Principle 8

The Core of the Body

Energy Centers

“Sense breath, sense consciousness expanding, forgive self, acknowledge the light of yourself. Be aware of spirals of energy moving through spine. Let the heart open. Let the breath flow, the diaphragm be full and free in its movement.”

Dhyani Ywahoo
Introduction

Nia and the Core

In Nia, we view the core of the body as the whole of three body weights: the pelvis, chest and head. When correctly aligned, these weights allow us to move energy along and through our vertical axis, so we can move with intrinsic balance, core power, spinal flexibility and greater relaxation. When misaligned, these weights can throw us off center, affecting not just our balance but our whole-body functioning, including our bones, organs, ligaments, muscles, veins, arteries and chakras (energy centers).

Postural alignment enhances your breathing, improves self-confidence, and provides a foundation for physical, mental and emotional health. When all three body weights are active participants in your movement—from your walk to your dance—you will naturally feel vibrant, alive and energetically present. To maintain proper alignment as you move in an upright position, imagine balancing your pelvis, chest and head one on top of another.

As Nia reveals, one of the most beautiful things about living in a body is our ability to find healing and realignment through movement. By paying attention to the way you hold and use your three body weights, you can identify areas that need adjusting and make conscious “tweaks” to re-establish balance, alignment and power.

To learn more about proper alignment of the three body weights, refer to the book, Rolfing by Ida Rolf.* Look at the pictures and then “x-ray” your own core to understand your current posture and alignment.
Nia and the Pelvis

The pelvis, the base of the three body weights, is the foundation of the core. Some cultures call the pelvis “the seat of your soul” – and in many senses, this is literally true! When you look at the skeleton, you can see the pelvis is a sturdy, bony basin that holds your torso and head. When it becomes tight, constricted or misaligned, this “seat” becomes an uncomfortable chair for the rest of your body. When your pelvis is free and balanced, your “seat” is a comfortable throne, a place of power for you to move from.

Your pelvis acts like a container for your abdomen and sexual organs. Because of this, many vital organs will be stressed when your pelvis is out of alignment. Chronic tilting of your pelvis, such as locking one leg and forcing all of your weight into one hip, will stiffen it into a position that interferes with its ability to act as an open container. For example, if your pelvis tilts too far forward, your abdominal muscles and viscera will spill forward. This causes your lumbar spine to hyper-extend and reach behind you, rather than toward the earth. If your pelvis tilts too far back, your tailbone will curl under as if you are tucking your tail between your legs. This places pressure on the organs resting against your spine and creates tightness and rigidity in your back.

When your pelvis is out of alignment, your body sends you messages of pain and discomfort in various related parts of your body. Listen to these sensations, for this is the voice of your body telling you important things! Some signs that signs your pelvis is constricted and/or out of alignment include pain in your hip sockets, lower back and/or sacrum; weakness in your legs, and the inability to comfortably draw your thighs up toward your chest.

To examine your current pelvic alignment, look at the skeleton in an anatomy book and then stand in front of a mirror and look at your own pelvis. Explore correct alignment between the front and back of your pelvis, paying attention to the placement of your sacrum and coccyx as you play with different postures. When you are properly aligned, you will be able to draw an imaginary line between your coccyx and your pubic bones, parallel to the floor. This means your pelvic floor is level. If your pelvis is tilted forward, your coccyx will be higher than your pubis. If your pelvis is curled under, your pubic bone will be higher than your coccyx. If your pelvis is tilted to one side, one hip will be higher than the other.

In addition to acting as a “container,” your pelvis provides a foundation for bearing and balancing weight. To allow for both stability and mobility, you will find a powerful, secure yet movable junction at the back of your pelvis called the “lumbosacral junction.” This is where your lumbar vertebrae and sacrum join to create the strong base that supports your upright, bipedal posture. This junction allows your pelvis to move in all directions, which is key to maintaining health and fitness. Practice moving your pelvis while keeping your legs stable, and then moving your thighbones while keeping your pelvis stable. If you can do this easily, this is a good sign!

Keep in mind: your pelvis, hip flexors and hip joints are designed to stay healthy by moving in a variety of ways and ranges of motion. When your pelvis can move freely in all directions, your back can become strong and healthy. Movement is the key to reclaiming your pelvis!

Nia and the Chest

The bones of your chest contain and protect some of your most vital organs: your heart and lungs. To allow for a wide range of movement and agility, your chest is made of individual rib bones that open and close like venetian blinds. In addition to allowing you to bend and twist in many directions, this expansion and contraction helps your body circulate air. As you inhale, your chest expands and your diaphragm extends toward your belly, making room for the swelling of your lungs and supporting your back. As you exhale, your chest and diaphragm release to neutral, which helps push air out.

Breathing in; receiving: your chest expands. Exhaling; giving: your chest softens. Like an elevator, the up and
down action of your diaphragm allows your rib cage to expand and release. Maintaining open, flexible, fluid movement in your chest improves the flow of energy through your body and supports mobility in your spine. Take time to notice the sensation of inhaling—a feeling of light-hearted expansion as your chest gains freedom.

When you move in an upright position, your sternum will ideally “stack” on top of your pubic bones. This centers your movement, which allows your spine and back muscles to relax and eliminates strain on parts of your body designed for other functions. For example, unless you are intentionally bending or leaning, placing your chest and head in front of your pelvis constricts your breathing and puts strain on your lower back. Leaning too far back forces your abdomen and neck to overcompensate, lock up and/or fatigue. However, stacking your chest and head does not mean you must move like a rigid Tin Man! When properly aligned, your body is designed to allow for fluidity, not rigidity.

Nia and the Head

With 8 cranial bones, 14 facial bones and one large brain, your head carries a great deal of weight. The bony structure of your cranium houses and protects your brain, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, tongue and teeth—vital organs that allow you to think, see, smell, hear, taste, protect and direct your body. Your head is a very busy place indeed! Even more miraculous is the fact that all of this is supported by your neck, one of the most mobile and important parts of your body.

To orient your body in space, to defend yourself, to appreciate the beauty all around, you must move your head in many directions, an action made possible by the amazing design of your neck. When you look at the skeleton, you can see what an incredible feat of strength and balance it is support the 8 to 10 pound weight of your head on top of your body. To accomplish this, small but powerful muscles attach at the base of your skull and cervical spine, and anchor deeply into your upper back and chest. This is why movement of your head also directly affects your neck, shoulder girdle and chest.

As with all parts of the body, Nia teaches you to maintain strength, flexibility and optimum functioning in your neck by conditioning it through movement. The most organic way to move your head and neck is to use your eyes. When you look directly at something, your eyes naturally lead your head to move in that direction in a relaxed and efficient way. Activating movement from a sensory desire, such as a desire to look at something or turn toward a sound, is the most safe and natural way for your body to move.

Interestingly, while your head is critical to your survival and functioning, it can also be the most challenging body part to integrate into your dance and life. Poor postural habits, social attitudes and negative emotional experiences often limit the ways we use our heads. Over time, consciously using your head to express your unique self—your creativity, confidence, thoughts, emotions, intentions and desire—can become a natural and effortless element of every movement.

Integrating head movement into your dance also conditions your vestibular system, the sensory system that helps you balance and establish spatial orientation. Head movement stimulates the fluid in your inner ear, which sends messages to your body about its position and location in space. If actively moving your head is new, this agitation might cause dizziness, nausea and even fear. This is perfectly natural. Your body is experiencing and processing new sensation—an increase of energy moving in a new way. In a short period of time however, your body will adjust to this increase of energy and you will be able to turn, spin and move up and down at different speeds without getting dizzy or lost. As a result, your whole body will gain agility, mobility and balance, allowing you to dance through life more with more freedom and power than ever before!

If you feel dizzy or nauseous when moving your head, simply slow down. Remember the fluid in your inner
ear is creating new kinds of pressure and your body is learning how to use this new information. Listen to the voice of your body when it says, “Stop; I need to move more slowly.” Take your time and honor your body by saying, “Thank you, body, for safely guiding me to learn new ways of moving!”

**Nia and the Spine**

The spine is a carefully contoured masterpiece, which simultaneously provides structure, protection and movement for your body. Made of 26 cylindrical vertebrae (7 cervical, 12 thoracic, 5 lumbar and the sacrum and coccyx), the spine is a long strand of bones that link together like a string of pearls to form a curvaceous column. These bones vary in size to provide more stability or mobility, and to bear different amounts of weight. Your spine also provides a protective tunnel for your nerves and spinal cord, which carries critical information to your whole body. This magnificent design makes it possible for you to stand, sit, walk, turn, twist, bend, run, jump and leap in safety!

Behind each vertebral cylinder are three spiny protrusions. These little spurs protrude outward to provide an anchor for the muscles of your back to join your spine. If your spine is misaligned, these spurs may agitate or even become embedded into the muscles of your back, leading to pain, stiffness, immobility and long-term injury. Because your spine directs all movement, any extreme or sustained rotation of the vertebrae has powerful impact on many other areas. For example, a torque or rotation of one or more vertebrae, or an excessive curvature in your spine (lordosis, kyphosis, or scoliosis), will cause an imbalance that may reduce leg power, agility and overall comfort, while increasing your potential for injury. The key to supporting spine health—and thus healthy functioning in your whole body—is to condition all of the muscles in your core to support proper alignment and free movement throughout the day.
Voice of

Body
To the physical part of you, I offer a foundation upon which to evolve in the vessel of a divine body, as a unique soul moving about in flesh and bone. I am your connection to earth. From the soles of your feet, rise up through me, out of the top of my pelvic girdle, floating high into your dreams and desires. Mobile and stable, I am the one you go to to move about freely as an upright, conscious human. I am where you go to be still. Rest into me; feel me give you power from underneath and behind.

Mind
To the mental part of you, I offer signals to listen and respond to. My intrinsic quivers call to you, speaking from the innermost folds of your authentic self. I move between the worlds of reason, imagination, emotion and intuition. Tune into me and I will lead you down a path of truth.

Emotions
To the emotional part of you, I offer an endless resource of information. In me you will find the answer to: “Is this safe? Do I really want this? Am I on the right path?” I speak only from within and will guide you down the path of your heart, seeking the most powerful alignment of your body, mind, emotions and spirit.

Spirit
To the spirit part of you, I offer a divine connection between your innermost desires and your outward manifestations. I am the source of your internal fire, of your water, earth and metal healing creations. When I am guiding you, you are guided by love and tenderness.
Activating the core of your body is a key part of The Body's Way because:

- Maintaining a strong and stable core is important for preventing injury
- Pelvic movement maintains mobility in your hips and lumbar vertebrae while conditioning the muscles of your abdomen, hips and thighs
- Chest movement conditions the muscles of your chest, back and spine and supports mobility, strength and stability
- Head movement conditions the muscles of your neck and shoulders and supports strength and stability
- The fitness and alignment of your pelvis affects the functioning of your organs, particularly the eliminative and sexual organs
- The fitness and alignment of your pelvis, chest and head affects the comfort and functioning of your spine, shoulders and neck
- Movement of your head releases upper back tension, stimulates breathing and strengthens the muscles along your spine
- Engaging your core while dancing encourages coordination and systemic (whole body) movement
Chakras and the Three BodyWeights

Chakras are often described as small, rotating vortices of energy that run vertically along your spine, centered in the core of your body. These energy centers are designed to metabolize physical vibrations, essentially breaking energy into parts, much like your digestive system, and distributing it to your whole body via your nervous system, endocrine glands, blood, bones and muscles. In this way, the chakra system provides energetic nourishment for your physical body. Consciously moving energy through these points increases and balances your body—physically, mentally and emotionally. When your chakras are open and freely circulating energy as they are designed to, all of your body’s systems receive the nourishment they need to function at their best.

First Chakra: Base or Root
The first chakra is stimulated by moving your coccyx, located at the base of your tailbone. Moving your whole pelvis stimulates the flow of energy through this chakra to your legs, coccyx and sex organs. Activating this chakra generates sensations of security and trust in life, developing a strong connection between your body and the earth.

Second Chakra: Sexual Center
The second chakra is housed in your pelvis and is affected by pelvic movement and subtle chest motions. Located near the first lumbar area of your spine, this chakra stimulates your large intestine, spleen, bladder, lower back and sex organs. Move this chakra to develop a strong connection between your male and female sexual sides—to stimulate your powers of creation.

Third Chakra: Solar Plexus
The third chakra, located at the mid-thoracic area of your spine, is affected by movement of your pelvis, chest and head (all three body weights). Movement of this chakra stimulates your heart, lungs, stomach, liver, adrenals, pancreas, kidneys, diaphragm, gall bladder, small intestines and duodenum. Move this chakra to connect to your self-confidence, will and personal power.

Fourth Chakra: Heart
The fourth chakra—often called the “heart” chakra—is located at the first, second and third thoracic vertebrae of your spine. It is mainly affected by movement of your chest and rib cage. Like the third chakra, movement of this chakra stimulates your heart, lungs, stomach, liver, adrenals, pancreas, kidneys, diaphragm, gall bladder, small intestines and duodenum. Move this chakra to develop a connection to the experiences of love, compassion, joy, hate and sorrow.

Fifth Chakra: Throat
The fifth chakra is located near the third cervical vertebrae of your spine and is affected by head and neck movements. This chakra stimulates your whole head, including your eyes, ears, face and throat. Move this chakra to sense, activate and gain freedom of self-expression.

Sixth Chakra: Brow or Third Eye
The sixth chakra is located at the first cervical vertebrae of the spine. Like the throat chakra, movement of this chakra also stimulates your head, face, eyes, ears and throat. Move this chakra to develop a connection to intuition, to physically sense what you intellectually and emotionally recognize.

Seventh Chakra: Crown
The seventh chakra has no spinal contact. Located above the crown of your head, this chakra is affected by intention—by your conscious connection to things beyond the physical realm. Centered at the point of your pineal gland (which produces the serotonin derivative melatonin), the seventh chakra stimulates spiritual energy and creates a connection between your physical and ethereal bodies. Move this chakra to develop a relationship with your self and your innately divine energy.
Chakras and the Three Body Weights

Refer to this chart to become familiar with how each chakra functions and is related to the three body weights, specific emotions and the movement of energy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chakras</th>
<th>Emotions</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 and 2 — Pelvis</td>
<td>Security, sexuality and fear</td>
<td>Contains energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 and 4 — Chest</td>
<td>Love, sorrow and grief</td>
<td>Exchanges energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5, 6 and 7 — Head</td>
<td>Sense of self; input into all senses</td>
<td>Directs energy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Moving all three body weights helps open and circulate energy through your whole body via the chakra system. Become aware of these centers as you move to locate areas of blockage in your body. Begin by paying attention to one chakra at a time as you dance with your three body weights. Remember: your movements do not need to be big to move energy; all movement stimulates breath, emotions and a shifting of energy. Be gentle—a little movement goes a long way. Always ground before and after doing any chakra work and breathe deeply throughout your practice. Pay close attention to the effects of your experience. If you feel jittery, unbalanced, out of sorts, or edgy, slow down. These signals are the voice of your body telling you to do less. In the beginning, less is more.

Emotions and the Three Body Weights

For many people, movement of the pelvis, chest, or head can unearth uncomfortable feelings. Even small movements can release physical holding patterns that result in powerful emotional releases, so go slowly in the beginning and be gentle with your movement. Do not underestimate the power of the body to stir up painful or joyous emotions. If an emotional release is too much, you can become frightened or overwhelmed, causing your body to contract and your movement to be restricted. If this happens, simply back off and move less. Force is not the answer; guide yourself with compassion and love. When exploring chakra work for the first time, take baby steps and sense for ease and safety.

To help control the amount of energy moving in and out of your chakras, use the “volume up, volume down” method. If physical or emotional sensations become too intense, back off by consciously turning your “volume” down. When you feel ready to take more energy in, turn your volume up! In this case, try using your voice—sounding is a great way to activate more energy. And remember: It is always okay to stop. You are in control. Honor yourself.
Pelvic Movement and Emotion

Of the three body weights, the pelvis often stimulates the most emotional discomfort when moved. This is due in part to social, cultural and personal attitudes associated with the pelvis. Past experiences and perspectives that inhibit movement may include beliefs such as: “Moving my pelvis is seductive and therefore wrong; moving my pelvis is shameful; moving my pelvis is asking for rape or attack.” Some people have been negatively affected by experiences such as sexual abuse, or being shamed for their sexuality in some way. It is understandable for these people to feel fearful and overwhelmed when they allow themselves to experience sensations in their pelvis, as the movement of sexual energy brings up uncomfortable and often painful memories. However while many people tend to avoid it, moving the pelvis is a natural and healthy part of maintaining a human body.

When working with new students or students who are uncomfortable, go slowly and guide them with respect and compassion. You might suggest they wear a skirt over tights or leggings to create a safe environment to move within. Establish fun, safe ways to experience the freedom and creative gifts of sensual energy, such as moving on the floor or turning the lights down. Play with different kinds of music to help them explore the concept of moving their pelvis in enjoyable, physically and emotionally pain-free ways. Remember: change begins with the acknowledging the messages of your body and creating a loving relationship with all sensations, thoughts and emotions.

Chest Movement and Emotion

Your rib cage, the center of the three body weights, protects your heart and other vital organs. It is in this “cage” that we often physically sense feelings of love, grief, joy and sorrow. Because of this, chest movements often unearth and release a variety of emotions in healthy ways, meaning we can use these emotions as wonderful movement inspiration to creatively express ourselves through our dance. Not only does this condition our bodies—supporting muscle tone, flexibility and greater range of motion—it also releases a sense of personal power, a sense of physical and emotional freedom in the chest, heart and lungs. Sometimes deep sorrow may arise; sometimes a euphoric joy. You may be surprised to find how much you expand or contract in the face of profound freedom. Whatever arises, be gentle with yourself and honor everything that arises.

The solar plexus, located in the soft tissue just below your ribs, is also stimulated by chest movement. The solar plexus is associated with personal power, self-confidence and free will. Breath work, undulations and pulsating or vibrating gestures can help unlock blocked energy in your solar plexus. Sometimes unlocking this power can be intoxicating; sometimes it can be frightening. Feel free to explore your own pace and trust you are exactly where you need to be.

Head Movement and Emotion

The head is commonly considered the source of intelligence. (However this is only part of the story—as Nia dancers know, intelligence is found throughout the whole body!) Like all parts of the body, movement of your head is key to maintaining optimum functioning and health. Unfortunately, the notion of “keeping your head on straight” often translates into rigid physical patterns, causing limited head movement and a disconnect from emotional expression. Holding your head in a fixed or restrained manner causes muscle tension and structural weakening in related areas, including your neck, shoulders and upper back. In addition to stiffness and pain, this leads to a dulling of your senses. For people who tend to tightly control their thoughts, feelings and expressions, head movements may be a new experience, which can be overwhelming at first. As always, explore slowly. Use your eyes to organically guide your head movement. Discover new ways to express your thoughts and emotions with your head, through different postures and motions. With practice, adding head movement to your life will become a natural part of who you are and you will soon discover a new range of experience, expression and sensation.

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Craft

This principle introduces you to the practice of moving your three body weights (pelvis, chest and head) as you dance. Your pelvis, chest and head together form your core, the powerful center of your body where you contain, exchange and direct the flow of energy. Each of the three body weights is associated with specific chakras and emotions, which work in harmony to support health, conditioning, self-healing, self-knowing and growth.

The Core of the Body  Energy Centers

The Core of the Body performs seven of the 52 Moves: two Pelvis, two Chest, one Head and two Spine movements.

Pelvis
• Pelvic Circles
• Hip Bumps

Chest
• Chest Isolations
• Shimmy

Head
• Head and Eye Movements

Spine
• Undulation
• Spinal Roll

Recall
1. What is the triad for Principle 8?
2. What is the catch phrase for Principle 8?
3. List all parts of the body included in Principle 8.
Embodiment

For these exercises, refer to the book: The Nia Technique: The High-Powered Energizing Workout that Gives You a New Body and a New Life. **

Review the below core moves of the Nia 52 Moves in your Nia Technique book, paying close attention to the instructions and benefits of performing each move. After reading, practice each move for one minute or more. Repeat this exercise regularly to refine your technique.

**Exercise 1: Practice the Pelvis Moves (2)**

**Pelvic Circles**
- Imagine you are hula-hooping.
- Practice creating even circles to the left and right.
- Move with the intent to loosen your hips and lower back.

**Hip Bumps**
- Imagine bumping helium balloons off your hips.
- Learn to start and stop your hips quickly.
- Bump in every possible direction.

**Additional Tips for Pelvic Movement**
- Talk to your pelvis—let your body know it is okay to move, that you are in control and your movement is safe and healthy. Be gentle and compassionate with yourself and any thoughts, feelings and emotions that arise.
- Move your pelvis in all directions. Circle your pelvis until you no longer feel rough edges or breaks in your movement.
- Turn your toes toward your midline to open the sacroiliac joint.
- Create sounds, particularly low frequency sounds, to stimulate the movement of energy inside your pelvis.

**Exercise 2: Practice the Chest Moves (2)**

**Chest Isolations**
- Imagine your rib cage is the ball in a roulette wheel.
- Learn to isolate your rib cage, moving it while keeping your legs and pelvis still.
- Move with the intent to free your spine.

**Shimmy**
- Imagine shaking water off your body.
- Practice evenly coordinating your front to back movements.
- Move with the intent to sustain your shimmy for longer and longer periods of time.

**Additional Tips for Chest Movements**
- Imagine stretching the skin on the front and back of your body.
- Vocally express different emotions as you move your chest, such as anger, frustration and tenderness.
- Move your chest in creative, dynamic ways—pulse, vibrate, shake, push, pull and undulate up, down and around.
- Circle your chest to improve flexibility, strength and mobility of the tiny muscles that attach to the many small bones along your spine.
- Imagine dancing with every single one of your ribs, spreading and creating more space inside your core.
Exercise 3: Practice the Head Moves (1)

Head and Eye Movements
• Imagine following a butterfly with your eyes.
• Practice moving your head by naturally allowing it to follow your eyes.
• Move with the intent to free your neck and shoulders.

Additional Tips for Head Movement
• Look in different directions and use your eyes to move your head.
• Follow the movement of your hands with your eyes to integrate your head into your expressions.
• Activate all your senses—look, smell, breathe, taste and listen.
• Move your head slightly forward, up and out, away from your body.
• Consciously release your lower jaw and let it hang loose to relax the muscles of your neck, jaw and face.

Exercise 4: Practice the Spine Moves (2)

Undulation
• Imagine your spine is a third arm; move it with the same freedom and creativity as your other two arms.
• Practice initiating arm and hand movements from your spine.
• Move with the intent to unlock your spine.

Spinal Roll
• Imagine your spine waving like seaweed in the ocean.
• Practice gracefully folding and unfolding.
• Move with the intent to open the front and the back of your spine.

Additional Tips for Spine Movements
• Move your spine in all possible directions and at different speeds.
• Extend energy all the way through both ends of your spine, bottom to top.
• Imaging spreading your back open and connecting to the energy behind you.
• Soften into your spine as you breathe.
• Release any areas of “holding” in your spine and sense its newfound freedom to move, supported by the water within you.
• Dance your tail to move your lumbar vertebrae.

Exercise 5: Learn the Muscles and Bones of the Core

Using the images in this chapter, study the muscles and bones of the core. After you see where a muscle or bone is located, find it on your own body. Move this bone or muscle, paying attention to the details of its sensations, form and function as you repeat its name over and over. Once you have repeated this with all muscles and bones in the core, photocopy the image on the next page and use it to quiz yourself. Continue studying until you develop an intimate understanding of your own dynamic structure and are able to easily complete the quiz by naming all bones and muscles of the core from memory.
Exercise 6: Isolating and Integrating the Three Body Weights

Take a moment to align your three body weights. Stand in front of a mirror and connect to the sensation of alignment. Use both visual and sensory feedback to observe how you hold your three weights. Notice the placement of your bones in relationship to your feet and legs. What thoughts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs are affecting your alignment? Which weight is the leader? The bully? The martyr? The nurturer? Do you like all three weights?

There is a wonderful abundance of information about you within your core. Look, listen and feel. Focus separately on each body weight. Isolate it, move it, and then integrate it into your systemic movement. Observe which weights move easily and which could use more mobility.

Recapitulate

Recapitulate, and then describe what you experienced while practicing Principle 8, *The Core of the Body*, in your Nia journal.
Art

Dancing Through Life With Your Core

To further embody Principle 8, The Core of the Body, pay attention to the alignment, movements and sensations of your core throughout your day. Here are some examples to get you started:

- As you stand in the shower, pay attention to the alignment of your pelvis, chest and head.
- As you stir soup on the stove, practice pelvic circles to relax your lower back.
- As you walk, allow your tail to gently wag from side to side to integrate your base with your core.
- As you sit at the dinner table or at the office, pay attention to how your three body weights are aligned.
- As you read or work at your computer, notice whether your head is aligned over your chest and spine.
- Give yourself at least one 60-second “shimmy break” midday to release tension in your spine, shoulders and neck.

Energizing Your Core With Imagery

Use the following imaginary to connect to your core and condition it through everything you do, in and out of class—to dance through life with your core!

- Imagine a ring of air, a cushion, between your rib cage and pelvis.
- Open the “blinds” of your ribs with your breath.
- Imagine smoke of beautiful, relaxing colors moving through the spaces between your ribs as you breathe.
- Imagine a sponge at the center of your chest, filling with water as you inhale. Each time you exhale, empty the sponge completely.
- Visualize your sternum as an arrowhead pointing down to your pubic bone, keeping your abdomen open and relaxed.
- Imagine a white feather lengthening along the back of your neck and tickling the belly of the clouds every time you move your head.
- Imagine the strings of a puppeteer pulling your head up and out.
- Walk with a halo of light around the crown of your head.
- Imagine a cobra rising up along your spine and over the back of your head. See the cobra behind you, peering out at the world over the top of your head.
- Imagine your spine as a long, blue ribbon of light.
- Visualize your spine as a golden snake that rises and dances toward the sky.
- Imagine your spine as a string of white pearls connected by a gold and silk scarf.
- Imagine blue water streaming down your spine and pooling in your feet.

My Story

As you read about, practice and embody Principle 8, The Core of Body, take some time to describe your personal story. How has Principle 8 affected your life?
Teaching Preparation

As you personally embody Principle 8, cues for core activation and pelvis, chest, head and spine moves will begin to flow naturally as you teach, regardless of the focus or routine. To prepare for teaching, practice cueing the moves and describing the concept aloud, as though you are teaching a live class. Discuss the fitness and conditioning benefits of Principle 8, *The Core of the Body*. Imagine a student asking, “*Why do we do this move?*” Practice sharing the answer out loud, both before class and as you dance the routine.

When you are ready, focus on the core of the body in class. Here are some ideas to get you started:

**Focus on Sensing The Body’s Way**

- Focus on sensing the pelvis
- Focus on sensing the chest
- Focus on sensing the head
- Focus on sensing the spine
- Focus on sensing the pelvis moves (Pelvic Circles, Hip Bumps)
- Focus on sensing the chest moves (Shimmy, Chest Isolations)
- Focus on sensing the head moves (Head and Eye movements)
- Focus on sensing the spine movements
- Focus on Principle 8 and X-Ray Anatomy (from Principle 10)
- Focus on Principle 8 and the Three Intensity Levels (from Principle 7)
- Focus on Principle 8 and sensing the Five Sensations (FAMSS)
- Focus on Principle 8 and sensing the Movement Forms (from Principle 2)
- Focus on Principle 8 and breathing
- Focus on Principle 8 and Sounding
- Focus on Principle 8 and the chakras (see more information on the chakras on NiaNow.com)
