The Mobility Reset: How to Move Better Without Adding Another Workout

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BY GREG PRESTO

A science-backed mobility plan that uses behavior change to restore strength, range of motion, and resilience.

“I should really stretch more often.”

We all know someone who says this. Maybe it’s you. Or maybe you mutter, “I used to be able to touch my toes,” or “This year I’m going to do more yoga.”

These are good instincts. **Studies show that men** lose an average of 0.8 percent of their mobility each year as they age; women lose about 0.6 percent. That might sound small, but it compounds and the consequences extend beyond stiffness.

When one joint loses range of motion, it creates problems elsewhere: Limited ankle mobility **changes how your legs work** when you squat. If your hamstrings lose their flexibility, or you’re not as efficient bending to the side, **a 2017 study found** you’re more likely to have back pain. And in a striking **2014 study**, researchers found that people who couldn’t rise from the floor without using their hands were five times more likely to die in the following six years than those who could.

Mobility, it turns out, is a surprisingly good proxy for vitality.

Before Mobility, There’s Behavior Change

Here’s the thing: You already know mobility matters. The problem isn’t information, it’s implementation.

“Behavior change is hard. People have trouble losing weight. They have trouble taking their medications,” says Margie Lachman, Ph.D., Director of the Lifespan Development Lab at Brandeis University and the author of the upcoming book ***PRIMETIME: A New Vision for Midlife***. “People are rushing around, running from one thing to the next, and it’s hard to fit something new into that busy schedule.”

What follows is Lachman’s advice on behavior change strategies that actually work, paired with moves from Mike Aidala, coach and owner of **The Offense** in Boulder, Colorado, and Mike Stella, founder of **The Movement Underground**.

Three Barriers to Mobility (And How to Overcome Them)

Barrier 1: It feels time-consuming.

“People are very busy and have a lot of commitments,” Lachman says. “They’re on automatic pilot, and it’s hard to fit in something new.”

The fix: Get specific. Knowing exactly when, where, and what you’ll do helps cement a new habit. Researchers call this “implementation intention,” and studies show it helps older adults meet activity goals.

Ask yourself: How many minutes do I actually need? Where will those minutes come from? If you want 20 minutes and you’re already rushing in the morning, you’ll need to get up earlier, or find another window.

Aidala offers a simpler option: “Integrate mobility into your strength training. Do mobility exercises between sets. It weaves into something you’re already doing, which is powerful for habit formation.”

And Stella reminds us to drop the all-or-nothing thinking: “People get in their minds that if they’re not doing a 60-minute mobility class, it’s not worth their time. Meanwhile, your joints would be thrilled with 10 minutes a day.”

Barrier 2: It doesn’t feel rewarding.

This may be the biggest obstacle, Lachman says. Unlike running farther or lifting heavier, mobility gains are hard to see in the short term. There’s no immediate feedback loop…until something hurts.

“Mobility is one of those tricky things because it’s not necessary until you need it,” Stella says. “It’s like insurance: better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it.”

The fix: Pair it with something you enjoy. Lachman suggests “temptation bundling”—pairing the behavior you’re trying to build with something that already feels rewarding. “If there’s a TV show you enjoy, but feel is a ‘waste of time,’ pair it with stretching your hips,” she says. Yoga poses during *Love Is Blind*? Go for it.

Another approach: Choose mobility moves with built-in progression. Dead hangs from a pullup bar and deep squat holds can both be timed, so you can watch yourself improve week over week. That visibility makes a difference.

Barrier 3: The “benefits” focus on the negative.

We’re usually told to stretch because of what’ll happen if we don’t: pain, stiffness, lost function. But fear is a weak long-term motivator.

“It’s more motivating to think about how it’s going to make you feel good and benefit you,” Lachman says.

The fix: Find your own reason. Maybe you want to be able to get down on the floor with your grandkids. Maybe you want to sit cross-legged comfortably again. Maybe you just want to touch your toes. The benefit doesn't have to be profound, it just has to matter to you.

Your 2026 Mobility Plan (That Actually Works)

This plan weaves mobility into your existing strength training: moving your joints through their full range during your warmup, then between each set of your workout.

Step 1: Create a Group

Social support is one of the most reliable predictors of behavior change, Lachman says. Running clubs work. Step groups work. Training partners work.

For mobility, you might find community at a yoga studio. But if that's not your thing, create your own: Recruit a few friends or relatives who also want to stay limber, and start an accountability text thread. Check in daily. Studies have found that **when people connect about exercise in this way**, even digitally, they are more likely to do that exercise more often.

Step 2: Turn These 5 Moves Into Your Warmup

One of the easiest places to "find" minutes is before your workout, Stella points out. A mobility warmup can make your sets stronger and your recovery shorter — all while keeping you mobile for the long term.

Each of these moves takes about a minute. Together, they mobilize your whole body in under 10 minutes — and they're easy to track, so you can see progress.

1. Dead Hang

The simple act of hanging from a bar can open up the shoulders and provide relief and length in your spine, Aidala says. It's also easy to measure.

How to do it: Grab a pullup bar with an overhand grip, hands about shoulder-width apart. Hang with straight legs. Accumulate one minute total, in as many hangs as you need.

Track it: Time your longest single hang. Add seconds over time. Eventually, try single-arm hangs.

2. Deep Squat Hold

Deep squats help open up the hips and relieve stress in the lower back. And as a mobility encouraging move, Aidala says, they're simple to make easier or more difficult. If balance is an issue, hold onto something sturdy, like a squat rack, chair, or doorframe.

How to do it: Stand with feet about hip-width apart, holding something for balance if needed. Push your hips back and lower until your thighs are below parallel, keeping your chest up. Hold as long as you can. Accumulate one minute total.

Track it: Time your longest hold. Gradually release your hands for short intervals—10 seconds, then 20, then longer.

3. Inchworm

This humbling move makes mobility *active*. You move through multiple ranges of motion going from standing to a pushup position and back. Over time, you'll be able

to do the move more easily, or progress with more repetitions.

How to do it: From standing, hinge at your hips and reach your hands to the floor (bend your knees if needed). Walk your hands out to a pushup position. Then walk your feet forward to meet your hands. Continue for one minute.

Track it: Note how many full reps you can do, how straight your legs stay, and whether you need breaks.

4. World's Greatest Stretch

This move is three stretches in one: hips, hamstrings, and thoracic spine.

How to do it: From a high plank, step your right foot to the outside of your right hand. Plant your left hand and twist your torso to the right, reaching your right arm toward the ceiling. Return to plank and repeat on the left side.

Track it: Notice how easily your foot lands in line with your hand, and how fully you can rotate into the twist.

5. Single-Leg Romanian Deadlift

This move helps build balance, and is a great warmup for days when you're going to be hinging in deadlifts, hip thrusts, or other moves, Aidala says. If it's too frustrating at the start, begin with your back leg staying on the floor in a kickstand position.

How to do it: Stand on your right leg, dumbbells at your sides. Hinge at the hip, extending your left leg behind you, until your torso is parallel to the ground. Return to standing. Do 30 seconds per side.

Track it: If you're using a toe tap for balance, reduce the pressure over time. Progress to no tap at all.

Bonus Moves

Add these if you have specific tight areas:

Tight shoulders? Add **shoulder CARs** (controlled articular rotations). These moves are just a way of slowly moving your shoulders through their full range of motion. When you reach an area that feels sticky, Stella says, notice it, and work even more slowly through that area to help access more of your mobility over time. In a half-kneeling position beside a wall, slowly arc your arm through its full range of motion: up, back, down, and around. Go slowly. Notice where it feels sticky. Thirty seconds per side.

Tight hips? Add **hip CARs**. These are just like the shoulder CARs, but for your hips. Standing with hands on a wall for support, lift one knee high, rotate it across your body, out to the side, and behind you in a slow, controlled circle. Reverse direction. Thirty seconds per side.

Tight low back? Add **cat-cow**. These simple yoga moves can help mobilize the spine. But instead of ripping through each rep, Stella says, try to control each segment of the movement so that your back moves in a wave, letting you feel one vertebrae at a time. On hands and knees, alternate between rounding your spine toward the ceiling (cat) and arching it toward the floor (cow). Move slowly enough to feel each vertebra.

Step 3: Do One Mobility Move Between Each Strength Set

Instead of scrolling your phone between sets, Aidala suggests doing a mobility move that opposes the exercise you just did. “If you’re bench pressing, do a chest-opening stretch,” he says. “When you go back to your next set, you’ll have more range of motion.”

Here’s how to pair them:

- **After pushing moves (bench press, pushups): Door stretch**Stand in a doorway. Bend one elbow 90 degrees and place your forearm on the door frame, fingers pointing up. Step through the doorway, keeping your shoulders square, until you feel a stretch in your chest. Hold 20–30 seconds per side.
- **After squats or lunges: 90-90 hip switches**. Sit on the floor with both legs bent 90 degrees—one leg in front of you (inside of thigh down), one out to the side (outside of thigh down). Rotate both hips to switch positions. Repeat 20 times.
- **After deadlifts: Crescent lunge**. From a pushup position, step one foot outside your hand. Drop your back knee to the floor. Rise up through your torso, arms overhead. You'll feel the stretch in the front of your hip. Hold, then switch sides.
- **After pulling moves (rows, pullups): Pushup plus**. In a high plank, push beyond the top position by spreading your shoulder blades wide, creating a slight hump in your upper back. Return to plank. Repeat.

It seems like a lot, but really it's ten minutes a day. A few stretches between sets. An accountability partner who texts you back. Your joints will thank you.

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WRITTEN BY:



Greg Presto