

# STRONGER

# TO THE CORE

→ *Guide* ←

Stronger  
Core For  
*Better  
Boxing*



# WELCOME

We'd like to welcome you to **Stronger To The Core!**

We hope you enjoy this guide and learn some valuable information about your amazing body!

Your core works hard 24/7 to keep your body balanced and aligned. But often, our daily lives conspire against us and make our core's job even harder!

This guide will help balance and strengthen your core from every direction, ensuring your day to day activities and your fitness ( including your Punch Love Boxing training) are enhanced to build a stronger, longer living body!

# WELCOME

## HERE'S HOW THE THE GUIDE IS SET UP:

First, you'll learn HOW to engage your core with our Foundational Movement (it might be different than you think).

Then, you'll learn the **#1 thing** you can do to make your core stronger and more balanced.

Finally, you'll incorporate targeted exercises to sculpt a strong core that will enhance your training and the health of your body long term.

Each day, practice your Foundational Movement along with a chosen core-strengthening exercise. Practice makes not just perfect but also habit so that eventually your core switches on automatically.

You'll also be receiving some regular emails packed with tips, motivation, and inspiration all based around core health and fitness.

Keep an eye on your inbox. In the meantime, let's get started!

*Nik & Karina xxx*



# WHAT IS YOUR CORE

## *Exactly?*

Your core is FAR more than just your ab muscles.

It also includes your spine, pelvic girdle, abdomen, and hip joints. Some definitions even include your lat (upper back) muscles.

Did you know your shoulders and chest also play a role in your core stability and strength! That means it's helpful to imagine your entire TRUNK makes up your core.

When all of these muscles are aligned and working together, your core is stable and strong. And when your core is stable, your entire body benefits! You're stronger, more balanced, and can generate more power when needed in your workouts - also helping to prevent injuries and as we get older its vital to help prevent falls!

But when your muscles are out of balance ... it can lead to instability and core weakness, contributing to pain, lack of flexibility, and injuries.

Here's an example: If you sit hunched over a computer for hours a day at work, it can cause your chest, shoulder, abdominal, and hip flexor muscles to become short, tight, and "activated," while your back and glute muscles lengthen and become less active.

You can see how it wouldn't take very long for this to affect the stability and strength of your core.



# BOXING AND YOUR *Core*



Core exercises are extremely important for boxing – the core transfers the force between the extremities, (upper and lower body / arms and legs).

Before any powerful, rapid movement can occur through the arms or the legs, the core needs to be solid and stable. The more stable the core...the more powerful the movements – the faster and stronger the punch and the swifter the kick.

Your core is where almost all movement originates, so to have a strong powerful punch you need a strong stable core.

A strong, stable core is not only vital to all motions and postures, it preserves a healthy spine throughout your workouts.



**NOTE:** If you are looking for stronger punches, more powerful kicks or more defined abdominal muscles... the key is connecting with your **Foundational Core Movement** before & during all parts of your BOXING classes.



*Your*  
**3-STEP  
PLAN**

- 1 Become “Core Aware”**
- 2 Check Posture Several Times a Day**
- 3 Strengthen Your Core Muscles**



# Becoming CORE AWARE

## Foundational Core Movement

Let's help you activate and isolate your deepest layer of abdominal muscles, called your transverse abdominis muscles (TVA).

These muscles run between your ribs and pelvis, horizontally from front to back. When they are activated, imagine a natural "girdle" around your internal organs and your lower spine, supporting them.

In BOXING they help stabilize your spine while you use your arms and legs.

This simple exercise helps build awareness of those muscles, and also learn how it feels to engage them. Once you know how to do this, it should make up a regular part of your warmup and reset positions during your BOXING classes.



**NOTE:** Your posture and alignment are **very important** during this exercise, so try to do it near a mirror where you can sneak a peek at yourself or take a video using your phone so you can check for any alignment issues.

# BECOMING CORE AWARE

- 1** Kneel on the floor on all fours, in a tabletop position. Your hands should be underneath your shoulders and your knees directly below your hips. Make sure your back is straight and your head is in line with your spine (your chin will be slightly tucked).
- 2** From here, keep the rest of your body still as you pull in the area just below your belly button so that it moves closer to your spine. I like to visualise drawing the girdle in then zipping up a pair of tight jeans.
- 3** Making sure to breathe, hold this position for 15 seconds. Relax.
- 4** Repeat for 5-8 repetitions.

You might feel some muscles (including your neck) shift or try to compensate for this drawing-in position. Do your best to keep everything aligned, while still breathing and relaxed.

The “drawing-in & up” feeling is what it means to engage your abs.



**TIP:** You don't have to kneel on the floor every time you want to engage your abs, but this exercise is one of the best ways to feel them in action. Once you can 'feel' the movement you can do it standing up in warmup in class.

Now that you know how it feels, you can practice core engagement while standing and sitting.





# POSTURE *Police*

Without question, how you stand, walk, sit, sleep, and move every day (and night) will give you the biggest results in creating a strong and aligned core.

Good posture does NOT mean holding your body stiff, with rigid shoulders and a fully-braced core.

Instead, it's about having core muscles that are strong enough to hold your spine in alignment while you're relaxed (and eventually without thinking about it!).

This is important because poor posture doesn't only cause aches and pains, but it can affect the long-term health of your spine and joints ... and it even plays a role in your breathing and digestion.

# POSTURE POLICE

## WHAT IS GOOD POSTURE?

There are actually TWO kinds of posture.

**DYNAMIC POSTURE** is how you hold your body when you are moving - walking, doing chores, & exercise like BOXING

**STATIC POSTURE** is how you hold your body when you're not moving - when you're sleeping, sitting, or standing.

Both matter!

Your spine is the key to your posture. It has three natural curves - at your neck, mid-back, and low back.

Your head should be above your shoulders, and the top of your shoulders should be over the hips.

Good posture keeps these curves at their perfect angle.



# POSTURE POLICE

## QUICK TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR POSTURE

### When standing, make sure your:

- Shoulders are back, stacked over your hips.
- Ab muscles are engaged ( zipped up)
- Knees are soft (not locked).
- Hips are in a neutral position – not tipped back (sticking your butt out) or curled under.
- Head is level.
- Arms are hanging down naturally at your sides.
- Feet are shoulder-width apart.



### When sitting:

- **Your chair should support your back.** Use a pillow if your chair doesn't have a backrest that supports the natural curve of your lower back.
- **It should also support your thighs and hips.** You should have a padded seat, and when you sit your thighs and hips should be parallel to the floor, and your feet touching the floor. If your chair or desk is too tall for you, you can place a footrest under your feet.
- **Keep your shoulders relaxed.** Make sure they aren't rounded forward or pulled back.
- Avoid crossing your legs.
- Switch sitting positions to avoid muscle tension.
- Take brief walks every hour.
- Gently stretch your muscles every hour or so to help relieve muscle tension

# 5 Surprising ENEMIES OF YOUR POSTURE (and Your Core)

## 1. YOUR PHONE.

There's actually a thing called "text neck," and it's caused by looking down at your phone.

It can add as much as a 25 kg load on your spine! As you might guess, this can lead to a MAJOR misalignment in your neck muscles, which then has a ripple effect through your entire core.



**THE FIX:** Look at your phone both less often and for shorter lengths of time! And when you do look at it, be mindful of your head position. Lift your phone to eye level.

**TRY IT NOW:**

Pick up your phone and look at a text message in your normal position. Lift your phone and look at it at eye level. Notice the difference in the weight through your neck.



# 5 SURPRISING ENEMIES OF YOUR POSTURE (AND YOUR CORE)

## 2. DRIVING.

Proper posture when driving is doubly important, because not only can slouching or sitting too upright behind the wheel affect your core, it's a safety issue.

Research shows that when you're poorly positioned in your vehicle during an accident, you have a higher risk of serious injury.

If at all possible, when you're seated behind the wheel, your knees should be slightly lower than your hips. Also, make sure your lower back is supported – use lumbar support or a lumbar pillow if necessary.

Plus, the seat back shouldn't be straight up and down – instead, it should lean back slightly to put the least pressure on your neck and back.

Also, your chest should be as far back from the steering wheel as possible while still allowing you to easily reach the pedals.



# 5 SURPRISING ENEMIES OF YOUR POSTURE (AND YOUR CORE)

## 3. SLEEPING.

We spend as much of a third of our lives asleep – and as you can imagine, if you sleep in awkward positions or curled up in a tight ball, it can cause aches and pains. The right mattress can also play a large role in a good night's sleep.

Make sure your body is fully supported. Use a pillow beneath or between your knees to keep your hips and spine aligned and make sure your head isn't propped up too high with extra pillows. Try to remain loose and relaxed!

## 4. CARRYING BAGS OR A PURSE.

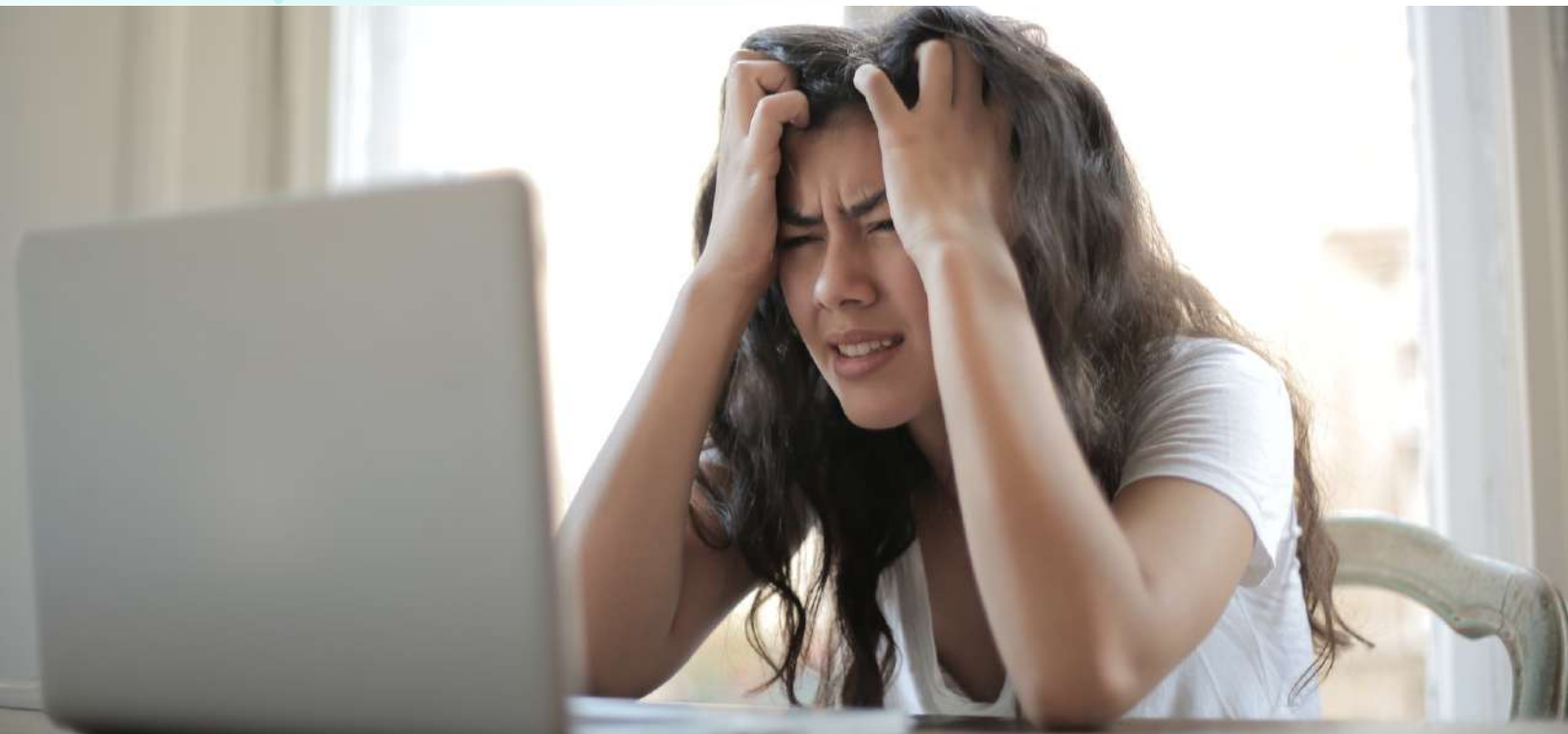
Did you know that the average purse being carried around by women weighs around 3 kgs? And many carry handbags that weigh double or triple that amount!

School backpacks are another problem for posture and our teens' core over the long term. Carrying books and laptops to lessons can cause headaches, hip and lower back issues.



**TIP:** Downsize your handbag and for teens make a point to switch sides when you carry the backpack, or use both the shoulder straps to create a balanced load.

# 5 SURPRISING ENEMIES OF YOUR POSTURE (AND YOUR CORE)



## 5. STRESS.

When people get stressed, we tend to go into protective mode, which can mean hunching up our shoulders and folding them inward, leading to tightness and even MORE stress. This affects not just our posture but also crumples our lungs and makes breathing more difficult. We also can tighten through our hip area, contributing to back pain.



**TIP:** Do a quick stress-check a few times a day, and take 3-4 long, deep calming breaths to expand your chest and exhale away all the negativity! You'll notice we do several deep breaths at the end of a BOXING class. This resets the core, shoulders & opens up the chest ready for you to walk out the door balanced and energised.

# Your **CORE EXERCISES**



## **DRAWING-IN MOVEMENT ( Foundational core movement)**

This is the exercise that was explained earlier, to help you feel your core engage. Each core-strengthening session begins with this move!

### **PLANK**

Lying on your belly on the floor, place your elbows on the floor, directly under your shoulders, with your forearms on the ground.

From here, if you are new to planks pop up on your knees or lift the knees from the floor, into the plank position.

Your body should be in a straight line from your heels to the top of your head.

Engage your core, by tightening the girdle and zipping up as well as squeezing on your glutes & quadriceps (front of your thighs).

(Exercise continued on the next page ...)



# YOUR CORE EXERCISES:

## PLANK CONTINUED ...

Double-check that your head is in alignment – your eye gaze should go to a spot just in front of your hands, and make sure you're not dipping down in your lower back.

Your shoulder blades should be lightly drawn down to avoid hunching.

And don't forget to breathe! Try to hold for 30 seconds.



# YOUR CORE EXERCISES:

## BRIDGE

Lie on your back with your hands at your sides, palms facing up toward the ceiling. Your knees should be bent and your feet flat on the floor, close to your bottom and under your knees.

Zip up your abs and clench your glute muscles and push your low back into the floor, ( I like to imagine I roll my lower back into the floor) then press your hips up. You should have a straight line from your knees to your hips to your shoulders.

Keeping your core and glutes engaged, hold for 2 to 3 seconds before lowering. Repeat for a total of 8-10 reps.



# YOUR CORE EXERCISES:

## BIRD DOG

Kneel with your knees hip-width apart and your hands flat on the ground under your shoulders.

With your core engaged, Engage your core by doing the drawing-in movement.

Maintaining a neutral spine with your abs engaged, reach your right arm straight in front of you while extending your opposite (left) leg behind you.

Think “long” and not “high” when lifting your arm and leg. If you find your back starts to sag or your hips rotate, only lift your leg as high as you can while keeping good posture.

Hold for 2-3 seconds, then return to the starting position and repeat on the opposite side, keeping the movements smooth and fluid. To keep your balance and focus on the trunk more easily perform the movement for all 5 reps on the same side then change to the other.

Repeat for a total of 5 repetitions on each side.



# YOUR CORE EXERCISES

## SIDE PLANK

Lie on your right side, your legs extended in a straight line from your hips, your top leg stacked on top of your bottom leg.

Place your right elbow directly under your right shoulder.

Engage your ab muscles, zipping up. Lift your hips and knees from the mat, holding your torso in a straight line. The key here is to stay focused on that Zip-up feeling the wholetime you are in the side plank position

Hold for 15-20 seconds and repeat on the other side.



**NOTE:** If you notice your body bending forward or your hip sagging, bend your bottom knee at 90° to give your body more support.



# STRONGER CORE = *Stronger Body*

We hope this has given you some basic core insights to go along side your BOXING training. Remember to master these basic moves with the Foundational Movement first, no matter how long you have been training. Using this movement will be like starting from scratch with core work.

Over time, you'll notice even MORE improvement not just in your strength and fitness, but in your energy levels and even in your aches & pains.

We firmly believe a holistic approach is the best when it comes to creating a healthy lifestyle you can maintain.

As always, if you have any questions just reach out to any of the team with any questions

In health,

*Nik & Karina*

