



Learn to act like an animal



Fitness expert Debbie Roy explains the value of primal movements to keep our bodies agile and strong



Welcome to another topic of Fitness Matters. I do hope you've been enjoying these articles and you are genuinely beginning to feel a difference. Last time we looked at 3D functional training and I left you with a few exercises to try out. These exercises may have been already familiar to you but to recap, we looked at introducing different directions into these movements to help gain skills more realistically transferable back into everyday life. From here, we're going to take this functional fitness a step further and look at primal movements.

What do I mean by primal movements? Well we're talking about an approach to human movement that prioritises basic, natural movement referring to the way people have been moving as long as people have been the way they are today.

Taking it back to basics, the body can move in seven different ways: lunge, twist, gait, bend, squat, pull and push. Think back to what we learned as babies; these movements helped our bodies gain flexibility, repair and prevent injury and build strength and skills to help us in everyday life as we grew up. Then we grew up. We

stopped crawling, stopped pulling ourselves up on things (unless you're one of those people I seriously admire who has overcome the battle of the pull up), stopped lying on the ground and rolling around, stopped sucking on our toes and stopped putting our feet behind our head just because we could.

These moves are ones that most grown-ups can only dream about. Now more than ever, as the likelihood of joint pain and osteoporosis increase, our efforts in the gym should reflect the movements our bodies were designed to perform. If we focus on movement patterns, not muscle groups when exercising, it will help us develop a functionally strong body at a time when it's fighting back.

At its core, exercise is all about movement and given the benefits of movement in everyday life especially during the menopause, I say it's something to get involved in.

If you've noticed gym-goers slithering like a snake, hopping like a frog and crouching like a tiger during their workout, you've spotted them taking a cue from the animal kingdom and going back to our early years, performing muscle-building exercises that tap into their primal side. The purpose of these workouts is to use your own body weight as strength training rather than actual weights.

Adding animal moves to your workout, challenges your entire body in a functional and fun way. Engaging all muscles at once, these exercises combine the movements of pushing, pulling, crawling, jumping and gliding all while you're on all fours to simultaneously build flexibility, strength, endurance

and power. They help to improve posture, keeping us standing tall and generally more balanced both physically and mentally.

To summarise; there are benefits from acting like an animal. Often during menopause, hormones are unbalanced, which can result in outbursts of anger or irritability so this is perfect. Secretly or not, every woman loves the idea of tapping her inner beast. Have some fun with this one, trust me and try these exercises.

Join me next time when I'll be exploring some of the other latest trends, in group training.

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Vertical Frog Jump

Stand with feet wider than shoulder-width apart. Lower into a deep squat and place your palms on the floor between your feet. Jump as high as you can, extending your arms overhead. Land softly in a squat, placing your hands on floor. Return to standing. Do 2 sets of 12 reps.

Crab Walk

Sit with your legs bent, slightly spread, feet on the floor. Place hands on the ground behind you with fingertips facing forward. Lift your hips and bum off the ground, holding yourself up on hands and feet. Crawl forward, backward and/or side-to-side, 25m in each direction. Repeat 2 - 3 times each direction.

Inchworm

Stand with feet wider than shoulder-width apart, in neutral spine. Bend forward and place hands on the ground, as close to your toes as possible. Walk your hands forward, leaving your feet where they are, until you are in a plank position with your arms extended forward as far as possible. Walk your feet into your hands, leaving your hands where they are, until you end in a forward bend again. Travel forward 6 Inchworms, turn and repeat back to your starting position.

