

C  R E A · I · M

Connect - Challenge - Elevate

An educational resource for growing youth athletes

Unit 7 – Core A.I.M.™ The Systematic Art of Exercise Prescription





# Unit 7 – The Systematic "Art" Objectives

1. Overview & breakdown of our A.I.M. process for exercise prescription
2. Understanding A.I.M. & why it is important
3. Phase- & position-based exercise prescription
4. Practical examples of what the growing athlete needs
5. Learning what constitutes neutral stance, proper movement sequencing & termination of movement
6. Learning what to prescribe to athletes



At Core A.I.M.™ our mission is to *Connect, Challenge and Elevate*.

We believe in being proactive with athletes, coaches and therapists. That means starting off on the right foot with the proper foundations in mind; not only movement foundations for the athletes but systematic procedural foundations for the coaches & therapists.

To assist with this, we at Core A.I.M.™ have developed the following:

- ✓ The Foundational Screen to evaluate the athlete's movement tendencies
- ✓ The Orthopaedic Mobility Assessment (OMA)
- ✓ The G.R.O.W.T.H. mindset as a framework for youth athlete management
- ✓ The T.O.S.S.S acronym for individual athlete skill acquisition

(Next up in Unit 7:)

- ✓ The A.I.M. process for coaching exercise prescription

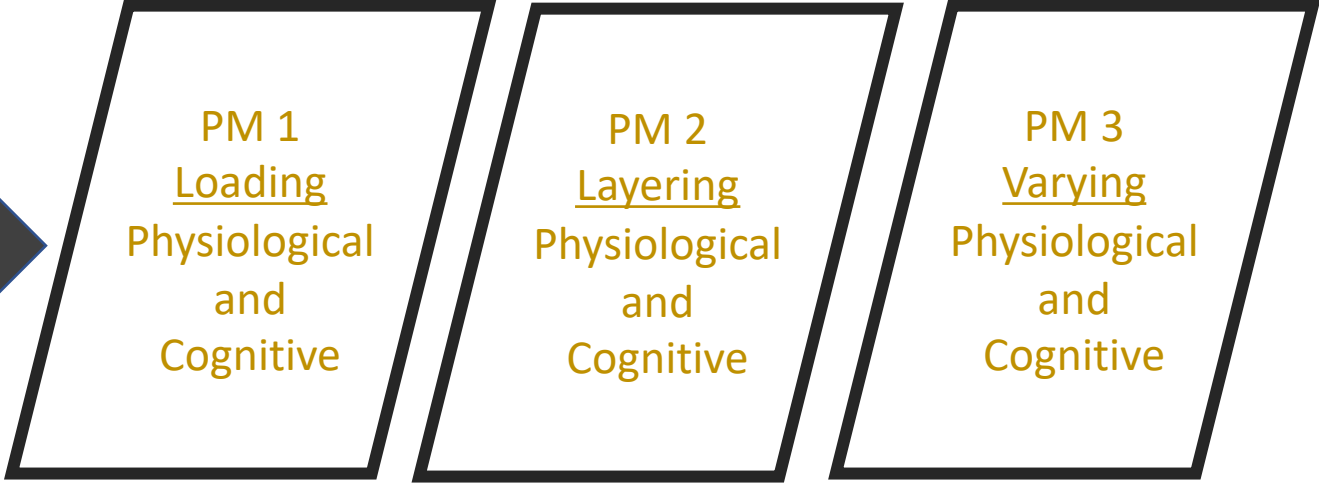
These are all systematic tools developed by Core A.I.M.™ to support you & your growing athletes by ensuring foundations are established & maintained, which then allows for manipulating essential progressions to promote resilient lifelong athletes.





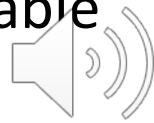
# Overview of Coaching Motor Skill Development

The A.I.M process is a systematic approach to developing **A**thletic **I**ntegrated **M**ovement:  
We establish foundational pre-requisites (FPs), then utilize progressive manipulation (PMs) to build resilient & transferable motor learning.



Stage 1 – Establish our *A.I.M.*

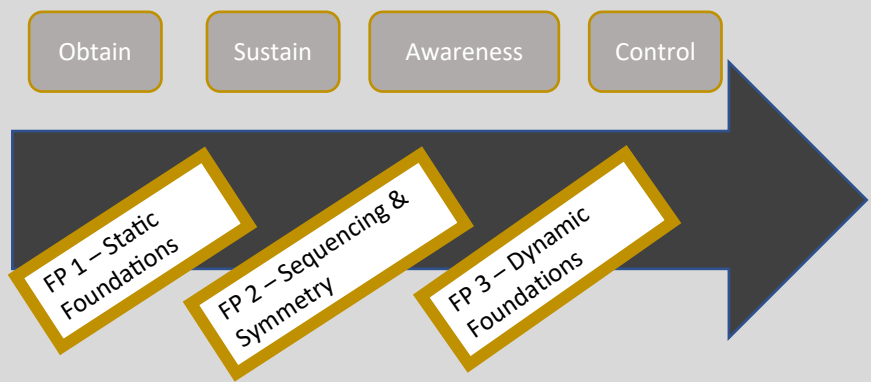
Stage 2 – Build our *A.I.M.* to be resilient & transferable





# The A.I.M. Motor Learning Process – Stages

## Stage 1 - Foundational Pre-Requisites



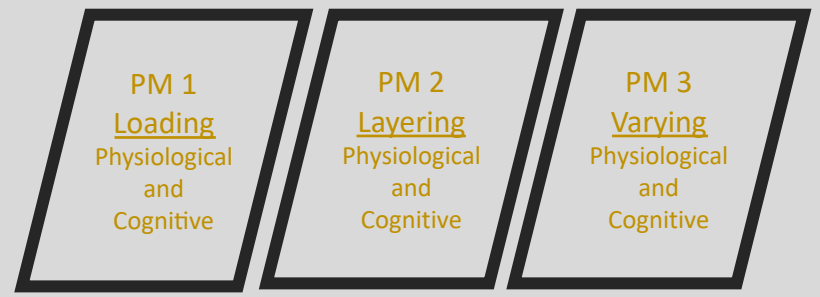
*Goal:* Establish common knowledge of A.I.M. for foundations of motor learning.

Therapist/coach/trainer reliance is high.  
Therapist/coach/trainer involvement is high.

\* here, we support the athlete w/ lots of feedback from multiple sensory systems.

**Stage 1 - Establishing A.I.M.**

## Stage 2 - Progressive Manipulations



*Goal:* Build resilient & self-organized A.I.M. for automaticity & transference.

Therapist/coach/trainer reliance is low.  
Therapist/coach/trainer involvement is high.

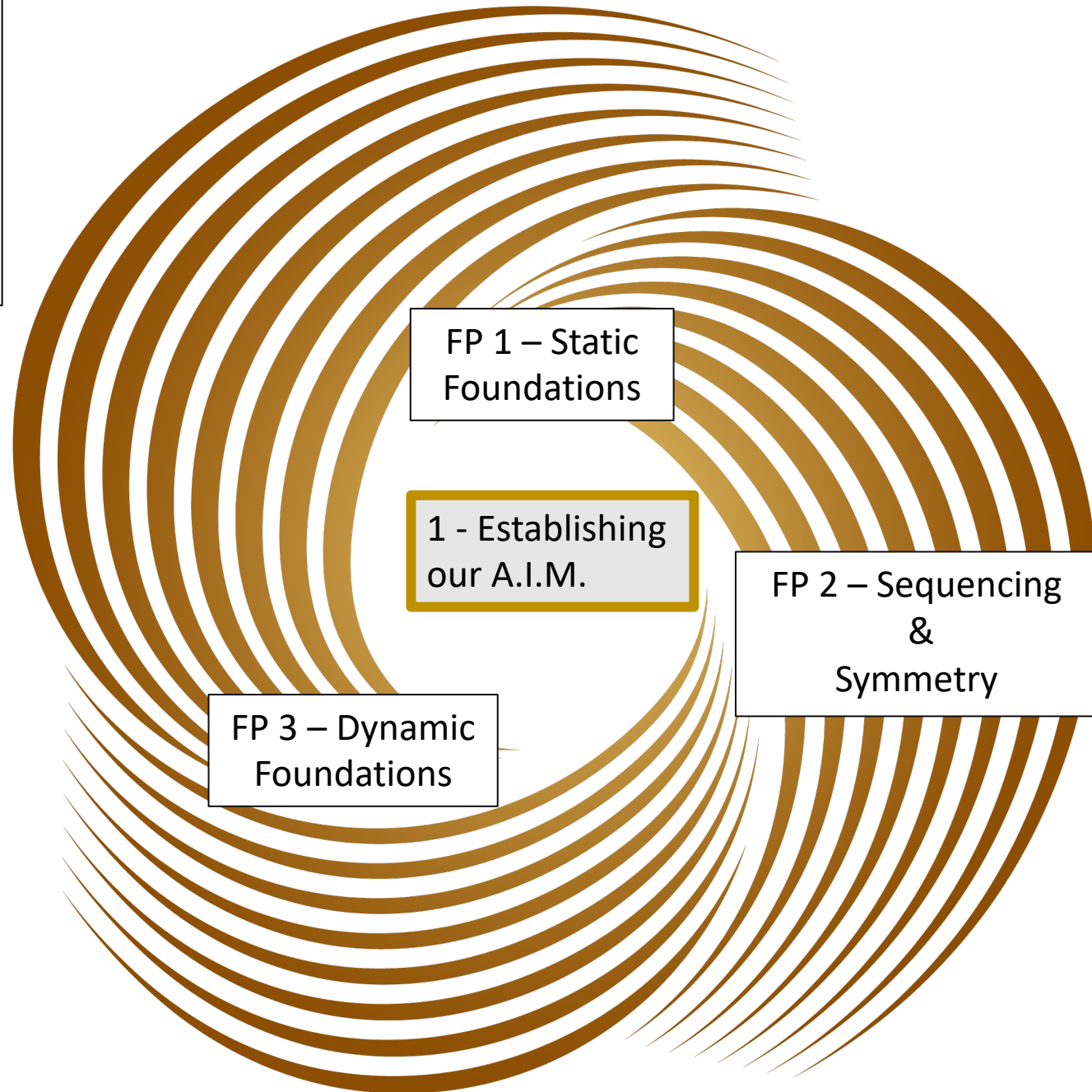
\* then, we manipulate by removing support, loading their system, adding layers of demand & varying the task/environment to prepare for both the known & the unknown of sport.

**Stage 2 - Building A.I.M transference & resiliency.**



Stage 1 –  
Establish  
our *A.I.M.*

- *Foundational  
Pre-Requisites*





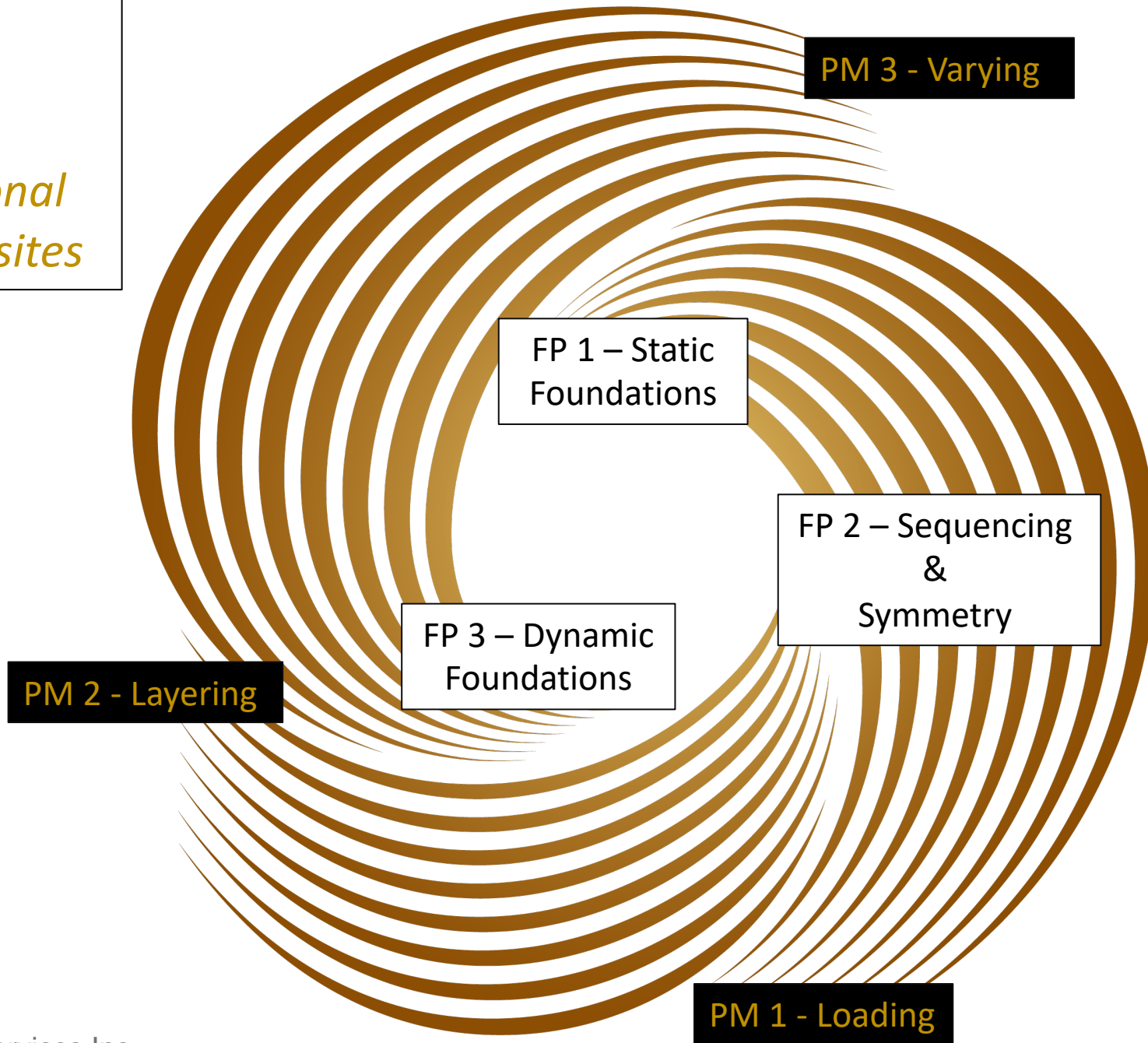
Stage 2 – Build  
our *A.I.M.* to be  
resilient &  
transferable

- *Progressive  
Manipulations*



Stage 1 –  
Establish  
our *A.I.M.*

- *Foundational  
Pre-Requisites*



Stage 2 – Build  
our *A.I.M.* to be  
resilient &  
transferable

- *Progressive  
Manipulations*





# A.I.M. From the Beginning

Core A.I.M.™ youth athlete management is about being **proactive** rather than reactive

- Starting off on the right foot with developing the athletic fingerprint through proper foundations is the key to success & to longevity
- Building this fingerprint can commence between the ages of 6-12
- This can be referred to as the foundational A.I.M. opportunity

"From a motor learning standpoint, it is desirable that children at the youngest age groups (ages 6-12) develop correct playing techniques from the beginning.

This also gives ample time for movements to become automatized."

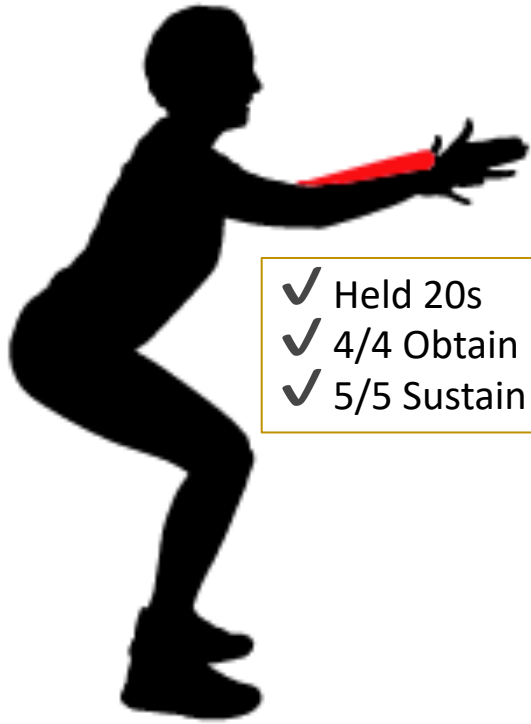
- [Benjaminse & Otten, 2011, p. 623](#)



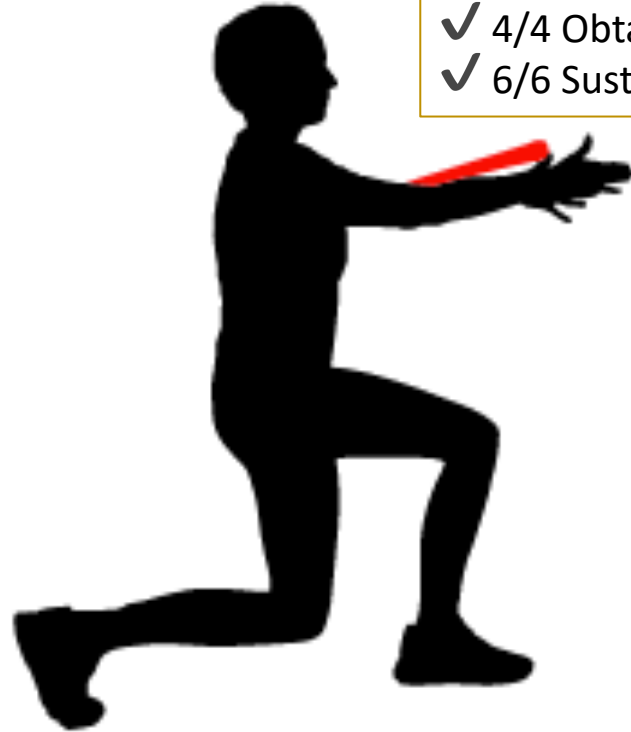
This process is **dynamic**, not linear

- A re-calibration phase should be inserted into each adolescent growth spurt
- This re-calibrates & re-establishes the A.I.M. by returning to the stage of FPs

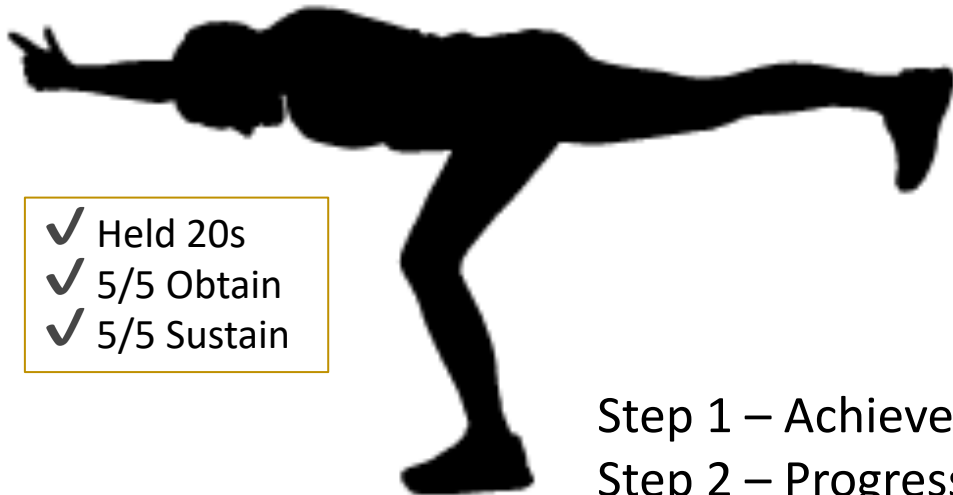




- ✓ Held 20s
- ✓ 4/4 Obtain
- ✓ 5/5 Sustain



- ✓ Held 20s
- ✓ 4/4 Obtain
- ✓ 6/6 Sustain



- ✓ Held 20s
- ✓ 5/5 Obtain
- ✓ 5/5 Sustain



- ✓ Held 20s
- ✓ 5/5 Obtain
- ✓ 6/6 Sustain



Step 1 – Achieve good, static foundations (FP 1)  
 Step 2 – Progress onto awareness & control (FP 2 & 3)





To follow are 3 program designs:

- Position – specific (SQUAT, STRIDE, STRETCH)
- Phase – specific (obtain, sustain, awareness, control)

Once FP 1 is established, then progress onto these examples of exercise prescription.

To select exercises, you can choose ones à la carte, or use the entire program, depending on the needs of your athlete.

To improve variability, autonomy & self-controlled learning, you could have the athlete choose different ones each day.



Seated hip IR with band

Seated hip ER with band

DL or SL in squat DF and PF ankle



Hover w/ Weight Shift



Sideplank SQUAT hold



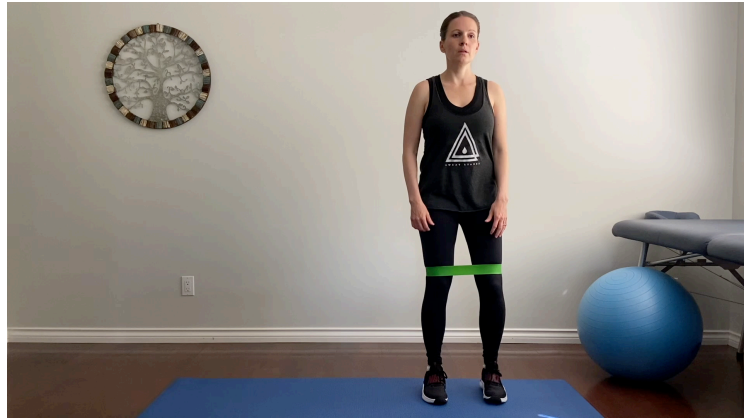
SQUAT hold



SQUAT w/ band hip ER



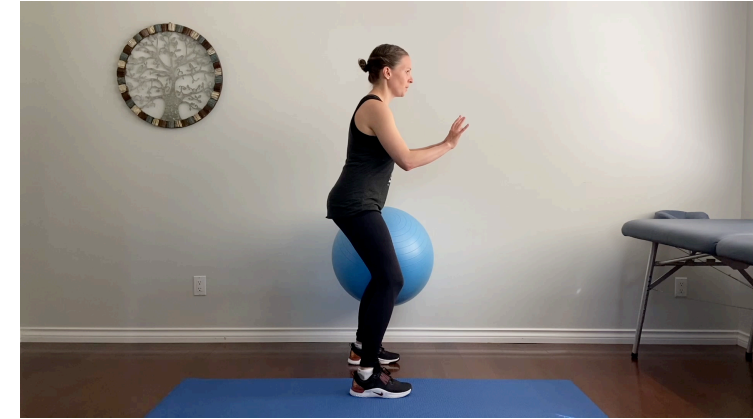
Lateral Drive SQUAT



Box Jumps

don't have box jumps and landings.  
Videos to come... in final product

Ball on Wall Pivot Drive SQUAT



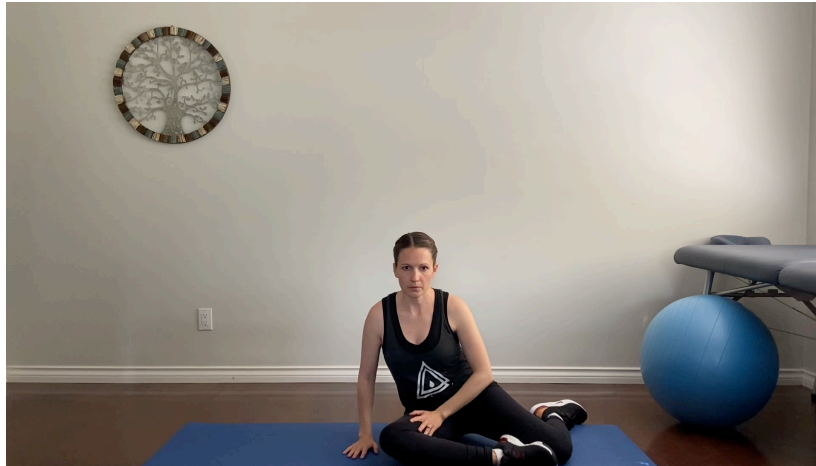
Box Landings

don't have box jumps and landings.  
Videos to come... in final product





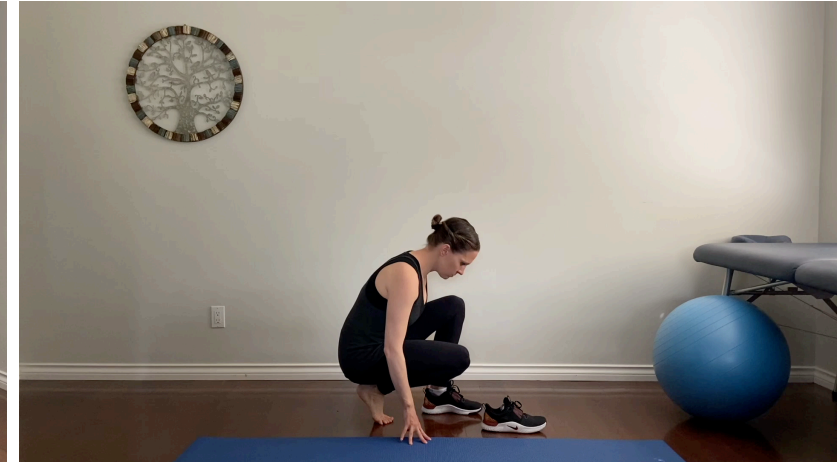
Iliopsoas/Quads Stretch



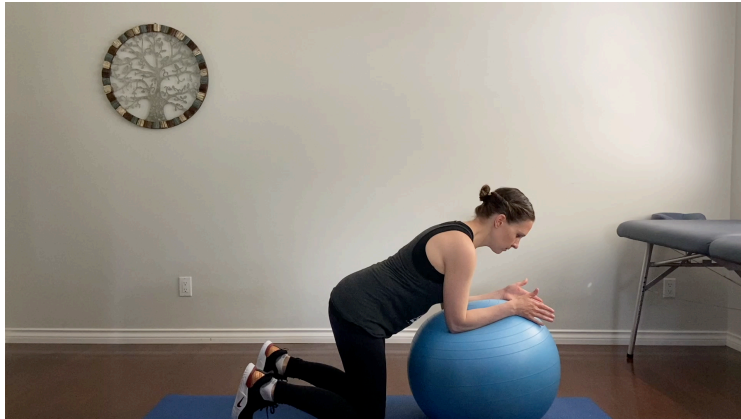
Hip Extension Stretch



Big Toe Extension



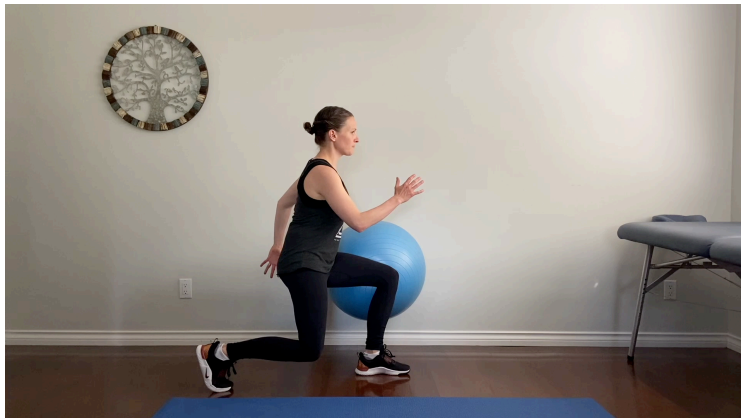
STRIDE Hover w/ Weight Shift



Sideplank STRIDE Hold



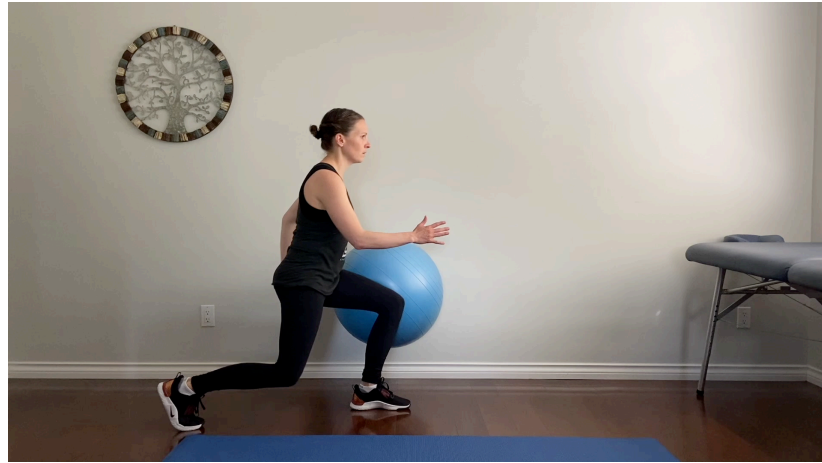
Ball on Wall STRIDE Hold



SL to Step Back STRIDE



Dynamic Ball on Wall STRIDE



1-2 STRIDE Stick



Deceleration STRIDE

Video to come in final product



# STRETCH Stance - Obtain & Sustain

Dosage: 30s holds or 10 reps x 2 sets stretches (Askling's: 3-4 sets x fatigue)

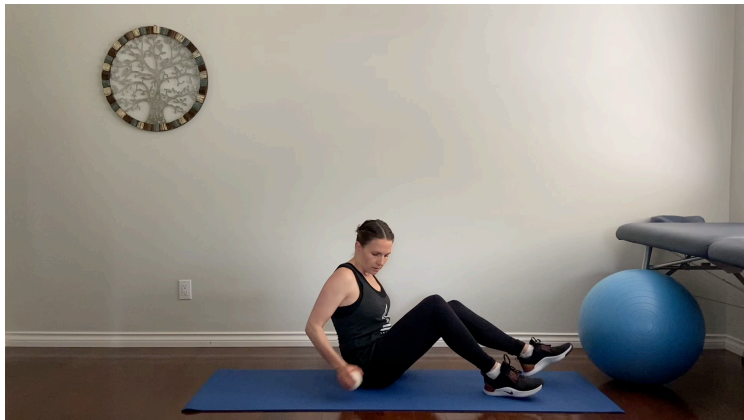
Sidelying Quads Stretch



Prone Shoulder Mobility



Rolling Ball ITB Gutter



Askling's Slider





Supine Hip Thrust



Sideplank STRETCH Hold



SL Horizontal STRETCH Hold



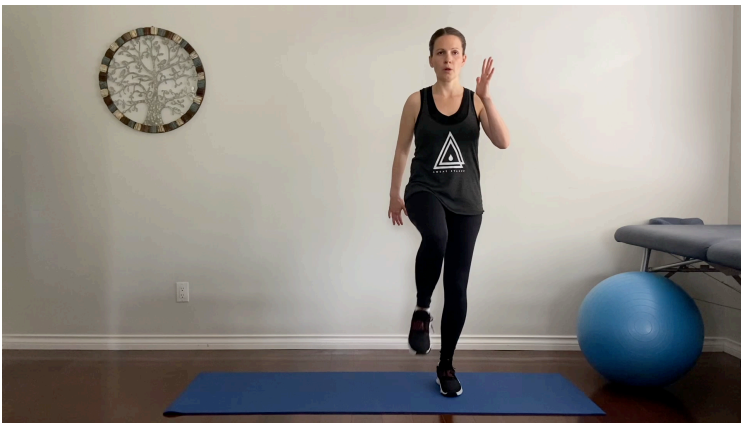
SL Vertical STRETCH Hip Dissociation



SL Horizontal STRETCH Tx Dissociation



Lateral Drive Hop



Pivot Drive Hop



“A recipe has no soul.  
You, as the cook, must bring soul to the recipe.”

- Thomas Keller





# A Framework for Athlete Management

- G** – Gather knowledge.
- R** – Relay & relate it.
- O** – Outline the process.
- W** – Work with purpose.
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# Know Your Athletes

<i>Category</i>	<i>Specifics</i>
PMHx Growth & Maturation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current needs/injuries</li><li>• Past injuries</li><li>• Stage of growth &amp; maturation</li><li>• Phase of learning – novice, learner, expert?</li><li>• Preferred methods of learning</li></ul>
Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sport(s)</li><li>• Position(s)</li><li>• Default posture – asymmetries?</li></ul>
Movement Tendencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Foundational Screen</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to obtain positions</li><li>• Movement awareness</li><li>• Asymmetries</li><li>• Initiate, controlled deceleration &amp; control of forces</li><li>• Efficiency &amp; economy</li><li>• Sequencing – distally vs proximally</li><li>• Maladaptive loading</li></ul>



# The Foundational Screen



## The Core A.I.M.™ Foundational Screen:

- Identifies your athlete's baseline movement profile at a point in time
- Allows for streamlining of motor control programming through obtaining the knowledge of your athlete's target areas for improvement
- Provides insight into whether your athlete possesses the necessary foundations for performance-based training & progressions
- Highlights athlete's key default positioning & movement asymmetries

\*\*Take note if any pain is described or is limiting positions, especially if the athlete is a rehabilitation patient.





# Identify Your Athlete's Phase of Rehabilitation

*Inflammatory phase* – Acute Injury Management

*Proliferative phase* – Introduce Foundations & Sequencing

*Remodeling phase* – Load & Layer (Neuromuscular Retraining)



# Know Your Intentions & What Your Athlete Needs



Do they have functional limitations (possibly from previous injury) that may need rehabilitation?

- Acute, Foundational, Loading & Layering

Do they need movement control or performance focused prescriptions? What are you targeting?

- Motor learning
- Motor control
- Strength
- Power
- Endurance
- Rate of Force Development
- Coordination

Are they youth athletes? Are they growing? What are their body specifics?

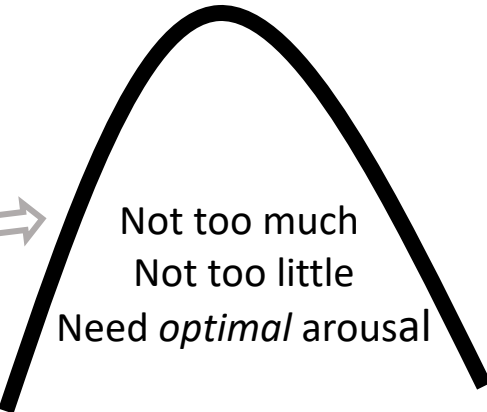




# Connecting Research & Clinic

Articles & books to CHECK OUT related to *Dosage*:

- 1. Yerkes-Dodson's Law (as cited in [Teigen, 1994](#))
- 2. Hans Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome ([1950](#))
- 3. 2 for 2 rule (Baechle et al., 2008)



**Hans Selye's GAS:**

- Homeostasis
- Alarm stage
- Resistance stage
- Exhaustion stage

Athlete can OWN it.





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# Relay & Relate Your Gathered Information

Are they growing athletes & do they need to be managed accordingly?

- As discussed in unit 2, monitoring growth provides us with information on growth spurts
- Unit 2 also provided an understanding of what is happening to growing athletes' bodies
- Make sure you *RELAY & RELATE* this information to the athlete
- Growing athletes **NEED** to understand what is happening to their bodies during this time & how that will impact their performance
- The information on growth & its implications for training adaptations also needs to be communicated to coaches



“Teams do not work in isolation – they work collectively to produce a powerful, strong and coordinated system for success.”

- Dani Langford

(modified from McKechnie, 2019)

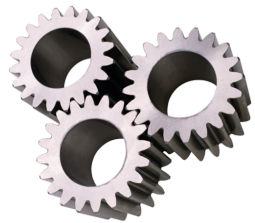




# Growth Requires Re-Calibration

The A.I.M. is challenged during periods of growth

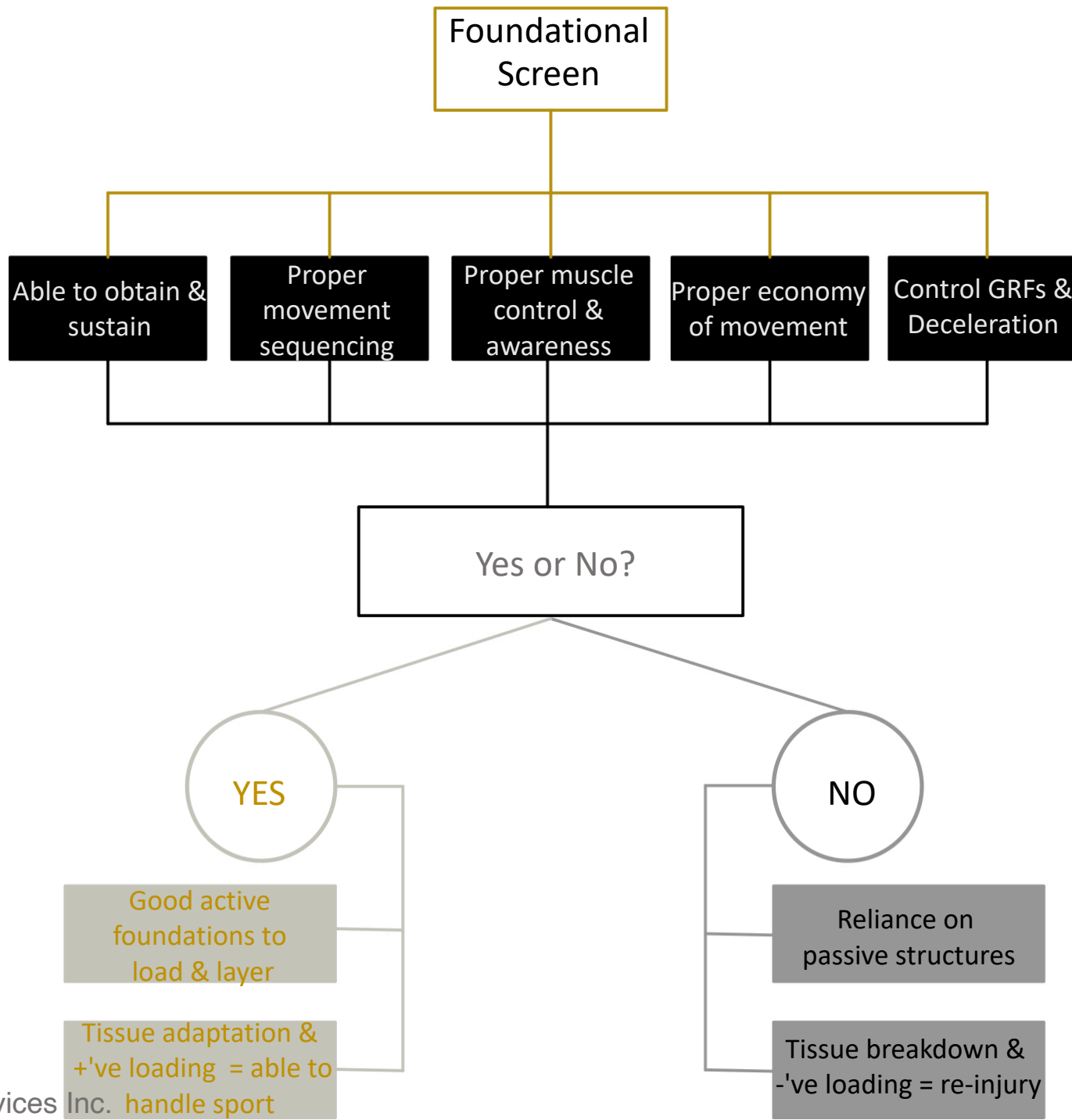
- Simply re-calibrate the A.I.M. if the athlete has previously been through the process
- Establishing A.I.M. during the period of growth is much more challenging



## How to re-calibrate?

- This involves cycling back to the stage of FPs
  - Support with multi-sensory feedback
  - Progress by reducing support & feedback as A.I.M. is re-established







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# Needs of a Growing Athlete

- Flexibility for mobility
  - To achieve NEUTRAL
  - To obtain the 4 foundational positions
- Spatial awareness
  - Balance
  - Tempo
- Sequencing movement control
  - Recalibration due to long levers & physiological growing patterns that lead to more distal initiation of movement
  - Goal is proximal initiation of movement
  - This is a dynamic & continuous process that *repeats itself* often throughout the early career of a growing athlete







# Summary of Ideas for Success with Youth

Imitation of peers, practitioners, coaches

Demonstration - watch & learn

Attention paid to mental imagery options & use of MSI

Novice learner is putting the pieces together - don't overload w/ feedback

Shorter attention span – make it fun!

As we know youth are not mini-adults, they are developing cognitively & they need special considerations.

[\(Barillas et al., 2020\)](#)

Errorless Learning - set them up for success

Implicit Learning - easy to do ANALOGIES

Unique opportunity - do it right the first time & establish A.I.M. early





# Check-in with Yourself

Examine your own skill set as coach/therapist/trainer

- Do you know the dosages for performance variables?
- Do you know the importance of mobility & how to obtain it?
- Do you know the importance of proper movement control & how to teach it?
- Do you know how to train body awareness?
- Do you know your athlete's sporting demands to be able to TOSSS them a skill?



What is neutral? How do *you* teach it?

What does proper movement patterning look like?





# What is 'Neutral' Stance?

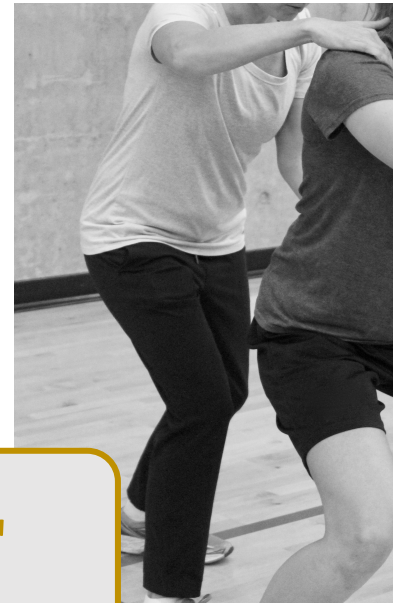
- Neutral stance is a **starting position** from which your body is able to optimally & efficiently move
- It is an **active position** from which your muscles are able to fire locally & then add power globally
- This allows achievement of the athletic task at hand with the **least amount of passive reliance** on tissues, which would cause break down
- Mobility is required to achieve neutral stance & to move in/out of this with control & efficiency
- Proper cueing is required to obtain neutral stance & the proper thought processes are required for movement initiation

“Comfortable is not always correct. However, correct can become comfortable.”

- Jack Westover



- Rhythmic stabilizations (RS) are: (Adler et al., 1999, as cited in [Dionisio et al., 2018](#))
  - Isometric agonist & antagonist activity
  - No loss of tension
- RS improved static & dynamic trunk muscle endurance & flexibility in young adolescents. ([Kim et al., 2013](#))
- RS performed before a reaching task increased ipsilateral local core muscle activation. ([Dionisio et al., 2018](#))
- RS via hands-on facilitation can increase motor demand & drive in an area to match the external force perturbations.
- RS decreased AP displacement in SL and SL balance tests. ([Kim & Park, 2016](#))



"Don't let me move you"



Tactile information from the environment is foundational to posture & positioning. It is key to knowing where you are in space. Externally applied & focused tactile forces can enhance local motor output to meet demand ([Dionisio et al., 2018](#)).

What if you can't put your hands on? How can you still use touch to benefit your athlete?



Tactile pressure

- Use compression

RS perturbations

- Use balls or dowels

"Don't let me move you"



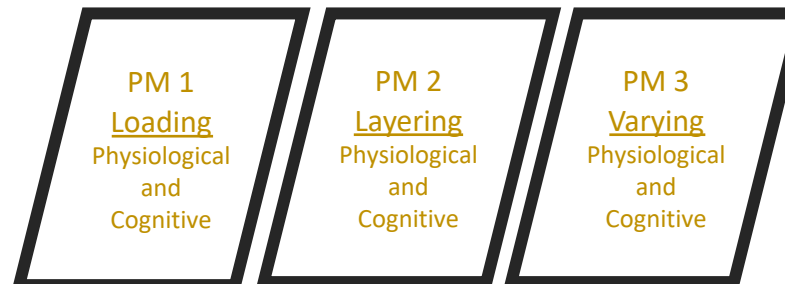
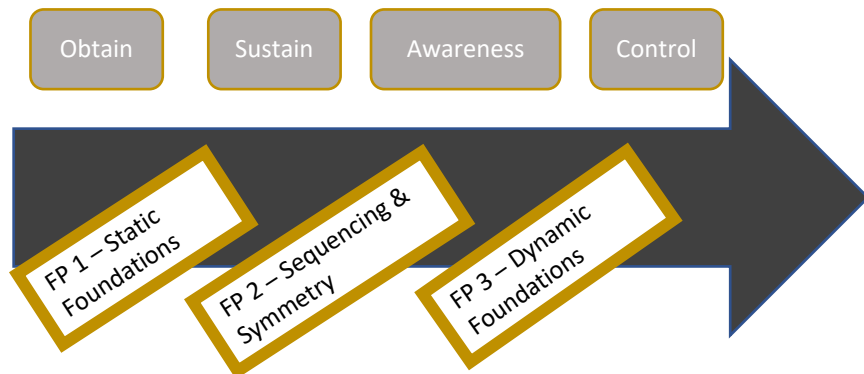




# Feedback – Parameters

Recall our Foundational Pre-Requisites (FPs) 1-3:

- Feedback & support is high when teaching something new
- To establish A.I.M., internal feedback is important
- Multi-sensory input should be utilized
- Athletes need to *make their own A.I.M.*, working from a good foundation
  - Self-organize based on our principles
- The therapist will have a more prominent role in the FP stage compared to the Progressive Manipulation (PM) stage



Advancement to the PM stage is vital for the athlete – this is where athletes are more independent, supported by their foundations



# Components of Spatial Awareness

- **Proprioception** – knowing where your body is in space
- **Utilizing feedback** – visual, verbal & tactile inputs into the body
- **Ground reaction force (GRF)** – tells your body where it is in space relative to the ground/surface
- **Touch** – beneficial in spatial orientation
- **Somatosensory cutaneous & mechanoreceptors** – valuable input from muscles, tendons & joints
- **Cognitively enhanced** – by having the athlete pay attention to sensory input related to the task (for example, asking what do you hear/see/feel when performing the task?)





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# Principles of A.I.M. Patterning within Sport

- What is optimal movement?
- What are key components of optimal movement?
- Are there different expressions of optimal movement?
- Should everyone move the same way?

"How we coach movement matters, but the result of how the athlete moves matters *most*."

- Core A.I.M.™

## Thought process

- Creating a focus
- Creating intention that directs movement

## Proximal sequencing

- Finding stability from a central point
- Stability with mobility

## Dynamic control

- Mobility with stability
- Awareness & control of the body

## Efficiency

- Dissociation allowing for a quietness & isolated work when appropriate
- Good economy of movement

## Self-organized

- Degrees of freedom
- Multiple ways to solve problems when movement processing errors occur
- Robustness & resilience in sport

## Adaptability

- Different environments
- Different contexts

## Strength

- Ability to sustain neutral when encountering external forces
- Ability to control position with encountering external forces
- Increased resiliency

## Endurance

- Ability to sustain neutral & control position as competition continues
- Resistance to time & fatigue

## Symmetry

- While possibly not attainable, striving for symmetry is non-negotiable



Qualities of A.I.M.



"External cues turn attention into intention. A movement without a goal is like a journey without a destination. The right cues bring purpose to patterns. "

- [Nick Winkelman](#)



# Teaching A.I.M. Patterning



## Thought processes

- Target this – every movement must start & end with a thought process

## Cause & effect

- Learn to teach movement properly from the start rather than chasing movement
- What you say *will* produce a result
- If you desire proper sequencing, you must *cue* proper sequencing

## Movement is unique to everyone

- By screening your athlete, you will know their movement tendencies
- Be prepared with this information and outline their key needs so you can facilitate & target their areas of weakness





# What is Movement Sequencing?

- Your first *thought process* needs to come from your *centre*
- Order matters
  - Muscle firing – what fires first?
  - Movement initiation – what moves first?
- Your anticipatory response that occurs *prior to movement* needs to fire from your *centre*
- Your first *body displacement* needs to come from your *centre*
- Your first *body displacement* needs to be directed *into the ground* to create a ground reaction force (GRF) – use the floor!



"Proximal strength means distal power."

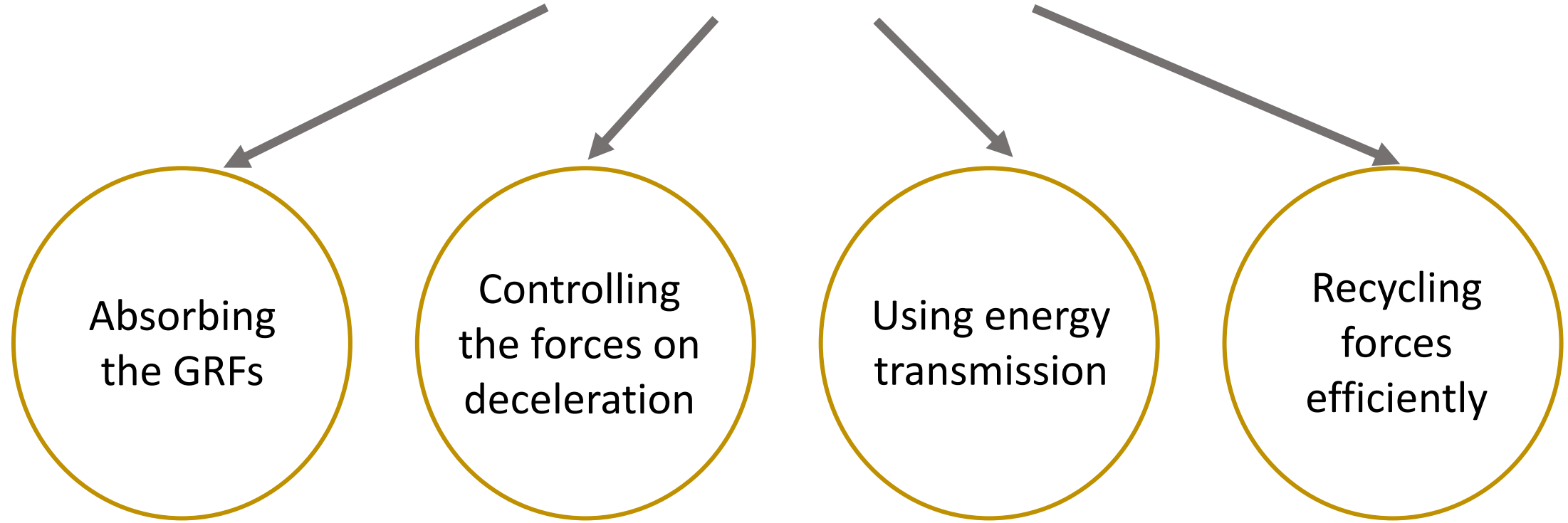
- Core A.I.M.





# What is Movement Control?

Progress from positioning, sequencing & creating GRFs to:



Law of Conservation of Energy = energy can be neither created nor destroyed.  
It can only change from one form of energy to another.



## *PROXIMAL: IN cues*

Drive down from your pelvis

Burst

Explode out of the ground

Move from your central  
point

Drive your left side down (to  
go right)

## *DISTAL: OUT cues*

Move your feet,  
Be on your toes,  
Get legs wide

You have no legs in your shot,  
Follow through, snap your wrist,  
bend your knees

Stutter feet to close out

He needs to find his hands

Fast feet  
Strike harder  
Swing harder



Cue A.I.M. to Get A.I.M.

\*\* fewer words, more implicit & external  
cueing, actions







# Dosage for Optimal Movement Patterning

- Adaptive response requires working to fatigue
  - Need it to feel hard
  - Need caveat of quality control
- Don't practice *repeat* poor reps
- With a bit of guidance & fostered internal feedback, athletes can determine the dosage for optimal movement patterning



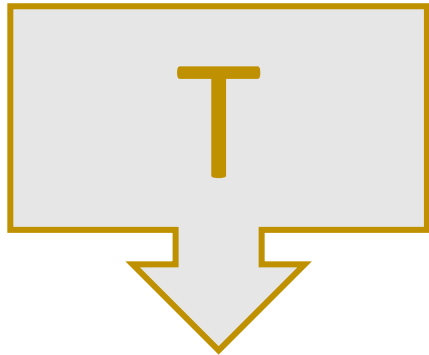


# A Framework for Athlete Management

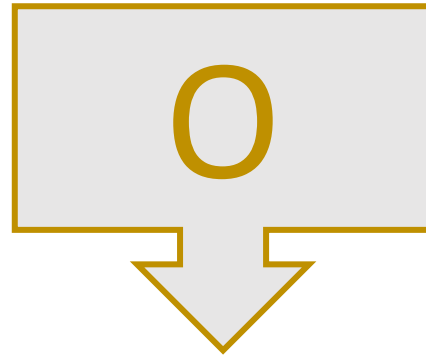
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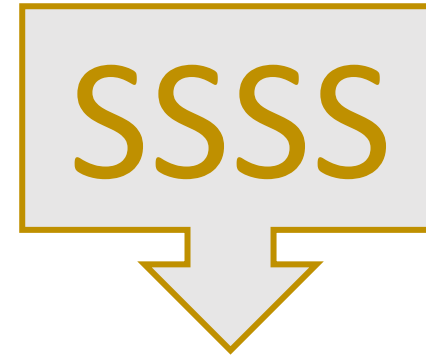
TOSSSS is to your athletes – TEACH them and help them OWN it,  
and then SOLIDIFY that with SPORT-SPECIFIC SKILLS



**TEACH** it to them  
Know your audience  
Know stages of skill  
acquisition  
Know preferred style of  
learning  
Teach thought processes  
for initiation & return



**Make it their OWN**  
Autonomy  
Engagement  
Attention  
Accountability  
Self-organization  
Confidence  
Implicit learning



**SOLIDIFY** with **SPORT  
SPECIFIC SKILLS**  
Strive for Automaticity  
Dual tasks for cognitive  
challenge  
Multi-sensory modalities  
Transference  
Manipulate constraints  
(DL)



Core A.I.M.'s Framework for  
Integrated Skill Acquisition





# Solidifying with Sport-Specific Skills



- Know your athletes sport & the critical sporting indicators in order to help them solidify skill acquisition into a sport-specific situation
- Think of the cognitive & physiological challenges each sport presents

"Treat locally, rehab globally"  
- Alex McKechnie

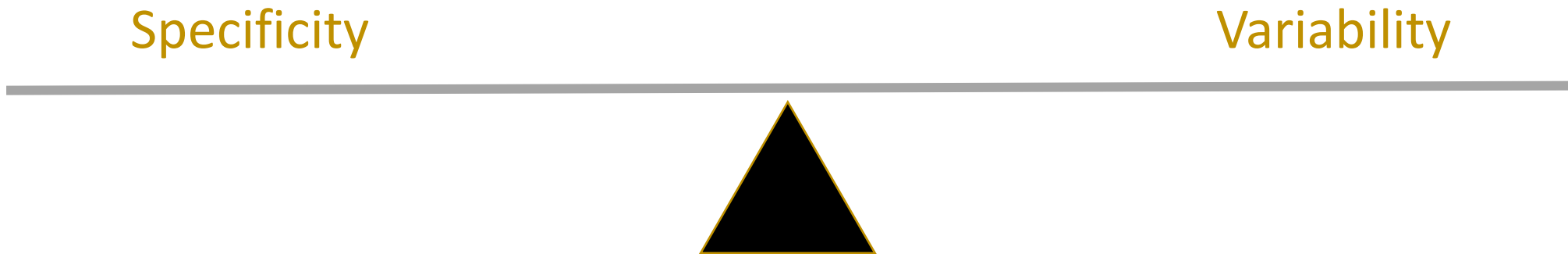




# Specificity or Variability for Transference?

Manipulating constraints is a balancing act between *specificity* & *variability*.

Each individual case is dynamic & unique,  
requiring a different solution for optimal transference.



DST – Constraints: task, individual, environment  
Micro level (local) vs Macro level (global)

([Gamble, 2006](#)); ([Faigenbaum et al., 2020](#))





# Connecting Research & Clinic

Resources to CHECK OUT related to *Specificity*:

1. Applying specificity to training – for athletes & for coaches ([Gamble, 2006](#))
2. Principle of specificity ([Delorme, 1945](#))
3. Specificity vs. relevance in youth ([Faigenbaum et al., 2020](#))
4. NSCA's Essentials of Strength and Conditioning ([Sheppard & Triplett, 2016](#))

Initially described by Delorme ([1945](#)), specificity as it relates to training: "[A]n athlete is trained in a specific manner to produce a specific adaptation or training outcome."

- [Sheppard & Triplett, 2016, p. 440](#)





# Specificity for Adaptation

**Exercise Physiology** – dosage for specific adaptations, types of contractions & muscle combinations

**Biomechanics** – depth of squat for function, joint angle & position

**Environment** – on field return-to-sport drills, altitude & temperature

**Cognitive** – need to handle auditory & visual distraction; multi-tasking & open skills

**Task / Sport** – rowers working double leg vs cyclists' working single leg

**Working Rates** – match 24 second shot clock; 15 seconds of actual defensive stance

**Population** – again, know our audience; gender, growth rate, etc

([Gamble, 2006](#))





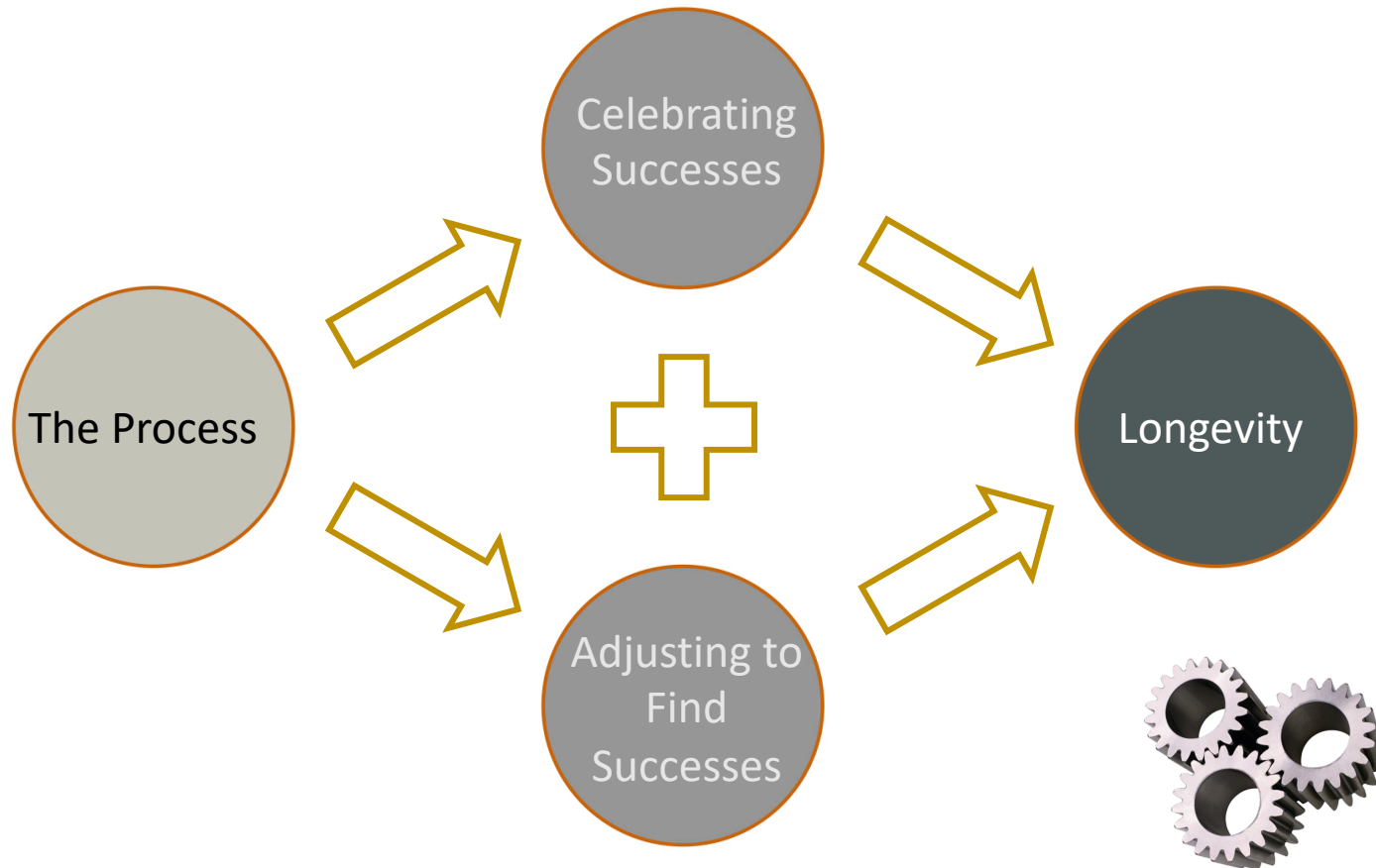
# A Framework for Athlete Management

- G** – Gather knowledge.
- R** – Relay & relate it.
- O** – Outline the process.
- W** – Work with purpose.
- T** – Teach & train together.
- H** – Highlight successes.





# Emphasize the Positives



## Celebrate G.R.O.W.T.H. with your athletes

- Be process-oriented
- Reflect on the process and needed adaptations
  - Are you creating change?
    - Re-calibrate, re-evaluate & readjust as required
- Help attach positive emotions to the process
  - Deliver dopamine to connect pleasure & highlight successes
- Build longevity
  - Able to play as long as they want





Longevity – life  
time benefits &  
participation in sport

Diversification & success of  
person AND sport.

Thickening and  
strengthening through  
experience – layering &  
loading.

Strong foundational  
beginnings that reach  
around to support.

<https://unsplash.com/photos/KVI1c42uSnw>



Core A.I.M.™ - Summary





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