

Jonathan: Hey, it's Jonathan Bailor. Let's run through how to apply our smarter eccentric exercise principles to an ab exercise. Now, this ab exercise is not part of the core Smarter Exercise routine. The reason for that is that your abs is a relatively small muscle. Remember, the exercises that we're doing here are specifically targeted at working as much muscle as possible so that we trigger the biggest hormonal response as possible.

Now, your abs, your biceps, your triceps — these muscle groups get a lot of attention but they're tiny and it really doesn't matter if you spend a lot of time working them until we get our body fat levels down to a certain point because if you have excessive body fat, it doesn't matter how strong your abdominals are, you're not going to be able to see them. That doesn't mean that having a strong abdominal wall isn't important; it's extremely important. But remember that the exercises we are focused on here are specifically designed to work the most muscle possible, to trigger the largest healing hormonal response possible, to burn as much fat, and to heal our brain, gut, and hormones as much as possible. We have a very specific goal so we do very specific exercises.

That said, as you've heard in other videos, I get so excited about this eccentric approach because it can be applied to any exercise. Let's say, you do want to do some abdominal work and you want to activate all of the muscle fibers in your abs. Now, if you're going to do this, again, please make sure you do your squats, you work your legs, you do your chest press, your shoulder press, your pull-ups, your rows. You're working your big muscle groups first but if you want to do abs, you can — with the understanding that it's icing on the cake, not the cake itself. That's probably a terrible analogy to use but, oh well.

How would you do crunches traditionally? The way crunches would be done traditionally, it's a quantity over a quality model — and you know what I think about that. It's all about quality. Quality, quality, quality. Conventional crunches that are about quantity are just about [counts], do 800, and get terrible results. Spend a lot of time, get bad results. We're not going to do that. We want to use a lot of resistance, we want to activate a lot of muscle fibers. The best way to do that is to get in — now, this is an extremely challenging movement so I'm going to show you a couple of variations of it. I'm going to show you the most advanced variation first just so you can see what you're working towards.

So what you would do is get on a flat surface and you would position so that you're on your tailbone. You're really sitting on your tailbone such that your heels are touching the ground, you've got your shoulders back, you've got your chest out, and then what you would do is you would slowly — so you can see I'm just — I've got my tailbone on the ground, keeping my shoulders back, chest out, slowly lowering myself down, almost parallel with the ground, holding, holding, holding. Whew! That is hard. That is extremely hard. Then you would get back up into that top position and, again, you're slowly lowering yourself down.

Now, a couple of ways not to do this — sometimes the best way to learn how to do an exercise is to learn how not to do an exercise and then you just accidentally end up doing it. So here's what not to do. For example, to go down like this and just to lower your leg — that's not what we want to do. Another thing that's not proper is to roll your shoulders forward. You want to roll your shoulders so you want to keep your back back. I tell you, you will immediately feel — this is your abdominals. You're going to feel something in your abdominals as you've never felt before, especially in your lower abdominals — that really difficult area to get strong. These are really going to help with that.

If you can't do this most advanced movement, there's a couple of ways to simplify it. The first will be to put your arms underneath your thighs here and use this to slowly lower yourself down. Again, you're not grinding your shoulders forward. You're still keeping your shoulders back, chest up, and you're sitting not forward — again, you're sitting on your tailbone. Now, just try to lean back without falling back. You're using your arms here to help support you but, just like every other exercise, you want to only use your arms enough so that the resistance forces you down in 10 seconds. Again, you're not like, "This is easy. I could keep going but that's 10 seconds so I'll stop." Remember, that's not how we want to do this. It's all about resistance.

What you would do if you were going to help yourself is, you would only use your hands enough such that you got to stop, you got to stop, and then you can crunch your way back up. If you want, you can help yourself back up. But really, what you're going after — and I like to use abs because this really shows the contrast between conventional quantity-focused exercise, which has gotten us nowhere and actually left us worse off over the past forty years, which, again, in that model, here's what we do [counts]. My gosh, we're flailing. You'll notice it's concentric. No eccentric. We're just flying back. We're just flying around, flopping around, nothing's happening. We're just hurting ourselves and getting sweaty. Not good. What we're doing here — the exact opposite.

You can see it's almost like a Pilates or yoga. It's a very powerful movement and we're trying to hold that movement and it's strong and it's slow and it's deliberate. It's almost like you're chiseling. You're a sculptor. You're sculpting your body. I love that metaphor because when you think of a sculptor, they've got their chisel and they're very delicate because they're creating something that's artful and beautiful. They don't have a chainsaw. No, we're not after that. We're going to sculpt our bodies so it's very slow and controlled. That doesn't mean it's not challenging. In fact, it's heck of challenging. The slower you move, the harder it's going to be.

Again, just imagine, the ideal world is this — slowly lowering yourself down for 10 seconds. It's going to be most challenging at the bottom so if you could hold this, more power to you. If you're not there yet, you're going to help yourself on the way down with your arms behind your legs. Focus on slow and controlled six sets of 10. Remember, quality over quantity.