

What is Balance Training and why we NEED it?

Balance is one of the most important skills we need in our lives. Yet, it's the one skill that most people lack.

Balance becomes more and more important as we age. Improving balance helps us move better! It can also improve athletic performance and prevent injuries. Here's an example of how it could prevent an injury: Pretend you are walking or jogging and you step on a stone that throws off your balance. If you have practiced balance training, your muscles would have been trained to react faster to that instability and prevent you from falling or spraining your ankle.

Equipment like Stability balls/Swiss ball, the BOSU trainer, dyno discs, etc. all create that instability which causes more muscles to activate than if you were just standing on a stable surface. Even sitting on a stability ball will activate your core muscles. When you use this equipment, you will find the movement to be a whole lot tougher. It is because the unstable nature of your base requires you to use a host of muscles that would never otherwise be engaged. I trained athletes that have never been on a BOSU. (First of all...what is BOSU? It's the one that looks like a half stability ball with a platform on the bottom). Their first time doing a squat on a BOSU makes their legs shake like crazy. They are surprised to learn how challenging it is to keep balance while on the BOSU! It has to be learned like any new skill.

And guess what? You don't have to use any equipment to start balance training. You can start with **SINGLE LEG** exercises such as lifting one foot off the ground and balancing. Any strength training exercise can include balance training by just using single leg or single arm movements. It shifts your center of mass and forces the core muscles to work more.

Balance Training has many benefits, but these are the two I think are most important.

1. Balance training improves reaction time and prevents injuries.

When your balance is compromised, you don't have time to think – you simply have to react to prevent a fall or injury. Movements become more efficient as a result of balance training. Studies have showed that balance training can significantly reduce the incidence of ACL soccer injuries and other sports related injuries.

2. Balance training will strengthen your core muscles – Your core is where all movement originates from. When you train for balance, you are working the stabilizer muscles of your trunk (part of the core) which helps alleviate strain on your lower back. Core strength and balance go hand in hand, when you improve one, the other improves as well.

So now you can see how important it is to incorporate Balance Training in your life! Any questions email focus1onfitness@gmail.com and I'd be happy to answer your questions.