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TAKE THAT, FAT!

If you've been sweating it out on a regular basis but still can't see your abs—or run any faster—we've got the fix (four of them, to be exact). Make these simple tweaks and nothing will come between you and a knockout body again.

BY LARA ROSENBAUM

1 | STAND UP STRAIGHT

Sucking wind instead of sailing through that last mile? Your posture may be to blame.

"It takes more effort for your muscles to stabilize you when you're hunched over, which increases your body's oxygen needs," says Dean Smith, Ph.D., a clinical professor in the department of kinesiology and health at Miami University in Ohio. "In one study, when participants bent over just 25 degrees, their oxygen intake went up by 28 percent."

→ **FIGHT BACK** Tight chest muscles exacerbate poor posture, so perform this stretch daily to help release them: Lie faceup with a foam roller placed vertically under your spine, and extend your arms out to sides at shoulder height, palms facing the ceiling; hold for up to a minute.

2 | BREATHE EASY

Exercise is a proven way to reduce anxiety, but a recent study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*

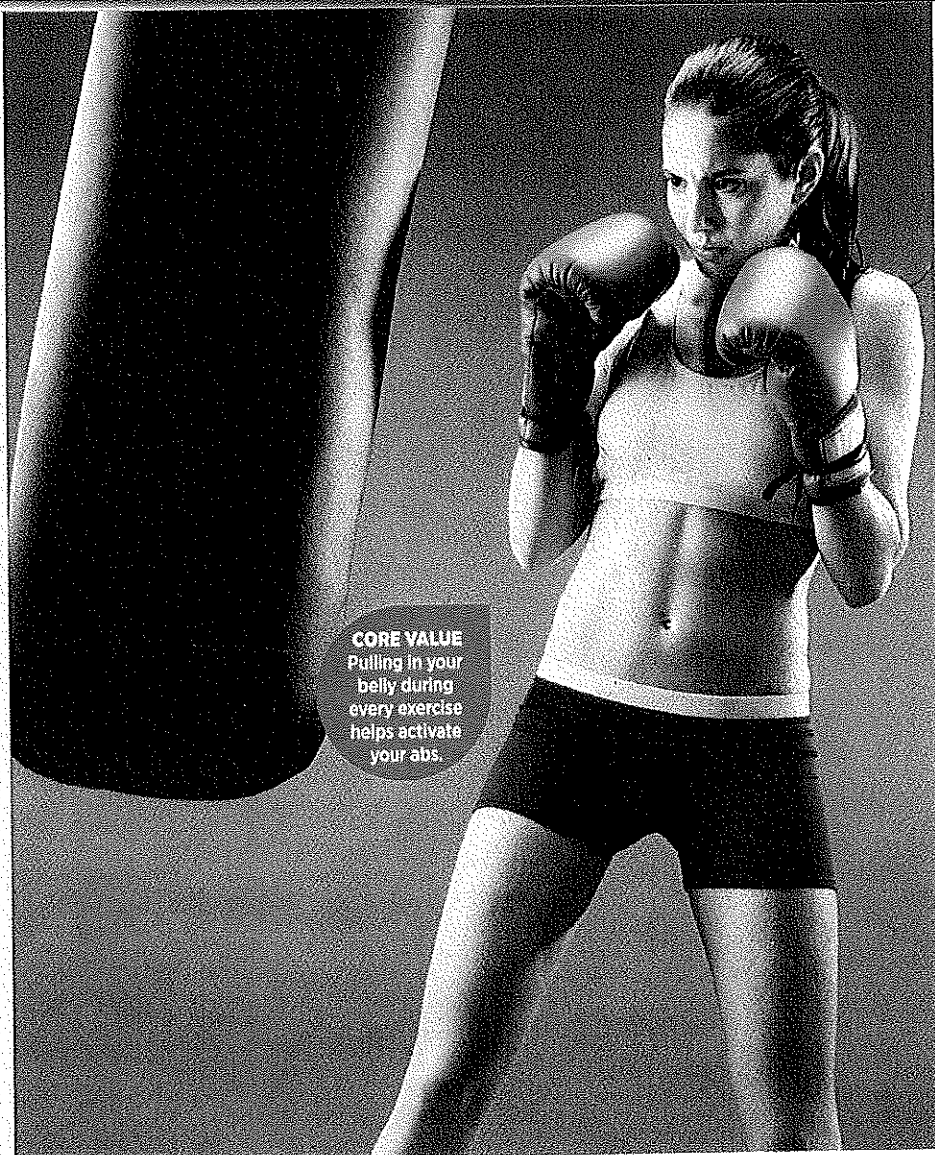
found that chronic mental stress impairs your physical recovery. **When you're uneasy, your body releases more cortisol**, a hormone that alters protein synthesis and diminishes your muscles' ability to rebuild and get stronger (i.e., more toned).

→ **FIGHT BACK** Chill out with a yoga class that includes chanting (rhythmic repetition of Sanskrit or mantras). Researchers at the University of California in Los Angeles recently found that doing 12 minutes of daily Kirtan Kriya—a form of meditation that involves chanting and breath work—decreased stress.

3 | EAT AND RUN

"The most common dieting error people make is not timing meals correctly around their

CORE VALUE
Pulling in your belly during every exercise helps activate your abs.



workouts," says Robin Benardot, R.D., a performance dietitian on the sports sciences and medicine committee of U.S. Figure Skating. The result is a double-whammy downfall: You might not have enough energy to push through your sets, and you'll be short on the nutrients required to feed and replenish your muscles after your session.

→ **FIGHT BACK** "Up to an hour before a workout, have a 200- to 250-calorie snack that includes easy-to-digest carbs—such as a banana and toast or a lowfat granola bar," says Benardot. "After training, consume 10 grams of protein within the first 30 minutes to help boost muscle repair and reduce soreness. Even a handful of pretzels and a string cheese will do the trick."

4 | TUNE OUT

Wait until after your cardio session to catch up on *Homeland*. "TV may distract you, preventing you from paying attention to your body's cues," says Paul Miller, Ph.D., a professor of exercise science at Elon University. "In our research, we found that people who cycled while viewing a video worked at a significantly lower intensity than those without visual stimulation."

→ **FIGHT BACK** Trade the tube for a high-energy playlist. "Study participants who listened to music while pedaling generated considerably more power and consistently moved faster over the course of 30 minutes than those who exercised in silence," says Miller. That extra speed and effort translates to more calories burned.

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