

Finding Neutral in the Neck: Holding-on vs Letting-go

Finding Neutral and understanding neuro-muscular repatterning are key components in BodySense. In this exercise learning the difference between rounding the neck forward towards your throat (flexion) and arching the neck back (extension) and where neutral is, somewhere in-between, will help you understand how you hold on so you can learn to let go.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

Photo 1: Start out by Lying on your back with knees bent, feet flat on the floor, a comfortable distance from the buttock, hip with apart. **The breath is soft and comfortable throughout the whole exercise, breath in through your nose when possible, and out through your nose or mouth.**

Photo 2: Blow up a balloon (see the handout and short video about using the balloons) or find a small, soft ball (a Pilates 8.5inch blow up ball works great). Lying down, the ball should fit snugly in the curve of your neck, filling the space from the base of your head to the top of the shoulders, the forehead and chin are level. You do not want your head tipping back. It should feel comfortable and relaxing and not straining in any way. The ball is usually only partially inflated to get this effect.

Photo 3: Once situated gently press the back of your head and neck into the ball/balloon so that your chin moves toward your chest, (feel how this tenses the throat). Notice which muscles are activated and efforting, and notice where there is pressure, stretch, and release. Slowly return to the resting on the ball/balloon.

Photo 4: Then, slightly pull your head and neck away from the ball/balloon moving your nose toward the ceiling. You do not want to lift your head and neck completely off the ball/balloon; just enough so that the ball/balloon starts to take its round shape back a little. Again, scan the neck as described in Photo 3 and this time also note the shoulders and jaw even the upper back; look for where there's tension and familiar holding patterns. Then find neutral it is light and free and expansive.

****Go back and forth between lightly pushing into the ball/balloon, lightly pulling away, and finding neutral (just right) do these movements pressing, lifting, and release 3-5 times and without disturbance remove the ball, pause and integrate. The integration and the pause between rounds are how we teach the nervous system to find this "lightness of being." Neutral is a soft spacious and much different sensation than the other two positions, it is where we experience the letting-go. I suggest you do at least 3-5 sets, and relax without the ball between rounds (integrate) then do it again for at least 2-3 more rounds.***

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