

fitbirds

FITNESS FOR WOMEN

Adore Your Pelvic Floor



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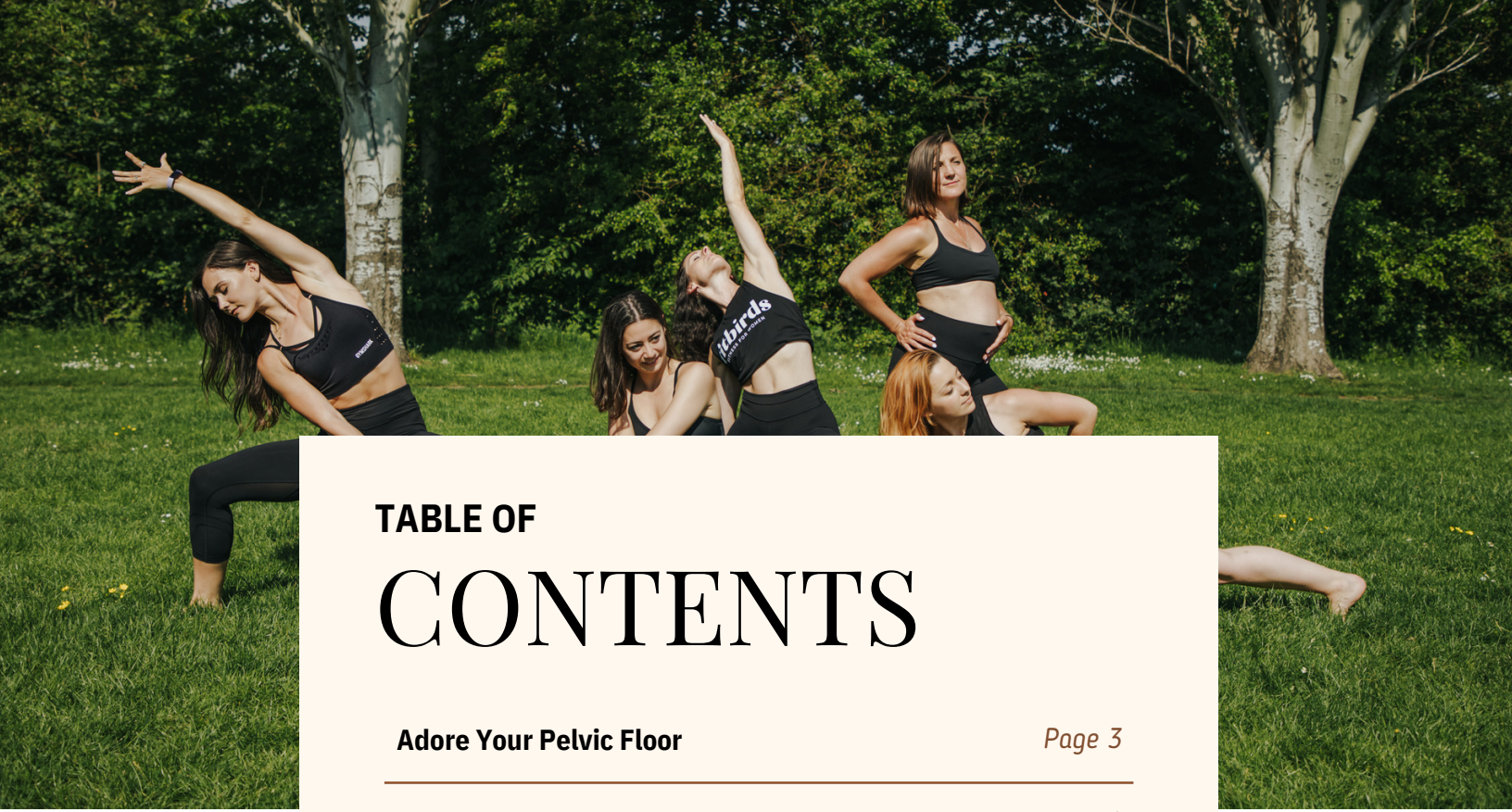


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ADORE YOUR *Pelvic* Floor

The content in this ebook was created by Fitbirds founder, Shani Yeend. The information here will educate you and empower you on how and why to bring true awareness and a deep connection with your pelvic floor. Through understanding your anatomy, physiology and using correct breath work, take yourself on a journey with your pelvic floor. Unlock limitless possibilities into the healing of your pelvic floor symptoms and dysfunctions. Unleash your full potential to reduce physical and emotional pain the body by tuning inwards birds. Read on to discover the superpowers of your pelvic floor.

SAY WHAT?

Your pelvic floor deserves a lot more attention than we are giving it birds. Your pelvic floor is responsible for an incredible amount of work in the body and contains a superpower - a deep connection to your entire physical and emotional wellbeing.



THE FUNCTIONS

Of Your Pelvic Floor



Supports Your Organs

The pelvic floor acts as a supportive hammock for your bladder, rectum and uterus. Its job is to keep these vital organs in place and to support their optimal function.

Postural Alignment and Spine Stabilisation

The pelvic floor muscles are part of your deep core network and they directly assist with postural alignment and spine stabilisation.

Mobility

Your pelvic floor muscles have a direct connection to your hip girdle and spine. Immobility and hyper-mobility within your hip girdle and spine can be linked to the condition of your pelvic floor.

Sexual Pleasure

Imagine you are having sex and you go in for that 'squeeze' to maximise pleasure. That squeeze is your pelvic floor.

Pain

Pain in the body can be a direct response indicating the health of your pelvic floor.

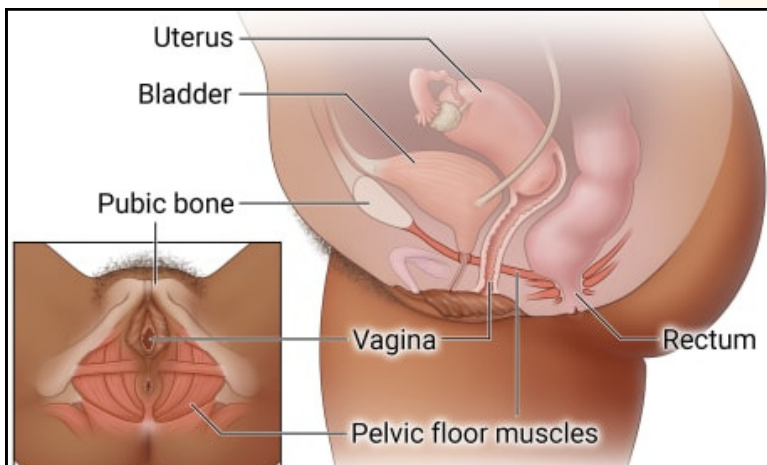
Stressors

The pelvic floor is one of the body's biggest stress containers – both physically and emotionally.

PELVIC FLOOR

Anatomy

Understanding the anatomy of your pelvic floor is a powerful tool in helping send your mind to your muscle. Your pelvic floor is a hammock shaped network of muscles with three sheets of layers. This hammock of muscles connects at four points: your pubic bone, your tail bone and your sitz bones (the pair of bones that extend from the bottom of your pelvis).



DIAPHRAGM

Your diaphragm is a dome shaped muscle positioned under your lung cavity. This muscle moves up and down in your abdomen when you are breathing correctly. The diaphragm and the pelvic floor work in unison, hence why it is important that with every breath we take we drop into diaphragmatic breathing. Without correctly breathing into the diaphragm the pelvic floor muscles do not expand and contract as they are naturally designed.

TRANSVERSE ABDOMINIS

Your TVA is the deepest, core muscle that wraps around your whole torso, (think of it like having a corset on - that is your TVA). Your TVA's role is to support your spine, pelvis and to protect your organs. When you tap into your diaphragmatic breath your TVA co-contracts with your pelvic floor muscles.

DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN ACCESS YOUR PELVIC FLOOR VIA YOUR FEET? IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FASCIA BIRDS.



FANCY FOOTWORK

Your pelvic floor is interwoven through our incredible fascia, our connective tissue - the connective stretchy glue that holds our organs and muscles in place. We highly recommend strengthening your feet birds; heel rises, spreading and gripping toes one toe at a time, and lifting your feet arches are all great feet strengthening exercises. What's more, do these exercises whilst bringing awareness and connecting to your pelvic floor and diaphragm.

Try this:

Stand up, place a Pilates ball or cushion between your inner thighs. Now grip your toes into the ground and 'tent' the arches of your feet by sensing that the arches are pulling up. What can you feel? Can you feel any connection into the ball or even deeper - into your pelvic floor? As you engage your feet the connective tissue fascia is responsible for activating a chain reaction from your feet to your adductors (inner thighs) and into your pelvic floor.



TRY THIS

THE BIGGEST NERVE IN YOUR BODY

The Vagus Nerve

The vagus nerve is responsible for sending messages from the brain to the body's organs. It lets our body know if we are safe or if we are running from the tiger! The vagus nerve is responsible for connecting us to both our sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems – our flight of fight and our rest and digest. The vagus nerve runs through your brain, neck, abdomen, gut, controlling our breathing and digestion. The posterior vagus nerve has branches which run through the pelvis and connect with the pelvic floor. By releasing our pelvic floor muscles we are able to stimulate our vagus nerve, bringing us into our rest and digest state.

Sit with a cushion or Pilates ball resting under your root, your pelvic floor. Now sigh out. Sighing 'ahhhhhh' we send a message via the vagus nerve down to the pelvic floor to say 'we are safe'. Ahhh to the sigh of relief. Sighing out will trigger a release to your pelvic floor, you might feel a subtle downwards pressure onto the ball/cushion as you take that sigh of relief. You can literally send your body into rest mode by sighing out.

Stress

Alongside your jaw and shoulders, your pelvic floor is one of your body's three stress containers. We can literally see the stress in our body just from looking at how we hold ourselves; by noticing our posture, by noticing how we breathe and by noticing the physical restrictions within our body as we move. It's important to understand where you hold your stress and how you can best release it.

Your pelvic floor can send your whole body into fight or flight, but, on the flip side, your pelvic floor can also bring you into rest and repair. By deeply connecting and understanding your pelvic floor you can bring yourself into a state of optimal health.
#mindblown



During a moment of tension check in with yourself - are your shoulders raised? Is your jaw clenched? Or perhaps your butt cheeks or your pelvic floor is gripping?

Now, breathe deeply, and let go birds. Awareness is the first step.

In summary, when your diaphragm, transverse abdominis and pelvic floor are working together you have power to build your strongest core, to reduce and release physical and emotional pain within your body, and to bring yourself into your rest and digest nervous system.



Cueing Your Pelvic Floor

Here we are talking about how to ‘lift’ and strengthen your pelvic floor birds.



O1

VERBAL CUES - FOR FUN

- a jellyfish is swimming
- a flower going from bud into bloom
- squeezing a tampon or penis
- lift from back passage to front passage
- sucking up a straw or spaghetti
- a diamond getting smaller
- suck up the poo and holding in wee

O2

REMEMBER THE ANATOMY - FOR REAL

Visualise the four connection points of your pelvic floor (pubic bone, tail bone and sitz bones) as a diamond shape. As you exhale make an “s” sound and visualize that diamond shape getting smaller, the four corners of that diamond shape are pulling inwards and upwards.

Let's Practice Birds

The following exercises explain how to use your diaphragm, TVA and pelvic floor in synch alongside these natural processes. These exercises and the stretches to follow can be practiced daily the more you practice the more balanced your pelvic floor musculature.

BENEFITS OF THIS PRACTICE

Instant benefits

- Will help you relax and reduce anxiety

Long term benefits

- A connected, well toned and optimal functioning pelvic floor
- Reduce and heal core dysfunction such as diastasis recti, and pelvic dysfunction such as prolapse, bladder incontinence and pelvic girdle pain



EXERCISE ONE

Pelvic Floor Awareness

We are going to use a Pilates ball (or a folded cushion) as a physical cue to feel into your pelvic floor and help you notice how it is interconnected with your breath.

Sit on the Pilates ball birds, a folded cushion or bolster. Close your eyes and place your hands on your lower belly.

Rock the pelvis forward, back and in circles feeling into your vulva and rectum, feeling into your pelvic floor. Find stillness with you pelvic floor gently resting on to the ball.

Begin diaphragmatic breathing, simply put - breathe like a baby birds.

Using your hands, direct the breath around the whole torso, the side of the ribcage and along back of the ribcage.

Inhale: belly rises, visualise a balloon inflating. **Exhale:** belly softens, empties, and the balloon deflates. Stay with this diaphragmatic breath for a few minutes until you feel settled with a sense of calm. Allow the chest, shoulders and jaw to relax.

Now take this natural breath (this is simply breathing birds) and connect with your pelvic floor, actively lifting and lengthening your pelvic floor with the breath.

Inhale: belly rises, pelvic floor lengthens pressing onto the ball. **Exhale:** lift your pelvic floor up and away from the ball, visualise a diamond shape getting smaller as you take that lift.

Inhale: slowly let go and lengthen the pelvic floor feeling that subtle pressure onto the ball. **Exhale:** zip your pelvic floor up and inwards towards your spine. **Inhale:** slowly let go of your pelvic floor.

Repeat for 3-5mins. Notice the shifts in how you feel. Notice if you feel other parts of your body gripping, your jaw tightening, your shoulders tensing or your glutes squeezing. Let it go. Stay connected to feeling into your pelvic floor.



Take a moment after you have completed these two exercises to write. Journalling is a powerful way to release clutter and tension in the mind and body. Write down anything that comes to you. The therapy is in the getting it out.

EXERCISE TWO

Lift and Wrap

Find a neutral spine in all fours position. Close your eyes and begin to soften your belly, connecting with that full, easy diaphragm breath.

Inhale: allow belly and baby to soften and feel heavy. **Exhale:** make an 'S' sound with your breath, lift your pelvic floor and wrap belly towards your spine, maintaining a neutral spine.

Inhale: let go and lengthen your pelvic floor, allow your belly to feel heavy. **Exhale:** "S" breath and lift, your pelvic floor, wrap your core and upwards with a sense of corseting your whole torso.

When you are 'wrapping' you are activating your TVA, your ribcage is literally moving inwards and downwards. When you see or feel this you know you are 'wrapping' your TVA correctly. #cleverbird

Pelvic Floor With Exercise

Pelvic Floor exercises don't need to be arduous, isolated exercises, often seen as a chore. We've spoken about bringing more daily awareness to your pelvic floor musculature - with this comes an inner connection which will provide you with a deeper understanding of your physical and emotional state.

Now we ask you to build that connection into your exercise and training. There are frequent opportunities to incorporate pelvic floor strengthening while you are in the gym, swimming or in a class environment. Basically any exercise birds.

The general rule of thumb when exercising is 'exhale on the effort'. This is fundamental breath for a number of reasons, but when in conversation with your pelvic floor - the exhale is when your pelvic floor is stimulated to engage (to strengthen). So birds, this is your golden ticket - next time you are squatting, deadlifting, glute bridging (or mid-swimming stroke) **EXHALE and lift your pelvic floor birds.**



So, you know your pelvic floor is there to stabilise your body birds, now put it to the test.

When you are working on unilateral training (aka. single leg work where you require balance), exhale and lift your pelvic floor. Notice how much more stability you get when you use your pelvic floor.

*We highly recommend all women
at any stages of their lives to see
a female health physio.
Your female health physio can do
an internal examination of your
pelvic floor to give you a deeper
understanding of how you are
connected to your pelvic floor
muscles.*



LET IT GO BIRDS

Pelvic Floor Release

An overactive (hypertonic) pelvic floor is common and can sadly be overlooked. An overactive pelvic floor could lead to physical pain in the body, postural imbalances and stored emotional stress. Understanding and feeling your pelvic floor released and soft is equally as important as the strengthening counterpart. I.e. A tight pelvic floor could show up as back pain, hip pain, tight hamstrings and even a sore neck and shoulders.

The stretches below will assist in stretching the adductor muscles and will simulate the vagus nerve, which will both aid with pelvic floor lengthening. In both these stretches use a 'sigh' on your exhale. This 'sigh' will send a message from your vagus nerve towards to your pelvic floor to release and let go. Tune in to your belly breathing – that full torso diaphragmatic breathing.

01

PIGEON POSE

Start on all fours and then slide your right knee towards your right wrist. Now extend your left leg out behind you. Rock your hips From side to side and lean into the stretch of your right glute and right hip. Begin to fold your body forwards. Allow gravity to draw you downward. Now breathe. Continue slow diaphragmatic breathing. Allow your pelvic floor to release and let go. Stay present with your pelvic floor, becoming interested and curious.



Take a moment after you have completed these two exercises to write. Journalling is a powerful way to release clutter and tension in the mind and body. Write down anything that comes to you. The therapy is in the getting it out.

02

WIDE LEG FORWARD FOLD

Stretch your legs straight and out wide. Flex your toes towards you and keep your toes and knees pointing towards the sky. Keeping your chest open and your spine flat, begin to walk your hands forwards, gradually inviting a deep stretch in the inner thighs.

Stay present with the softening of your pelvic floor muscles. Visualising your pelvic floor as a rose opening into full bloom. Begin diaphragmatic breathing. Exhale let go, deepen.



FROM THE FOUNDER

SHANI YEEND

Stay present and become interested in your pelvic floor throughout your day. Notice your pelvic floor while you do the dishes, while you are exercising and while you are on the toilet.

Full awareness of engagement and of letting go. Allow your transformation into alignment and true embodiment birds.



STAY CONNECTED

You've got this and we've got you. Stay connected (with your pelvic floor and with us) email us or Instagram us with any questions. Please share your journey with us and others.

Shani and Charlie x

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