

In my effort to bring all those who read these articles the most current and progressive information within the world of strength training and conditioning, I am often baffled by what is offered in everyday magazines, advertisements, infomercials and newspapers.

Society is still stuck on how many abdominal exercises in a short period of time will make your stomach flat. But one enlightening, robust article from *The New York Times* has recaptured my hopes that more and more energy is being placed to change the traditional ways of how we think about performance in the media.

“Stretching: The Truth,” negates preconceived thoughts about warm-up exercises we all learned in grade school, ones that are no longer beneficial. Specifically, the static stretching (holding a stretch for 20 or 30 seconds) you still see before any movement activity such as golf, running, biking, tennis, or skiing. It explains how static stretching is a harmful warm-up routine and numerous studies believe that dynamic stretching is the proper excitatory response for muscles to undergo before movement.

Training To Be Balanced has replaced the words “warm-up” with D.A.M.P., which stands for dynamic activation movement prep. D.A.M.P. does just that dynamically activates movement to prepare the body to move. Activation or “turning on” the nerves and muscles of the body is a strategy that enhances the excitability of the neuromuscular and muscle sequencing. Sequencing is synonymous with synergy in that muscles and nerves work in a kinetic chain to produce the maximal amount of force or movement pattern. Proper activation increases range of motion and prepares the body to handle acceleration and deceleration forces.

Almost any type of mild movement that is active works for D.A.M.P. Chose movement patterns that move many body parts at once or movements that stabilize one area of the body while others move. Pick movements that can be done anywhere and at any time (such as at the top of the Tram or Gondola). A few big D.A.M.P. exercises at the beginning of a down hill ski make a whole world of difference.

The approach made to D.A.M.P. should be to prepare the body for movement, not just stretch. We, at T2BB, always perform a D.A.M.P. in the beginning of training. We perform movements that activate or “turn on” the muscles and mobilize the major joints in the body. To cover the bases, ensure your D.A.M.P. has a single leg, rotation, and a squat motion.

The *Times* article continues with a few examples of movement-based exercises for their “warm-up”. Here are a few D.A.M.P. exercises that we perform at Training to be Balanced and encourage to do at the top of the Gondola or Tram before every run. It takes 30 seconds.

The first is “Standing Scorpion”. Stand with arms out to the side and reach a flexed heel up, out and over (not down to the floor) to the opposite hand without that hand moving. Hold for one second and repeat on the other side. It looks like a ballet move or a scorpion whipping its tail.

Second, is the “Teeter Totter”. Stand on one foot with head between arms. Keeping a straight line between your fingers and swing foot, hinge at the waist. Shift weight to the heel on the standing leg to activate glutes and hamstrings to help you balance. Alternate sides while keeping the base leg slightly bent. Looks like a golfer picking up a golf ball from the ground and swing the other leg up but the only difference here is that you are trying to stay straight.

Third, is a “Dragon”. From standing, step out into a large exaggerated right lunge with the right forearm flat on floor next to right foot. Next, place the right hand next to the right foot, reach left hand up above body, then bring hands on either side of the right foot and bring hips and right foot up with the right leg straight. Again this is a continuous motion with one-second holds at each end.

I have great respect for the *The New York Times* exercise articles even though it is about 5 years behind on current exercise training. Nonetheless, the information is out there and I hope society can start to change habits towards efficient and non-efficient. I am a believer that most of what Training to be Balanced preaches is not about right and wrong but more about what makes you perform the most efficiently. (The New York Times article is located at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/02/sports/playmagazine>).

Happy Holidays, D.A.M.P., and have fun as we all bring in the New Year!