

MAMA SAID MOVE PRESENTS

THE GUIDE TO MOVING POSTPARTUM



This is my
workout bag.

WHERE TO FIND WHAT

Where to Start

Breathing 101.....4

Information Overload

Things you didn't know you needed to know.....5

Changes that happen during pregnancy.....6

The importance of good posture.....7

The pelvic floor connection.....8

Pillars of the pelvic floor.....9-10

To kegel or not to kegel.....11

Good glutes mean a happy pelvic floor.....12

What is prolapse?.....13

What to do if I have prolapse.....14

Diastasis recti.....15

Rib flare & upper ab gripping.....16

Upper ab gripping solved with mediation.....17

C-section scar and considerations.....18

Breastfeeding and exercise.....19

Checking for feedback.....20

WHERE TO FIND WHAT

Time to Work

Phase One.....	21-22
Phase Two.....	23-24
Phase Three.....	25-26
Phase Four.....	27-28
Phase Five.....	29-30
Phase Six.....	31-32

YOU DID IT.....	33
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Resources.....	34-35
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BREATHING 101

After pregnancy, breathing is more important than ever. If throughout pregnancy a continuous effort to keep the inhale down and stay connected to the pelvic floor with a good exhale wasn't made, you are probably in a paradoxical breathing pattern (breathing upwards).

The majority of women I have worked with are in an upwards breathing pattern. When relearning breathing the goal is not belly breathing but working on getting the bottom six ribs to move to the side, back, and out.

Upwards breathing causes the use of secondary muscles that often will lead to pain and tightness. By breathing upwards we can not properly engage the core or manage pressure. This will be essential to having a successful postpartum exercise journey.

Time to get to work, remember this is going to take time and practice. Be sure to work on breathing any chance you get. Whether that is breathing while lying in bed at night or working on the computer the goal is to practice, practice, practice!!!

[Breathing 101 Video](#)

THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED TO KNOW

PELVIC FLOOR, POSTURE, DIASTASIS RECTI, PROLAPSE, RIB FLARE, UPPER AB GRIPPING

This may not be your first postpartum journey, if your story is anything like mine it took a couple of pregnancies to really find my way into exercise postpartum. This program is a guide to all things postpartum, not only from my personal experience but from my experience as a postpartum corrective exercise specialist and personal trainer.

We are going to cover a lot of material but some may not apply to you. Many women live with diastasis recti and prolapse and have no idea. If you experience symptoms such as back pain, leaking or painful sex, I highly recommend a pelvic floor therapist. A physical therapist is an amazing resource in your journey back to a fit mama.

Having experienced multiple births puts you at a higher risk of pelvic floor dysfunction. This guide will help address connecting and strengthening the core and pelvic floor connection. We will work on using feedback and strategies to improve the function of both the pelvic floor and core.

Find a local pelvic floor therapist: <https://pelvicrehab.com/>

CHANGES THAT HAPPEN DURING PREGNANCY

Pregnancy takes a toll on your body. The postpartum period is filled with ups and downs and sometimes it can be overwhelming and frustrating. During pregnancy you may have experienced;

- Organ got squished and moved
- Diagram stopped working properly
- The pelvic floor had to handle tons of pressure
- Ribs moved to make more room
- Abs had to stretch out
- Back muscles tightness to counter the weight of the baby
- Posture changes increased
- Hormones changed

The postpartum period is a time to recover. Healing can occur with movement. Start with light breathing work and walking if comfortable.

I know it can be exciting to get back into your fitness routine but it is important to remember your body is healing. If you are excited about getting back into hard plyometric exercises such as running and jumping. You want to make sure to put in the proper progressions, just as you would with any healing process.

When doing exercises we will be on the constant lookout for feedback. How is your body handling pressure? Is it coming out the midline (linea alba) then take a step back. Is it causing heaviness or pressure in the pelvic, then take progression backward and build up the base strength. Feedback is key in determining what you feel up to postpartum. Exercise should not be painful or hurt do NOT push through.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD POSTURE

During pregnancy, posture changes occur rapidly. Due to weight gain and weight distribution as well as ligament laxity. Muscles will tighten to help provide stability.

Common Postural Habits:

Flared ribs

Jaw clenching

Shallow breathing

Hanging forward on hips

Standing on the outsides of feet

Collapsing arches of feet

Forward head

Rounded shoulders

Breathing is key. A good 360 breathing pattern can help relieve forward head posture, jaw clenching, flared ribs, and shallow breathing. Serratus anterior is the key muscle to help reduce shoulder and neck pain as well as aid in postpartum recovery. As well as spine mobility which is addressed with breathing and exercises like cat and cow.

Did you know maintaining a good posture can burn up to 300 calories a day? Good posture takes work, it also takes a certain amount of strength.

THE PELVIC FLOOR CONNECTION

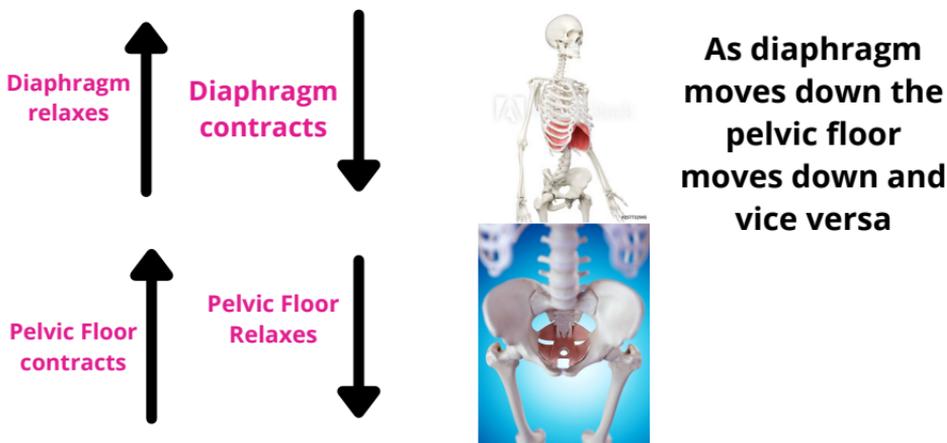
Breathing and the Pelvic Floor

When thinking about the relationship between the diaphragm (breathing muscle) and pelvic floor, you can think about it as a canister or piston.

As you breathe in the diaphragm contracts downward, this increases the intra-abdominal pressure pushing on the pelvic floor causing it to lengthen.

As you breathe out the diaphragm moves upward to its original position and the pelvic floor also moves upward to its resting position.

How intra-abdominal pressure impacts your pelvic floor is dependent on a lot of factors. Diastasis recti and posture are two factors that influence the movement of pressure within the canister. When not managed correctly intra-abdominal pressure can cause pelvic floor dysfunction.



PILLARS OF THE PELVIC FLOOR

How to make the pelvic floor happy (no leaks or pressure). Are you ready to go for a run? Jump on a trampoline? Do box jumps?

Did you know that being postpartum doesn't necessarily mean your pelvic floor has a low tone? It is normal to assume that your pelvic floor would be hypotonic postpartum this is a pelvic floor that is weak and has low muscle tone.

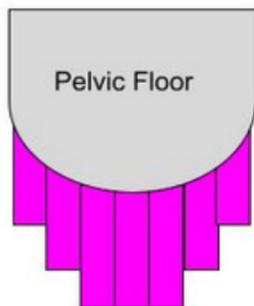
A pelvic floor that is weak in terms of muscle tone aka hypotonic. The goal is to connect with and get those muscles working again. You can also experience leaking with a hypotonic pelvic floor. The focus is placed on the exhale, really working the pelvic floor trying to get it up from the basement to the first floor.

A pelvic floor that is tight (hypertonic) is often also weak. The goal is to get it to relax and then contract. This means really focusing on the inhale working the pelvic floor into the basement since it likes to hang out on the first floor. A hypertonic pelvic floor can cause leaking and pain with intercourse.



PILLARS OF THE PELVIC FLOOR

The pillars of the pelvic floor are everything at play for a happy pelvic floor. If any particular support is not working correctly, it can hinder the function of the pelvic floor.



Seven Supports For a Happy Pelvic Floor

1. Posture
2. Pressure Management
3. Pelvic Position
4. Pelvic Floor
5. Diaphragm
6. Arch Strength
7. Hip Muscles

TO KEGEL OR NOT TO KEGEL

Our body knows it is the strongest when we bear down, but postpartum we have to take extra care to protect the pelvic floor.

The pelvic floor and lower transverse abdominus are separate groups of muscles. They are very hard to work in isolation, they love to work together.

In any movement, we want to make sure to fully relax the pelvic floor. Imagine walking around holding a bicep curl all day, that is what it would be like to constantly contract the pelvic floor.

The cue, I like is to think about picking up a blueberry and then putting it back down.

There is a time and place for isolation. Just like any muscle in the body, when there is weakness isolation can be important. The pelvic floor is tricky in terms of determining if it is weak or tight. A pelvic PT can be super beneficial to determine if you are either!

Weakness or tightness does make a difference when cueing exercises! When experiencing tightness, the focus is on the inhale down to get the pelvic floor to relax. When experiencing weakness, the focus is on the exhale to engage the pelvic floor.

When we don't use muscles we lose that pathway, or the ability to contract that muscle, throughout pregnancy many pathways are challenged. So it is time to reconnect and build up the neuromuscular pathway and connect to the pelvic floor.

GOOD GLUTES MEAN A HAPPY PELVIC FLOOR

Let's talk about the glutes aka the butt. Do you know who loves some good glutes? That's right the pelvic floor. To have good glutes here is a great place to start.

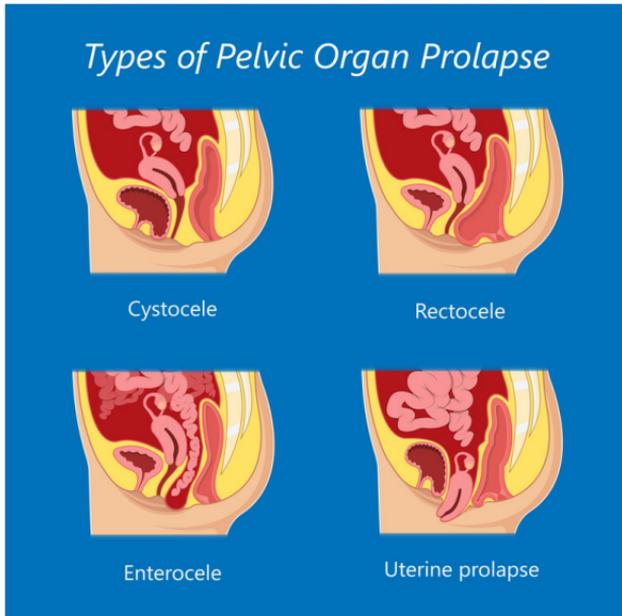
1. Stop Clenching- Bring awareness to the tension you are holding in the glutes. A tight muscle is a weak muscle, so check in are you holding tension in your glutes?
2. Lengthen the glutes during exercise, really focus on sitting into the squat, and keeping the back flat during deadlifts.
3. Contract the glutes, making the ugly butt at the top of the exercise. Be sure to not go past pelvic neutral (throwing the hips forward) but rather focus on activating the glutes and keeping a neutral pelvis.



Glutes play a major role in the position of pelvis. They are responsible for an anterior, neutral, or posterior tilt.

WHAT IS PROLAPSE?

You may or may not have heard of prolapse. Up to 50% of women will experience prolapse. Often times it is felt like something in the vagina or heaviness or full sensation. This is the pelvic organs moving into the vaginal canal or rectum.



WHAT TO DO IF I HAVE PROLAPSE

In my own experience with prolapse, it was a mixed emotion of scared, confused, and lonely. The truth is though that 8% of women who have never had a child have had a uterine prolapse and 48% of women that had a vaginal delivery have had a uterine prolapse. If you find any comfort in those numbers, I hope it shows you that you are in fact NOT alone.

Healing with prolapse my first and foremost recommendation is to get in touch with a Pelvic PT. The start of the feeling process is the most vulnerable and sensitive to setbacks but also where a lot of progress can be made.

In exercise, we want to focus on

1. Not bearing down and figuring out how to control the intra-abdominal pressure.
2. Staying tall and lengthening the torso
3. Keep connected to the breath
4. Meet your body where it is avoid pushing the limits

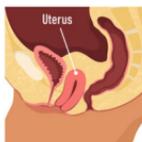
STAGES OF UTERINE PROLAPSE



Normal Anatomy



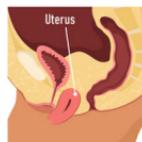
Stage 1 - the uterus is in the upper half of the vagina



Stage 2 - the uterus has descended nearly to the opening of the vagina



Stage 3 - the uterus protrudes out of the vagina



Stage 4 - the uterus is completely out of the vagina.

DIASTASIS RECTI

Types of Diastasis Recti



Normal
rectus
abdominis



Below navel



Around navel



Above navel



Open diastasis

Let's talk diastasis recti, I promise this is not as scary as it sounds. As a fact, you have probably experienced diastasis recti (DR) at the end of pregnancy. It is the body's way to make room. Up to 33% of women will experience DR at 12 months postpartum.

DR is the separation of the rectus abdominis (6-pack muscles). The tissues that run down the middle (linea alba) will stretch to accommodate the growing baby.

In the postpartum period, this tissue can heal and allow the 6 pack muscles to move closer (similar to a rubber band after being stretched). Sometimes this is not the case (the rubber band doesn't return to its original elasticity), though the reason is unknown there is a large genetic factor. Everyone who has DR is going to have a different experience, it is very different from individual to individual.



**Top layer (6 pack muscles)
separation occurs in the line
down the middle**

How to check for DR Video



**Deep Core (TVA) focus for
strengthen that middle and
lessen the depth of the DR check**

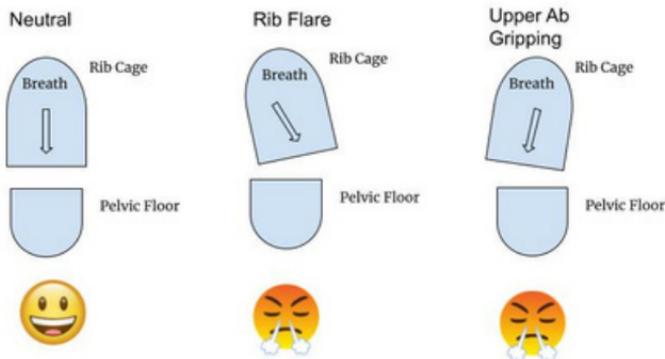
RIB FLARE & UPPER AB GRIPPING

A balanced core makes for a happy pelvic floor. This picture talks about upper ab gripping and rib flare. Both impact posture and how the pressure presses against the pelvic floor.

Upper ab gripping is when the upper TVA are engaged throughout the day. If you are like me, I carry a lot of tension in my upper abs. The best is to use biofeedback. Place your hand under your rib cage and make sure it is soft at different times throughout the day especially when you are feeling a little extra stress.

Rib flare occurs during pregnancy as the ribs spread to make room for the baby. This causes pressure to be placed on the front of the pelvic floor. Working on "HA" breathing focusing on engaging those intercostal muscles and moving the ribs down and in to bring the core back in balance.

Rib Flare Check Video



UPPER AB GRIPPING SOLVED WITH MEDIATION

I know, I know, you have heard this probably a million times "you need to relax". My type-A personality says NO WAY I have a million things to get done.

Did you know the tension you are holding could be slowing your recovery? Especially if you are an upper ab gripper, holding all that tension in the abs is putting more pressure on your pelvic floor hindering your progress.

I have found meditation the easiest, quickest way to release tension. Take 10 minutes a day to lay on your back. I want you to start at your eyes, bring attention to your eyes then let them go. Move up the head then all the way down to the toes, bring attention to each body part then let it sink into the floor.

C-SECTION SCAR AND CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to remember you just underwent major abdominal surgery. This may increase the return time to exercise by a couple of weeks versus a vaginal birth. It is important to wait until you are ready and comfortable. A great way to start is with breathing exercises. The core will be weak, with surgery the abdominal wall shuts down and scar tissue will also add to recovery time. Having patience (though can be difficult and frustrating) is key to success.

Scar mobility with any surgery is super important. In my experience working with women who have had a c-section scar tissue can cause many issues. The layers of skin and muscle will attach, which can make laying down and doing core exercises uncomfortable. Starting with desensitization to make a connection with the scar. Then move on to scar tissue massage and mobilization (getting that scar to move in all directions).

Scar Mobility Video



BREASTFEEDING AND EXERCISE

Breastfeeding matters! You will experience ligament laxity due to hormone imbalances. Estrogen is still low which helps with healing. You can make progress while breastfeeding, the most important thing to do is to listen to your body.

Many women worry about their supply during exercise, but several studies have shown that exercise has no major impact on the production of milk. Dehydration will play a major role in milk production, making water intake that much more important in this phase of life. The more you move the more water loss, be sure to always keep a water bottle close.

CHECKING FOR FEEDBACK

If you have ever watched any of my workout videos you have probably asked yourself why is this person touching their stomach so much. When working on your abs one of the best things you can do is check for feedback.

So what are you looking for? You are looking for any coning or doming on the middle line (linea alba). This is a sign that the pressure is too much for the deep core to handle and you need to modify the exercise. You are also making sure those 6 pack muscles are not showing up too much. If the 6 pack muscles are making a grand appearance and popping out that means that the deep core is not engaged, that is a no-go. This is a signal to stop and reset. Whenever you doing ab work you want to think about keeping your stomach as flat as possible, this is a sign that the deep core is working!

This is pressure on the linea alba



We will learn how to manage this pressure so avoid that strain on the linea alba

PHASE ONE

GET THOSE RIBS MOVING

We have talked about breathing a lot, I know, but that is because I don't think I will ever be able to convey just how important it is to your postpartum journey. Enough of the talking and more of the doing. To get a good breath down and really start to stretch the pelvic floor we have to get the diaphragm moving in the right direction. We call this 360 breathing. That means getting the ribs to move in all directions. That is the goal of this phase. We will focus on mobilizing those ribs and lengthening the pelvic floor.

For questions email mamasaidmove@gmail.com

Video instructions available at mamasaidmove.com

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PHASE ONE

Equipment: None

Warm-Up

2 ROUNDS

Side-Lying Breathing 3-5 Breaths
Child Pose Breathing 3-5 Breaths

Super Set 1

2 ROUNDS

Open Book with 3 Second Hold 5 each side
Hip Flexor 30 sec each side
Cat to Table 5 reps

PHASE TWO

CONNECTING TO THE PELVIC FLOOR

You have successfully got that breath to move down!! That is amazing, it was one of the hardest parts of my journey. Now that we have lengthened the pelvic floor it is time to contract. The key to a strong muscle is two parts; lengthen and contract. For example, if I was doing a bicep curl, I would straighten my arm the bend. Imagine if you didn't do both those parts, how effective would that exercise be? What if I just kept my elbow bent the whole time? Or never actually did the curl portion of the exercise?

The goal of this phase is to connect with those pelvic floor muscles. When we don't use muscles we lose that pathway, or the ability to contract that muscle, throughout pregnancy that pathway is challenged. So it is time to reconnect and build up the neuromuscular pathway.

The focus in this phase will be the exhale, that is how we are going to connect to both the pelvic floor and those deep core muscles. Visualize pulling up a string as you exhale, let's get connected.

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Video instructions available at mamamsaidmove.com

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PHASE TWO

Equipment: Ball

Warm-Up

2 ROUNDS

90/90 Breathing (Exhale Focus) 3-5 breaths
"HA" Breathing 3 breaths

Super Set 1

2 ROUNDS

Bridge with Adductor 10
Quadrupled Ball Squeeze 10

Super Set 2

2 ROUNDS

Deadbug March with Ball Squeeze 6 each leg
Heel Slides 10 each leg
Hip Rotators 10 each leg

PHASE THREE

INHALE, EXHALE, AND WORK

Welcome and congratulations! You have mastered breathing woohoo!! We will advance this breathing adding in a little spiciness with resistance. Focus working on lengthening those glutes and untucking the butt.

Holding babies all day takes its toll on your body and strengthening those back muscles are more important than ever. Don't worry we are still working on the core in one of the most important progression thus far.

PHASE THREE

Equipment: Ball, Long Bands, Mini Bands

Warm-Up

3 ROUNDS

Deep Squat 3- 5 breaths
BW Chair Squat 10 reps

Super Set 1

2 ROUNDS

Mini Band Lat Pull Down 10 each arm
Mini Band Crossbody Row 10 each arm

Super Set 2

2 ROUNDS

Deadbug Progression 20 reps alternating
Birddog Progression 20 reps alternating

PHASE FOUR

BRINGING BACK THE BOOTY

The core work is in place, you have mastered the progressions, look at you go!! Now is the time to support that pelvic floor with some good glutes. Remember lengthening and contracting is the goal, now add a little resistance and perfection. Of course, can't let you sneak away without one more core progression. Being able to do leg lifts is the ultimate pressure control test, so don't forget to breathe!!!

To move to the next level we want to master these progressions, being able to do a single leg lift while maintaining a flat stomach shows that the deep core is able to manage the load of the single leg.

PHASE FOUR

Equipment: Mini Bands and Ball

Warm-Up

2 ROUNDS

Hands and Knees Breathing 3-5 breaths

Serratus Press 10 reps

Hover with Abductor 10 reps

Super Set 1

2 ROUNDS

Band Kick Backs 10 each leg

Banded Squat 10 each leg

Super Set 2

2 ROUNDS

Side-Lying Ball Squeeze Knee 10 each leg

Side-Lying Ball Squeeze Palm 10 each arm

Super Set 3

3 ROUNDS

Cross Body Push Dead Bug 10 each side

Single-Leg Lift Progression 10 each leg

PHASE FIVE

USING GRAVITY TO OUR ADVANTAGE

We have the booty on board, the breathing mastered and now it is time to add a little gravity to advance the core work. Anytime we move our arms or legs away from our body (such as picking up a kid) we are using our core. Core work is essential to a strong foundation, the easiest way to take it up a notch is to add a little gravity. We will start slow, in a more elevated position such as a wall before moving down to a lower surface. To round out the core work we will help address any rib flare that may have occurred during pregnancy, to make room for the baby. Working the band overhead also helps fire up the deep core!

PHASE FIVE

Equipment: Mini Bands, Long Band, and Ball

Warm-Up

2 ROUNDS

Hands and Knees Resistance 3-5 Breaths
Cross Body Long Band Pull 10 reps
Lat Walks with Mini Band 10 each leg

Super Set 1

2 ROUNDS

Elevated Hover Abductor 12 reps
Bent Knee Side Plank 10 reps each side

Super Set 2

2 ROUNDS

Wall Plank 30 sec. hold
Wall Plank Shoulder Taps 20 reps

Super Set 3

3 ROUNDS

Lying Overhead Band Pulls with "HA" breathing 8 reps
Lying Overhead Band Hold with Heel Taps 10 each leg
Overhead Band Pull with Bridge 10 reps

PHASE SIX

RESIST THE TWIST

You have made it to the final phase!!! Your hard work is paying off. The core is feeling strong we are moving from gravity to bands. Ant-rotational work will help bring together the two sides of the 6 pack muscles. Creating tension and working the mid-line is the name of game this round!! Of course, I can't let you leave me without a little booty work..;)

PHASE SIX

Equipment: Mini Bands , Long Band, Ball

Warm-Up

2 ROUNDS

Elevated Push-Up 8 reps

Squat with Overhead Press 10 reps

Band Pull-Apart 10 reps

Super Set 1

2 ROUNDS

Cross Body Band Pull 10 reps

Bridge Band Chest Fly 10 reps

Super Set 2

2 ROUNDS

Birddog Mini Band Reach 10 each hand alternating

Palloff Press 10 each direction

Super Set 3

3 ROUNDS

Monster Walk 20 steps

Banded Lateral Walks 10 each direction

Small Marches with Mini Band 30 marches

SUCCESS

CONGRATULATIONS

I am so unbelievably proud of you!! I know this program at times could be boring and you were probably asking yourself if this was all worth it. Here you are ready to enter the next phase of exercise.

Moving forward, it is important to remember your body underwent huge changes, breastfeeding and hormones are still in play. The modifications we made in this program, such as moving to an elevated surface, and using biofeedback are going to be super important as you continue to exercise.

Finding something you love to do is so important and really will be the key to staying consistent. Movement looks different for everyone, whether that is working out at home, at the gym, pilates, or boot camp.

I would love it if you would like to continue your movement journey with me! Be sure to check out the virtual coaching options available at mamasaidmove.com!

I am going to leave you with one last video. This video is a guide on how to match your exhale (core engagement) with a particular exercise. This is a skill that will help you in everyday life!

[Core Engagement Video](#)

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