

HBF INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Hand-Balancing Foundation! During the first stage of HBS (Hand-balancing Foundation) of the program we are going to focus our attention into learning the basic knowledge and building a good solid foundation for our hand-balancing journey. Balancing on your hands is simple, yet very complex. Sure some people can throw themselves into the floor and balance with their legs wide opened, an arched back and start walking with their hands in no direction whatsoever until balance is lost. That's the simple aspect of it. On the other hand there are masters who can spend more than 5 min upside down and take on a conversation without even getting their head red. That's the complex aspect of it.

I like to see my handstand journey neither as simple nor complex, nor easy or hard, but instead, interesting, fun and profound. The reason I say profound is because your hand-balancing journey will teach you so much about yourself that you will fall in love with this never ending process of discovering. That is at least what happened to me and I am sure it will happen for you as well. Let's get started!

MERCURY PHASE 1 - INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Mercury! The planet of your mental life and inner communication!

This is where we begin your journey to learn how to balance on your hands. There are many different approaches that all involve different techniques and theories to fitness which many of them could take you towards your goals. However, we have made sure to design HBS in the most customizable way possible for you to focus on understanding your individual body, identifying your unique **limitations, strengths, and weaknesses** and building a strong foundation that's in harmony with who you are at any specific moment in time. This is not a one-size fits all program. It requires time to build the body working through each of the limitations to achieve the handstand position, however, it is worth every second of work.

Depending on your individual weaknesses and limitations (Such as Flexibility, Mobility, Strength, Balance, and Alignment) we encourage you to be as mindful as you can be during each practice as well as adjusting your training approach based on your observations and tips given during the course. It is important to be aware of such limiting areas and weak links in order to advance and develop your own unique practice that's in congruence with your current level, unique lifestyle and personal goals.

Please let me add that we DO NOT want to become obsessed with this, and making the following mistakes:

1. Overthinking your practice and doing less because of it. Practice first, observe and modify as you go.
2. Over-judging yourself for each single weakness that we ALL have. Accept yourself FULLY.
3. Trying to work on every single limitation at the same time resulting in inefficient and slow progress.
4. Learning without application. This is just the same as not knowing at all.
5. Judge your limitations based only on the instructions given in the course, rather than truly developing the art of listening to your body.

With that in mind, let's begin our upside down journey of self-discovery!

We will be exploring each of those limitations in depth throughout the program. However, the ONLY way for us to get to know our bodies is by using them and that is exactly why the lectures are not truly mandatory, although incredibly useful and recommended that you watch as many of them as possible. You could learn as much (or even much more) by doing the training videos alone as you would by reading hundreds of books in hand-balancing. The Handstand is all about consistent action, proper application of the principles, and the understanding of how your own unique body learns and functions in different scenarios. The only way to do that is with direct action. Let's begin our journey.

In the following 3 part series Introductory Lecture videos, you will learn the fundamental **principles** that govern the body's ability to perform a proper Handstand. We will start with a brief overview about the complexity of the human body and everything that can affect our Hand-balancing and inversions journey. Nonetheless, this is only for you to see how different we all are and how much a simple skill like standing in your hands can teach you so much more about yourself than what you ever thought possible.

Topics we will cover:

1. How **Strength** relates to stability and the ability to perform advanced skills like handstand pushups.
2. **Balance** and the role the Central Nervous System plays in nutrition, stress, sleep, and equilibrium.
3. How our Handstand **Alignment** is greatly affected by our mobility, flexibility, and stability.

Understanding and developing the handstand around these principles along with using the exercises in this video will guarantee you the ability to learn the handstand, if you're willing to put in the consistent hard work. The handstand is a tool for us to understand ourselves at a deeper level and become overall better human beings in this game we call LIFE.

We thank you for taking the first step towards this incredible journey and we are beyond excited to have you balancing in your hands like never before!

Let's get started.

PHASE BREAKDOWN

PHASE DURATION: 6 weeks

MAIN PRACTICES: 8 follow along workouts

ADDITIONAL PRACTICES: 2 Challenges

LECTURE VIDEOS: 15+ Lessons & Tips

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: 12+ General & Specific Warm ups

MERCURY - PRACTICES

1. *HAND-BALANCING FUNDAMENTALS 1 - Arm Support & Hollow Body*
2. *HAND-BALANCING FUNDAMENTALS 2 - Positional Drills and Spine Stability*
3. *HAND-BALANCING FUNDAMENTALS 3 - Lower Body & Compression Strength*
4. *EXPANDING STABILITY 1 - Core Development - Anterior Chain Focus*
5. *EXPANDING STABILITY 2 - Core Development - Posterior Chain Focus*
6. *BUILDING STABILITY 1 - Full Body Stability Flow*
7. *BUILDING BALANCE 1 - Full Practice & Balancing Drills*
8. *BUILDING STRENGTH 1 - Crow Pose & Upper Body Strength*
9. *88 ORBIT RETROGRADE SHOCK CHALLENGE - Mercury Challenge 2*
10. *PRESS UP OR SHUT UP CHALLENGE - Mercury Challenge 1*
11. *COSMIC FLOW 1 - Compress to Decompress*
12. *CALORIS BASIN FINAL ASSESSMENT*

GENERAL WARM UPS

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| 1. HANDSTAND WARM UP 1 - Full Body Sequence HB Specific | 5. WRIST WARM UP 1 |
| 2. BODY HEAT WARM UP 1 - Blood Flow HB Specific | 6. WRIST WARM UP 2 |
| 3. BODY HEAT WARM UP 2 - Blood Flow HB Specific | 7. WRIST WARM UP 3 |
| 4. BODY HEAT WARM UP 3 - Blood Flow HB Specific | 8. SHOULDER WARM UP 1 |
| | 9. SCAPULA WARM UP 1 |
| | 10. LOWER BODY WARM UP 1 |
| | 11. GENERAL WARM UP 1 |
| | 12. GENERAL WARM UP 2 |

13. GENERAL WARM UP 3

ESSENTIAL MOBILIZATION & CONDITIONING ROUTINES —————

1. HANDSTAND LONGEVITY 1 - Wrist, Shoulders & Elbows Mobilization
2. HANDSTAND LONGEVITY 2 - Essential Joint Mobilization
3. MECHANICAL EFFICIENCY - Wrist Mobility & Conditioning

MERCURY - LECTURES & TIPS —————

1. *HANDSTAND ENTRIES 1* - The kick up
2. *OVERCOMING FEAR* - Conscious Falling
3. *HAND-BALANCING TAKE OFF* Ep.1 - Your Unique Journey
4. *HAND-BALANCING TAKE OFF* Ep.2 - Mobility Dominant
5. *HAND-BALANCING TAKE OFF* Ep.3 - Strength Dominant
6. *BALANCE BEYOND EQUILIBRIUM* - Understanding Balance Lecture
7. *Warm up VS Burn Out*
8. *Body Calibration*
9. *Back to Wall Handstand*
10. *Pike Push up Tutorial*
11. *Handstand Body Tension*
12. *Selective Tension*
13. *How to Hang and Why*
14. *Pointing To Space*
15. *Sun Salutations & Handstands*
16. *Crow to Handstand*
17. *Building Bent Arm Strength*

PHASE OVERVIEW

The first phase of *HBF (Mercury)* contains *8 Follow Along Practices*, *2 Challenges* (1 at the end of every week), *1 Final Assessment at the end of the phase*, as well as *15+ Lectures and Tips* to better facilitate your journey upside down. It also includes *3 specific warm ups and essential joint mobilization sequences*, *3 Body Heat warm ups*, and *10+ Additional warm ups* for your wrist, elbows, shoulders and legs.

The phase has a duration of 6 weeks and it is layout in a *Calendar method*, meaning that you will move *Day by Day* as it is indicated. Each day you will have a *recommended warm up sequence* for the practice ahead, however, feel free to add any additional warm ups at your convenience from the *additional warm ups list*. Also, do not hesitate to modify the program based on your own lifestyle by either training *every other day* or by doing *2 sessions in a single day*. In addition, you will have a *routine customization* for each one of the routines in order to make the suitable for you! With that said, remember that it is only you who knows how far you can go and when it is the time to push harder or when it is time to step back and recover.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Our main **objectives** during *HBF Phase 1* are as follows:

1. Getting familiar with the *main concepts* that are required to understand *our body upside down*.
2. Building enough *Stability, Strength* and *Body Awareness* for an efficient *Inversion Practice*.
3. Preparing our *joints, muscles* and *Central Nervous System* to be able to practice our Handstands safety on a regular basis.
4. Working towards developing our own practice based on our own *goals, needs* and *individual lifestyles*.
5. Becoming aware of our own *weaknesses* and *limitations* and do our best to improve based on our observations and guidelines given on the program.

Our main **goals** during *HBF Phase 1* are as follows:

1. Achieving a *full CTW (Chest to Wall) Handstand Hold of 1 min* or more for at least *2 consecutive sets*.
2. Comfortably holding *Crow Pose and Bounded Headstand* for at least *10 seconds*.
3. Developing enough *core strength* to be able to hold a *Laying Hollow Body Hold* with hands overhead for at least *20 seconds*.
4. Becoming *100% comfortable* with *bailing (exiting) your handstand safely*.

5. Creating enough *Lower Body Mobility* in order to achieve a *Low Squat* as well as the Lower Portion of The Pistol Squat.

ROUTINE CUSTOMIZATION

In order to maximize the routine at hand, please do your best to **scale up or scale down** the exercises to your current level. As we have learned so far, we are all different in many areas from our physical structure, to our background, our individual lifestyle, and most importantly, different in the way our body learns any type of movement. When it comes to the handstand, it is not different. It is actually one of those skills that require us to be in tune with our bodies in order to progress safely and effectively. Each routine is carefully programmed in a way for you not to overtrain or under-train, as well as structured in a manner that we work on different areas of hand-balancing every day to ensure a constant and steady progress.

Below each routine you will find some guidelines as to how to modify the routine to your own level and personal goals, as well as tips/customizations given on the practice & theory videos. As always, listen to your body, test, record your progress and tweak as you move through each one of the phases. As you move through the program, it will become easier and easier to tailor the routine to your own individual needs. Mindful observation and deliberate practice is all that is needed to achieve this.

WARM UP OVERVIEW

We all know the importance of warming up our body before doing any type of physical activity. When it comes to training your handstands - or any arm balance / inversion - is not only important, but absolutely essential that you warm up properly all your muscles, joints and ligaments before starting any Hand-balancing practice.

Every phase of the course will have a *designated warm up sequence* given at the beginning of every week carefully designed to prepare your body for the demands of the training ahead. As we advance through the course the warm ups will slightly change to be more specific as your workouts become harder and more complex.

I cannot stress enough the importance of warming up your body before you start training or practicing your handstand - especially during the adaptation phase, but also throughout your entire hand-balancing journey. Warming up *will not eliminate all chances* of getting injured, but they will drastically reduce that possibility. Let's play it hard but safe so we can ensure that we show up everyday stronger than the day before. Moreover, you will clearly notice how warming up will increase ten fold the effectiveness of your practice.

The warm up phase for the entire hand balancing system is divided into 4 *main parts* that are crucial for having a pain free and effective handstand practice.

1. **WRIST WARM UPS:** Movements with the purpose of preparing the wrist joint, forearms and fingers for them to support your entire body weight upside down. The healthier and stronger our wrists are, the stronger our handstand game will be, simple.
2. **BODY HEAT WARM UPS:** Movements with the purpose of raising your overall body temperature, loosening all your muscles, joints and ligaments. In short, turning ON your central nervous system and setting up the proper environment for your body to perform at its best.
3. **SHOULDERS & SCAPULA WARM UPS:** Additional Movement patterns with the purpose of keeping the muscles, joints and ligaments surrounding your shoulders and scapula healthy. This is critically important for any type of bodyweight training, and handstands are not the exception.
4. **ROUTINE SPECIFIC WARM UPS:** As the name implies, these are short and specific warm ups that are tailored to either the routine ahead, the week ahead, or an entire phase.

To summarize, you will find a recommended sequence for each individual workout, even when workouts are being repeated you will find a slightly modified version of the warm up based on the current stage of the phase you are in. Make sure to complete this section of the routine before moving on to the main practice of the day.

That concludes everything you will need in order to have a successful Hand-balancing Journey. We will see you in Mercury!

The SM Hand-Balancing Foundation - Phase 1 - Mercury

*With Love, Kindness & Appreciation,
The SM Team*