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Sportsmedicine: Rolling the Distance

By Cassi Clark

Seven years ago Pam Glazer, a tri-athlete and allover active person, couldn't even step up on a curb because of a hamstring injury she'd been nursing for almost a year. Her neighbor, Yamuna Zake, said she could help Pam with a technique she had created called Body Logic. Using her elbow in a deep tissue massage like fashion Yamuna works the muscles from their origin to insertion with gentle traction re-training them to extend to their full lengths, breaking up adhesions and restoring proper movement. The pressure of her elbow softens the connective tissue that holds muscles like the skin around sausage, called fascia (literary the glue that holds us together it encases all tissue in the body). The fascia then becomes malleable allowing it and the muscle to be elongated to their natural length which releases the strain on tendons where injuries occur. In less than a month, with the help of Yamuna's Body Logic and Body Rolling and taking supplements to correct muscle deficiencies, Pam's hamstring was healed and she was running again.

Yamuna Body Rolling (YBR), a tool of Body Logic designed for self practice, uses small (6-9in.) specially designed balls to create traction like in Body Logic. Rolling through the length of a muscle stretches and re-trains muscles to extend to their full length, releases tight tendons and ligaments and stimulates bone. The resistance of the ball also tones and strengthens each muscle separately developing more efficient use of the muscles as well as creating a "cut" look. Bad alignment, a seemingly incurable problem to those who've dealt with orthotics, can limit sport prowess as well as lead to injury. By releasing the muscles with YBR the body becomes properly aligned and functions as it was designed to. "A chronic misalignment in the hip, knee or ankle will throw the entire leg out of balance," says Yamuna in her book, *Body Rolling: An Experiential Approach to Complete Muscle Release* (Healing Arts Press, 1997), "When the femur is properly aligned in the acetabulum [the cup-shaped cavity at the base of the hipbone into which the ball-shaped head of the femur fits], all the muscle groups of the thigh are toned and free of restrictions. The joint has adequate lubrication and intra-articular space, and the femur moves freely in the hip socket, with no tight tendons restricting it." Rarely do runners stretch enough to be effective, says Yamuna, they run for the effects of running, not to stretch thus their quads and hamstrings as well as other muscles adhere together and to the bone limiting movement and flexibility. "People who walk heavily or do much high-impact exercise also often lose the natural shock absorption of the intra-articular space in the ankles, the space that keeps the bones from touching each other," Yamuna explains in her book. "The decrease in space within the ankle forces the knee to absorb more weighted impact. If this extra stress persists over time, the knee can weaken and become injured, resulting in increasing limited range of motion in the ankle." This jarring of the bones works its way up to the hips and back all the way up the body causing chronic pain, joint compression and other problems as well as shin splints and knee injuries most of which result from worn out menisci from bad alignment. "Using Body Rolling to create length and balance in all the muscle groups of the leg both addresses and will prevent a multitude of possible injuries," Yamuna continues in her book. Pam warms up her ankles before running and uses Yamuna's Foot Savers and Wakers to maintain flexibility and space in her ankles and feet. "When I'm running and twist my ankle it doesn't hurt because it's used to [bending that way]," Pam said. Good alignment will also cut down on the wear and tear on your shoes, making your favorite pair last at least a few runs longer.

YBR as opposed to regular stretching creates muscle memory so when in that endorphin high spacey-ness of a great run, not concentrating on form, your body will stay in proper alignment allowing you to run longer and faster without injury. Yamuna says taking 15-20 min a day to roll through the hamstrings, quads, adductors and abductors as well as the calves and shins will correct alignment and promote flexibility, which will lengthen your stride and increase efficient movement therefore maximizing speed and endurance and preventing micro fiber tears and overuse injuries.

Since she started Body Rolling, Pam has "noticed a marked improvement in my recovery time." After the NYC marathon, her first ever, at the age of 49, she only complained of a blister and was back running her normal 18-30 miles per week in only a couple weeks. While most doctors recommend staying off injured muscles for 2-6 weeks, Yamuna understands how psychologically detrimental that can be to dedicated athletes and has a different approach. "YBR immediately increases circulation to the injured area and prevents scar tissue build up," she explains. "We usually recommend taking it easy, instead of your regular run, run a just half mile the next day, don't lay off." Continuing to run in addition to Body Rolling will maintain muscle function and prevent muscle loss as well as help you retain some semblance of sanity. (Note: Never roll directly on the hot spot or swollen area, but do roll all around it.) "We never say give it up," Yamuna says. "If you love it, do it safely."

Yamuna Body Rolling is so much more than stretching. It facilitates a freedom in the body that lasts. "I think it's brilliant," said Pam, "stretching doesn't do what YBR does." It prevents and heals injuries, extends sports careers, improves athletic ability, and teaches the body to function at its optimal capacity. "Body Rolling is a perfect adjunct for every runner because it's cost effective," says Yamuna, "it keeps them running with consistently measurable improvement, and with peace of mind that they can prevent injuries."

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