

Sustainable Whole Body Training

by Sheri Pate, Mastery Member and ITP Group Leader

I was inspired by my ITP visioning process, affirmation and community to join with trainer Robert DeLeon to create Sustainable Whole Body Training (SWBT), an evidenced-based training program. SWBT combines mind-body training, strength building and education to attract flow states, specifically for improved athletic performance and greater joy and meaning in life. Flow state, coined by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, is a mental state in which a person is fully immersed in the moment, effortlessly performing, seemingly with supernormal ability.



In a SWBT session, we usually begin by lying down and utilizing intentional breath and body awareness accompanied by an educational component, then we move into correctional exercises and strength building. Finally, we end with a period of recovery.

Examples of correctional exercises are therapeutic rolling and dynamic stretching. Foam rolling, or ball rolling, is known as soft-tissue work. Rolling helps improve tissue quality by massaging tight areas and increasing blood flow. Dynamic stretching is a series of movements that allows one's body to move into deeper ranges of motion.

In SWBT, strength building focuses on core stability through simultaneously balancing and lifting free weights or body weight. Weight is not increased until stability and balance are obtained.

One of the primary differences between a “regular” exercise routine and SWBT is the “how.” By maintaining synchronized breath, mindfulness, centering, visualization, positive self-talk and other practices, we focus more on “being” rather than accomplishing. Our goal is to connect participants with their extraordinary capacities and flow state.

Flow is not a static process; perhaps it is best understood in stages. In SWBT (as in life and sport), we may find ourselves struggling. This is Stage 1. In fact, according to Csikszentmihalyi, flow often depends on challenging ourselves with greater requirements for skill and complexity. As we challenge ourselves in SWBT, especially strength building, we may initially experience a rush of adrenaline and cortisol (anxiety, fear); at this point the entryway to flow is through mind-body practices, such as breath awareness and visualization.

As we learn to relax and come fully into the present moment – Stage 2, we experience a sense of effortlessness and bliss. This is the flow state or Stage 3. Finally, if we do reach this elusive state of flow, we must be prepared for the transition out. As Steven Kotler, author of *The Rise of Superman*, explains, recovery or Stage 4 is an essential stage of flow. In SWBT we end our training with relaxation and guided imagery to bring our autonomic nervous system back to neutral.

The combination of mind-body practices and strength building in SWBT opens the doorway to the stages of flow. We not only hope to teach people about best practices for flow, but to have participants experience flow through their whole body and being.