

# SELF

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straight-talking doctor explain how to

## wake up your body for action

by Ben E. Benjamin, Ph.D.

**W**hether it's an activity as calm as golf or as vigorous as tennis, basketball or a dance class, a wake-up, or warm-up, is well worth the time and energy—and it doesn't take much of either. A body that's been warmed up is like a resilient green twig: It can absorb stress and remain supple. Without warming up, the body is like a dry stick, breaking under pressure. Torn or pulled muscles, sprained ankles, back spasms, sciatica, torn cartilage and shinsplints are just a few of the injuries that can result.

Warming up physiologically prepares the body for the increased stress of exercise. In fact, "warming up" actually



*Yarnell also dances, warms up in leg-warmers.*

### SHIELDS AND YARNELL: "TIGHT BODIES WON'T DO"

by Melinda Blau

She said, "I was born to dance. He was born to mime." Today, fitness is a way of life for Lorene Yarnell and Robert Shields. You might have seen the *Shields and Yarnell Show* on TV, or perhaps you've caught their act on stage—Lorene in tap shoes, Robert mimicking a gorilla. During the show, she gets thrown around a lot and he's constantly taking pratfalls. Tight bodies won't do. So before they go on, Shields and Yarnell spend at

Pamela Barkentin, Bruce Plotkin

means making your body heat increase. It's like a furnace burning fuel for energy: Breathing supplies the oxygen that ignites the fire to burn the "fuel"—your body's nutrients—and heat is produced as a by-product. Just as a boiler heats water that is then circulated through radiators, the blood carries heat around your body. In a sense, you begin to "steam-heat" your muscles, making them warm and more flexible.

Warming up prepares the heart as it does other muscles. During vigorous activity, the heart needs additional blood and nutrients to increase its capacity for harder and faster pumping. It may suffer great stress if it doesn't readjust its internal circulation gradually.

In the same way, without gradually preparing the respiratory system, you tire very quickly and often end up panting after a few minutes of vigorous exercise. The most important and neglected part

of respiration is exhaling. Most people do not exhale fully. They keep a residual volume of used air that stagnates in the bottom of their lungs. Warming up the diaphragm by slowly increasing your breathing rate and paying attention to *how* you breathe can set the tone for more consistent breathing during vigorous exercise.

Finally, it's important to prepare the joints for sports or exercise. Joints are bathed in synovial fluid, which acts as oil would in a hinge. As we use a joint, the body produces more synovial fluid to increase the lubrication and reduce friction. This slowly accelerates as the stress and vigor of joint movement increases. If stress increases too suddenly or too quickly, fluid production lags behind and joint injury is much more likely to occur.

Effective

warm-up exercises consist exclusively of light to moderate strength-building activities. Take into account: 1) what kind of activity you're getting ready for (see box, *next page*), 2) at what intensity you will begin it, 3) what part of the body is most intensively used, 4) what your physical limitations are. If you suffer from excess tension, give yourself more time. Tense muscles affect blood circulation the way standing on a hose affects water flow. Your body needs to work harder to warm up.

Another factor is the weather. In the summer, the muscles, in a more expanded state naturally, tend to warm up quite easily. Warming up should take from ten to 15 minutes, but in very warm weather six to seven can be enough. In the winter, even if you exercise indoors, it takes a little more time.

least 45 minutes warming up—stretching and doing sit-ups and other exercises they've adapted from ballet, karate and fencing.

Robert, who also swims, roller-skates, works out in a gym, and skateboards ("to build the calf muscles"), recalled one time when he didn't prepare his body for the show: "Because of blocks and pressures I worked out only one day before we did a gig. Well, I threw my knee out, and Lorene had to do most of the show by herself for the rest of the run—two weeks!"

Lorene, a dancer since age four, takes warming up seriously. "I'm at the bar at 8:30 every morning. I need a more thorough warm-up (*Continued*)"



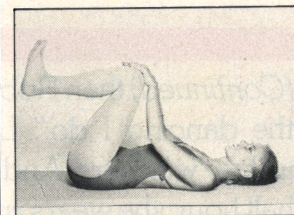
Warm-ups coax Shields' calves into antics.

Always spend extra time warming up a part of your body that has a tendency to be injured or tense. Warming up cannot guarantee that you won't be injured, but it will greatly decrease the likelihood.

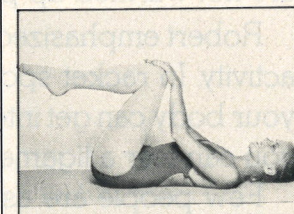
Warm-ups aren't very strenuous, and you should never have to pant or strain while doing them. Begin while lying on the floor; this will enable you to gradually warm up the ankle, knee and hip joints before they have the body's full weight on them.

Always start by breathing deeply—ten to 15 breaths without pushing (*Continued*)

## THE 10 MINUTE WAKE-UP



**1a** Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat on floor—the "basic" position. Draw knees to chest and flex feet, curling toes forward. Then...



**1b** ...extend feet, pointing toes. Do 10 to 15 sets. Afterwards rotate ankles in both directions a few times. (*Continued*)

Danskin Freestyle leotard/swimsuit, about \$17

Continued

or forcing, the lower chest and upper abdomen rising and falling simultaneously. Breathing in this manner, through an open mouth, is the first step toward relaxation.

Breathe gently and easily during every exercise. If an exercise causes you pain or even slight discomfort, your body is telling you that some-

thing is wrong. Stop and try to find out what's going on.

Avoid doing the same exercises over and over. Even a terrific meal becomes tiresome after several days! Keep alternating sides; change exercises after five or six repetitions.

Above all, make warming-up and exercising as enjoyable as you can by wearing loose-fitting clothes in a comfortably warm room on a rug, blanket

or towel, or outside on a flat, grassy area. If you have a bony sacrum (the bone at the base of the spine), keep a small pillow or towel on hand to use as a cushion when legs are in the air. If you like music, warm up to anything from Bach to the Beatles. □

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## DESIGNING YOUR OWN WARM-UP PROGRAM

It's important to tailor warm-up exercises to *your* body's needs. Know your own weak spots and give those parts extra attention. Also, design a warm-up program that's appropriate for the activity you're about to do. Most sports require the use of your whole body; many put extra stress on a particular area. Always begin with a

few basic warm-ups (exercises 1 through 10) and then concentrate on the muscles in the upper body (11, 12, 13) or lower body (14, 15) or do some from both, if needed.

**Do general body warm-ups for:** all sports, exercise or vigorous activities.

**Add upper body warm-ups for:** golf, rowing, bowling, canoeing, sailing, archery.

**Add lower body warm-ups for:** running, skiing, ice-skating, roller-skating, hiking, bicycling, basketball.

**Add upper-lower combination warm-ups for:** tennis, baseball, softball, gymnastics, volleyball, hockey, handball, squash, racquetball, paddleball, platform tennis, cross-country skiing, badminton, karate, aikido, judo, fencing, waterskiing.

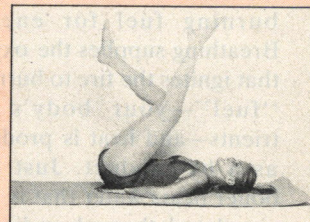
(Continued) than Robert because of all the dancing I do." Lorene practices in leg-warmers. And during the first half hour, she wears rubberized sweat pants. "They *really* keep your legs warm! But for ballet they're necessary because you practically turn your body inside out. If your legs are not warmed up properly, you could really get hurt."

Robert emphasized that a tight body can suffer injuries during any type of activity. In racket sports, for example: "When you're trying to get the ball, your body can get into all sorts of strange positions. If you're not warmed up, you can tear a ligament or cartilage just like that."

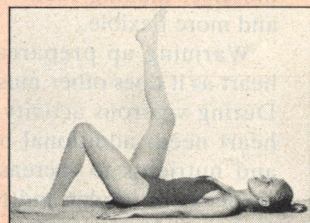
Few people are as dedicated to exercise as Lorene Yarnell and Robert Shields, but even weekend athletes can follow their example when it comes to warming up. "Get the blood flowing in the right places," Lorene advises. "Just wake up your body really nice and easy—until you get it going." □



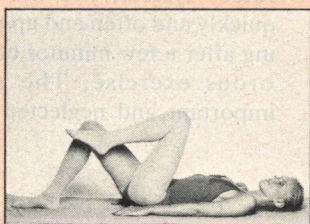
Shields skateboards for his calf muscles.



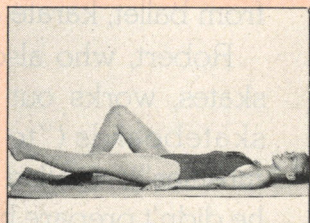
2 Still lying on back with knees drawn to chest, shake feet and legs forcefully for 30 to 40 seconds.



3 Feet flat on floor, knees bent, gently toss one foot back toward your head, leading with toes. Do 4 sets, alternating legs.



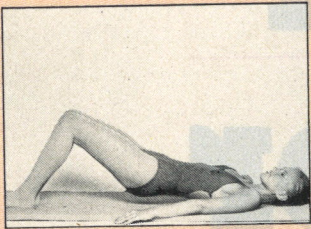
4 Return to basic position, knees bent, feet flat on floor. Slowly alternate, bringing knees to chest. Do 5 or 6 times.



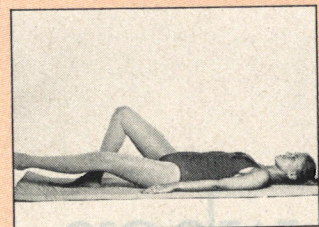
5 Bring one knee to chest, extend leg a few inches above floor; return knee to chest, then back to basic position with foot flat on floor. Alternating legs, do 4 or 5 sets.

# Wake up your body for action

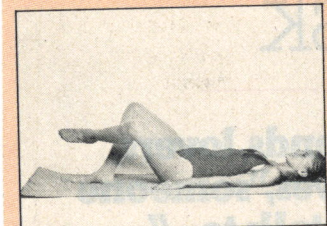
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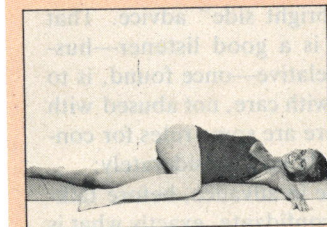
**6** In basic position, tilt pelvis forward so that lower back touches floor. Slowly lift pelvis a few inches, gently lower. Do 8 to 10 times.



**7a** In basic position, bring one knee to chest. Keeping back on floor and knee bent, open leg to side as far as it will go.



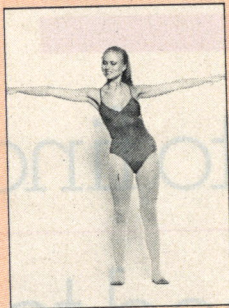
**7b** Keeping leg a few inches off floor, extend it till straight. Return to basic position. Do 2 or 3 times, each leg in a continuous motion.



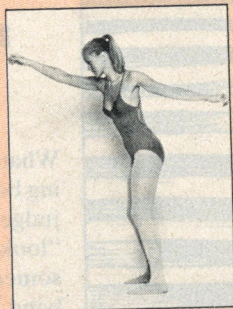
**8** Arms out to sides, palms down, lower both knees to one side. Allow top knee to move up. Relax. Alternate sides 2 to 3 times slowly, 5 to 6 times more quickly.



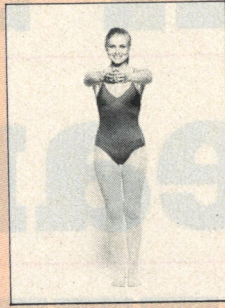
**9** Stand and stretch I: Feet apart, extend arms above head and "reach" with alternating arms, stretching up body. Do 8 to 10 sets.



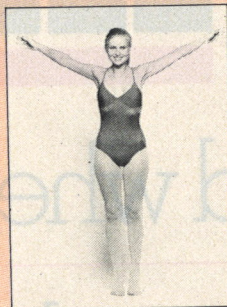
**10** Stand and stretch II: Feet apart, extend arms out to sides at shoulder level. "Reach" out to one side, then to other. Do 8 to 10 sets.



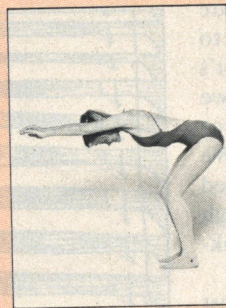
**11** Stand with feet about 2 feet apart. Bend knees slightly and lean forward about 6 inches. Alternating arms, circle them, making windmills. Do continuously, 15 to 20 times.



**12a** Feet together, weight centered over balls of feet, extend arms, touching fingertips.



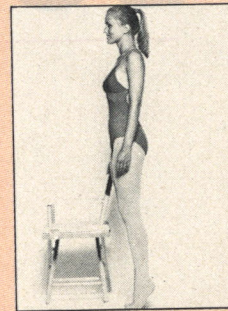
**12b** Quickly open arms up and back beyond shoulders, exhaling and lifting heels. Inhale as you close. Repeat 8 to 10 times.



**13** With feet 1 foot apart, simultaneously bend knees, exhale, round back, extend arms. Inhale, roll up, drop arms. Do 8 to 10 times.



**14a** Bottom photo, previous row: Hold on to something sturdy and slightly above waist level — a kitchen counter, doorknob or high-backed chair. Feet 2 to 3 inches apart and back straight, slowly bend knees without raising heels.



**14b** Simultaneously straighten legs and rise up onto balls of feet. Return to starting position. Do 8 to 10 times slowly.



**15a** Feet 2 to 3 inches apart, back straight, bend knees, making sure heels stay on floor.



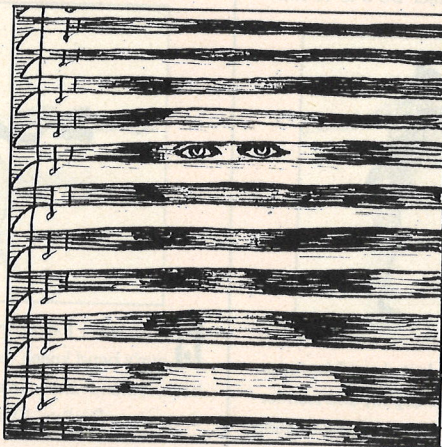
**15b** Spring into air so that toes are an inch off the floor, pushing off with whole foot, not just toes. Don't bounce when you land. Do 10 to 15 times. □

# Our silent screams for HELP

**h**ow and where to find it when  
you're ashamed to ask

**T**oday, as women, we celebrate independence. Our goal is to stand on our own two feet. It's a good one. But admitting we need help at times does not mean forfeiting self-respect. We tend too often to feel ashamed about asking for help, as though it were an expression of weakness rather than strength.

"We are all born dependent and most of us will die dependent," said psychiatrist Willard Gaylin, M.D. The years between are spent trying so hard to "out-grow" this dependence, striving for self-sufficiency, we forget that caring is necessarily a two-way street. According to Dr. Gaylin, "If you can't be cared for, you can't care." A woman of true independence is one who can care and be cared for, whose assurance will let her accept help when it's needed without fear of losing herself. But even when acceptance is forthcoming today, help may be somewhat more difficult to find than it was in the past. Many of our traditional help systems are diminished—the family has shrunk and/or spread itself thin across many miles, different cities and



states. Social clubs, union halls and churches seldom function in the more personal way they once did. Many behavior experts feel that the lack of these traditional supports, along with a hunger for something outside ourselves to believe in, has encouraged some people in our society to lean toward cults, charlatans and "charismatic" leaders to fill the void.

There are, however, warmer, saner, more legitimate groups and individuals to turn to. You can start in your own backyard with:

## Friends, lovers, relatives, "someone to talk to..."

What most of us really want is a sounding board, someone who does not quickly judge us, condemn us or cut us off with "look on the bright side" advice. That someone who is a good listener—husband, friend, relative—once found, is to be confided in with care, not abused with complaints. Here are some rules for confiding successfully and considerately:

**1** Try to define in advance, before talking to your confidante, exactly what is bothering you. Often this leads you to realize that what appears to be the immediate problem—say boredom so pervasive you feel there is nothing worth getting out of bed for—really stems from something more fundamental—your year-long dissatisfaction with your job. You really don't want to go to it every day. Knowing the real source, getting to the exact problem can not only start you on the way to solving it, but can also help you decide whom to talk to.