



Returning to Activity, Safely.

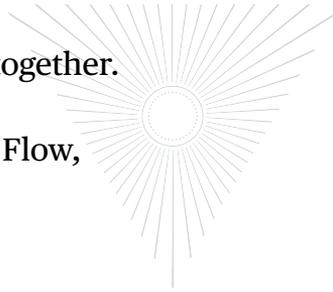
A physical therapist's
perspective

Welcome and thank you for subscribing. Here is my first gift to you. This is a small part in a wide selection of evidence and practical-based information, provided in a way that can be easily referenced and shared with peers, friends and clients! My background in yoga, meditation science and 11+ years of experience as an orthopedic physical therapist within multiple settings has allowed me to hone in on the key elements for rehabilitation, prevention and wellness success, holistically. I love to learn and I love to share. So, thank you for the opportunity to share.

We are in this journey together.

Move Still, Be Well and Flow,

Dr. Helen.



Disclaimer Notice:

The information in this free e-book is intended to be a general resource for modalities/interventions and does not claim to be applicable to all cases and all conditions. Please consult with your healthcare provider(s) to determine the absolute right course of action for you.

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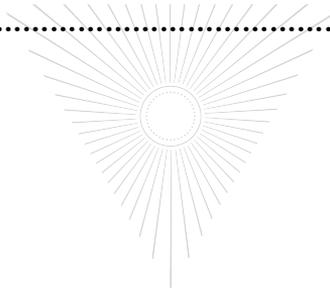
“The world doesn’t belong to
leaders. The world belongs to all
humanity.”

The Dalai Lama



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Prologue

Can we ever expect to pick up where we left off? Often times, we are in a new place, mental space, physical condition, energy, or lack thereof, when we decide to return to exercise.

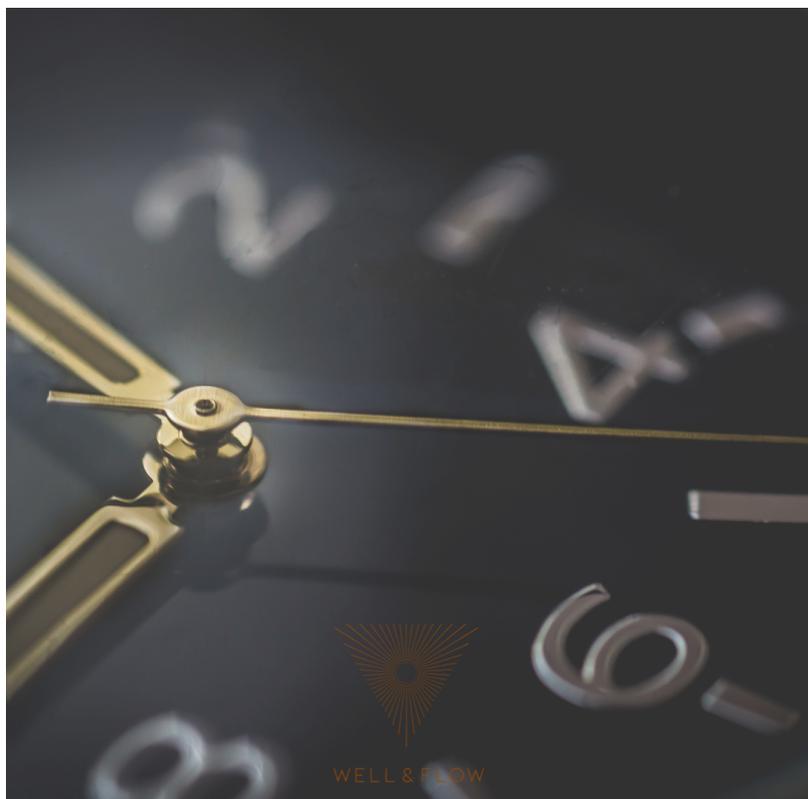
Regardless if you are an avid athlete, a speed walker, an occasional stroller or a couch surfer, before you ever go back to returning to a sport or workout plan, you need to assess a few things.



Weekend Warriors are at risk for major injury. As a physical therapist, I see various examples that can range from an immediate traumatic injury like a fracture or a sprain to a cumulative effect experienced as a patellar tendonitis or low back pain. We can even take a few steps back and use the example of that moving day or the time you went to Costco and transported a case of water.

Opportunities to injure ourselves are rampant, so we have to define and redefine what our limits are.

...So we begin, and begin again...



W hat are the main things to consider?

1. Old injuries/New injuries
2. Setting Yourself up for Success
3. Habit Formation Techniques
4. Preparing the Foundation

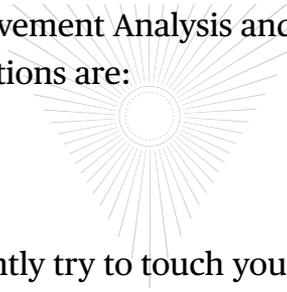
#1: Face the Old with the New

Let's face it, old injuries never fully disappear. If they do, consider yourself one of the lucky ones. Our symptoms improve and we return to our daily habits and functional patterns, but there is always a risk for re-injury. So, being aware of your old injuries is the first step to returning to activity.

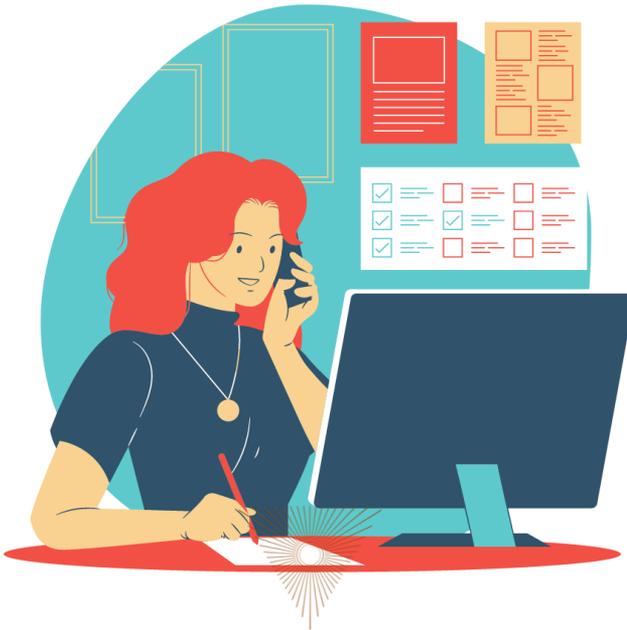


Dust the old cobwebs and get to know yourself...

1. Assess where your potential problems may be.
2. If you were seen by a physical therapist in the past, go back to some of your old prescribed exercises.
3. Perform a Self-Movement Analysis and determine where your limitations are:
 - Reach overhead.
 - Bend over and gently try to touch your toes.
 - Twist over your waist.
 - Perform a wall push up or plank.
 - Go for a short walk and assess your body, mind and energy the next day.
4. Ask yourself, “Am I pain-free”? If not, you may still begin but **lightly and within a pain-free zone of activity.**



#2: Set Yourself up for Success



WELL & FLOW

Let's talk about recognizing your own
limitations...

Barriers to Habits:

- *Time*
- *Pain*
- *Not-so-great habits*
- *Lack of Motivation*
- *Lack of Energy*



Time (and location) is of the Essence...

Do you have an accessible gym? Is your neighborhood walkable? Does the weather in your area impact your ability to leave your house? Do you have time in your day to dedicate to exercise? What are the most opportune times to integrate any self-care time?

If you're having a hard time finding time for a breath, it may be difficult to get started on a regular routine. Consider all these barriers first before you commit to a routine. The last thing you want when starting a new habit is being disappointed because you set unrealistic expectations.

#3: Habit Forming Techniques

Less is More, how often do we hear that?

Well, **it matters** here.



When starting a new routine:

1. Start anywhere
2. Start with the **basics**
3. Start **anytime**. Just fit it in anywhere in the day
4. Do **one set** if that's all you have time for
5. Group your activities with activities that already exist in your day, also known as **stacking**
6. Begin, without expectation

This takes on another meaning to **set it and forget it, doesn't it?**

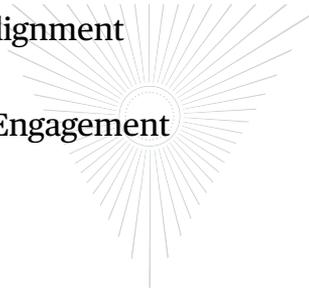
Remember: something is better than nothing.



#4: Prepare the Foundation

There are basic fundamentals you need to ensure you're well prepared to return, regardless of your chosen sport or activity:

1. Proper Postural Alignment
2. Deep Abdominal Engagement
3. Gluteal Strength
4. Ankle Stability

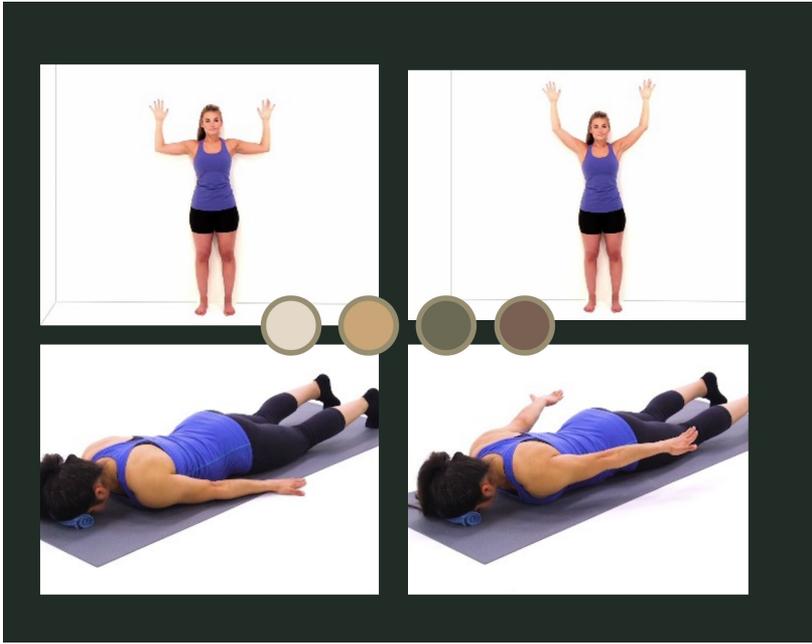


By the way, if you want to learn more about the details regarding these foundational building blocks to strength, subscribe to my [Newsletter](#).

Without further adieu....

Here are the top 5 Fundamental Exercises to begin with to address posture, core, pelvic stability, and proprioception:

1. Posture



Wall Angels

Setup

- Begin in a standing upright position with your back against a wall.

Movement

- Raise your arms out to the side with your elbows bent to 90 degrees, and rest them against the wall. Slowly slide your arms straight up the wall, then lower them back to the starting position and repeat.

Tip

- Make sure to keep your back and arms in contact with the wall, and do not shrug your shoulders or arch your lower

back during the exercise. Only raise your arms as far as you can without causing pain.

Scapular Squeezes

Setup

- Begin lying on your front with your forehead resting on a towel roll. Your arms should be positioned at your sides with your palms facing down.

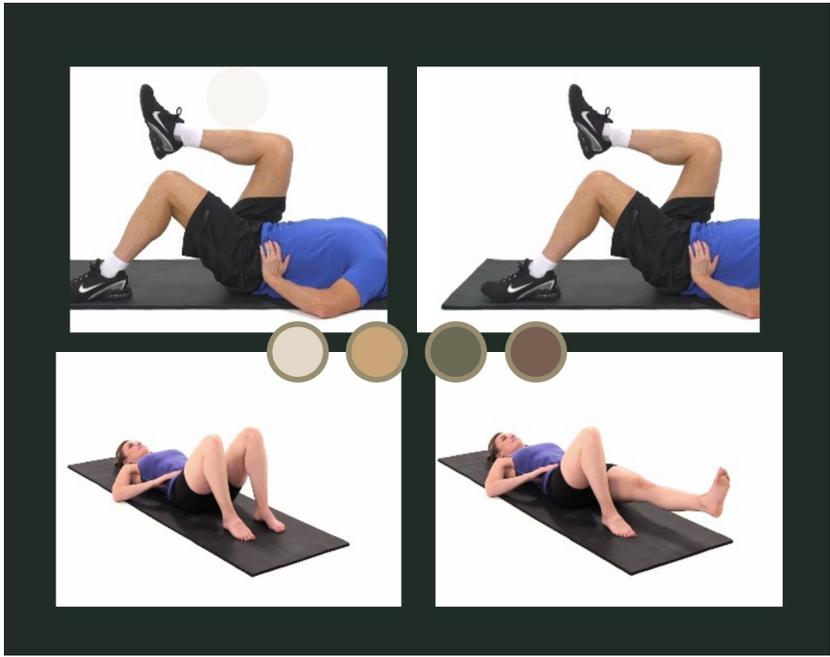
Movement

- Gently squeeze your shoulder blades together, then slowly lift your arms so they are parallel to your body. Hold briefly, then lower your arms back down and repeat.

Tip

- Make sure to keep your neck relaxed and do not shrug your shoulders during the exercise.

2. Core



Marches

Setup

- Begin lying on your back with your knees bent and feet resting on the floor.

Movement

- Engage your abdominal muscles and lift one leg off the floor to a 90-degree angle, then lift your opposite leg. Hold briefly, then lower the first foot back to the floor, then the other. Repeat, leading with the opposite leg.

Tip

- Make sure to keep your core engaged and do not hold your breath during the exercise.

Leg Extensions

Setup

- Begin lying on your back with your knees bent, feet resting on the floor, and your fingers resting on your stomach just above your hip bones.

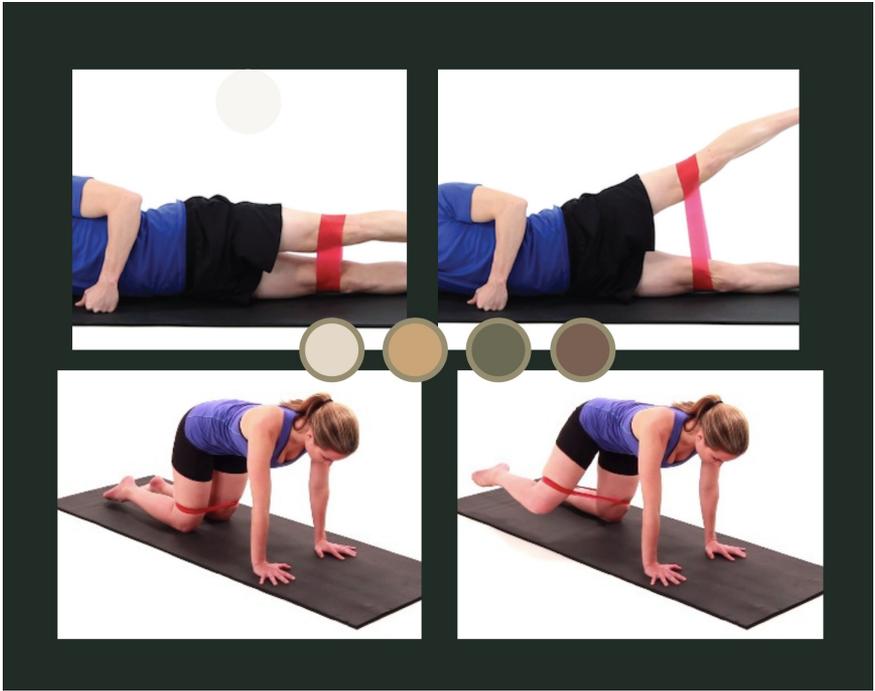
Movement

- Tighten your abdominals, pulling your navel in toward your spine and up. You should feel your muscles contract under your fingers. Hold this position, then straighten one knee, holding your leg a few inches off the ground. Bring it back to the starting position and repeat with your other leg.

Tip

- Make sure to keep your abdominals tight as you extend your legs. Do not hold your breath during the exercise.

3. Pelvis



Sidelying Leg Lifts

Setup

- Begin by lying on your side with a resistance loop secured around your thighs just above your knees.

Movement

- Extend your leg slightly backward until your toes are at the level of your bottom heel. Raise your leg toward the ceiling, keeping your knee and foot straight.

Tip

- Make sure not to roll forward or backward during the exercise.

Hydrant Kicks

Setup

- Begin on all fours with your arms directly under your shoulders and a resistance loop around your legs.

Movement

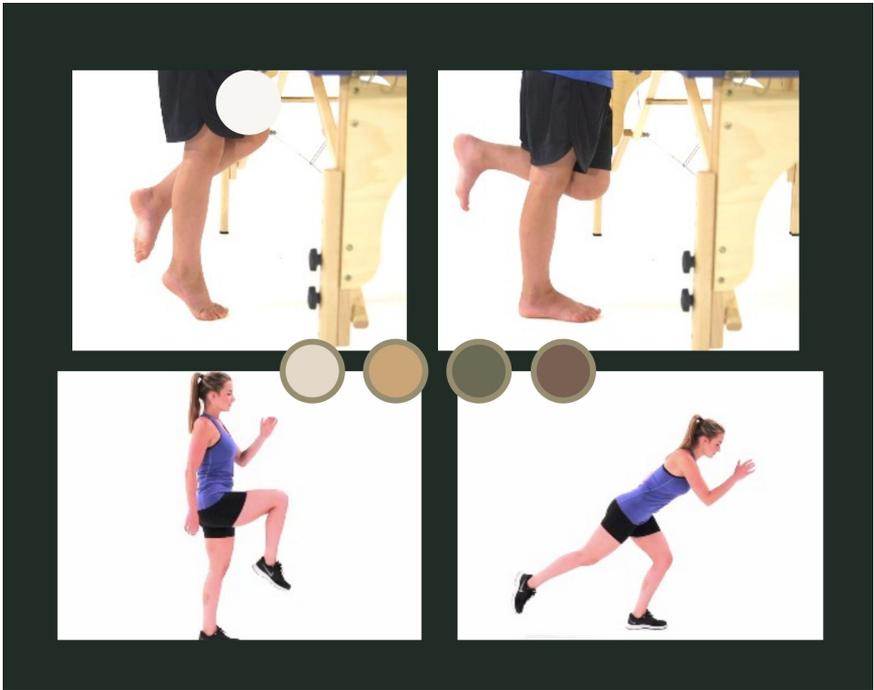
- Raise one leg straight to your side, keeping your knee bent. Slowly bring it back to the starting position and repeat.

Tip

- Make sure to keep your abdominals tight so your trunk does not rotate as you lift your leg.



3. Ankles



Single Leg Heel Raises

Setup

- Begin standing tall, holding onto a stationary object in front of you.

Movement

- Lift one foot off the ground and balance on one leg. On your stance leg, lift your heel and raise up onto your toes, then lower back down and repeat.

Tip

- Make sure to keep your balance and do not let your heel roll to either side.

Running Balance in Place

Setup

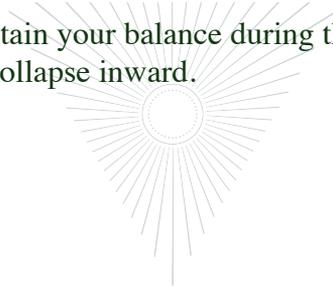
- Begin in a standing upright position.

Movement

- Bend one leg and your opposite arm into a running position, then straighten your bent leg, lean forward, bend your other arm, and bend your standing leg. Return to the starting position and repeat.

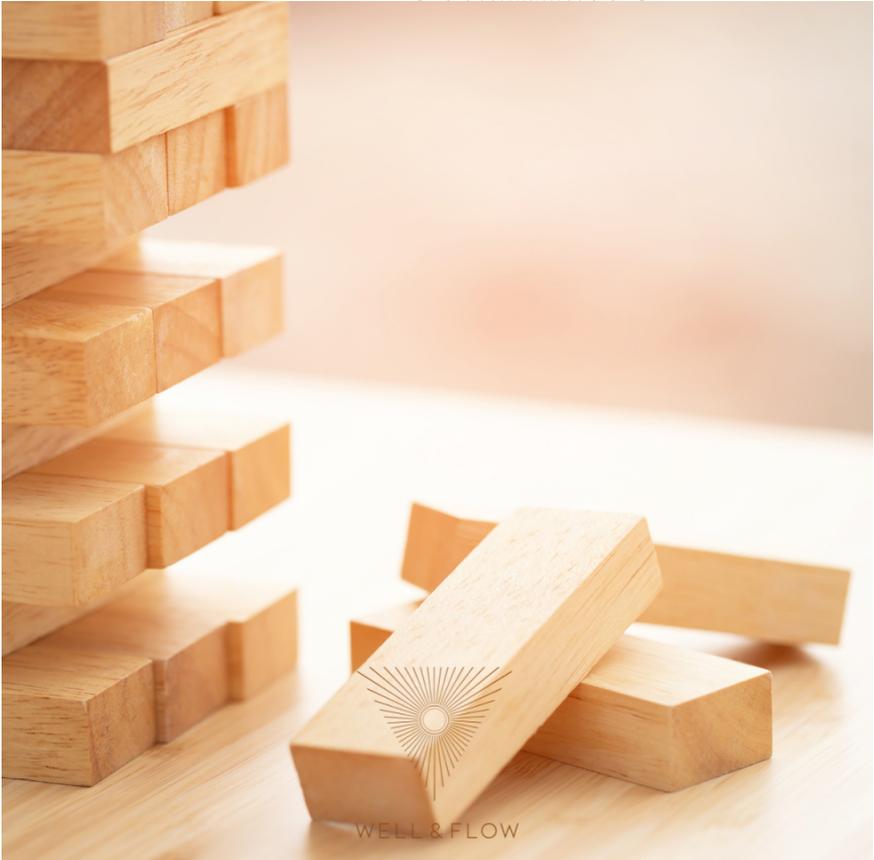
Tip

- Make sure to maintain your balance during the exercise. Do not let your knee collapse inward.



If you have resistance bands, GREAT! If not, you can still do these using gravity. As you can see, none of these require equipment. All you need is a wall and a floor!

The important thing here is starting and starting well. With the basics and fundamental **building blocks**.



How often? Glad you asked...

Frequency: as often as you can

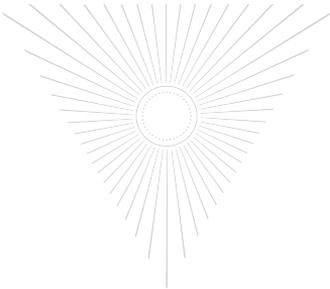
Intensity: to the point of fatigue



Wish it all could be so simple...

...It can be. All you have to do is just start where you are.

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As I always say, **Nothing works in isolation.** Your body, your mind, your outlook, your personal history, and everything in between creates your personalized canvas and landscape. Understanding the physiology of your body and the internal workings of your mind is the first step to disentanglement or peeling off the layers in order to get to the source. Begin slowly, softly, and with open awareness to possibilities.

I am here to help see you through it.

I hope you find this information to be valuable and a good starting point on your journey back to being active.

For more in-depth information and interventions, please contact me so we can devise a working plan to get you to your comfortable place.

Follow me on IG: [@wellandflowpt](#)

You can find me on [Twitter](#) and [Linkedin](#)

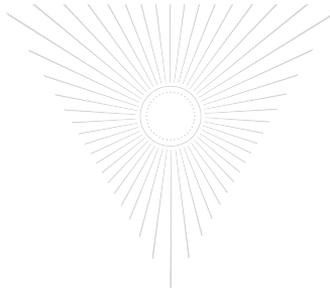
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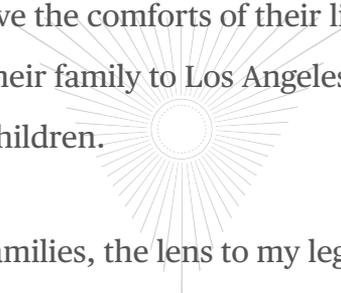
Resources

- Exercise photos provided by [medbridge.com](https://www.medbridge.com). Accessed February 1, 2022.



About the Author

I stepped into this world beginning with the love of dance and exploration, and it continues to play out in my life and career until this day. My story began with benevolence at home and later an outcome to living as an Armenian immigrant in Los Angeles. My parents, both classically trained musicians, decided they would leave the comforts of their lives they built in Armenia and move their family to Los Angeles in hopes of a better future for their children.



Like many immigrant families, the lens to my legacy holds the struggle of my ancestors and witnesses the hard work and dedication of my parents who navigated in this new world. But like the duality of nature, it also holds my experiences in diversity, culture, the love of dance/music, and complete immersion in beautiful places. My lens holds gratitude for all my experiences and successes in the face of personal and global difficulties and chaos. This canvas holds no limit to possibility.

I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Communication from USC's Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism, then transitioned to health care and obtained my Doctorate of

Physical Therapy degree from Mount St. Mary's College. As grateful as I was for these milestones, it only felt like the beginning. A year after my career began as a physical therapist, I knew there was more to discover. My career and spiritual/contemplative practices grew in tandem with one another as I took a plunge into the life of self-discovery. I took time off in 2012 and traveled in Rishikesh, India and Nepal to begin my studies in yoga and meditation in its entirety. I knew I didn't want to just get another notch on my belt but to truly embody what it means to master the Art of Living. There I was introduced to the ways of the ashram life, which included a lot of discipline, community and methods to obtaining personal freedom. There I was awakened to my own personal healing and creating abilities, an unexpected side effect. I knew that if I can find this personal power, I can help others do the same.

My story holds the blueprint to how I see this world, the old, the new and the evolving. It explains my desire for full immersion and embodiment practices. It explains my prolonged trips without set return dates and without itineraries. It explains my always-evolving love for music,

dance, and cultural diversity. My life has become an expression of freedom. My body, by way of dance and travel; my mind by way of writing, learning and contemplative practices; my heart through connection with nature; and the offering up of my gifts to the world.

I am a Board-certified physical therapist, Yoga Alliance-certified yoga instructor, and a trained Mindfulness Facilitator through UCLA Mindfulness Awareness Research dedicated to the practice and integration of the mind-body systems approach to addressing pain, wellness, prevention and recovery of functional limitations for orthopedic, chronic pain, women's health and Performance Arts injuries. My ongoing training and expertise include pain science, trauma, movement and mindfulness science, aromatherapy and manual/energy interventions including but not limited to Reiki, Craniosacral Therapy and Myofascial Release. I chose to become a physical therapist because it was a way to keep my passion for dance, movement, and self-expression alive. My intention is to provide tools and empowerment in people who suffer from pain and disabilities. I believe that without freedom in the heart, there will be no true movement or freedom in the body. Physical therapy is not just about the

body. It's a multi-systems approach to improving one's health and wellness, with improving function being the ultimate goal.

As physical therapists, we are trained to understand movement, but for me movement isn't just something you observe. For me it's a feeling; it's expression. I believe that movement is another form of expression that much like everything else, is influenced by our own personal stories: our memories, emotions, trauma, natural aging and gravity. So I like to really get to know my client's story or help them find their story. I particularly utilize mindfulness techniques in my treatment sessions to provide my clients with the opportunity to really get to know themselves in the process. We won't be able to truly change without discovering what we are willing to accept or move away from first. I want my clients to feel empowerment and hope. Often, the experience of pain and disability in any area incites emotions of tremendous fear and loss. Empowerment and hope has the power to close chapters and provide opportunities in healing. Ultimately, my intention is to provide them with as many opportunities for healing as I can because ultimately, we are all influencers and creators.