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LAEL LABAN



OUT OF PAIN? NOW STAY CAPABLE.

How I stay capable

Lael Laban

Three knee surgeries later. My week, my checks

Educational content, not medical advice
Read the next page before anything else

Version 1

READ THIS FIRST

Before you start

! READ FIRST

My week, my numbers

This is my week, at my level, with my numbers. It is not a program for you. Your loads and heart rates will be different.

Who I am

I'm Lael Laban, a movement coach based in Israel. I'm not a licensed physical therapist, physician, or other healthcare provider in the United States.

This is education, not healthcare

Everything here is general education about how movement works. It is not medical advice, a diagnosis, or treatment. It does not replace a doctor, a physical therapist, or any licensed clinician who can examine you.

I have not seen you move. Nothing here is built for your body, and reading it doesn't make me your clinician.

Talk to your doctor first, especially before high-intensity work, and if

You have a heart, lung, bone or joint condition, or any condition a doctor is treating

You have high blood pressure, or you are over 40 and have not trained hard recently

You had surgery, an injury or a fall recently

You are pregnant, or recently gave birth

A clinician told you not to exercise, or not to load a joint

Stop and get help if

You feel sharp pain, or pain that keeps getting worse

You feel numbness, tingling or weakness in an arm or a leg

You feel dizzy, short of breath, or have chest pain

A joint swells, locks or gives way

If it feels like an emergency, call 911 or your local emergency number

Your choice, your risk

Exercise carries a risk of injury. You decide whether a movement is right for you and how far to take it. You do the checks and exercises at your own risk. Stop if anything hurts.

Some people find these exercises helpful. Some do not. I cannot promise any result.

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HOW I STAY CAPABLE

Lael Laban

Where I am starting

Sex	**Male**
Strength level	**5 of 5**
Endurance level	**5 of 5**
Training	**Functional gym**
Sleep	**~7 hrs a night**
Stress	**5 of 10**

Morning energy	**Okay**
Commitment	**10 of 10**
What I want	**Build a system I can follow for years**
Pain history	**3 knee surgeries, 2 herniated discs**
Pain today	Sometimes my knee, because I play a lot of footvolley. I do the mobility before I play, so I don't start the game in pain. After intense games there is usually pain, and then I do the releases and the mobility.

First, commit

I had three knee surgeries. Looking back, nobody ever looked at how the rest of my leg moved. That's the part I work on now. Two herniated discs after that.

Over the years I got hurt a lot. Different injuries every time. On top of the two herniated discs, inflamed shoulders, wrist pain, ankle pain.

I used to eat crazy amounts of white bread. When I changed how I eat, I noticed I recover much better.

I drink water all day. At least 3 liters, and on training days at least 1.5 liters more. And I got serious about sleep.

Why I live like this: year after year my performance goes up. You see it on the footvolley court, in my strength and in how I move. The graph keeps going up, and that is the most accurate measure. I feel it too. Sharp, fast, focused.

For me, pain usually pointed to a part of the chain that wasn't moving well. That was my experience. Pain can also mean something that needs a clinician, so don't ignore it. **Nobody is going to do this work for you.**

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How I live, day to day

Out of pain? Now stay capable.

My day

Wake up	6:45
First hour	Half a liter of water as soon as I am up. Bathroom. Another half liter of water. Then coffee. If yesterday was a hard session, zone 4 to 5, I add salts and potassium.
Mobility and release	Once a day, all nine. Before a morning session, right after the water, or at noon if I trained in the morning. It is not part of the strength sessions.
Training	Two mornings a week I train around 8. The rest of the week it moves with the day, sometimes 9 to 11, sometimes 4 to 7 in the evening. Footvolley is at least an hour, up to two and a half. Strength is up to an hour, usually in the evening.
The rest of the day	Pretty active. I demonstrate, move weights, write at the computer, sit, demonstrate again.
Recovery	At least twice a week I try to fit in a sauna after training. It helps me a lot with recovery.
Evening	Sometimes infrared. Or on my back with massage balls on the points that feel loaded, to take the load off the body.
Water	At least 3 liters a day. On training days, at least 1.5 liters more.
Bed	Between 10 and 11.

What I eat

My eating is already consistent.

First meal, at work	Two sourdough sandwiches with tuna, lettuce, tomato and garlic spread. One more sourdough sandwich with natural peanut butter and jam.
Lunch	A big vegetable salad, rice, chicken thigh.
Before training	If I train: a banana or a date, or coconut water, and more salts, electrolytes.
After training	Usually 4 eggs, a vegetable salad and two slices of sourdough.
When I am hungry	On training days, if I am hungry, I add more sourdough bread.
What I keep out	No white bread. No sweetened drinks. Natural drinks are fine, coconut water is good before training too. Soda water and water.

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THE METHOD

Every day, something

4 WEEKS

The mobility and release layer, once a day. Its own slot, not part of the strength sessions. A joint that stiff needs frequency, not intensity.

Open it and load it, same session. Range you can't hold won't stay. Flexibility is passive. Mobility is active and controlled.

THE FIRST MONTH

WEEKS 1 TO 2

Find the link

Do the screen on day one and write down what you find. Not yet on a check? Its drill is in the daily layer.

WEEKS 3 TO 4

Add a little

When every set is clean at the top of the range, the load goes up about 5 percent. Never more than 10 percent in a week.

WEEK 4

Screen again

The same five screens. What changed is your answer.

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THE CHECKS

Five screens

5
SCREENS



Five self-checks. They show how a position feels for you today. They don't diagnose anything, and nobody is reviewing your results. **Do them in this order and write down what you find.** Pass, or not yet. If a check hurts, stop.

What you need. A chair, floor space and a wall. An adjustable bench. Two yoga blocks. A foam roller, two balls and a massage ball. A weight.

01 Heel sit

Knee, full bend. On /checks: the knee

DO	Kneel and sit back on your heels.
PASS, ALL FOUR	Your butt touches your heels. The tops of your feet are flat on the floor, no gap anywhere along them. You are sitting comfortably. Your chest stays lifted and tall.
WHY	If your hips don't reach your heels, the limit is often around the joint, not in it. That's what the drill works on.
RECORD	Pass or not yet.
NOT YET?	The heel sit with balls and a roller in the daily layer.

02 Toe touch

The back of the legs. New. Added to the three on /checks

DO	Knees locked. Bend your spine forward and reach for the floor.
PASS	Hands on the floor, knees locked.
SHOWS	Shows how the back of your legs, the hamstrings, let you move.
RECORD	Pass or not yet. Not yet? Write down where you stopped.
NOT YET?	First the hip flexor opening on a bench, then the spinal forward flexion with an elephant walk. Both in the daily layer.

03 Figure 4 on a chair or the floor

Hip, outside rotation. New. Added to the three on /checks

DO	On a chair or on the floor. Put one foot on the other knee. Then the other side.
RECORD	How open each side is, and whether there is a difference between the sides.
NOT YET?	The active pigeon in the daily layer.



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04 90/90 inside rotation

Hip, inside rotation. Close to check 3 on /checks, the hip, in a different position



DO On the floor: sit in 90/90. Bring one knee down while the other leg stays where it is. Only one leg moves. Then the other side.
On a chair: sit with a yoga block between your knees, and check how far each hip turns in.

PASS On the floor: the knee reaches the floor and the other leg stays where it is.
On a chair: compare how far each knee turns out to the side. Both sides similar, and no pain, is a pass.

RECORD Each side, pass or not yet. Not yet means one side is clearly more limited than the other. If it hurts, it's not a "not yet". Stop the check, skip the drill for that side, and see a clinician where you live.

NOT YET? The 90/90 in the daily layer.

05 Squat

Foot to hip. New. Added to the three on /checks

DO Sit down into a squat.

PASS No falling, no pain, and comfortable. All three.

RECORD Pass or not yet.

NOT YET? The full daily layer, all 9.

YOUR RECORD

SCREEN	LAEL	DAY 1 LEFT	DAY 1 RIGHT	WEEK 4 LEFT	WEEK 4 RIGHT
01 Heel sit	pass				
02 Toe touch	pass				
03 Figure 4 on a chair or the floor	pass				
04 90/90 inside rotation	pass				
05 Squat	pass				

You may notice one check feels harder than the rest. That's the one I'd start with. Its drill is in the daily layer. **Week four, screen again.** What changed is your answer.

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THE WEEK

My training week

7
SESSIONS



This is my week, at my level, with my numbers. It is not a program for you. Your loads and heart rates will be different. Talk to your doctor before starting any new exercise program, especially if you have a heart condition, high blood pressure, or are over 40 and haven't trained hard recently.

The same seven sessions in the same order, every week. Strength, an aerobic base, and the mobility and release layer on top. The mobility and release layer is its own daily slot, not part of a session. Once a day, all nine. Before a morning session, right after the water, or at noon if I trained in the morning.

DAY	SESSION	CONDITIONING
Every day	**Mobility and release**	Once a day, all nine, before a morning session or at noon. Its own slot
Monday	**Pull strength**	-
Tuesday	**Push strength**	-
Wednesday	**Control and core**	45 min, zone 2, 113 to 132 bpm, one continuous session
Thursday	**Intervals**	5 x 1500 m, zone 4 to 5, 150 to 188 bpm
Friday	**Push volume**	-
Saturday	**Pull volume**	-
Sunday	**Long run**	75 min, zone 2 to 3, 113 to 150 bpm. The second half faster than the first, and finish at tempo

How the loads are set. The back squat is the anchor: 100 percent of bodyweight at level 5, rounded to 5 kg. For me that is **80 kg** for 5 x 5. Every other lift is a fixed step from it, and the volume days divide it down. Reps in reserve, RIR, say where to stop: RIR 2 means two clean reps still left. When every set is clean at the top of the range two sessions in a row, the load goes up about 5 percent. Never more than 10 percent.

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THE LAYER ON TOP

Mobility and release

11
DRILLS



The layer that keeps the rest working. **Open it and load it, same session.** Range you can't hold won't stay. **Once a day, all nine. Before a morning session, right after the water, or at noon if I trained in the morning.** Its own slot, not part of the strength sessions. Drills 10 and 11 are only for the toe touch.

01 Heel sit with balls and a roller

2 balls 1 roller, open your knee

Place the balls in the crease behind the knee and sit down gently onto the roller. Let the balls press into the back of the thigh while your feet relax into a pointed position. If the knee hurts, move the roller further back. Once you reach full range, try taking the roller out.

Sets **2** Time **3:00**

Focus A stretch across the top of the foot, and a muscular ache where the balls press.

Three versions, 1 to 2 to 3. Same dose

1. Two balls, yoga blocks and a roller. Feet pointed, the top of the foot on the floor.
2. The same, with the feet flexed. Toes tucked under.
3. A broomstick behind the knees, two yoga blocks under the knees.





02 Chest opening with a roller and a weight overhead

The roller sits along the line of the chest. Open backwards, starting from the chin. The chin and the crown of your head want to touch your butt.

Sets **3** Reps **8**

Focus The opening comes from the chest, not from arching the lower back.

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03 Active pigeon

On a bench at 30 to 40 degrees. An active hold. The knee on the bench presses down into it to open the pelvis.

Time **30s** Hold **active**

Focus Keep the pelvis centered for the whole hold.

04 90/90

Seated 90/90 hip rotations. Active and passive rotations with an open chest. Hold the last rep.



Reps **10** per side Hold **30s**

Tip Rotating your spine toward the opposite side opens the joint. Use your hands to help.

05 Fire hydrant

One leg is the axis. All the movement comes from the knee of the other leg. A roller against the wall sits against the inside of that knee, which stays slightly bent, in full contact the whole time. Lift the back leg slightly, like the start of a deadlift.

Sets **3** Reps **10**

Focus Move slowly, with no shift at the hip and no compensation. Both hands on your pelvis.

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06 Seated foot release, fingers between the toes

Sit down with the foot on a block. Slide one finger into each gap between the toes. Hold the ankle still with the other hand. Now spread the toes apart.

Time **45s** each foot

Why The floor is information. Let your feet read it.



07 Foot release, fascia release with a massage ball

Roll the foot. Find a tender spot and stay on it with gentle pressure. Skip this if you have diabetes-related foot numbness, take blood thinners, or have a history of blood clots, unless your doctor says it's fine.

Sets **2** Time **2 min or more** each foot

Focus Stay until it softens. When you let the foot go, it feels softer.

08 Knee slide on a slant

Stand with one foot on the slant board. Slide the knee forward over the toes. The other foot stays on the floor.

Time **1 min or more** each leg

Focus Keep the arch up. Don't let the foot collapse in.





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09 Sissy squat

Sets **3** Reps **5**



10 Hip flexor opening on a bench

For the toe touch. First

Ease into the full stretch, then tuck the pelvis under and hold it steady.

Time **1:00** per leg

Focus A steady pelvis, tucked under the whole time. This is a posterior pelvic tilt, PPT for short.

11 Spinal forward flexion with an elephant walk

For the toe touch. After the hip flexor

Hands on two yoga blocks, at their highest setting. Bend one knee and lift that heel. Straighten the other knee all the way into a stretch. Hold 5 seconds. Switch: bend the straight knee and lift its heel first, and only then straighten the other one. Hold 5 seconds.

Reps **2** per leg Hold **5s** each position

Focus Push into the blocks the whole time.

Progression Lower the blocks only when you can.

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THE SESSIONS

My sessions

7
SESSIONS

This is my week, at my level, with my numbers. It is not a program for you. Your loads and heart rates will be different. Talk to your doctor before starting any new exercise program, especially if you have a heart condition, high blood pressure, or are over 40 and haven't trained hard recently.

The mobility and release layer is its own daily slot, not part of these sessions.

Monday. Pull strength

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RIR	WEIGHT
Weighted Pull Up	5	5	150s	2	+25 kg added
Bent-Over Barbell Row	5	5	150s	2	70 kg total
Heavy Dumbbell Row	5	5	120s	2	32.5 kg each
Barbell Romanian Deadlift	5	5	180s	2	70 kg total
Back Extension	4	8	75s	2	Bodyweight

Finisher. AMRAP 7 min. 8 American KB swings, overhead, 8 ring rows, 10 V-ups

Tuesday. Push strength

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RIR	WEIGHT
Back Squat	5	5	180s	2	80 kg total
Bench Press	5	5	150s	2	65 kg total
Standing Barbell Overhead Press	5	5	120s	2	40 kg total
Barbell Front Squat	5	5	150s	2	65 kg total
Weighted Ring Dip	5	5	120s	2	+25 kg added

Finisher. 21, 15, 9 reps. Dumbbell push press, Burpees, Russian twists, 10 min cap

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Wednesday. Control and core

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RIR	WEIGHT
Bottom Squat Hold / Goblet Hold	3	45s	60s	-	Your choice
Single Leg RDL / Hip Airplane	3	10 each leg	60s	-	12.5 kg each
Farmer Carry	4	40 m	60s	-	Your choice
Pallof Press	3	12 each side	45s	2	Your choice
Box Jump	4	8	60s	2	Bodyweight
Mobility Flow and Stretching	1	15 min	-	-	-

Conditioning. 45 min, zone 2, 113 to 132 bpm, one continuous session

Thursday. Intervals

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RIR	WEIGHT
Dumbbell Romanian Deadlift	4	10	90s	-	22.5 kg each
Reverse Hyper / Back Extension	3	12	60s	2	Your choice
Hanging Leg Raise	3	15	60s	2	Bodyweight
Cable Pallof Press	3	12 each side	45s	2	Your choice

Conditioning. 5 x 1500 m, zone 4 to 5, 150 to 188 bpm

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Friday. Push volume

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RIR	WEIGHT
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	4	12	90s	2	12.5 kg each
Seated Dumbbell Shoulder Press	4	12	90s	2	10 kg each
Goblet Squat	4	12	100s	2	20 kg
Parallel Bar Dips	4	12	90s	2	Bodyweight
Walking Lunges	4	12 each leg	60s	-	12.5 kg each
Dumbbell Lateral Raise	3	15	45s	-	5 kg each

Finisher. AMRAP 8 min. 10 push-ups, 10 box jumps, 12 air squats, 12 sit-ups

Saturday. Pull volume

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RIR	WEIGHT
Lat Pulldown (Wide Grip)	4	12	90s	2	35 kg total
Dumbbell Row	4	12	90s	2	17.5 kg each
Barbell Romanian Deadlift	4	12	90s	2	35 kg total
TRX / Ring Face Pull	4	12	75s	2	Your choice
Barbell High Pull	4	12	60s	-	25 kg total
Hyperextension	3	15	60s	2	Bodyweight

Finisher. AMRAP 12 min. 8 chest-to-bar chin-ups, 10 single-arm KB clean and presses, 12 slam balls, 15 V-ups

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Sunday. Long run

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RIR	WEIGHT
Yoga / Mobility Flow	1	30 min	-	-	-

Conditioning. 75 min, zone 2 to 3, 113 to 150 bpm. The second half faster than the first, and finish at tempo

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RECOVERY AND FOOD

Sleep, stress, food

Z
RECOVERY

Sleep

~7 hours a night. Morning energy: okay.

In bed between 10 and 11. In the evening, sometimes infrared, or massage balls on the points that feel loaded. At least twice a week a sauna after training. It helps me a lot with recovery.

Stress

5 of 10.

For me: the sauna. A completely dark room, no red standby lights. A pillow under my head and a pillow under my knees. I sleep on my back with my knees up. For me, that position feels better for my back, and I sleep better.

Food

Protein: 125 to 160 g a day.

Quality protein, a good fat, and a carb that helps me train. No white bread.

Supplements

Magnesium bisglycinate, curcumin and creatine.

What I take, not a recommendation. Supplements can interact with medications. Check with your doctor first.

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THE REASONS

Why my plan looks like this

?
WHY

01 I had three knee surgeries. Looking back, nobody ever looked at how the rest of my leg moved. That's the part I work on now.

02 What I want is this: "Build a system I can follow for years". That is why the week is fixed. The same sessions in the same order, so it stops being a decision every morning.

03 On the mornings I play footvolley, the mobility comes after the game, at noon. It takes the load of the game off my body, so I don't bring tight hips and sore knees into the strength session that evening, in a functional gym.

> **Open the range first. Only then strengthen it.**

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PAIN RULES

When something hurts

READ FIRST

Pain is information. Sometimes it points to a movement gap. Sometimes it points to something that needs a clinician. The list below tells you which.

What you should feel

A stretch, and a muscular ache where the ball presses.

In the foot release, stay until it softens.

A stretch or a dull muscular ache is expected. Sharp, burning, shooting, or joint pain is not. Stop.

Back off a little

If a check hurts, stop.

Only as far as it stays comfortable.

If you feel it in your lower back, the pelvis tipped forward. Tuck again, and back off a little.

Stop any exercise that sends pain down the leg or makes it worse.

Stop and see a clinician where you live if

The pain is sharp inside the joint and does not ease

There is swelling, numbness, or a joint that gives way

Sharp pain under the kneecap, pain in the Achilles, a knee that will not straighten at all or locks

The injury is new, or the pain is getting worse

Get emergency care now (call 911 in the US) if you have

Numbness in the groin or the inner thighs

Trouble controlling your bladder or bowels

A leg that is getting weaker, or a foot that drags

Back pain with fever, after a fall, or pain that wakes you at night and does not ease

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SOURCES

Where these positions show up in research

5
SOURCES

Similar positions are used in sport and movement research. These papers look at how reliably a position can be measured. They don't test this guide or its drills.

01 **Toe touch.** Mayorga-Vega D, Viciana J, Cocca A, Merino-Marban R (2014). Criterion-related validity of toe-touch test for estimating hamstring extensibility: A meta-analysis. Journal of Human Sport and Exercise, 9(1). doi.org/10.4100/jhse.2014.91.18

02 **Toe touch.** Muyor JM, Vaquero-Cristobal R, Alacid F, Lopez-Minarro PA (2014). Criterion-related validity of sit-and-reach and toe-touch tests as a measure of hamstring extensibility in athletes. Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research, 28(2). repositorio.ucam.edu/handle/10952/3193

03 **Figure 4.** Bagwell JJ, Bauer L, Gradoz M, Grindstaff TL (2016). The reliability of FABER test hip range of motion measurements. International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy. pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5159634

04 **90/90 inside rotation.** St-Pierre MO, Sobczak S, Fontaine N, Saade N, Boivin K (2020). Quantification and reliability of hip internal rotation and the FADIR test in supine position using a smartphone application in an asymptomatic population. Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics, 43(6). depot-e.uqtr.ca/id/eprint/9996

05 **Squat.** Krause DA, Boyd MS, Hager AN, Smoyer EC, Thompson AT, Hollman JH (2015). Reliability and accuracy of a goniometer mobile device application for video measurement of the functional movement screen deep squat test. International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy. pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4325286

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WHAT COMES NEXT

Start with the screen

Start with the screen. Find the check that feels hardest, do its drill for a few minutes a day, and check again in four weeks.

thankstolael.com/checks

You're welcome

I'm Lael Laban, a movement coach based in Israel. I'm not a licensed physical therapist, physician, or other healthcare provider in the United States.
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