainly can be, but that shouldn't be its default state.

Also, please understand that this is just one view of mobility. The fitness industry is packed with wildly diverse people with even wilder differences of opinion. I think the information here creates a great starting foundation, but I encourage you to seek out other sources, too. Absorb what those people say, pick out the useful bits, and combine it with what you read here. That's probably the best way to approach fitness, regardless of the subject.

