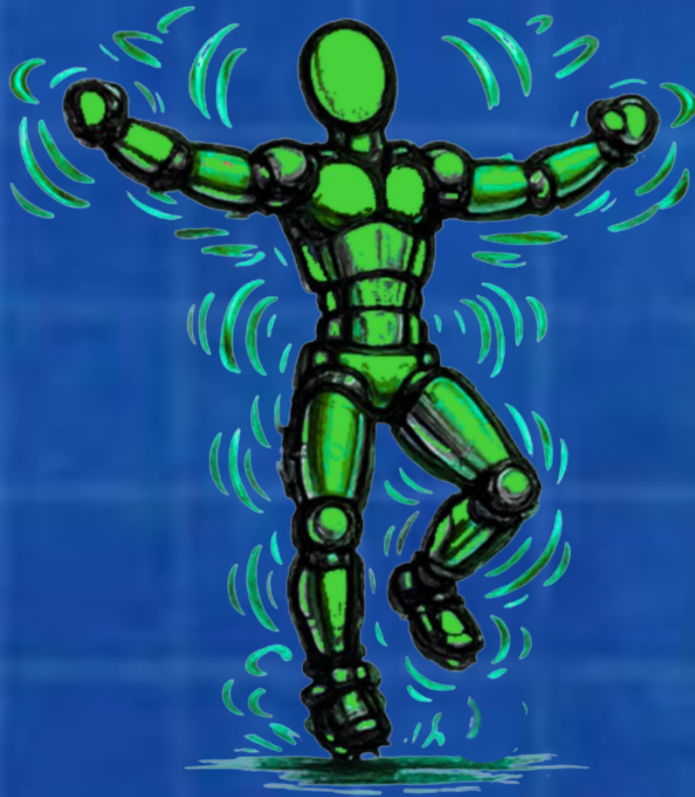


THE FUNCTION AND FLOW

Fitness Routine



Chad Merk



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Before beginning any new movement, exercise, breathing, or wellness routine, consult your physician or qualified health provider, especially if you have a medical condition, injury, pain, dizziness, balance concerns, cardiovascular concerns, or any other health-related limitation. Physical activity should be approached safely and progressed gradually based on current ability and health status.

By using this booklet, you acknowledge that you are participating voluntarily and at your own risk. Stop immediately and seek medical advice if you experience pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, chest discomfort, or any unusual symptoms while performing these activities.

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Function And Flow Fitness Routine

This booklet expands on the *Function and Flow Fitness Routine* that was briefly discussed in *Chapter Four, The Stability Plan*, of the book *The Bonsai Blueprint*.

Consistency over time matters far more than any single missed session.

I have been developing Function and Flow for over ten years now, and it has become a practice that feels less like exercise and more like a moving meditation. I feel strong. I feel loose. And relaxed.

My goal is to perform this routine daily. It normally takes around twenty minutes to complete a full session. If I miss a day here or there, it is ok. I just start again the next day.

Remember, the goal is strength with longevity, not to be tired, sore, or injured.

The Five Components

Function and Flow is built from five parts that move together as one sequence, each with its own purpose, and each with its own depth to refine over years rather than weeks.

Micro jumps, combined with arm circles, arm flaps, and arm shakes open the session to warm the body and build minor impact control.

Foam rolling follows, releasing tension, and allowing the body to settle into position before any resistance work begins.

CROB comes next as the light, slow and controlled resistance, and balance work of the routine.

Yoga follows to release and lengthen the body again.

Tai Chi closes the sequence, bringing flow and energy to complete the practice.

Each piece is intentionally designed to carry into the next, and each rewards refinement the longer you practice it.

Why this Works

Most fitness approaches treat recovery and release as an afterthought, something to squeeze in after the real workout, if there is time at all.

Function and Flow builds release directly into the same daily session, so nothing gets skipped and nothing is bolted on separately.

It is also, in a real sense, a combination of old and new. Tai Chi and yoga carry centuries of tradition.

Foam rolling and micro jumps are much more recent additions to how we think about movement and recovery.

CROB itself sits in between, a modern structure built from years of testing and refinement.

Together they draw from a wide span of movement wisdom, ancient to modern, and combine it into one practice.

The result, for me, is twenty minutes a day that leaves me physically strong and loose, and mentally energized, focused, and calm. Plus there is no need for a gym membership, to drive anywhere, complicated equipment, or a large block of time.

Just twenty minutes, and the rest of the day is easier because of it.

Setting and Tools

If possible, find a quiet space large enough to fully stretch out from fingertip to toe and fingertip to fingertip.

It is best to be on a soft surface or to use a yoga mat for the routine.

If you do not have one, I highly recommend purchasing a High-Density Round Foam Roller, as it is one of the best ways to release tension. It is like having your own personal masseuse.

Find one dumbbell of a light enough weight that allows for full, effortless control through the entire range of motion, where you can maintain a slow, Tai Chi-like speed without using momentum, and without locking your joints. This is your anchor weight. I use between ten to twenty pounds.

Finally, I recommend putting on slow, focused, almost spa-like music. It is not just background sound, it helps you hold your pace and stay in a gentle, steady flow rather than rushing through the counts.

Warmup

For a quick and easy way to warm my body up in only one minute, I do fifty gentle *Micro Jumps* combined with *Arm Circles*, *Arm Flapping*, and *Arm Shakes*.

To perform the Micro Jumps, I hop no more than an inch off the floor, similar to skipping rope. I focus on landing only on the ball of my foot each time.

If you do not want to generate that much force, you do not even have to hop. You can also just bounce up onto your toes in quick succession.

While jumping, I do ten large Arm Circles, followed by ten small ones. Then I do Arm Flapping ten times from hip height to shoulder height. Finally, I do Arm Shakes ten times at shoulder height and ten times at my hips.

If you are unable to combine all of these while doing Micro Jumps, you can also do them individually.



The goal is not to be perfect, but to be consistent. Find what works for you and enjoy.

Foam Roll

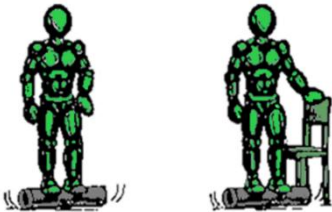
After completing micro jumps I move to the second stage of the routine where I perform foam rolling for three to five minutes.

I find this to be one of the best ways to help my muscles loosen and relax. I personally use a 36 inch high density round foam roller for each movement and perform short distance rolling three times for each body part.

Standing Position

Bottom of the Feet

I start by standing on the roller. If needed, you can do one foot at a time or hold onto a chair for balance.



Sitting Position

Back of the Legs

I sit on the floor and place the roller between my ankle and calf. From there, I move it to mid-calf, then between the top of my calf and knee. After that, I place it at the lower part of my hamstring, then mid hamstring, then at the top of my hamstring, and finally, I complete the legs by placing the roller under my glutes.



Lying Position

Back

I begin by placing the roller under my lower back. Then I move it to my middle back and finally to my upper back.



Neck

I place the roller under my neck and slowly rotate my head from side to side with gentle releasing pressure.



Arms

I extend my arms above my head and place the roller across both shoulders. Then I place it across my biceps and finally across the front of my forearms.



Hands and Knees Position

Arms

I start at the bottom of my forearms and then move to my triceps.



Chest

I place the roller in the middle of my chest.



Abdomen

I place the roller in the middle of my abdominal muscles and tighten them slightly, so I do not put too much pressure on my stomach.



Legs and Feet

I then place the roller at mid-thigh. Finally, I gently roll my shins with very light pressure. I then place the roller against the top of my feet.

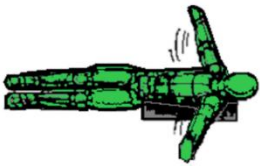


T Position

Back

Once complete, I move into the last position. In this position, I place the roller lengthwise on the mat so I can rest my spine on it from head to tailbone.

From this position, I roll to one side until the roller is between my back and shoulder. Then I roll all the way to the other side and do the same. Finally, I end with the roller back in the middle of my spine. With my arms stretched out, I press my shoulders back and down toward the floor to open my chest as wide as possible.



This completes the foam rolling portion of the routine.

CROB (Controlled Resistance Offset Balance)

Once I have completed my foam rolling I move to the third stage of my routine. This is where CROB teaches the body to work as one connected system rather than isolating muscles. Instead of heavy weights and grinding through sets, the focus is slow continuous tension, light resistance, steady posture, and full body balance.

I created CROB because I wanted something anyone could do at any age, even with just one pound, and still maintain functional strength.

After years of trying different approaches I kept coming back to one question. What does it look like to still be moving well, feeling strong, and living fully to one hundred and beyond.

The answer came from Tai Chi.

By combining its slow, deliberate control and focus on quality of movement over force with light resistance and offset balance, CROB was born.

As an alternative to typical weight lifting, CROB uses a different path to the same goal. Maintaining a strong, injury free, functional body that lasts a lifetime.

The resistance in CROB matters, but the control of that resistance matters more. This is where most people misunderstand strength work. Think of our ancestors and the hunters who came before us. Yes, they sprinted when the moment called for it, but their everyday movement was slow and controlled. Their bodies stayed fit and capable through control, not through manufactured intensity.

This is also why CROB leans on the same principle that has kept Tai Chi and yoga relevant for centuries, the idea that mastery comes from micro adjustments refined over years, not

from adding more weight or more reps. It is less a resistance exercise with a ceiling, and more a control practice with the same open ended depth as Tai Chi and yoga themselves.

CROB is built around three positions, lying, hands and knees, and standing, and each position includes three movements, vertical, horizontal, and diagonal. In each movement you perform five slow, controlled repetitions on each side, for a total of ten. There is no counting. You simply flow from the first repetition to the second, then the third, and so on, keeping every one as slow, smooth, and continuous as you can. The aim is not to rush, jerk, or use momentum, but to use focused control.

CROB works because of time under tension. Moving slowly through a full range with real control asks more of the muscle than a fast rep at the same weight ever does. Pace and control, rather than heavy load or high rep counts, is how CROB builds and maintains strength.

Throughout each movement, gently bend the joint while actively flexing the muscles of the hand, arm, chest, core, back, and legs. To engage different muscle groups, gently rotate the position of the weight from palm up to palm down, or vice versa. This active transferal sets CROB apart from the passive flow of a practice like Tai Chi, and it builds the internal resistance that drives control and strength.

This lighter, slower approach also changes how often you can train. At this lighter weight and slower, more controlled pace, the stimulus is gentle enough on the joints that it no longer needs the same spacing heavier resistance work requires, the same reason Tai Chi and yoga can be practiced daily without issue.

What matters most is consistency over time, not the length or intensity of any single session.

Now that you understand how CROB functions you need to find your working weight. This is whatever weight lets you move through all ten movements of a position clean and controlled from start to finish, no joint discomfort, no breakdown in form.

I'm 6'2", fit, and athletic, and 10 to 20 lbs is all I need. Weight isn't about size or strength, it's about control. If it's not testing you, try more weight. If more weight isn't controllable, return back to the original weight and slow your pace for more timed resistance without more load. If your form feels unstable or a joint hurts, drop the weight and slow your pace.

I've done a version of this routine for five years, four of them never really going past 10 lbs. This past year I tried more weight and found it wasn't needed, because it only caused unneeded strain on my joints. So I am back to 10 lbs.

I am 47 now and have been doing a version of this routine for five years, and I find the proof is in what my body can still do. In one recent two week span, I paddle boarded, biked over forty kilometers, and hiked up and down a mountain. On top of that, in one single day, I swam half a kilometer, played volleyball for over an hour, and threw my two seven year old nephews around in the water for two hours straight, all without stiffness, soreness, or losing my breath.

I'm not chasing being the biggest or the strongest. I want to be lean, light, and genuinely capable for as long as possible, and that's exactly what this builds.

Everything in this section comes from what has genuinely worked for me, tested and refined over ten years, not from a claim that it is the only way or the proven way for everyone.

Take what works for you, try it as written, or use it as a starting point to build something that fits your own body better. Either way, the goal is the same, a strong, capable body that lasts.

CROB Routine

Lying Position

In this position I lie flat on my back with one foot planted and the knee bent.

Vertical

I begin with my arm beside my body holding the weight palm up, and my opposite leg bent towards my chest. I gently bend my arm, contract the muscle, and arc the weight slowly above my chest. I then rotate my palm and continue down past my head slightly. At the same time my opposite leg begins to extend out above the floor. Then I return all limbs to the start position and flow into the next repetition.



Horizontal

I begin with the weight palm down, over the opposite shoulder, and my opposite leg bent towards my chest. I gently bend my arm, contract the muscle, extend the weight up, rotate my palm, and arc it horizontally down toward the floor. At the same time my opposite leg mirrors the motion, opening at the hip and rotating over the floor. Then I return all limbs to the start position and flow into the next repetition.



Diagonal

I begin with my arm across my abdomen, the weight palm down, and my opposite leg bent to my chest. I gently bend my arm, contract the muscle, press the weight up, rotate my palm, and move into a controlled diagonal arc up and outward to the side, like the point of a star. At the same time my opposite leg extends out parallel to the floor, like the opposite point of a star. Then I return all limbs to the start position and flow into the next repetition.



This completes the lying position. The next position is hands and knees.

Hands and Knees Position

In this position I am on one hand and the opposite knee, with my chest up and out and my back straight.

Vertical

I begin by holding the weight palm up in a rowing position, and my opposite leg off the ground. I arc the weight down, gently bend my arm, contract the muscle, rotate the palm, and move it upward past my head. At the same time my opposite leg arcs out and up directly behind me. Then I return all limbs to the start position and flow into the next repetition.



Horizontal

I begin by holding the weight palm up across my chest, and my opposite leg off the ground. I gently bend my arm, contract the muscle, then arc the weight across and upward into a reverse fly. At the same time my opposite leg opens at the hip and moves outward, hovering over the floor. Then I return all limbs to the start position and flow into the next repetition.



Diagonal

I begin with the weight palm up across my abdomen, and my opposite leg off the ground. I arc the weight down, gently bend my arm, contract the muscle, rotate the palm, and move into a controlled diagonal arc up and outward to the side, like the point of a star. At the same time my opposite leg extends outward to the side, like the opposite point of a star. Then I return all limbs to the start position and flow into the next repetition.



This completes the hands and knees position. The next position is standing.

Standing Position

In this position I am standing on one leg, and because of this the movements are more dynamic. If needed, a chair can be used with the free hand for balance.

Vertical

I begin with the weight palm up in a rowing position, and my opposite leg up towards my chest. I arc the weight down, gently bend my arm, contract the muscle, rotate the palm, and arc upward above my head. At the same time my opposite leg arcs down, back, and out directly behind me. Then I return all limbs to the start position and flow into the next repetition.



Horizontal

I begin holding the weight palm down across my chest, and my opposite leg bent in front of me. I gently bend my arm, contract the muscle, move my arm across horizontally, and rotate the palm. At the same time my opposite leg mirrors the movement, opening at the hip and moving outward. Then I return all limbs to the start position and flow into the next repetition.



Diagonal

I begin with the weight palm down across my abdomen, and my opposite leg up towards my chest. I gently bend my arm, contract the muscle, and move into a controlled diagonal arc up and outward to the side, like the point of a star. At the same time my opposite leg extends outward to the side, almost tip toe, like the opposite point of a star. Then I return all limbs to the start position and flow into the next repetition.



This completes the final position and the CROB portion of the routine.

Yoga Stretches

Once my CROB is complete I move to the fourth stage of the routine where I perform simple and easy yoga stretches. Normally I hold my stretches for a long slow three count, while focusing on breathing in and out in a calm pace.

Recline Kneel



Cat/Cow



Opposite Right & Left Arms and Legs



Cobra



Superman



Locust



Child & Right and Left Shoulder



Pigeon Right and Left Legs



Low Lunge Right and Left Legs



Spine Twist Right and Left Legs



Knees to Chest



Happy Baby



Bound Angel



Downward Dog



Plank



Warrior One Right



Warrior Two Right Triangle Right Warrior One Left Warrior Two Left

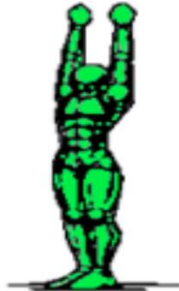


Triangle Left

Mountain

Fold

Close



Tai Chi

Once my yoga stretching is complete, I close with simple Tai Chi movements. For the speed of each movement I again follow a natural and calm breathing pattern.

Opening



Raised Arms



Brush Knee Left



Brush Knee Right



Hold Ball Left



Parting Mane Left



Hold Ball Right



Parting Mane Right



Cloud Hands Five Right to Left



One Leg Right



One Leg Left



Scoop Left



Kick Right



Scoop Right



Left Kick



Grasp Birds Tail, Press, Open and Push Right



Grasp Birds Tail, Press, Open and Push Left



Scoop



Hands Crossed



Close



Closing Statement

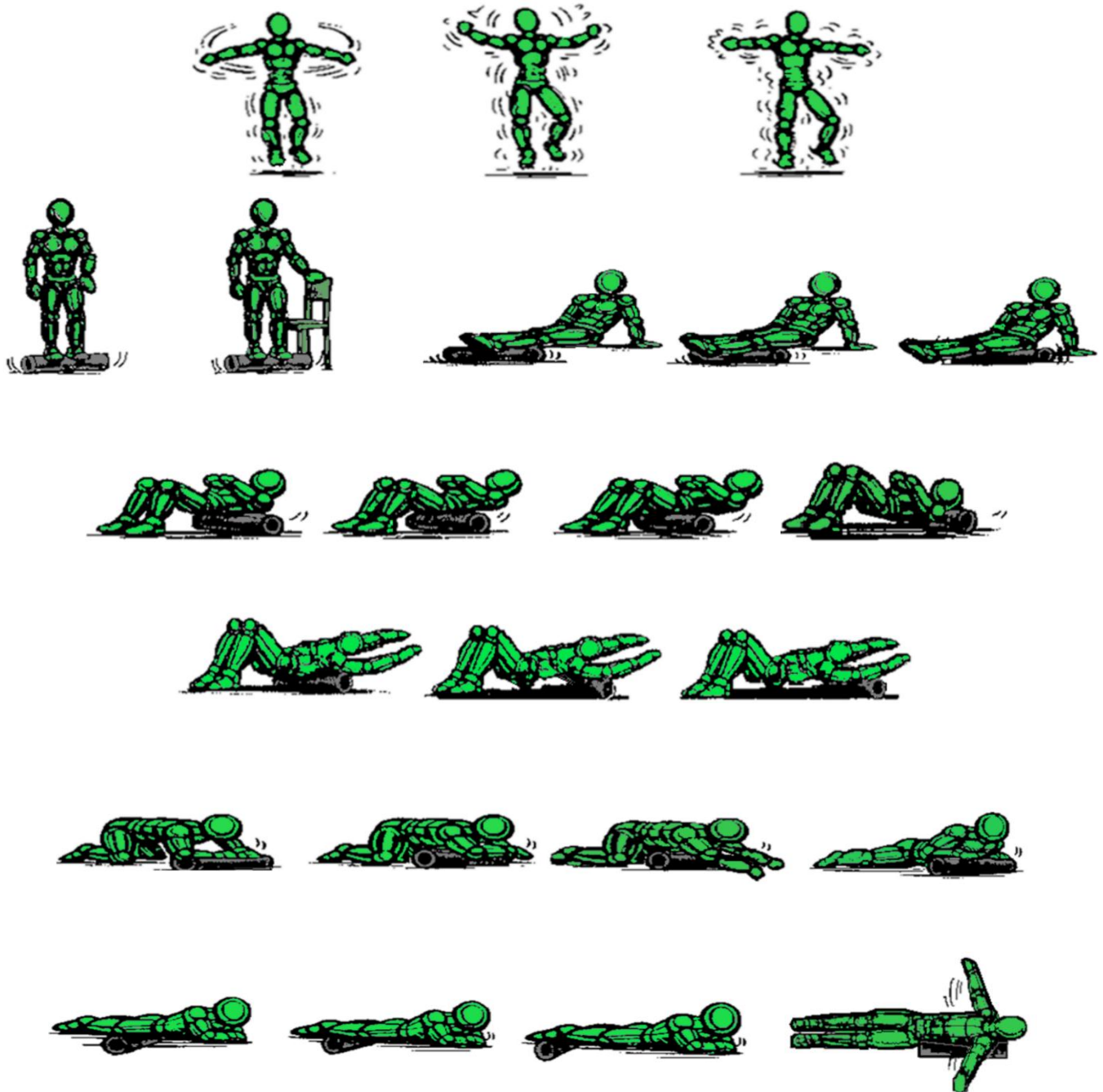
Begin with what feels natural. Start with the movements that bring ease, control, and confidence to your body. You do not need to chase complexity for movement to be effective. What matters is recognizing how your body responds and building from a place that feels steady and true.

Refine what creates steadiness. Notice the positions, patterns, and rhythms that help you feel balanced, supported, and connected. Often, the smallest adjustments made with intention lead to the most meaningful progress. The purpose is not simply to move, but to move in a way that is functional, sustainable, and aligned with your body's natural design.

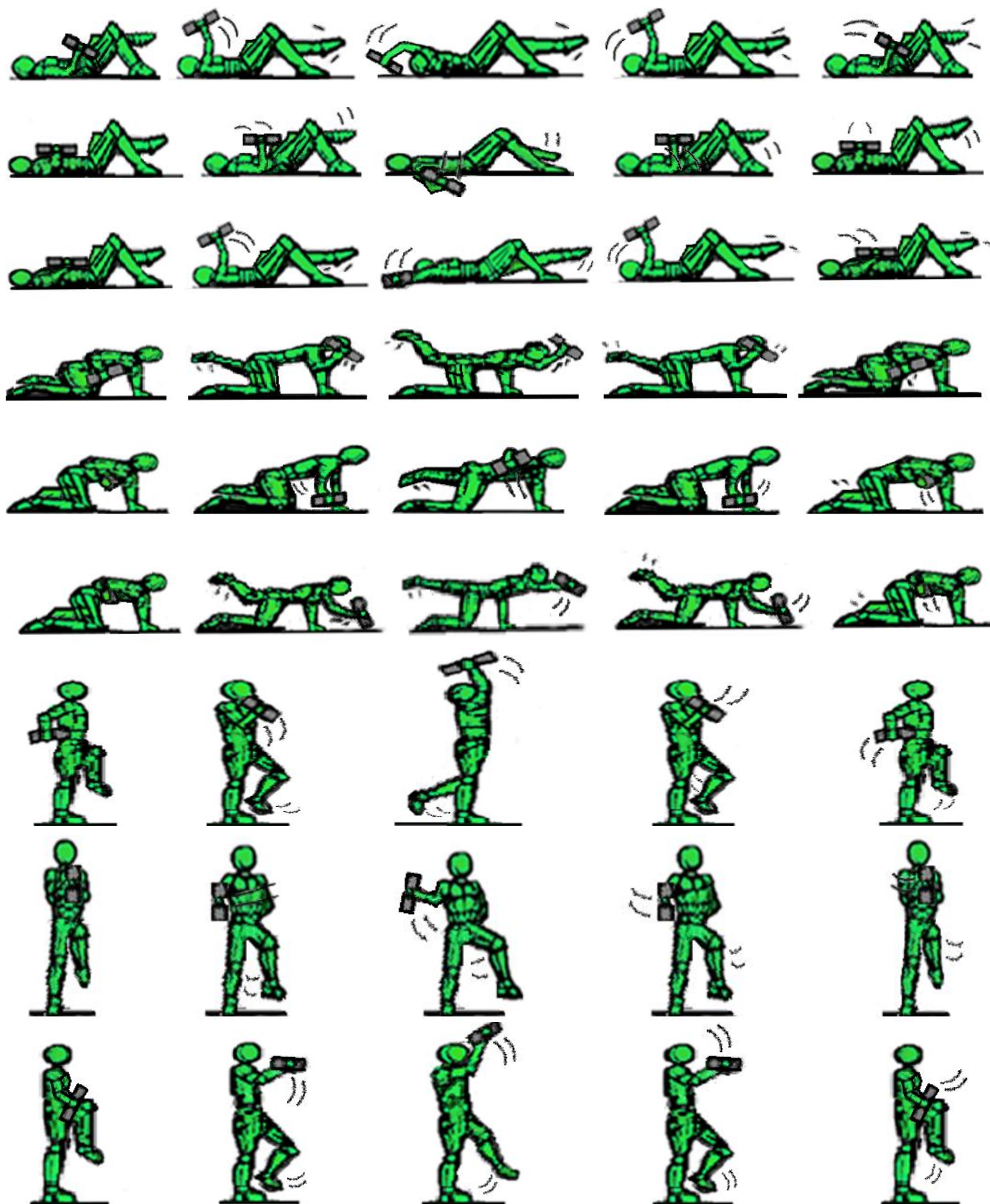
Return to the movements that help you feel aligned, capable, and well. Let them become part of your daily practice and personal foundation. With consistency, simple movements can strengthen the body, improve coordination, support confidence, and enhance overall wellbeing. Function and Flow is a reminder that better movement does not come from doing more, but from doing what works with greater awareness, purpose, and steadiness.

Full Routine Four Page Print-out

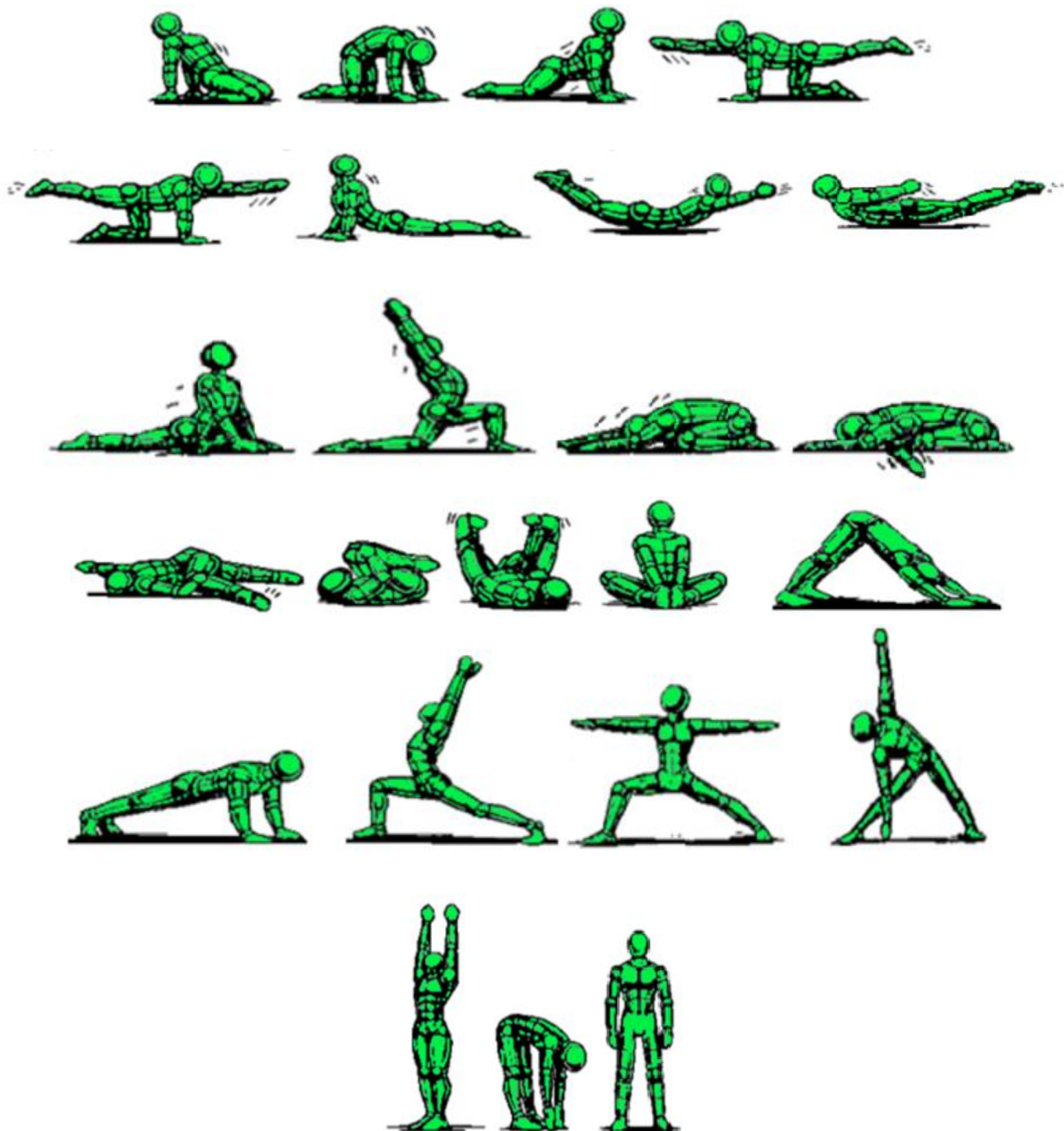
Micro Jumps and Foam Rolling



CROB



Yoga



Tai Chi

