

February 2020

BodyGears

# NEWSLETTER

THE FACTS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH AND CARING FOR YOUR BODY



THE SELF-  
LOVE  
ISSUE



**PSOAS: MUSCLE OF  
THE SOUL**

**10 PRACTICAL  
SELF-CARE PRACTICES**

**RECIPE OF THE MONTH**

**EXERCISE OF THE  
MONTH**

enhancing **HUMAN** mechanics<sup>SM</sup>

# Welcome to Oak Park, Dr. Janelle Howell, PT, DPT



Janelle earned her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA. She also has a Bachelor of Pre-Physical Therapy Degree from Oakwood University in Huntsville, AL.

Janelle treats a variety of orthopedic conditions with a combination of manual therapy and therapeutic exercise and is also a Women's Health therapist.



She recently completed her residency in the field of Women's Health and is able to help women with a variety of pelvic health issues including high-tone pelvic floor and bladder-related issues, as well as prenatal and postpartum needs.

*"I love that I can provide patients with the opportunity to become stronger, more flexible, and more coordinated in their movement. All we need is willingness and commitment. Those who understand that physical therapy is a team effort are usually the ones who achieve the most."*

*- Janelle*

# Psoas: Muscle of the Soul

The psoas is the only muscle in your body that connects your back bone to your leg bone - more specifically from the vertebral bodies and discs of T12 to L5 down to the inner portion of the upper femur bone.

It is sometimes referred to as the *muscle of the soul*, or *emotional core* or *sacred psoas* because of its proximity to the diaphragm.

You have both a psoas major and psoas minor muscle on each side of your body, and they share a common tendon with another muscle called the iliacus. Together, these three muscles are referred to as the iliopsoas.

The psoas muscle is uniquely both a core muscle that helps to stabilize the lumbar spine and a mover muscle that flexes the hip. Many people who have experienced a psoas release (which can be done through yoga, Pilates, self-release techniques, and manual physical therapy) have also experienced a flood of emotions releasing along with the muscle.

A tight psoas can affect your posture, which will in turn impact your breathing mechanics, likely resulting in more shallow breaths and potentially triggering a stress response.

Likewise, the inverse can also be true. Stress, which can cause you to take quicker, shallower breaths and affect your posture

can tighten up your psoas.

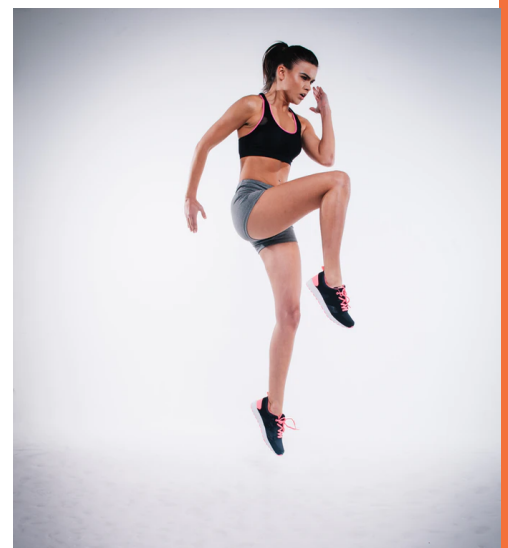
At Body Gears, we acknowledge the connection between the physical self and the emotional self. We don't have all the answers that science has yet to figure out about how, but we know that being able to breathe freely when your psoas are limber and your posture promotes full rib cage expansion is good for the soul.

One last thing to consider is whether or not you truly have a tight psoas muscle. In a culture where we sit for long periods of time, it's easy to think that psoas muscles would naturally become tight being forced to endure shortening to 90-degrees of hip flexion or beyond for hours on end.

If you're a desk worker with pain in the front of your hip, it's a natural conclusion for someone to jump to. But what if the problem is actually weakness, not tightness?

Replacing activity with long periods of sitting also leads to muscle weakness and because the psoas is an important core stabilizer muscle, it needs to continuously be exhibiting strength. One way for a muscle to maintain strength in the face of weakness/fatigue is to become tight. This would then make strengthening more important than stretching/releasing.

Just some food for thought can you can share with your soulmate.



Watch out for the silent P-. It's pronounced "so-as" and it's Greek for "muscle of the loins."

# 10 Ways to Infuse Self-Care into Your Weekly Routine

**1. Spend at least an hour outside every week.** This could be 10 minutes a day or a couple of 30-minute walks. Not only will you be getting essential vitamin D and fresh air to combat fatigue, depression, and high blood pressure, but it provides the perfect time to practice gratitude, mindfulness, or any other meditative discipline to benefit your mental health as well.

**2. Find a regular physical activity that's fun!** If going to the gym or going for a run aren't your thing, don't fret. It's important to enjoy what you're doing so that you can be more consistently physically active. Instead, try taking classes in dance, kickboxing, or fencing, or find a meetup group for something you're already passionate about doing.

**3. Create your ideal nighttime routine.** Whether it's a 5-step skincare routine, reading a book with a cup of tea, or journaling, having a technology-free ritual that signals to your body that sleep is imminent will help you fall asleep faster. Ensure you get your full 8 hours to promote healing, trigger less pain, and improve cognitive function.

**4. Make one informed dietary change at a time.** Once you view processed food as more chemicals than food, you'll know you've transitioned from a diet to a lifestyle change. Instead of dieting, try eliminating high fructose corn syrup from your diet. This artificial sugar drives up the calorie count with no nutritional value and is linked with obesity, heart disease, fatty liver disease, and diabetes. When you're looking for it, you'll find it listed in surprising places.

**5. Nurture at least one relationship a week.** Socialization is an important aspect of self-care. Pick a family member, friend, or colleague and dedicate time that week connecting with him or her to strengthen your bond. Having a diverse support system for advice, consolation, and help and being part of someone else's support system is important for everyone's well-being.

**6. Enjoy a hobby. Or several.** Hobbies help you learn new skills, bring down your stress levels, and can promote social and spiritual well-being. Whether expressing yourself through any art form; strategizing and socializing

with board games; learning a new language; or spending time with animals, be sure to dedicate time every week to a fun passion.

#### **7. Use positive reinforcement.**

Use entertainment you enjoy to help you get through less enjoyable tasks. Pick a TV show, podcast, or type of music you enjoy and only allow yourself to watch/listen to it while completing your necessary but less enjoyable tasks to create a positive rather than negative atmosphere.

#### **8. Find your laugh factory.**

Whether it's an episode of a TV show or a movie that gets you every time, a professional comedian, or just a hilarious friend, it's important to laugh regularly and to know where you can get laughs when you need them. Laughter has the obvious effect of reducing stress and boosting your mood, but it also strengthens your immune system and diminishes pain.

#### **9. Do one thing to de-clutter**

**everyday.** It could be clearing a whole room or just a notorious table. Whatever clutters your life, make the effort once a day to leave your space a little tidier than you found it. This will help keep tidying to a manageable level and promote a clean space for a clear mind.

#### **10. Don't let things fester.**

If something is going to go away on its own, it should start to do so within a week. If you're still dealing with last week's unresolved emotions, physical ailments, or other challenges, then it's time to address it head on. The benefit of consulting a professional is quickly getting to the root of the problem and identifying the most effective management strategies for you. Time can heal many wounds, but who's got time for that?

## The 5 Areas of Self-Care:

- Physical
- Social
- Mental
- Spiritual
- Emotional



## Halva: A Middle Eastern Sweet

Prep Time 15min  
Chill time 2hrs  
Yields 1lb

### Ingredients

1 1/2 cups well-stirred tahini at room temperature  
1/4 tsp kosher salt  
1/2 tsp vanilla extract  
1 1/4 cups sugar

Special Equipment:  
Candy thermometer

Optional:  
A few nice flavor/topping ideas are chopped roasted pistachios and rosewater, coarsely chopped dark chocolate and ground cardamom, and lemon zest (added to the saucepan before making the syrup) and poppy seeds

### Directions

1. Line an 8" x 8" baking pan or a 9" x 4" loaf pan with parchment paper, leaving a 2" overhang on two sides. Using a wooden spoon, mix tahini, salt, and vanilla in a medium heatproof bowl.
2. Pour 1/4 cup of water into a small saucepan, then stir in the sugar. Attach a candy thermometer to the side of the pan and bring the sugar to a boil over medium-high heat. Stir occasionally until the temperature reaches 250°F and then immediately remove from heat.
3. Gradually stream the hot syrup into the tahini mixture, mixing constantly with a wooden spoon until the halva comes together in a smooth mass and starts to pull away from the sides of the bowl (less than a minute - do not overmix or your halva will be crumbly).
4. Working quickly, scrape the halva into your lined pan and push it toward the edges while smoothing the top. Let it cool to room temperature before covering tightly with plastic and chilling for at least two hours. Remove from the pan using the parchment overhang and slice as desired to serve. Can be stored for three weeks in the fridge.

### Halva Fun Facts

Tahini (ground sesame) has more protein than milk and most nuts and is a rich source of B vitamins. This an old traditional dish even found in an early 13th century Arabic recipe book, which might lead you down a interesting search for what they used as a thermometer.

# Exercise of the Month



## Diaphragmatic Breathing

### A Mindful Breathing Strategy

People often notice taking faster, shallower breaths while stressed, but it's also possible for an inefficient breathing strategy to trigger a stress response. Common inefficient breathing patterns include not expanding enough through the abdomen or not being able to exhale through the chest. This can be the result of poor posture and/or joint and soft tissue restrictions. There's no perfect way to breathe, but you want to ensure your chest and abdomen have the capacity to fully inhale and exhale.

1. Lay on your back with your knees bent, one hand on your chest, and one hand on your abdomen.
2. Take in a breath slightly deeper than normal and notice whether one hand moves more than the other. Notice whether this is the same on the exhale.
3. On your next breath, try

- to have both hands rise the same amount at the same time.
4. Likewise, when you exhale, both hands should lower at the same time.
- Practice for 3-5 minutes as both a mobility exercise for the chest and abdomen and a mindfulness exercise to reduce stress.

## Wheaton

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**630-937-3030**

## West Loop

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**312-728-3030**

## Lincoln Park

2316 NORTH CLARK ST  
CHICAGO, IL 60614

**312-739-3030**

## Oak Brook

2311 WEST 22ND ST #110  
OAK BROOK, IL 60523

**630-912-6040**

## Winnetka

914 GREENBAY ROAD #202  
WINNETKA, IL 60093

**847-447-6040**

## Oak Park

1049 LAKE ST #201  
OAK PARK, IL 60301

**708-607-6040**

# SCHEDULE YOUR FREE DISCOVERY SESSION

## Visit our website or give us a call.

Whether you're recovering from an injury, training for a competition, or you're striving for better health, wellness and freedom of movement, Body Gears can help you achieve your optimum self.

This 20-minute appointment will allow you to meet with a physical therapist, share your story, and complete a mini-assessment. The purpose of this session is to answer two questions:

- 1. Which techniques will help you change your story?**
- 2. How can Body Gears help you achieve your functional goals?**

Our physical therapists will be able to quickly provide you with the information you need to take the next step.

We hope it's with us!