

## DVD review

### **Release to Balance: A Successful Approach to Teaching Pelvic Floor Dysfunction**

By Maeve Whelan

Pelvic Physiotherapy, Dublin, 2010, 40 min, DVD, £30.00

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Maeve Whelan is a specialist chartered physiotherapist who works in a private practice in Dublin, Ireland. In 2008, she was awarded the title of Specialist Member of the Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists in the area of Women's Health and Continence. Her particular interest is manual therapy of the pelvic floor, and she both lectures and writes about this subject.

*Release to Balance: A Successful Approach to Teaching Pelvic Floor Dysfunction* is aimed at the public. The DVD is a video tutorial on managing pelvic floor dysfunction, and it mirrors the advice and instructions about exercise techniques given on Maeve's website

([www.pelvicphysiotherapy.com](http://www.pelvicphysiotherapy.com)). A preview is available online (Pelvic Physiotherapy 2011a).

The front cover is discreet; it is only on the reverse that *Release to Balance* is described as being dedicated to teaching exercises that successfully treat bladder and bowel problems, pelvic pain, and organ prolapse. The aim is to educate viewers about control of the pelvic floor by considering it as part of the cylinder formed by the abdominal muscles and diaphragm. Control or balance is achieved by releasing or lengthening the muscle before strengthening.

The tutorial begins by using text and animation to give a very clear explanation of the pelvic floor muscles and the anatomy of the transversus abdominis. Maeve then instructs a clothed patient who only exposes her abdomen in this clinical situation. For the most part, the patient is in the crook-lying position, but side-lying is suggested and standing is also demonstrated. Maeve manages to teach the patient and talk to the camera at the same time, and her instructions are enhanced by animated diagrams.

Beginning with the patient's palpation of her abdomen, the technique is broken down into chapters and sections. The 'sniff, flop and drop' exercise is taught, the 'sniff' being diaphragm descent, the 'flop' the abdominal release and the 'drop' the pelvic floor muscle release. Each part of this section is described slowly and performed independently by the patient. Animations give visual cues for the timing and direction of movements. Poor technique is alluded to and corrected. The following section combines the 'sniff and flop' first, then the 'flop and drop', and finally, the 'sniff, flop and drop'. Progression through this stage is appropriately repetitive, and Maeve emphasizes throughout the importance of isolating each element of the technique before moving on to the next.

Once this release of the pelvic floor is mastered, balance is achieved by strengthening exercises. These begin with the 'abdominal zip' and then the 'tuck' of the pelvic floor muscles, first separately and then as a combined technique before adding breathing control. Things that can go wrong with this method are described and corrected. Finally, the strengthening exercise is



combined with the 'sniff, flop and drop', and a whole set of 10 repetitions of the complete sequence is talked through in real time.

*Release to Balance* is 40 min long, and the chapters and sections are clearly defined. Thus, each part is easily accessible and can be worked through by the viewer at her own pace, with pauses and repetitions of each element as required. Maeve is encouraging, and her calm manner and precise instruction promote patience and concentration.

There are no mentions of the causes of pelvic floor dysfunction or its symptoms in this DVD, but women are advised to refer to the website, which has detailed descriptions (Pelvic Physiotherapy 2011b, c). The model patient and the figures in the diagrams are female, but I see no reason why the Release to Balance principle and disc would not be useful to men.

I consider this tutorial to be an invaluable adjunct to physiotherapy intervention, but it is also explained so clearly that many women will learn and benefit from it safely and independently. Sometimes I think we overemphasize the strengthening element when treating pelvic floor dysfunction in the clinical situation, or attempt to progress patients too quickly through the sequence of release before strengthening. *Release to Balance* reinforces the concentration, patience and focus required of the patient and clinician in correcting pelvic floor dysfunction.

Together with the Pelvic Physiotherapy website, this DVD makes the recent advances in managing pelvic floor dysfunction available directly to the public and safely empowers women to gain control. It bridges the gap between scientific knowledge and self-management beautifully. I warmly recommend the DVD to ACPWH members, to our patients and to the public, and I applaud Maeve for her work.

*Release to Balance* can be purchased in the UK and Ireland for £30.00 or €35.00 (plus shipping and taxes) from Amazon.co.uk, or in the USA and the rest of world for \$45.00 (plus shipping and taxes) from Amazon.com.

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## References

- Pelvic Physiotherapy (2011a) *Series: DVD Release To Balance*. [WWW document.] URL <http://pelvicphysiotherapy.mindbites.com/series/836-dvd-release-to-balance>
- Pelvic Physiotherapy (2011b) *Dysfunction Overview*. [WWW document.] URL [http://www.pelvicphysiotherapy.com/PelvicDysfunction\\_Overview.html](http://www.pelvicphysiotherapy.com/PelvicDysfunction_Overview.html)
- Pelvic Physiotherapy (2011c) *Causes – Do I Have Pelvic Dysfunction?* [WWW document.] URL [http://www.pelvicphysiotherapy.com/Causes/Causes\\_IsThisMe.html](http://www.pelvicphysiotherapy.com/Causes/Causes_IsThisMe.html)