

## Pilates Balance Ball exercise routine – 30 mins

The Balance ball can be used to activate the deep abdominal muscles through balance and to gently extend the range of movement through the spine enabling it to lengthen and the back muscles to release.

### STANDING – Warm up

1. Shoulder circles
2. Neck rolls
3. Balancing on to toes with arms sweeping up and down
4. Roll downs
5. Side stretches
6. Dumb waiter
7. The Twist
8. Place ball behind low back and lean on ball against a wall then bend knees forwards to 'slide down the wall' with arms sweeping out in front ( +weights)

### MAT WORK

#### Breathing to focus

Lie in the relaxation position and then focus your **in-breath** down in to the **side of the ribs**. Then begin to '**hollow**' the deep abdominal muscle, starting from just above the pubic bone, with your **out-breath**. As you breathe out fully through your mouth, try to get a sense of how the abdominals lift from the pelvic floor and draw in towards your spine gently but deeply. Draw your deep abdominals in further as the exhalation tapers out and wait for the in-breath to come naturally to you; letting the air in through your nose.

#### 1. Spine curls

3 pelvic tilts then 3 further spine curls up to bridge position

*Observe the movement and 'feel' of your spine and shoulders.*

Hip rolls - from side to side (x 6)

#### 2. Leg slide variations (co-ordination)

*Lying on your back, place ball under both feet to roll it away in a straight line.*

Double leg slides with both arms sweeping over head & circling back to the side (x4)

*Place ball under left foot only with right foot resting on floor, knees bent.*

Single leg slides on left foot with knee folds on right foot (x 4 – then swap)

Single leg slides with knee folds and arms sweep over head (x 4).

#### 3. Knee fold variations (balance)

*Place ball under low back and pelvis so that they are supported as you lie in a (spine curl) bridge position with your neck and shoulders relaxed into the floor.*

Knee folds (alternate L and R knees x 4)

Knee fold with opposite arm sweeping over head (x 4). Variations: same arm same leg, or arms folded across chest and just kneefolds etc.

Knee fold into leg stretch to ceiling then straight leg lower toward floor (x 4 each leg)

Double knee folds (x 3) into double leg stretch to ceiling (x 3)

*Remove the ball* - Spine curls (x 3) to observe your movement.

#### 4. Abdominal exercises

*Place ball under mid back between shoulder blades, tailbone now down on floor so that you are reclining on the ball like a cushion behind you.*

Curl up (x 6)

Curl up and twist (obliques) (x 6)

*Aim to stretch over the ball as you return - as long as it feels comfortable to do so.*

*Keep elbows in view and neck soft!*

Roll up and forwards to come off the ball, then roll back carefully onto the ball (x 3)

Now straighten legs and squeezing inner thighs together roll up and back again (x 3).

*Remove the ball - Spine curls (x 3) to observe your movement.*

#### 5. Back & leg exercises

*Roll onto your front and place ball at the top of thighs or further up onto pubic bone if comfortable. Need to keep abdominals engaged through out this set.*

Cobra (x 4)

Heel squeezes (8 feet flexed, 8 feet pointed)) – Elbows under shoulders to support your body

Double heel kicks (x 4)

Lie over the ball (so its just under your pelvis) to ‘open’ and stretch your back.

#### 6. Side exercises

*Sit on side and place ball to the side, under the heel of outstretched hand.*

Roll ball away from hips (x3)

Extend top leg and top arm to stretch out as you roll ball away from hips (x3)

*Place ball next to hip under side of waist and lie over ball on your side to rest your elbow on floor (in line with hip) and head in hand.*

Side lifts - slide top arm down thigh of outstretched top leg to bring supporting elbow off floor (x4)

Stretch both arms over head, lying over the ball & breathe into upmost part of ribcage.

*Now lying on your side, bend top knee to a right angle in front of you and place ball under that knee for support. Straighten the underneath leg.*

Inner thigh lifts (x 10) – lift and lower the underneath leg with keeping the foot flexed

#### 7. Release/relax exercises

*Place ball under neck and shoulders so that you can look straight at ceiling (not forwards or backwards)*

Reach arms out wide moving to reach arms slowly from side to side sliding them along the floor.

Shoulder circles with tips of fingers on front tips of shoulders.

Chin tucks on the ball.

Neck Rolls from side to side.

*Remove the ball - Spine curls (x 3) to observe the movement of your spine. If you feel a ‘space’ where the ball has been, see if you can mobilise your spine into that space.*

Please note: whilst you are working with out the guidance of a teacher; home practice is your responsibility. Please don't attempt an exercise that you are unfamiliar with and discontinue exercising if you feel discomfort or pain. These exercises require a degree of core stability and may not bet suitable for beginners.