



# A Step Above

## Personal Training Concepts

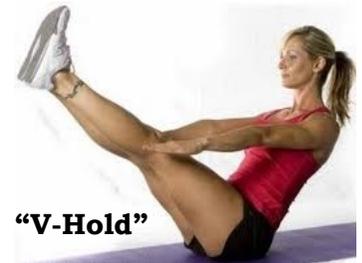
True enjoyment comes from activity of the mind and exercise of the body; the two are united.

~ Alexander von Humboldt



*Jinjer's Thoughts:*

**FLEX ...  
HOLD ...  
MOVE SLOW**



“V-Hold”

Just reading those words will make you sweat! Taking routine exercises and simply changing the way you do them can really increase muscular fatigue and build core strength in your workout. The picture above (far-right) illustrates isometric and static strength training all in one. Isometric exercises, a form of resistant training, involve muscular actions of the body to exert a force either against an immovable object or to hold the muscle in a fixed position for a set duration of time -- the length of the muscle does not change, and there is no visible movement at the joint.

This exercise can yield a great full-body toning and strengthening of core muscles. If you already know how to perform this exercise, then maybe rethink some things such as the body works harder if you do this exercise slowly. Slow, controlled movement while tensing (not only the muscles causing the movement, but also the opposing muscles, which has a braking effect) is an effective way to exercise. When doing the exercise, focus on contracting the muscles in your quads, abs, shoulders, and chest as you balance and reach toward your legs or shins in order to achieve

height. When holding this position, upon lowering your legs you should feel all those muscles contracting and fighting to stabilize your body for balance. Try to hold the position for about five to ten seconds until your body is able to do the movement smoothly.

**CAUTION BEGINNERS!** Due to the possibility of straining the lower back, this exercise should be done with caution or under the supervision of a personal trainer/fitness instructor. Beginners should work only one part of the exercise at a time. Example: Begin with the leg lift. Start by placing the hands behind the back, fingers pointing out to the side on the floor in order to assist in supporting body weight and learning to balance on your butt. Lift either one leg at a time or both no more than 6 to 8 inches from the ground, hold for about 5 seconds, and then slowly lower legs back to the ground. Repeat and incrementally progress the

height of lift (45-degree angle), as the body gets stronger. Incorporate the hands after you have trained the lower half of the body. **NOTE:** It is common for inexperienced individuals to hold their breath during these types of exercises. Breathing is important during static strength training. If someone is inexperienced, middle aged or elderly, holding their breath can be dangerous and can cause a considerable amount of internal pressure creating a spike in blood pressure and possibly tearing or pulling a muscle contingent to the amount of force being applied.

Why are isometric exercises and static strength training good for the body? “**Isometric**” or “**static**” muscle action involves contractions of a particular muscle or group of muscles with **NO** change in muscle length or movement at the joint. Example: Sit in a chair or on the floor with your legs

*(continued on next page)*

*FLEX, HOLD, MOVE SLOW (Continued)*

extended and flex your quad muscles (thighs) slowly. Hold the contraction about 5 or 10 seconds then relax and release slowly. After a few times of this you should start feeling your legs getting tired. The key is flex slow, hold, then release slowly. You can apply this same concept by moving your legs to a bent position, holding that position or joint angle, and repeating the same static action. As you get more familiar with your body, this can really be fun, challenging and tiring all at the same time.

I sometimes use isometric training with clients who have never exercised to get them more familiar with their muscles. It is a great teaching tool to use prior to training someone on how to lift weights. Using each muscle group, teaching them to contract and release -- holding only a few seconds and doing only a few sets to avoid muscle spasms. In fitness programs, this is great way to follow a warm up, especially if it is a weight training class. The functional exercises continue to help improve heating up the muscle tissue, to improve circulation, and to assist with core stability and balance. Once clients begin to know what the muscle should feel like (such as teaching them how to flex the bicep muscle), then they might be taught how to use their body weight as resistance.

In general, isometric exercises provide some strength gains and are great for toning the body. However, not all muscle fibers are activated during this type of muscle action, and these types of exercises can be somewhat limited; therefore, they are mostly used in rehabilitation programs. Nevertheless, it is sometimes great to use them if you have not been able to make it to the gym because of a busy schedule. On the other hand, isometric exercises using body resistance by either pushing against an immovable object (like a wall) and trying to force it away, or by holding a push up or plank position for approximately 10 to 30 seconds, can be very beneficial in increasing muscular strength.

There are several exercises out there that can really increase strength and core without worrying about gym memberships, traveling and missing your workout, or not finding enough time in the day to exercise. This type of training takes very little equipment, if any, and can improve or maintain the body just by spending 15 minutes a day of flexing and relaxing muscles. It's

also a great stress reliever. There is a plethora of ways to strengthen the body statically; needless to say the explanation of them is beyond the scope of this article. Below are some examples of static strength training exercises. Holding the position for about 10 to 30 seconds and then repeating the exercise 2 or 3 times can produce overall strength gains in fitness.



**Plank Bridge**

1. Start by lying face down on the ground. Place your elbows and forearms underneath your chest.
2. Prop yourself up to form a bridge using your toes and forearms.
3. Maintain a flat back and do not allow your hips to sag towards the ground.
4. Hold for 10-30 seconds or until you can no longer maintain a flat bridge. Repeat 2-3 times.

**Side Plank Bridge**



1. Start on your side and press up with your right arm.
2. Form a bridge with your arm extended and hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat 2-3 times.



**Hundred Breaths Exercise**

This isometric exercise is taken from Pilates and is excellent for developing static strength in the core region.

1. Lie face up on a mat with arms by your sides. Bend legs to 90 degrees. Lift your head and shoulders off mat and take 5 short, consecutive inhales, followed by 5 short, consecutive exhales.
2. At the same time, lift arms off mat and pulse them in unison with the breath palms face up on inhale and down on exhale.
3. Repeat 10 times for a total of 100 breaths.

**References:**

Howley, Edward, T., Franks, Don, B. Health Fitness Instructor's Handbook, 2003

[www.sport-fitness-advisor.com](http://www.sport-fitness-advisor.com)

**PUMPKIN SQUARES**

Whole wheat pastry flour makes these pumpkin squares light in texture, and brown sugar and, of course, pumpkin, makes them nice



and moist. Sprinkle mini chocolate chips to make the chocolatey taste spread further. *Total Time: 20 minutes*

- 1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp allspice
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup pumpkin puree (not pumpkin pie mix)
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 egg whites
- 1 tbsp canola oil
- 1/2 cup mini chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350°. Coat an 8-inch pan with nonstick cooking spray. Whisk flour, baking powder, cocoa, cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg and salt in a small bowl. In a large bowl, mix pumpkin, sugar, egg and egg whites and oil. Stir flour and spice mixture into egg and sugar mixture. Stir in chocolate chips. Empty batter into pan. Bake for 18-20 minutes. *Makes 16 squares.*

**Per Square:** Calories 63, Calories from Fat 14, Total Fat 1.5g (sat 0.3mg), Cholesterol 13mg, Sodium 30mg, Carbohydrate 10.1g, Fiber 1.5g, Protein 2.2g

**THANK YOU ...**

We (Jinjer, Missy and Elaine) would like to thank all our Boot Camp Cadets for your participation in our morning and evening Boot Camps. God Bless you all! ... We value each and every one of you and look forward to continuing to coach your fitness needs.

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