Mapping Mobility and Modifications in Yoga: Creating Unique and Intelligent Classes

Thursday, July 21, 2022 1:45pm – 3:35pm
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Regress to Progress Guidelines

In exercise science, a **Regression** is any strategy implemented to make a movement easier, or more accessible, while a **Progression** can be defined as making a movement more challenging. Use the following biomechanical strategies as guidelines for regressing or progressing any pose, movement, or skill.

Position – Changing your relationship to gravity, or the floor, follows the developmental progressions of a human, from infancy to childhood. In order of more regressed to progressed they are as follows:

- **Supported -** (Floor / Supine / Prone)

- **Crawling -** (Quadruped / Down Dog / Plank)

- **Seated -** (Pelvis on the floor or feet)

- **Kneeling -** (One or both shins on the floor)

- **Standing -** (One or both feet on the floor)

- **Inverted -** (Unique to yoga and other acrobatic forms of movement)

Lever Length – Refers to the distance between the focal joint and the distal end of the limb.

- **Shorter** = Regressed

- **Longer =** Progressed

Kinetic Chain – A closed chain refers to the distal aspect of a given extremity being fixed to the Earth or another solid object. An open chain sees the distal aspect of the extremity moving freely, or not contacting a solid object.

- **Closed Chain** = Regressed

- **Open Chain** = Progressed

Partially Closed Kinetic Chain – We may use this to refer to the feedback received by the distal end of a limb contacting a non-fixed object (such as a block, strap, or other body part).

Range of Motion **–** Refers to the degree to which one can, or chooses to, move a particular joint.

- **Less ROM** = Regressed

- **More ROM** = Progressed

Load **–** Refers to the amount of force being exhibited on a particular joint. Load can be **Extrinsic** (i.e., working with weights), or **Intrinsic** (i.e., non-weighted isometric activation).

- **Less Load** = Regressed

- **More Load** = Progressed

Time – The variable of time can be used to increase or decrease the difficulty of a movement. This can refer to the number of times one performs a movement, the time taken to rest in between sets or sessions, the time it takes to execute a rep, or the length of time one chooses to practice. Because of these variables it is not easy to make a definitive statement about which is more regressed / progressed. It is more accurate to say, "it depends."

Sensory Awareness – This typically refers to sight, or lack thereof. Having more visual awareness of the space around you, and even the visual feedback of looking in a mirror, or seeing recorded footage of your movements, can make it easier to understand what you're doing. In contrast, closing your eyes or practicing with less visual awareness can make the movements more elusive to perform acurately.

- **More** = Regressed

- **Less** = Progressed

Stability – Refers to the base of support upon which one performs a movement

- **More** = Regressed

- **Less** = Progressed

Contextual Interference – Our ability to learn new motor skills requires regularly interfering with the context under which we practice. This can include environmental factors (location, position in the room, temperature, music, etc), as well as time of day, mood, terrain, and really any of the aforementioned biomechanical variables. Ultimately, to truly "own" a movement skill, one must practice that skill under a wide array of contexts to ensure that the skill is transferrable to different circumstances.

- **Less** = Regressed

- **More** = Progressed

Notes:

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Sequencing Worksheet:
Regress to Progress

Take inventory of your pose, including its joint positions, difficulties, and common compensation patterns. Then use this worksheet to brainstorm regressions / progressions for your pose of focus. Depending on level, time, and type of pose, your sequence's beginning and end points will vary based on your unique intentions.

Pose or Movement of Focus_____

Type of Pose (i.e., Standing, Seated, etc.)_____

Intended learning outcome(s) for students_____

Level of Class_____ **Time**_____ **Available Props**_____

Opening Section and Warm-ups: This section may include brief explanation of themes, areas of focus, and some full body movements and/or breathwork to awaken and foreshadow the focus of class. If class begins seated you can introduce some movements / actions here. After completing the worksheet and selecting your sequence, you may be better able to determine how (or if) you use this section of class.

- **Theme Ideas –**

- **Breathing Practices –**

- **Awakening Movements –**

Floor (Supine / Prone) Variations: Explore regressions of the movement in a supported position. Consider factors like lever length, distal / proximal movements, and static / dynamic movements.

- **Passive –**

● **Active –**

● **With Feedback** (Partial Closed Chain) –

● **No Feedback** (Open Chain) –

● **Additional Ideas** (i.e., time, load, lever, etc.) –

Crawling: Crawling movements can include variations on hands and knees (quadruped), plank, and down dog. Consider variations of the pose that can be explored in these positions.

● **Quadruped –**

● **Plank –**

● **Down Dog –**

● **Additional Ideas** (i.e., stability, transitions, feedback, etc.) –

Sitting / Kneeling: When brainstorming variations, consider the factors of stability and range of motion that change depending on if you are sitting with your pelvis on the floor or kneeling on one or both shins with your pelvis lifted. Using, or not using, your hands on the floor for support also plays a role in regressing / progressing the difficulty.

● **Seated –**

● **Kneeling –**

● **Additional Variations** (i.e., stability, lever length, transitions, chain, etc.) –

Standing: If your pose / movement of focus is not a standing pose, you may still consider exploring variations of the pose standing. While it is considered a progressed position since less of your body is touching the floor, it may be an easier position for mapping certain movements in other ways. Consider the additional resources you have to regress movements in the standing position (i.e., a wall, chair, dowel). When exploring changes in lever length, balance, and range of motion, additional support in this way can be useful.

- **Closed Chain** –

- **Open Chain** –

- **Short Lever** –

- **Long Lever** –

- **Stability** –

- **Additional Ideas** (i.e., sensory awareness, time, load, etc.) –

Inverted - As yoga practitioners we often endeavor to progress our movements by balancing on our hands with our legs open chain. These movements can still be regressed by using a wall, chair, blocks, etc. Consider ways your pose could express itself as a hand balancing, or inverted posture, and how you might regress / progress within this category of movements to make it more accessible / challenging.

- **Wall** –

- **Chair** –

- **Other ideas** –

Cooldown - While a full body cooldown can be nice after a movement practice, consider what would be needed to facilitate balance. As your sequence likely explores specific, loaded joint positions, consider deloading those positions by moving in the opposite direction. This is one area where passive stretching can play a useful role in the mitigation of residual tension from practice.

- **Joint Positions / Muscles Loaded** –

- **Positions to De-Load** –

When crafting your sequence, select the regressions / progressions that apply to your specific goals for class. It is not necessary, or possible, that every variation in every position be explored. The type of class, the level of students, and your objectives are the determining factors. This template provides a starting point and basic outline for crafting your class, but experiment and be willing to adapt its format to meet your needs and interests.