Exercise apparatuses, and methods of making and manufacturing same, for performing a plank exercise are provided. The apparatuses include a first support member that operates to rest against the chest/body of a user, and a second support member that is attached to, and extends away from, the first support member and may rest on a surface, such as a floor, mat, etc. The apparatuses may include one or more base components to add instability and increase the difficulty of workouts, the base components operating to rest on the surface, instead of the second support member or other component(s), when used. Since an individual, who has not developed proper form and strength, performing the plank exercise can lead to serious injuries, the apparatus/device permits the user to perform the plank exercise more easily and safely while permitting the user to employ the base components to increase the difficulty of an exercise.
APPARATUS FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT WHEN PERFORMING PLANK TRAINING EXERCISES AND METHODS OF MANUFACTURING AND USING SAME

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a Continuation-in-Part of U.S. Non-Provisional patent application Ser. No. 13/542,766, filed Jul. 6, 2012, and presently pending, entitled “APPARATUS FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT WHEN PERFORMING PLANK TRAINING EXERCISES AND METHODS OF MANUFACTURING AND USING SAME”, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to the field of exercise devices, and, more particularly, to exercise devices, including training devices, providing support to perform planking exercises/routines and methods of manufacturing and using same. Such planking training exercise devices provide stability while performing plank exercise routines, particularly in situations where individuals using the device have not developed the strength, proper form or other skills needed to perform plank exercises independently.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The plank exercise is a very popular exercise that is intended to work the core musculature (e.g., upper and/or lower body muscle(s), abdominal or stomach muscle(s), lower back muscle(s), hip muscle(s), buttock muscle(s), etc.) of the body. Strengthening the core muscles not only adds support to the spine, thereby aiding ideal posture, but improves the performance of other exercises. The plank exercise is generally defined as a static exercise where an individual uses his/her arms to raise the individual’s body off of the floor and to hold the body straight and still/firm. Typically, the plank exercise is performed without any equipment, and is commonly performed on the ground where the hands and/or a portion of the arms (such as the forearms, elbows, etc.) are placed on the ground. The shoulders are typically positioned above the elbows, and the rest of the body is stiffened by contracting the core musculature, such as the abdominal muscles, lower back muscles, buttock muscles, etc., of the body such that the body is substantially straight from the shoulders all the way down to the feet, which are supporting the other end of the body by resting on the ground (e.g., the toes are on the ground, the feet are on the ground, the individual is supported by the balls of his/her feet, with feet hip-distance apart, with feet together, the heels are on the ground when performing a reverse planking exercise, etc.).

[0004] However, it has been found that a problem one encounters with this exercise is that the exercise relies on the arms and shoulders to support the weight of the body. The arms and shoulders are not intended to be exercised in the plank exercise, but often fatigue as quickly as the core musculature does. When an individual is not trained to maintain the proper position (e.g., the arms and/shoulders are not strong enough to perform the exercise independently), it is possible that injuries to, such as, but not limited to, the arms, shoulders, chest, etc., may result from such lack of training, incorrect positioning, errors, etc. Often times, such injuries can be serious and/or can lead to set-backs in a training regimen. For example, experiencing such serious injuries can even prevent an individual from performing a same or similar exercise in the future, with or without the assistance of equipment (those individuals should consult their doctor before performing such exercises and/or using such devices for same). While gym goers may seek the help of private trainers to learn proper form while conducting such exercises, learning the proper form from a private trainer, especially when required to join, and travel to, a gym, can be cost prohibitive.

[0005] Thus, it would therefore be desirable to provide a device that operates to permit a user of the device to perform plank training exercise routines in a way that would allow the user to learn proper form/technique while developing the skills, strength, and ability to eventually perform the plank training exercises independently.

[0006] Additionally, there is a need in the art to provide an exercise device that operates to permit users to perform the plank training exercise when those users either cannot, or do not want to, perform the routine on their own (e.g., due to lack of experience, age of the user, laziness, etc.). Such is especially true where users are incentivized to exercise when they possess the proper equipment to carry out the routine and/or to enable the routine to be easier. This is also true where the user wants to increase the instability of the exercise device in order to achieve a more intense workout, but may not yet be able to perform the exercise routine(s) without the exercise device.

[0007] Thus, it would therefore be desirable to provide a novel device that operates to aid or assist a user in performing the plank exercise and methods for making and manufacturing same. There is also a need in the art to provide an exercise device that is easy to make and use, does not involve an expensive manufacturing process, increases the level of safety involved with performing the plank exercise, allows the user to adjust the stability of the device for different levels of difficulty, and reduces and/or eliminates injuries (e.g., by removing the weight of the body from the hands, arms and/or shoulders, by removing stress from the hands, arms and/or shoulders of the body, etc.) that may result from performing the plank exercise without proper equipment.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] In accordance with one or more embodiments of the present invention, an exercise device for performing one or more plank exercise routines is provided with a first member that operates to resist against a portion of a user, such as a chest, back, waist, leg, etc., and support the user, and a second member extending substantially transversely away from the first member and operating to resist on, or contact (e.g., directly, indirectly, etc.), a surface, such as a floor, thereby providing support for the device. Additionally or alternatively, one or more embodiments may include a base component extending from the first and/or second support member(s), the base component operating to contact the surface or the floor. The apparatus may be ergonomically designed to include one or more contours, cut-outs, shapes, etc. to comfortably accommodate the body of a user.

[0009] The exercise device may sit in between a surface and a user of the device, and supports the weight (either in part or in whole) of, the body of the user, thereby removing the weight and/or stress from the arms and/or shoulders. The exercise device takes the stress off these areas and makes the plank exercise more effective at working the intended target.
of the exercise, i.e., the core of the body. In one or more embodiments, the device may fit under the shoulders of the user, contact the shoulders at, be placed in between the shoulders against the chest, and/or be proximate to the shoulders. The device supports the weight of the body in part or in whole, thereby relieving the arms and shoulders of this task.

[0010] In accordance with one or more embodiments of the present invention, a plank exercise device includes: a first support member having at least a first surface, a first side and a second side, the at least first surface of the first support member extending between the first and second sides for a predetermined length; and at least one second support member having a first and second end, the first end of the at least one second support member being attached to the first support member, the at least one second support member extending at least one of substantially transversely and substantially perpendicularly away from the first support member, thereby providing vertical support to the exercise apparatus, wherein the first support member and the at least one second support member are sized and shaped such that exercise apparatus operates as a device for performing the one or more plank exercises. The exercise apparatus may operate to receive an upper portion of a body of a user on the first support member and to permit the user to place at least one of one or more hands, one or more elbows and one or more forearms of the user on at least the surface for the performing one or more plank exercises. The exercise apparatus may operate to remove at least a portion of the weight of the body of the user from at least one of one or more hands, one or more arms and one or more clavicles and/or shoulders of the user, thereby reducing or removing stress from at least one of the one or more hands, the one or more arms and one or more clavicles and/or shoulders of the body.

[0011] The second end of the at least one second support member may operate to rest on, or contact (e.g., directly, indirectly, etc.), at least a surface for performing one or more plank exercises, thereby aiding the provision of the aforementioned vertical support. Additionally or alternatively, the exercise apparatus may include one or more base components connected to and extending away from at least one of the first support member, the second end of the at least one second support member, and/or from a base element connected to the at least one second support member, such that one or more base components operate to rest on, and/or contact (e.g., directly, indirectly, etc.), at least a surface for performing one or more plank exercises, thereby aiding the provision of the aforementioned vertical support. In one or more embodiments, a base element may be located, and disposed, between the one or more base components and their respective one or more second support members. Preferably, the one or more base components are in contact with the surface or the floor when the exercise apparatus is in use. The one or more base components, the base element(s) and/or the second support member may be in contact with the surface or the floor when the exercise apparatus is not in use.

[0012] Preferably, the one or more base components are employed when the user of the exercise apparatus wants to add instability to the exercise apparatus in order to achieve a more intense workout, thereby further strengthening the musculature, such as the core musculature, of the user. The one or more base components may be sized and shaped to add a predetermined amount of instability. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the one or more base components may be connected, or attached to, the one or more exercise appara-

tuses using any means known to those skilled in the art, including, but not limited to, gluing, press-fitting, molding, clamping, screwing, latching, etc.

[0013] Additionally or alternatively, the one or more base components and the one or more exercise apparatuses may be releasably connected or re-attached to each other, and readily disconnected from each other by any means known to those skilled in the art as discussed above, e.g., screwing and/or unscrewing, clamping and/or unclamping, tightening and/or untightening, snap-fitting, friction-fitting, removing, etc., such that the one or more base components may be connected for use and then disconnected after use, during manufacturing, for storage, for shipment, and/or for any other suitable scenario. As such, the exercise apparatuses may be used with or without the one or more base components. Alternatively, the one or more base components may be built into, made integral with, and/or permanently connected to the one or more exercise apparatuses.

[0014] The one or more base components may be made of the same or similar less expensive, fewer, or lightweight materials as discussed above for the one or more other components of the exercise apparatuses, such as, but not limited to, one or more of the following: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, fiber, any combination of the foregoing, etc. Preferably, the one or more base components include, or are made from, any desired material that permits the one or more base components to operate as described herein and provide, add, and/or increase, the predetermined amount of instability.

[0015] Preferably, the one or more base components are sized and shaped such that the one or more base components operate to reduce the amount of contact (e.g., point(s) of contact, line of contact, surface area of contact, etc.) between the exercise apparatus and a surface on which the user is exercising as compared to the amount of contact that the exercise apparatus would otherwise have with the surface when not including the one or more base components therein or thereon, thereby increasing or creating the aforementioned instability and increasing the difficulty of performing the one or more exercise routines, such as the plank exercises. The user may interchange, exchange or switch one or more different types of base components with an already installed base component in order to provide varying degrees of instability. For example, in at least one exercise routine, the one or more base components having only a point of contact with the surface on which the user is exercising may provide the most instability, thereby permitting the user to get the most effective workout when using the exercise apparatus. When the user wishes to lower the degree of difficulty, the user may select the one or more base components having a line of contact or a surface area of contact with the surface on which the user is exercising or may simply stop using the base component.

[0016] Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the structure and orientation of the one or more base components may be modified in various ways while providing the benefits described herein. For example, the one or more base components may be sized and shaped to have different geometric shapes, such as, but not limited to, a substantially circular
base, a semi-circular base, a point or pointed base (e.g., conical or substantially conical in shape), a post, pillar or bar base, a spring base, etc., as further discussed herein. Preferably, in order to increase the instability as discussed above, the one or more base components have a width, length, radius and/or diameter that is shorter than the width, length, radius and/or diameter of the exercise apparatus and/or the second support member of the exercise apparatus. Alternatively, the width, length, radius and/or diameter of the one or more base components may initially be the same or substantially the same as the width, length, radius and/or diameter of the exercise apparatus and/or the second support member of the exercise apparatus and then become smaller at a predetermined location on the one or more base components, thereby operating to increase the instability of the exercise apparatus. The one or more base components may be sized and shaped depending on the desires, needs or requirements of the user of the exercise apparatus. For example, the one or more base components may include a substantially rounded, sloped or convex surface to provide the desired level of instability, and, additionally or alternatively, the one or more base components may include a substantially flat, flat, or concave surface and/or one or more points to provide the desired level of instability. Alternatively, the one or more base components may be sized and shaped to resemble a spring, coil or spring-like structure.

[0017] One or more upper arms of the user may: (i) be substantially transverse, or substantially perpendicular, to at least the surface for performing the one or more plank exercises; and (ii) extend from respective sides of the exercise apparatus to permit the user to perform the one or more plank exercises.

[0018] The first support member may further include: (i) a third side and a fourth side on opposite sides of the first support member, the third and fourth sides extending between the first and second sides; and (ii) one or more contours or indentations for receiving one or more portions of the body of the user of the exercise apparatus. In at least one embodiment of the exercise device, the first support member may further include a second surface on the opposite side of the at least first surface such that the at least first surface and the second surface are facing away from each other, the second surface being attached to the first end of the at least one second support member such that the at least one second support member extends away therefrom.

[0019] Additionally or alternatively, the at least one second support member may at least one of slope and taper inwardly from the first end of the at least one second support member to a predetermined location along at least one of the length and the height of the at least one second support member and then at least one of slope and taper outwardly from the predetermined location to the second end of the at least one second support member. In one or more embodiments, the at least one second support member may comprise at least one of: (i) two or more support members (or posts); and (ii) three support members (or posts) to provide the desired support and/or to distribute or spread out the weight/stress over the device.

[0020] In at least one embodiment, there may be one or more contours or indentations disposed on the superior surface of the exercise device to accommodate one or more portions of the user, such as, but not limited to, the chest of the user, the back of the user, a portion of the upper body of the user, etc., and to achieve desired comfort for the user when performing the plank exercise. The one or more contours or indentations of the first support member may include at least one of: at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation disposed on, and in communication with, at least one of the first side and the second side of the first support member, the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation being disposed on, and in communication with, the first side of the first support member and the second clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation being disposed on, and in communication with, the second side of the first support member, the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations operating to receive at least one of at least one clavicle/shoulder and a portion of at least one arm of the user; two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations, the first clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation being disposed on, and in communication with, the first side of the first support member and the second clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation being disposed on, and in communication with, the second side of the first support member, the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations operating to receive at least one of at least one clavicle/shoulder and at least one arm of the user; one or more pectoral muscle (also referred to herein as “pec.” or “pec. muscle”) and/or breast contours or indentations disposed on, and in communication with, the third side of the first support member, the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations operating to receive at least one of at least one portion of at least one pectoral muscle and a portion of at least one breast of the user; at least one chest and/or upper body contour or indentation disposed on, and in communication with, the at least first surface of the first support member, the at least one chest and/or upper body contour or indentation receiving at least one of a portion of a chest, a portion of an upper body and a portion of the upper portion of the user; and at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation disposed on, and in communication, the fourth side of the first support member, the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation operating to receive at least one of a portion of a neck and a portion of a chin of the user.

[0021] The size and shape of the invention may be such that user of the invention can properly perform the one or more plank exercises. As such, at least one of a depth of at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations and a depth of the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations may be at least one of: about zero inches to about 5 inches; about zero inches to about 5 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 5 inches where the depth defines a radius thereof. At least one of a length of the first side of the first support member and a length of the second side of the first support member may be at least one of: about 1 inch to about 19 inches; about 1 inch to about 20 inches; about zero inches to about 19 inches; and about zero inches to about 20 inches. At least one of a length of the third side of the first support member and a length of the fourth side of the first support member may be at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; and about 3 inches to about 36 inches. At least one of a length, a width, a thickness and a depth of the at least one second support member may be at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; about 3 inches to about 36 inches. A depth of the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation may be at least one of: about zero inches to about 4 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 2 inches at the deepest location thereof. A depth of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations may be at least one of: about zero inches to about 4 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 2 inches at the deepest location thereof. At least one of a height of the at least one
second support member and a length of the at least one second support member may be about 4 inches to about 25 inches. At least one of a height of the chest and/or upper body contour or indentation of the first support member and a depth of the chest and/or upper body contour or indentation of the first support member may be at least one of: about zero inches to about 2 inches; and about zero inches to about 4 inches. A height of the exercise apparatus may be about 4 inches to about 25 inches. When the invention employs a base element and/or a base component, at least one of a length, a width and a diameter of the base element and/or the base component may be at least one of: about 3 inches to about 36 inches.

[0022] One or more exercise devices may include a cushion disposed on, or as part of, the at least first surface of the first support member and operating to receive at least one of a portion of the upper portion of the user and a portion of the chest of the user thereof, wherein at least one of the cushion, the first support member, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component may comprise at least one of: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, fiber or any other suitable material known to those skilled in the art. For example, the exercise device may include dense rigid materials in the posts or supports of the exercise device. At least one of the first support member, the cushion, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component may be integral.

[0023] One or more embodiments of the exercise device may include a base element attached to the second end of the at least one second support member, the base element being sized and shaped such that the base element operates to add horizontal support or stability to the exercise apparatus. The base element may at least one of: (i) extend radially in all directions from the second end of the at least one second support member to add the horizontal support or stability; and (ii) be sized and shaped to be at least one of: a circle, a square, a rectangle, and an oval.

[0024] Additionally or alternatively, the first end of the at least one second support member may include a surface attached to the first support member, at least one of the surface of the at least one second support member and the first end of the at least one second support member having substantially the same, or the same, shape or surface area as the at least first surface of the first support member such that the at least one second support member may include the one or more contours or indentations of the second support member and the one or more contours or indentations of the second support member extend substantially transversely, or substantially perpendicularly away, from the first support member for a predetermined distance.

[0025] Additionally or alternatively, the first end of the at least one second support member may be attached to the first support member along a perimeter of the first support member such that the at least one second support member may have a first side, a second side, a third side and a fourth side, the first side of the at least one second support member extending substantially transversely or substantially perpendicularly away from the first side of the first support member, the second side of the at least one second support member extending substantially transversely or substantially perpendicularly away from the second side of the first support member, the third side of the at least second support member at least one of being sloped and tapering away from the third side of the first support member, and the fourth side of the at least second support member at least one of being sloped and tapering away from the fourth side of the first support member. The at least one base component may be attached to the first or second support member in the same or similar fashion.

[0027] In one or more further embodiments of the plank exercise device, the first end of the at least one second support member may be attached to the first support member along a perimeter of the first support member such that the at least one second support member may have a first side, a second side, a third side and a fourth side, the first side of the at least one second support member at least one of being sloped and tapering away from the first side of the first support member, the second side of the at least second support member at least one of being sloped and tapering away from the second side of the first support member, the third side of the at least second support member at least one of being sloped and tapering away from the third side of the first support member, and the fourth side of the at least second support member at least one of being sloped and tapering away from the fourth side of the first support member. The first and second sides of the at least one second support member may at least one of: include at least one of the clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations, and each include one of the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations. At least one of the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations and the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations may extend from the first support member along at least one of the length and the height of the at least one second support member to the second end of the at least one second support member. At least one of the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations and the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations may extend from the first support member along at least one of the length and the height of the at least one second support member for a predetermined distance. At least one of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations and the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation may extend from the first support member along at least one of the length and the height of the at least one second support member for a predetermined distance. At least one of the width and the depth of the at least one of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations and the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation may decrease as the at least one of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations and the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation extend away from the first support member.
thereof to add instability, and thereby increase the effectiveness of one or more plank exercises, to the exercise device while still allowing the user to perform the one or more plank exercises in a manner that is safer than when not using such a device at all.

[0029] The methods of using the exercise device aid or assist the user in learning how to perform, and in allowing the user to develop strength, skills, proper form, etc., while performing, the one or more plank exercises. Such skills, form, etc., allow the user to reduce and/or eliminate the chance of injury of performing plank exercises and other exercise routines. A method of performing one or more plank exercises comprises: placing at least one of a portion of a chest and a portion of an upper body of a user on a first support member of an exercise apparatus, the first support member having at least a first surface, a first side and a second side, the at least first surface of the first support member extending between the first and second sides a predetermined length, and the first support member being connected to a first end of at least one second support member, the at least one second support member extending at least one of substantially transversely and substantially perpendicularly away from the first support member; placing a second end of the at least one second support member of the exercise apparatus on a surface or a floor for performing the one or more plank exercises such that at least one of the at least one second support member provides vertical support to the exercise apparatus; and placing at least one of one or more hands, one or more elbows and one or more forearms of the user on the surface or the floor for performing the one or more plank exercises, wherein the first support member and the at least one second support member are sized and shaped such that the exercise apparatus operates as a device for performing the one or more plank exercises.

[0030] Alternatively, when the one or more base components are used as discussed herein, the step of placing a second end of the at least one second support member of the exercise apparatus on a surface or a floor for performing the one or more plank exercises such that at least one of the at least one second support member provides vertical support to the exercise apparatus may be replaced with the step of placing a portion of the one or more base components on a surface or a floor for performing the one or more plank exercises, where the one or more base components extend from the at least one second support member (e.g., directly therefrom, indirectly from a base element of the at least one second support member, etc.), such that at least one of the at least one second support member, the base element, and/or the one or more base components provide vertical support to the exercise apparatus. In one or more embodiments, at least one of the second support member and the at least one base component may operate to be in contact with the surface or the floor.

[0031] The methods of using the plank exercise device may further comprise at least one of: arranging one or more upper arms of the user substantially transversely, or substantially perpendicularly, to the surface or the floor for performing one or more plank exercises such that the one or more upper arms of the user extend from respective side(s) of the exercise apparatus to permit the user to perform the one or more plank exercises; and operating the plank exercise apparatus to remove at least a portion of the weight of the body of the user from at least one of one or more arms and one or more clavicles/shoulders of the user, thereby reducing or removing stress from at least one of the one or more arms and the one or more clavicles/shoulders of the body. Additionally or alternatively, the method may further comprise disposing a cushion on, or integrating or forming a cushion into, at least first surface of the first support member between the first support member and at least one of the upper portion of the body of the user and the chest of the body of the user, wherein at least one of the cushion, the first support member and at least the second support member comprise at least one of: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, and fiber.

[0032] The methods of manufacturing the exercise device provide a cost-effective, economic manufacturing process (to avoid excessive costs usually associated with manufacturing exercise equipment). A method of manufacturing an exercise apparatus for performing one or more plank exercises is provided, comprising: forming a first support member having at least a first surface, a first side and a second side, the at least first surface of the first support member extending between the first and second sides for a predetermined length by sizing and shaping the first support member to receive, or accommodate, at least an upper portion or a chest of at least one of a mold of a manikin, an anatomical model of a human body and a mold of a human model; forming at least one second support member having a first end and a second end by attaching the first end of the at least one second support member to the first support member and sizing and shaping the at least one second support member based on the at least one of the mold of the manikin, the anatomical model of the human body and the mold of the human model such that the at least one second support member extends at least one of substantially transversely and substantially perpendicularly away for a predetermined distance from the first support member, thereby providing vertical support to the exercise apparatus, the predetermined distance that the at least one second support member extends being selected such that at least one of: (i) one or more elbows or one or more forearms of the manikin or anatomical model of the human body operate to rest on the surface for performing the one or more plank exercises; and (ii) the exercise apparatus operates to permit a user to place at least one of one or more elbows and one or more forearms of the user on at least the surface for the performing one or more plank exercises; and forming one or more contours or indentations on the first support member and the at least one second support member of the plank exercise apparatus, based on one or more contours of at least one portion of the at least one of the manikin, the anatomical model of the human body and the mold of the human model such that: (i) the one or more contours or indentations of the plank exercise apparatus operate to receive at least one corresponding portion of a body of a user of the plank exercise apparatus, the portion including at least one of: a back, a side, an upper portion of a body, a shoulder, a clavicle, a neck, a chin, an arm, a chest, a breast and a pectoral muscle of the user; and (ii) the first support member and the at least one second support member are sized and shaped such that exercise apparatus operates as an apparatus for performing the one or more plank exercises.

[0033] When the one or more exercise apparatuses are made or used without the one or more base components, the second end of the at least one second support member oper-
ates to rest on at least a surface for performing one or more plank exercises, thereby providing the aforementioned vertical support to the one or more exercise apparatuses. Alternatively, when the one or more exercise apparatuses are made or used with the one or more base components, the one or more base components are connected to, and extend a predetermined distance from, at least one of the first support member, the at least two second support member and/or a base element of the at least one second support member, and operate to rest on, and/or contact, at least the surface for performing one or more plank exercises, such that the one or more base components, the base element(s) of the at least one second support member and/or the at least two second support member operate to provide the aforementioned vertical support.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0034] For the purposes of illustrating the various aspects of the invention, wherein like numerals indicate like elements, there are shown in the drawings simplified forms that may be employed, it being understood, however, that the invention is not limited by or to the precise arrangements and instrumentalities shown. To assist those of ordinary skill in the relevant art in making and using the subject matter hereof, reference is made to the appended drawings and figures, wherein:

[0035] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a plank exercise device in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0036] FIG. 2A is a perspective view of the plank exercise device embodiment of FIG. 1 illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0037] FIG. 2B is a front view of the plank exercise device embodiment of FIG. 1 illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0038] FIG. 3 is a top view of the plank exercise device embodiment of FIG. 1 in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0039] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a plank exercise device in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0040] FIG. 5A is a perspective view of the plank exercise device embodiment of FIG. 4 illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0041] FIG. 5B is a front view of the plank exercise device embodiment of FIG. 4 illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0042] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of yet another embodiment of a plank exercise device in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0043] FIG. 7A is a perspective view of the plank exercise device embodiment of FIG. 6 illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0044] FIG. 7B is a front view of the plank exercise device embodiment of FIG. 6 illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0045] FIG. 8A is a perspective view of an additional embodiment of a plank exercise device in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0046] FIG. 8B is a top view of the plank exercise device embodiment of FIG. 8A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0047] FIG. 9A is a perspective view of yet an additional embodiment of a plank exercise device in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0048] FIG. 9B is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 9A illustrating a manikin or an anatomical representation of a human body in a reverse plank position in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0049] FIG. 10A is a front view of a plank exercise device having at least one base component illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0050] FIG. 10B is a perspective view of the plank exercise device of FIG. 10A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0051] FIG. 10C is a side view of the plank exercise device of FIGS. 10A-10B in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0052] FIG. 11A is a front view of another embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least one base component illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0053] FIG. 11B is a perspective view of the plank exercise device of FIG. 11A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0054] FIG. 11C is a side view of the plank exercise device of FIGS. 11A-11B in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0055] FIG. 12A is a front view of another embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least one base component illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0056] FIG. 12B is a perspective view of the plank exercise device of FIG. 12A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0057] FIG. 12C is a side view of the plank exercise device of FIGS. 12A-12B in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0058] FIG. 13A is a front view of another embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least one base component illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0059] FIG. 13B is a perspective view of the plank exercise device of FIG. 13A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0060] FIG. 13C is a side view of the plank exercise device of FIGS. 13A-13B in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0061] FIG. 14A is a front view of another embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least one base component illustrating an individual using the device to perform the plank exercise in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0062] FIG. 14B is a perspective view of the plank exercise device of FIG. 14A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

[0063] FIG. 14C is a side view of the plank exercise device of FIGS. 14A-14B in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;
FIG. 15A is a side view of another embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least one base component in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

FIG. 15B is a perspective view of the plank exercise device of FIG. 15A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

FIG. 16A is a side view of another embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least one base component in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

FIG. 16B is a perspective view of the plank exercise device of FIG. 16A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

FIG. 17A is a side view of another embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least one base component in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

FIG. 17B is a perspective view of the plank exercise device of FIG. 17A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

FIG. 18A is a side view of another embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least one base component in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

FIG. 18B is a perspective view of the plank exercise device of FIG. 18A in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

FIG. 19A is a perspective view of yet another embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least two base components in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention;

FIG. 19B is a perspective view of yet another even further embodiment of a plank exercise device having at least two base components in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

An exercise device/apparatus including a first support member and a second support member is disclosed herein for performing one or more plank exercise routines. A plank exercise (also referred to as an abdominal bridge) is an isometric core exercise that strengthens the core musculature, typically by involving maintaining a difficult position for an extended time period. Such plank exercises, include, but are not limited to, a front plank (e.g., where the user holds his or her body in a push-up position with the weight of the body being placed on the forearms, elbows, hands and/or toes), a side plank (e.g., where the user holds his or her body to one side such that the weight of the body is placed on the toes and only on one forearm, elbow, and/or hand of one of the user’s arms), a reverse plank (e.g., where the user holds his or her body in a reverse push-up position where the user’s back is facing the floor or surface on which the toes and the forearms, elbows and/or hands are placed), etc. The device may be used in homes, gyms, outside, or in any other setting suitable for exercising. The first support member operates to rest against a portion of a user, such as a chest, waist, leg, back, etc., and support the user during such routine(s). The second support member is connected/attached to, and extends substantially transversely away from, the first member and operates to rest on a surface, such as a floor, thereby providing support for the device. The apparatus may be ergonomically designed to include one or more contours, cut-outs, shapes, etc., to comfortably accommodate one or more portions of the body of a user.

Turning now to the details of the figures, FIG. 1 illustrates an apparatus 10 including a first support member 2 having at least a first surface 3, a first side 4 and a second side 5, the at least first surface 3 of the first support member 2 extending between the first 4 and second sides 5 for a predetermined length; and at least one second support member 8 having a first end 9 and a second end 54, the first end 9 of the at least one second support member 8 being attached to the first support member 2, the at least one second support member 8 extending at least one of substantially transversely and substantially perpendicularly away from the first support member 2 and the second end 54 of the at least one second support member 8 operating to rest on at least a surface 20 (e.g., such as, but not limited to, a floor, a gym mat, grass or other terrain suitable to perform one or more plank exercises, etc.) for performing one or more plank exercises, thereby providing vertical support to the exercise apparatus 10. Preferably, the first support member 2 and the at least one second support member 8 are sized and shaped such that exercise apparatus 10 operates as a device for performing the one or more plank exercises. One or more components (e.g., the first support member 2, the second support member 8, the base element 11 (further discussed below), etc.) of the exercise apparatus 10 may be made of less expensive, fewer, or lightweight components, such as, but not limited to, one or more of the following: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, and fiber. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the structure and orientation of the first support member 2 and the at least one second support member 8 with respect to each other may be modified in various ways while providing the same benefits described herein. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the first support member 2 may be connected, or attached to, the second support member 8 using any means known to those skilled in the art, including, but not limited to, gluing, press-fitting, molding, clamping, screwing, latching, etc. Additionally or alternatively, the first support member 2 and the at least one second support member 8 may be releasably connected so that the first support member 2 and the at least one second support member 8 may be connected for use and then disconnected after use, during manufacturing, for storage, for shipment, and/or for any other suitable scenario.

The one or more exercise devices include structural attributes that permit one or more users 30 to operate the devices in such a way that the devices, such as the exercise apparatus 10, operate to remove at least a portion of the weight of the body 21 of the user 30 from at least one of one or more arms 25a, 25b and one or more clavicles 26a, 26b or one or more shoulders 27a, 27b of the user 30, thereby reducing or removing stress from at least one of the one or more arms 25a, 25b and the one or more clavicles 26a, 26b or one or more shoulders 27a, 27b of the body 21 of the user 30. Such reduction and/or removal of stress during the plank exercise routine(s) reduces and/or eliminates the chance for serious injuries to the body 21 of the user 30. As such, the user 30 may work the core musculature (e.g., upper and/or lower body muscle(s), abdominal or stomach muscle(s), lower back muscle(s), hip muscle(s), buttock muscle(s), etc.) of the body 21 by performing traditional basic plank exercises, side plank
exercises, or modified forms of plank exercises (such as, but not limited to, reverse planks) using one or more embodiments of the exercise device, such as the exercise apparatus 10, in accordance with one or more aspects of the present invention. Thus, when the user 30 uses one of the various embodiments of the exercise device, such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, exercise apparatus 100 discussed further below, exercise apparatus 200 discussed further below, exercise apparatus 300 discussed further below, and exercise apparatus 100 discussed further below, to strengthen the core musculature, the user 30 obtains the one or more benefits of adding support to the spine, improving/aiding ideal posture, learning proper form for exercising, gaining strength, reducing injuries related to performing exercise routines that the user 30 is not familiar with, and improving the ability of the user 30 to perform other types of exercises, and not just plank exercises. The user 30 may use the device, such as the exercise apparatus 10, to develop the skills, strength, ability, etc. until such time that the user 30 may perform the one or more exercise routines independently (i.e., without the use of the device).

In one or more embodiments of the invention (best seen in FIGS. 2A-2B, 5A-5B and 7A-7B), the one or more structural characteristics, features and attributes of the one or more exercise devices (e.g., such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, exercise apparatus 100 discussed further below, exercise apparatus 200 discussed further below, exercise apparatus 300 discussed further below, and exercise apparatus 100 discussed further below) permit them to operate to receive an upper portion 28 of a body 21 (such as, but not limited to, a portion of the back of the user 30, a portion of the chest 29 of the user 30, a side portion of the user 30, a portion of the sternum of the user 30, etc.) or a chest 29 of a user 30 on the first support member 2 and to permit the user 30 to place at least one of one or more hands 32a, 32b, one or more elbows 32a, 32b and one or more forearms 33a, 33b of the user 30 on at least the surface 20 (e.g., such as, but not limited to, a floor, a gym mat, grass or other terrain suitable to perform one or more plank exercises, etc.) for the performing one or more plank exercises. Additionally or alternatively, one or more upper arms 24a, 24b of the user 30 may extend from respective sides 4, 5 of the exercise apparatus, such as the exercise apparatus 10, to permit the user 30 to perform the one or more plank exercises.

The first support member 2 of the exercise apparatus (also referred to herein as an exercise device) 10 may further include a third side 7 and a fourth side 6 on opposite sides of the first support member 2, the third 7 and fourth 6 sides extending between the first 4 and second 5 sides. The one or more sides 4, 5, 6, 7 of the first support member 2, and/or the first support member 2, may include one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 for receiving one or more portions of the body 21 of the user 30 of the exercise apparatus 10. The one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 may be included to provide a more ergonomic structure for the exercise device, such as the exercise apparatus 10, thereby promoting the comfort of the user 30 and the ease of use. Additionally, the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 can promote the reduction and/or elimination of serious injuries due to the improved comfort and ideal fit of the exercise device, such as the exercise apparatus 10.

The one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 of the first support member 2 may include at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation 16, 17 disposed on, and in communication with, at least one of the first side 4 and the second side 5 of the first support member 2 where the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation 16, 17 operates to receive at least one of a portion of at least one clavicle 26a, 26b, a portion of at least one shoulder 27a, 27b and a portion of at least one arm 25a, 25b of the user 30. In one or more embodiments, the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 of the first support member 2 may include two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations 16, 17, the first clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation 16 being disposed on, and in communication with, the first side 4 of the first support member 2 and the second clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation 17 being disposed on, and in communication with, the second side 5 of the first support member 2. The two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations 16, 17 may operate to receive each at least one of at least one clavicle 26a, 26b, at least one shoulder 27a, 27b and at least one arm 25a, 25b of the user 30. Additionally or alternatively, the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 of the first support member 2 may include one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations 16, 17 disposed on, and in communication with, the third side 7 of the first support member 2, the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations 16, 17 operating to receive at least one of a portion of at least one pectoral muscle and a portion of at least one breast of the user 30. Additionally or alternatively, the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 of the first support member 2 may include at least one chest 29 and/or upper body 28 (or upper portion 28, such as, but not limited to, the back of the user 30, a side portion of the user 30, the sternum of the user 30, etc.) contour or indentation 63 (best seen in FIGS. 1, 4, 6 and 9A-9B) disposed on, and in communication with, the at least first surface 3 of the first support member 2, the at least one chest and/or upper body contour or indentation 63 operating to receive at least one of a portion of a chest 29, a portion of an upper body and a portion of the upper portion 28 (such as, but not limited to, a portion of the back of the user 30, a side portion of the user 30, a portion of the sternum of the user 30, etc.) of the user 30. In the one or more embodiments, additionally or alternatively, the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 of the first support member 2 may further include at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation 13 disposed on, and in communication, the fourth side 6 of the first support member 2, the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation 13 operating to receive at least one of a portion of a neck and a portion of a chin of the user 30. The one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 may be any geometrical shape, including, but not limited to, circular, oval, rectangular, grooved, concave, convex, semi-circular, etc.

Because one or more embodiments of the invention, such as the exercise apparatus 10, exercise apparatus 100, exercise apparatus 200, exercise apparatus 10, etc., are preferably sized and shaped for permitting the user 30 to perform the one or more plank exercises, the corresponding dimensions for one or more of the first support member 2, the at least one second support member 8 and the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 may be selected to achieve a proper structural arrangement between the one or more components, such as, but not limited to, the first support member.
2, the at least one second support member 8 and the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63, of the device, such as the exercise apparatus 10. Preferably, the relationship between the size and shape of the first support member 2 and the at least one second support member 8 permits the user 30 to perform the one or more plank exercises using the device, such as exercise apparatus 10, exercise apparatus 100, exercise apparatus 200, exercise apparatus 300, exercise apparatus 10', etc., while the device vertically and horizontally supports the weight of the user 30, thereby aiding and assisting the user 30 during the one or more exercise routines.

[0081] The device may provide such support during any type of plank exercise, such as, but not limited to, side plank exercises (e.g., where only one hand 32a, 32b, a portion of one hand 32a, 32b, and/or a portion, such as, but not limited to a forearm 23a, 23b, an elbow 22a, 22b, etc., of one arm 25a, 25b is placed on the surface or floor 20; where at least one of the upper arms 24a, 24b extends substantially transversely, or substantially perpendicularly, from the apparatus, such as apparatus 10; where at least one of the one or more upper arms 24a, 24b extend substantially transversely, or substantially perpendicularly, towards the surface or floor 20, etc.), basic or advanced plank exercises (e.g., where one or more hands 32a, 32b of the user 30, a portion of the one or more hands 32a, 32b of the user 30, and/or a portion, such as, but not limited to a forearm 23a, 23b, an elbow 22a, 22b, etc., of each arm 25a, 25b of the user 30 is placed on the surface or floor 20 on which the toes and the forearms 23a, 23b, elbows 22a, 22b and/or hands 32a, 32b are placed; where the one or more upper arms 24a, 24b extend substantially transversely, or substantially perpendicularly, from the apparatus, such as apparatus 10; where the one or more upper arms 24a, 24b of the user 30 extend substantially transversely, or substantially perpendicularly, towards the surface or floor 20, etc.), reverse plank exercises (e.g., where the user holds his or her body in a reverse push-up position where the user’s back is facing the floor or surface 20 on which the heels of the feet and the forearms 23a, 23b, elbows 22a, 22b and/or hands 32a, 32b are placed), etc. For example, the first support member 2 may be sized and shaped based on one or more measurements or statistics, such as, but not limited to, average measurements, one or more predetermined measurements, distance between each of arms 25a, 25b, etc., of chest 29 size for the user 30 or a group of the users 30.

[0082] As best seen in FIGS. 3, 4, 6 and 8A, at least one of a length, L', of the first side 4 of the first support member 2 and a length, L", of the second side 5 of the first support member 2 may be at least one of: about 1 inch to about 19 inches; about 1 inch to about 20 inches; about zero inches to about 19 inches, and about zero inches to about 20 inches. Additionally or alternatively, as best seen in FIGS. 3, 4, 6 and 8A, at least one of a length, L", of the third side 7 of the first support member 2 and a length, L", of the fourth side 8 of the first support member 2 may be at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; and about 3 inches to about 19 inches. Additionally or alternatively, as best seen in FIGS. 1, 4, 6 and 8A, at least one of a length, L", a width, W, a thickness and a depth of the at least one second support member element may be at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; and about 3 inches to about 19 inches, and/or at least one of a height, H, of the at least one second support member 8 and a length of the at least one second support member 8 may be about 4 inches to about 25 inches. Preferably, a height, H, of the exercise device/apparatus, such as exercise apparatus 10, exercise apparatus 100, exercise apparatus 200, exercise apparatus 300, exercise apparatus 10', etc., may be about 4 inches to about 25 inches.

[0083] The same or similar statistics or measurements may be employed when designing the size, shape, contours, etc. of the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63. Additionally or alternatively, the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 may be custom-shaped, sized, contoured, sloped, tapered, etc. to accommodate each of the users 30, especially since many users 30 have different body types, shapes, sizes, etc. For example, in at least one embodiment (best seen in FIGS. 6 and 9A-9D), at least one of a height, H, of the chest and/or upper body (e.g., back, sternum, etc.) contour or indentation 63 of the first support member 2 and/or a depth, D, of the chest and/or upper body contour or indentation 63 of the first support member 2 may be at least one of: about zero inches to about 2 inches; and about zero inches to about 4 inches. In one or more embodiments, the height and the depth of the chest and/or upper body contour or indentation 63 of the first support member 2 may refer to the same dimension. Additionally or alternatively (as best seen in FIGS. 3, 4, 8A and 8B), at least one of a depth, D", of at least one of a depth, D", of the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations 16, 17 and a depth, D", of the clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations 16, 17 may be at least one of: about zero inches to about 5 inches; about zero inches to about 5 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 5 inches where the depth defines a radius thereof. Additionally or alternatively (as best seen in FIGS. 3, 4 and 8), a depth, D", of the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation 13 may be at least one of: about zero inches to about 4 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 4 inches at the deepest location thereof. As best seen in FIG. 3, a depth, D", of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations 12 may be at least one of: about zero inches to about 4 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 2 inches at the deepest location thereof. When one or more embodiments of the invention include a base element 11 (further discussed below), at least one of a length, a width and a diameter of the base element 11 may be at least one of: about 3 inches to about 36 inches.

[0084] In one or more embodiments of the invention (as best seen in FIGS. 1, 3-4, 6 and 8A-8B), the device, such as, but not limited to, exercise apparatus 10, exercise apparatus 100, exercise apparatus 200, exercise apparatus 300, exercise apparatus 10', etc., may further include a cushioning element 40 and/or, or as part of (e.g., the first surface 3 of the first support member 2 may act as the cushion 40 when made of appropriate material, such as a soft material, resilient material or other appropriate material discussed below; the first support member 2 may act as the cushion 40 when including appropriate material, such as a soft material, resilient material or other appropriate material discussed below; a portion of the first support member 2 may comprise the cushion 40; etc.) may be, the at least first surface 3 of the first support member 2. Preferably, the cushion 40 operates to receive at least one of a portion of the upper portion 28 (e.g., a chest 29, a back, a sternum, a side portion of the user 30, etc.) of the user 30 and a portion of the chest 29 of the user 30 thereon. Like the first support member 2 and/or the at least one second support member 8 as discussed above, the cushion 40 may comprise at least one of: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer,
foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, and fiber.

[0085] As best seen in FIGS. 1-3, one or more embodiments of the invention may include one or more additional features. For example, the first support member 2 may further include a second surface 14 on the opposite side of the at least first surface 3 such that the at least first surface 3 and the second surface 14 are facing away from each other. The second surface 14 may be attached to the first end 9 of the at least one second support member 8 such that the at least one second support member 8 extends away therefrom. The at least one second support member 8 may: (i) at least one of slope and taper inwardly from the first end 9 of the at least one second support member 8 to a predetermined location 15 (best seen in FIG. 1) along at least one of the length and the height of the at least one second support member 8; and (ii) then at least one of slope and taper outwardly from the predetermined location 15 to the second end 54 of the at least one second support member 8.

[0086] Additionally or alternatively (as best seen in FIGS. 1-3), the device, such as the exercise apparatus 10, may further include a base element 11 attached to the second end 54 of the at least one second support member 8. The base element 11 may be sized and shaped such that the base element 11 operates to add horizontal support or stability to the exercise apparatus, such as the apparatus 10. As discussed above, the base element 11 may: (i) have at least one of a length, a width and a diameter of the base element 11 be at least one of: about 3 inches to about 36 inches; and (ii) include at least one of: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, and fiber. The base element 11 may at least one of: (i) extend radially in all directions from the second end 54 of the at least one second support member 8 to add the horizontal support or stability; (ii) extend away in one or more directions for one or more predetermined distances from the second end 54 of the at least one second support member 8 to add the horizontal support or stability; and (ii) be sized and shaped to be at least one of: a circle, a square, a rectangle, an oval or any other size and shape known to those skilled in the art suitable for providing the horizontal support or stability.

[0087] As shown in FIGS. 9A-9B, one or more devices, such as apparatus 10', may include the at least one second support member 8 having at least one of: (i) two or more support members 8; and (ii) three support members 8. While this structural feature is not a requirement, additional support members 8 may be employed when accommodating additional weight of a user 30 and/or for removing additional stress and/or weight, or evenly distributing or spreading out the stress and/or weight, from the hands 32a, 32b, forearms 23a, 23b, elbows 22a, 22b, arms 25a, 25b, etc. of the user 30. As best seen in FIG. 9B, a manikin or anatomical representation of a human body 21 may be placed on the exercise apparatus 10' to form one or more features of the exercise apparatus 10' (for the method of manufacturing as further discussed herein below) and/or to illustrate (in a diagrammatic fashion) how a user 30 may use the exercise apparatus 10' to perform one or more plank exercises (showing a reverse plank position in FIG. 9B).

[0088] As best seen in FIGS. 4-5B, the device, such as the exercise apparatus 100, may have at least one second support member 8 having the first end 9 thereof including a surface attached to the first support member 2. The surface of the first end 9 and/or the first end 9 of the at least one second support member 8 may have substantially the same, or the same, shape or surface area as the at least first surface 3 of the first support member 2 such that the at least one second support member 8 may include the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 and the second support member 8 and the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 of the second support member 8 may extend substantially transversely, or substantially perpendicularly away, from the first support member 2 for a predetermined distance. As best seen in FIG. 4, the exercise apparatus 100 may include the cushion 40 as described above. In one or more embodiments, at least one of the first support member 2, the cushion 40 and the at least one second support member 8 may be integral.

[0089] As best seen in FIGS. 6-7B, the device, such as the exercise apparatus 200, may have at least one second support member 8 where the first end 9 of the at least one second support member 8 is attached to the first support member 2 along a perimeter of the first support member 2 such that the at least second support member 8 has a first side 41, a second side 51, a third side 71 and a fourth side 61. The sides 41, 51, 61, and 71 may include the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 in any orientation or arrangement described herein with respect to the exercise apparatus 200 or any other device, such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, the exercise apparatus 100, the exercise apparatus 300, the exercise apparatus 10', etc. The first side 41 of the at least one second support member 8 may extend substantially transversely or substantially perpendicularly away from the first side 4 of the first support member 2. The second side 51 of the at least one second support member 8 may extend substantially transversely or substantially perpendicularly away from the second side 5 of the first support member 2. The third side 71 of the at least second support member 8 may be at least one of sloped and tapering away from the third side 7 of the first support member 2, and/or the fourth side 61 of the at least second support member 8 may be at least one of sloped and tapering away from the fourth side 6 of the first support member 2. Alternatively, the third side 71 and the fourth side 61 may extend substantially transversely or substantially perpendicularly away from the first support member 2. As best seen in FIG. 6, the exercise apparatus 200 may include the cushion 40 as described above. In one or more embodiments, at least one of the first support member 2, the cushion 40 and the at least one second support member 8 may be integral.

[0090] Now turning to FIGS. 8A-8B, the device, such as the exercise apparatus 300, may have at least one second support member 8 where the first end 9 of the at least one second support member 8 is attached to the first support member 2 along a perimeter of the first support member 2 such that the at least one second support member 8 has a first side 41, a second side 51, a third side 71 and a fourth side 61. The sides 41, 51, 61, and 71 may include the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 in any orientation or arrangement described herein with respect to the exercise apparatus
operate to adjust one or more dimensions of the device. For example, the adjustment elements may adjust at least one of: (i) the height of the device and/or of the at least one second support member; and (ii) the length of the first support member.

As further illustrated in FIGS. 10A-18B and 19B, additional embodiments of the present invention, or the aforementioned embodiments, such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc., may further include a base component 50 that adds a predetermined amount of instability to the device. When not using the base component 50, one or more embodiments of the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc., may add and/or provide instability (as best seen in FIG. 19A). Because the base component 50 adds a predetermined amount of instability to the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc., the user 30 works one or more areas of musculature, particularly the core musculature, even harder to keep the exercise apparatus balanced while performing the one or more routines.

Such instability may be particularly useful after the users 30 get used to the aforementioned exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. (e.g., one or more muscles of the users 30 normalize or strengthens to the point where the user 30 may not be relying on the apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. for support and/or stability) when not using the base component 50 (see e.g., FIGS. 1-93). Thus, when the user 30 has trained and built enough muscle strength to no longer rely on one or more of the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. that do not employ the base component 50 (or that use a plurality of second support members 8 as shown in FIGS. 9A-93), the user 30 still may be unable to perform the one or more exercise routines without a lesser degree of assistance and/or stability, or may prefer or wish to still use some form or level of assistance and/or stability (i.e., use more assistance and/or stability than the user 30 would otherwise have without using the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc., at all).

Additionally or alternatively, even when the user 30 may still obtain the benefit, and/or improve muscle strength, using an exercise apparatus without the base component 50, perhaps the user 30 wants to add the base component 50 (or use fewer second support members 8 of the plurality of the second support members 8) regardless in order to increase the difficulty of the workout routine(s) (although the user 30 may wish to check with his/her doctor to make sure the workout routine is safe, and may wish to take a break or stop the workout routine(s) if the user 30 feels, or his/her doctor advises, that any particular workout routine or any level of difficulty is too hard or unsafe for the user 30). If the user 30 finds that the increased difficulty is too advanced, the user 30 may always remove the base component 50 from, or replace the removed second support member(s) 8 of the plurality of the second support members 8 to (as aforementioned and as further discussed below; see e.g., FIG. 19A), the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc., to reduce the difficulty of the one or more routines.

Alternatively, the user 30 may attach the base component 50 to the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the base component 50 may be connected, or attached to, the one or more exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. using any means known to those skilled in the art, including, but not limited to, gluing, press-fitting, molding, clamping, screwing, latching, etc.
Additionally or alternatively, the base component 50 and the one or more exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. may be releasably connected or re-attached to each other, and readily disconnected from each other, by any means known to those skilled in the art as discussed above, e.g., screwing and/ or unscrewing, clamping and/or unclamping, tightening and/ or un-tightening, snap-fitting, friction-fitting, removing, etc., such that the one or more base components 50 may be connected for use and then disconnected after use, during manufacturing, for storage, for shipment, and/or for any other suitable scenario. As such, the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. may be used with or without the one or more base components 50. Alternatively, the one or more base components 50 may be built into, made integral with, and/or permanently connected to the one or more exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. Preferably, when the user 30 is using the one or more exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. including the one or more base components 50, the one or more base components 50 operate to contact or be disposed on the surface 20 on which the user 30 is exercising. When the user 30 is no longer using the one or more exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. and/ or when the one or more exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. are in a rest position, at least one of (i) the one or more base components 50 and (ii) a portion of the at least one second support element 8 (e.g., the second end 54 of the at least one second support element 8) operates to contact the surface 20 on which the user 30 is exercising.

The base component 50 may be made of the same or similar less expensive, fewer, or lightweight materials as discussed above for the other components of the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc., such as, but not limited to, one or more of the following: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that is to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, fiber, any combination of the foregoing, etc. Preferably, the base component 50 comprises any desired material that permits the base component 50 to operate as described herein and aid, or provide, the predetermined amount of instability.

Preferably, the base component 50 is sized and shaped such that the base component 50 operates to reduce the amount of contact (e.g., point(s) of contact, line of contact, surface area of contact, etc.) between the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. and a surface 20 on which the user 30 is exercising as compared to the amount of contact that the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. would otherwise have with the surface 20 when not including the base component 50 therein or thereon, thereby increasing or creating the aforementioned instability and increasing the difficulty of performing the one or more exercise routines, such as the plank exercise(s). The user 30 may interchange, exchange or switch different types of base components 50 with an already installed base component 50 in order to have varying degrees of instability. For example, in at least one exercise routine, the base component 50 having only a point of contact with the surface 20 on which the user 30 is exercising may provide the most instability, thereby permitting the user 30 to get the most effective workout when using the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. When the user 30 wishes to lower the degree of difficulty, the user 30 may select the base component 50 having a line of contact or a surface area of contact with the surface 20 on which the user 30 is exercising or may simply stop using the base component 50 as aforementioned.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the structure and orientation of the base component 50 may be modified in various ways while providing the benefits described herein. For example, the base component 50 may be sized and shaped to have different geometric shapes, such as, but not limited to, a substantially circular base, a circular base, a substantially semi-circular base, a semi-circular base, a point or pointed base (e.g., conical or substantially conical in shape), a post, pillar, or bar base, a spring base, etc., as further discussed herein. Preferably, in order to increase the instability as discussed above, the base component 50 has a width, length, radius and/or diameter that is shorter than the width, length, radius and/or diameter of the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. Alternatively, the width, length, radius and/or diameter of the base component 50 may initially be the same or substantially the same size as the width, length, radius and/or diameter of the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc., the base element(s) 11 of the second support member(s) 8, and/or the second support member 8 of the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. Alternatively, the width, length, radius and/or diameter of the base component 50 may initially be the same or substantially the same size as the width, length, radius and/or diameter of the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc., the base element(s) 11 of the second support member(s) 8, and/or the second support member 8 of the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. and then become smaller at a predetermined location on the base component 50, thereby operating to increase the instability of the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. The base component 50 may be sized and shaped depending on the desires, needs or requirements of the user 30 of the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. For example, as shown in FIGS. 10A-11C and 15A-15B, the base component 50 may include a substantially rounded, sloped or convex surface to provide the desired level of instability, and, additionally or alternatively, as best seen in FIGS. 12A-13C, 16A-163 and 18A-18B and 19B, the base component 50 may include a substantially flat, flat, or concave surface and/or one or more points to provide the desired level of instability. As seen in FIGS. 14A-14C and 17A-17B, the base component 50 may be alternatively sized and shaped to resemble a spring, coil or spring-like structure as discussed further below.
ovular, semi-ovular, substantially semi-circular or semi-circular base component 50 has a diameter and/or radius that is shorter than the width and/or length (and/or diameter and/or radius for other exercise apparatuses having a second support member 8 that includes such dimensions) of the second support member 8, thereby decreasing the amount of contact with the surface 20 on which the user 30 may exercise. Additionally or alternatively, the perimeter of the substantially semi-ovular, semi-ovular, substantially semi-circular or semi-circular base component 50 may be connected to, and extend from, the perimeter of the second support member 8 of the exercise apparatus 200. Alternatively, the perimeter of the substantially semi-ovular, semi-ovular, substantially semi-circular or semi-circular base component 50 may be connected to, and extend from, the bottom of the second support member 8 of the exercise apparatus 200, but from a portion of the second support member 8 that is a predetermined distance inward (e.g., and away from) from the perimeter of the second support member 8 of the exercise apparatus 200.

[0103] As best seen in FIGS. 12A-12C, the base component 50 may be substantially sized and shaped such that the portion of the base component 50 that operates to contact the surface 20 on which the user 30 exercises comprises a point. For example, the base component 50 may be substantially conical or conical, and may extend from the perimeter of the second support member 8 of the exercise apparatus 200 or may extend from a portion of the base of the second support member 8 located at a predetermined distance inwardly and away from the perimeter of the second support member 8. The base component 50 preferably is sized and shaped such that the substantially conical or conical base component 50 has a length, width, diameter and/or radius that is shorter than the width and/or length (and/or diameter and/or radius for other exercise apparatuses having a second support member 8 that includes such dimensions) of the second support member 8, thereby decreasing the amount of contact with the surface 20.

[0104] As best seen in FIGS. 13A-13C, the base component 50 may be substantially sized and shaped such that the portion of the base component 50 that operates to contact the surface 20 on which the user 30 exercises comprises an area (i.e., has a surface area). For example, the base component 50 may be substantially bar, pillar or post shaped or bar, pillar or post shaped. The base component 50 preferably is sized and shaped such that the substantially bar, pillar or post shaped or bar, pillar or post shaped base component 50 has a length, width, diameter and/or radius that is shorter than the width and/or length (and/or diameter and/or radius for other exercise apparatuses having a second support member 8 that includes such dimensions) of the second support member 8, thereby decreasing the amount of contact with the surface 20 on which the user 30 may exercise. Preferably, the substantially bar, pillar or post shaped or bar, pillar or post shaped base component 50 has a first surface that is connected to the second support member 8 at a predetermined distance inwardly and away from the perimeter of the second support member 8, extends from the second support member 8 for a predetermined distance, and has at least a second surface that operates to contact and/or be disposed on, or adjacent to, the surface 20 on which the user 30 exercises or will exercise.

[0105] Additionally or alternatively, as best seen in FIGS. 14A-14C, the base component 50 may comprise a spring, coil, and/or a spring-like device to provide a greater level of instability. The base component 50 preferably is sized and shaped such that the spring-shaped or substantially spring-like base component 50 has a length, width, diameter and/or radius that is shorter than the width and/or length (and/or diameter and/or radius for other exercise apparatuses having a second support member 8 that includes such dimensions) of the second support member 8, thereby decreasing the amount of contact with the surface 20 on which the user 30 may exercise. Preferably, the spring-shaped or substantially spring-like base component 50 has a first portion that is connected to the second support member 8 at a predetermined distance inwardly and away from the perimeter of the second support member 8, extends from the second support member 8 for a predetermined distance, and has at least a second portion that operates to contact the surface 20 on which the user 30 exercises or will exercise.

[0106] The different shapes and sizes of the base component 50 as discussed above may be employed in the same or similar fashion with any of the other exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. disclosed herein. For example, as best seen in FIGS. 15A-15B, 16A-16B, 17A-17B, and 18A-18B, the substantially semi-circular or semi-circular base component 50, the substantially conical or conical base component 50, the spring-shaped, coil, or spring-like base component 50, and/or the substantially bar, pillar or post shaped or bar, pillar or post shaped base component 50, respectively, may be used with the exercise apparatus 10 as disclosed herein (best seen in FIGS. 1-2B). The base component 50 may be attached to, or disposed on, at least one of: a base element 11 (best seen in FIGS. 15A-18B), the at least one second support member 8 (best seen in FIGS. 10A-14C), the bottom portion 54 of the at least one second support member 8 (best seen in FIGS. 10A-14C), and the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc.

[0107] Now turning to the details of FIG. 19A, the exercise apparatus 10' may achieve the desired instability without using the at least one base component 50 when the exercise apparatus 10' originally had a plurality of second support members 8 and/or one or more base element(s) 11 (best seen in FIGS. 9A-9B), and one or more of the second support members 8 and/or one or more of the base element(s) 11 are removed (best seen in FIG. 19A). Preferably, at least one second support member 8 remains when removing one or more second support members 8. The exercise apparatus 10' may simply be provided or manufactured with only one second support member 8 that does not include a base element 11 (see e.g., FIG. 19A). Indeed, as described above, the base element(s) 11 operate to add stability to the exercise apparatus 10' whereas the base component(s) 50 operate to remove stability and/or add instability to the exercise apparatus 10'. In such a manner, the user 30 may have a plurality of options for adjusting the instability settings of the one or more exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. to achieve the predetermined instability for exercising.

[0108] Additionally or alternatively, as best seen in FIG. 19B, when provided with an exercise apparatus with only one second support member 8 that does not include a base element 11 or when provided with the exercise apparatus 10' as seen in FIGS. 9A-9B (and then removing one or two of the second support members 8 and one or more of the base elements 11), one or more of the spring-shaped, coil or spring-like base components 50 may be provided on the apparatus initially or may be added as desired. As shown in FIG. 19B, the exercise apparatus 10' may include two spring-shaped, coil or spring-like base components 50 disposed on opposite ends of the first support member 2 thereof and extending at least one of transversely, perpendicularly and substantially perpendicularly
away from the first support member 2 thereof such that the
two spring-shaped, coil or spring-like base components 50
operate to communicate with the surface 20 on which the user
30 exercises or will exercise. Depending on the instability
needs of the user 30, the base components 50 may be sized
and shaped to be connected to, and extend from, a second
support member 8, which may be sized and shaped appropri-
ately such that the dimensions (e.g., length, height, etc.) of
the second support member 8 and the base components 50 permit
the user to perform the one or more workout routines, such as,
but not limited to, the one or more plank exercises, as dis-
cussed herein.

[0109] In accordance with one or more aspects of the
present invention, method(s) of performing one or more plank
exercises are provided including: (i) placing at least one of
a portion of a chest 29 and a portion of an upper body 28 of a
user 30 on a first support member 2 of an exercise apparatus
(such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, the
exercise apparatus 100, the exercise apparatus 200, the exer-
cise apparatus 300, the exercise apparatus 10', etc.), the first
support member 2 having at least a first surface 3, a first side
4 and a second side 5, the at least first surface 3 of the first
support member 2 extending between the first and second
sides 4,5 at a predetermined length, and the first support mem-
ber 2 being connected to a first end 9 of at least one second
support member 8, the at least one second support member 8
extending at least one of substantially transversely and sub-
stantially perpendicularly away from the first support mem-
ber 2; (ii) placing a second end 54 of the at least one second
support member 8 of the exercise apparatus (such as, but not
limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, the exercise apparatus
100, the exercise apparatus 200, the exercise apparatus 300,
the exercise apparatus 10', etc.) on a surface or a floor 20 for
performing the one or more plank exercises such that the at
least one second support member 8 provides vertical support
to the body 21 of the user 30. The cushion 40 may incorporate
one or more features of the cushions 40 as described herein.

[0110] Additionally or alternatively, when at least one of
the at least one second support members 8 operates to be
placed on the surface or the floor 20 and where the one or
more base components 50 are connected to, and extend away
from, the first support member 2, the method may still include
the step of placing the at least one second support member 8
on the floor or the surface 20, and may further comprise the
step of placing a portion of the one or more base components
50 on the floor or the surface 20 for performing the one or
more plank exercises such that the at least one second support
member 8 provides vertical support to the exercise apparatus
10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. and the one or more base compo-
nents 50 operate to add instability to, or create instability of,
the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc.

[0111] Additionally or alternatively, where at least one of
the at least one second support members 8 operates to be
placed on the surface or the floor 20 and where the one or
more base components 50 are connected to, and extend away
from, the first support member 2, the method may still include
the step of placing the at least one second support member 8
on the surface or the floor 20 for performing the one or
more plank exercises such that the at least one second support
member 8 provides vertical support to the exercise apparatus
10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. and the one or more base compo-
nents 50 operate to add instability to, or create instability of,
the exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc.

[0112] As part of learning and using that proper form, the
method(s) may further include arranging one or more upper
arms 24a, 24b of the user 30 substantially transversely, or
substantially perpendicularly, to the surface or the floor 20
for performing one or more plank exercises such that the one
or more upper arms 24a, 24b of the user extend from respective
side(s) 4, 5 of the exercise apparatus (such as, but not limited
to, the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc.)
upon the floor 20 to perform one or more plank exercises.
Alternatively or additionally, the user 30 may operate the
plank exercise apparatus (such as, but not limited to, the
exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc.) to remove
at least a portion of the weight of the body 21 of the user 30
at least one of one or more hands 32a, 32b, one or more arms
25a, 25b and one or more clavicles 26a, 26b and/or shoulders
27a, 27b of the user 30, thereby reducing or removing stress
from at least one of one or more hands 32a, 32b, the one or
more arms 25a, 25b and the one or more clavicles 26a, 26b
and/or shoulders 27a, 27b of the body 21 of the user 30.

[0113] One or more features, elements, aspects, etc. of the
device(s)/invention(s) (such as, but not limited to, the, exer-
cise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc.) as discussed
herein may be employed when practicing the method(s) of
using the invention.

[0114] The method(s) may further include disposing a
plank 40 on, or integrating or forming a cushion 40 into, the
at least first surface 3 of the first support member 2 between
the first support member 2 and at least one of the upper
portion 28 of the body 21 of the user 30 and the chest 29 of the
body 21 of the user 30. The cushion 40 may incorporate one
or more features of the cushions 40 as described herein.
Additionally, a method of manufacturing an exercise apparatus (such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc.) for performing one or more plank exercises is provided herein, the method comprising: (i) forming a first support member 2 having at least a first surface 3, a first side 4 and a second side 5, the at least first surface 3 of the first support member 2 extending between the first and second sides 4, 5 for a predetermined length by sizing and shaping the first support member 2 to receive, or accommodate, at least an upper portion 28 or a chest 29 of at least one of a mold of a manikin, an anatomical model of a human body 21 and a mold of a human model; (ii) forming at least one second support member 8 having a first end 9 and a second end 54 by attaching the first end 9 of the at least one second support member 8 to the first support member 2 and sizing and shaping the at least one second support member 8 based on the mold of the at least one of the manikin, the anatomical model of the human body 21 and the mold of the human model such that the at least one second support member 8 extends at least one of substantially transversely and substantially perpendicularly away for a predetermined distance from the first support member 2, thereby providing vertical support to the exercise apparatus (such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc.). Additionally or alternatively, the at least one of the manikin or the anatomical model of a human body 21 or an actual person may be used to create the mold (e.g., similar to the embodiment shown in FIGS. 8A-8B) by creating a cast mold from direct contact with the manikin, the anatomical model of the human body 21 and/or the actual person, and then the mold may be used to create the exercise apparatus accordingly.

When the one or more exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. are made or used without the one or more base components 50, the second end 54 of the at least one second support member 8 operates to rest on at least a surface 20 for performing one or more plank exercises, thereby providing the aforementioned vertical support to the one or more exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. Alternatively, when the one or more exercise apparatuses 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. are made or used with the one or more base components 50, the one or more base components 50 extend a predetermined distance (e.g., from the first support member 2, the second support member 8, the base element(s) 11, etc.) and operate to rest on, contact, and/or communicate with at least the surface 20 for performing one or more plank exercises, thereby providing the aforementioned vertical support.

The predetermined distance that the at least one second support member 8 extends and/or the predetermined distance that the one or more base components 50 extend may be selected such that at least one of: (i) one or more hands 32a, 32b, one or more elbows 22a, 22b or one or more forearms 23a, 23b of the at least one of the manikin, the anatomical model of the human body 21 and the mold of the human model operate to rest on the surface 20 for performing the one or more plank exercises; and (ii) the exercise apparatus (such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, the exercise apparatus 100, the exercise apparatus 200, the exercise apparatus 300, the exercise apparatus 10', etc.) operates to permit a user 30 to place at least one of one or more hands 32a, 32b, one or more elbows 22a, 22b and one or more forearms 23a, 23b of the user 30 on at least the surface 20 for performing one or more plank exercises. When an exercise apparatus 10, 100, 200, 300, 10', etc. employ one or more base elements 11, the distance that the one or more base elements 11 extend may be considered to determine the predetermined distances for the at least one second support member 8 and/or the one or more base components 50.

The method may further include forming one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 on the first support member 2 and the at least one second support member 8 of the plank exercise apparatus (such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, the exercise apparatus 100, the exercise apparatus 200, the exercise apparatus 300, the exercise apparatus 10', etc.), based on one or more contours of at least one portion of the at least one of the manikin, the anatomical model of the human body 21 and the mold of the human model such that: (i) the one or more contours or indentations 12, 13, 16, 17, 63 of the plank exercise apparatus (such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, the exercise apparatus 100, the exercise apparatus 200, the exercise apparatus 300, the exercise apparatus 10', etc.) operate to receive at least one corresponding portion of a body of a user 30 of the plank exercise apparatus (such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, the exercise apparatus 100, the exercise apparatus 200, the exercise apparatus 300, the exercise apparatus 10', etc.), the portion including at least one of: a back, an upper portion 28, a shoulder 27a, 27b, a clavicle 26a, 26b, a neck, an arm 25a, 25b, a chest 29, a breast and a pectoral muscle of the user 30; and (ii) the first support member 2 and the at least one second support member 8 are sized and shaped such that exercise apparatus (such as, but not limited to, the exercise apparatus 10, the exercise apparatus 100, the exercise apparatus 200, the exercise apparatus 300, the exercise apparatus 10', etc.) operates as an apparatus for performing the one or more plank exercises.

Although the invention herein has been described with reference to particular embodiments, it is to be understood that these embodiments are merely illustrative of the principles and applications of the present invention. It is therefore to be understood that numerous modifications may be made to the illustrative embodiments and that other arrangements may be devised without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

1. An exercise apparatus for performing one or more plank exercises, the apparatus comprising:

- a first support member having at least a first surface, a first side and a second side, the at least first surface of the first support member extending between the first and second sides for a predetermined length;
- at least one second support member having a first and second end, the first end of the at least one second support member being connected to the first support member, the at least one second support member extending at least one of substantially transversely and substantially perpendicularly away from the first support member and the at least one second support member operating to provide vertical support to the exercise apparatus; and
- at least one base component having a first end and a second end, the first end of the at least one base component being attached, or releasably connected, to at least one of the first support member and the at least one second support member, the at least one base component extending away from the first support member and being sized and shaped to at least one of provide, create and add a predetermined amount of instability to the exercise
apparatus, thereby increasing the difficulty of performing the one or more plank exercises, wherein:

(i) the first support member, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component are sized and shaped such that the exercise apparatus operates as a device for performing one or more plank exercises; and
(ii) at least one of the second end of the at least one second support member and the second end of the at least one base component operate to at least one of rest on, contact and communicate with at least a surface for performing one or more plank exercises.

2. The exercise apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one of:

the exercise apparatus operates to receive an upper portion of a body of a user on the first support member and to permit the user to place at least one of one or more hands, one or more elbows and one or more forearms of the user on at least the surface for performing one or more plank exercises;
one or more upper arms of the user: (i) are substantially transverse, or substantially perpendicular, to at least the surface for performing the one or more plank exercises; and (ii) extend from respective sides of the exercise apparatus to permit the user to perform the one or more plank exercises;
the exercise apparatus operates to remove at least a portion of the weight of the body of the user from at least one of one or more hands, one or more arms and one or more clavicles and/or shoulders of the user, thereby reducing or removing stress from at least one of the one or more hands, the one or more arms and the one or more clavicles and/or shoulders of the body;
the at least one base component is sized and shaped such that the at least one base component reduces the amount of contact between the exercise apparatus and the surface on which the user is exercising as compared to the amount of contact that the exercise apparatus would otherwise have with the surface when not including the at least one base component therein or thereon, thereby operating to provide, create or add the predetermined amount of instability;
the second end of the at least one base component operates to provide at least one of a surface of contact, a line of contact and a point of contact with the surface on which the user is exercising;
the second end of the at least one base component comprises at least one of: a rounded surface, a point or pointed surface, a flat or substantially flat surface, and a spring/coil or spring-like structure;
the shape of the at least one base component is at least one of: substantially a circle, a circle, substantially a semi-circle, a semi-circle, substantially a cone, a cone, substantially a pillar, a pillar, substantially a post, a post, a spring, and substantially a spring; and
the first end of the at least one base component is attached to at least one of the first support member and the at least one second support member along a perimeter thereof such that the at least one base component has one or more sides, the one or more sides of the at least one base component being sloped and tapering away from the at least one of the first support member and the at least one second support member.

3. The exercise apparatus of claim 2, wherein at least one of:

the first support member further comprises: (i) a third side and a fourth side on opposite sides of the first support member, the third and fourth sides extending between the first and second sides; and (ii) one or more contours or indentations for receiving one or more portions of the body of the user of the exercise apparatus; and
the one or more contours or indentations of the first support member include at least one of:

at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation disposed on, and in communication with, at least one of the first side and the second side of the first support member, the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation operating to receive at least one of a portion of at least one clavicle and/or shoulder and a portion of at least one arm of the user;
two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations, the first clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation being disposed on, and in communication with, the first side of the first support member and the second clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation being disposed on, and in communication with, the second side of the first support member, the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations operating to each receive at least one of at least one clavicle and/or shoulder and at least one arm of the user;
one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations disposed on, and in communication with, the third side of the first support member, the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations operating to receive at least one of a portion of at least one pectoral muscle and a portion of at least one breast of the user;
at least one chest and/or upper body contour or indentation disposed on, and in communication with, the at least first surface of the first support member, the at least one chest and/or upper body contour or indentation operating to receive at least one of a portion of a chest, a portion of an upper body and a portion of the upper portion of the user; and
at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation disposed on, and in communication, the fourth side of the first support member, the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation operating to receive at least one of a portion of a neck and a portion of a chin of the user.

4. The exercise apparatus of claim 3, wherein at least one of:

at least one of a depth of the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations and a depth of the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations is at least one of: about zero inches to about 5 inches; about zero inches to about 5 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 5 inches where the depth defines a radius thereof;
at least one of a length of the first side of the first support member and a length of the second side of the first support member is at least one of: about 1 inch to about 19 inches; about 1 inch to about 20 inches; about zero inches to about 19 inches, and about zero inches to about 20 inches;
at least one of a length of the third side of the first support member and a length of the fourth side of the first support member is at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; and about 3 inches to about 36 inches; at least one of a length, a width, a thickness and a depth of the at least one second support member is at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; and about 3 inches to about 36 inches; at least one of a length, a width, a thickness and a depth of the at least one base component is at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; and about 3 inches to about 36 inches; a depth of the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation is at least one of: about zero inches to about 4 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 2 inches at the deepest location thereof; a depth of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations is at least one of: about zero inches to about 4 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 2 inches at the deepest location thereof; at least one of a height of the at least one second support member and a length of the at least one second support member is about 4 inches to about 25 inches; at least one of a height of the at least one second support member and a length of the at least one base component is about 4 inches to about 25 inches; at least one of a height of the chest and/or upper body contour or indentation of the first support member and a depth of the chest and/or upper body contour or indentation of the first support member is at least one of: about zero inches to about 2 inches; and about zero inches to about 4 inches; a height of the exercise apparatus is about 4 inches to about 25 inches; and at least one of a length, a width and a diameter of the base component is at least one of: about 3 inches to about 36 inches.

5. The exercise apparatus of claim 4, wherein at least one of: the first support member further comprises a second surface on the opposite side of the at least first surface such that the at least first surface and the second surface are facing away from each other, the second surface being attached to, or releasably connected to, at least one of the first end of the at least one second support member and the first end of the at least one base component such that at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component extends away therefrom; and

the at least one second support member at least one of slopes and tapers inwardly from the first end of the at least one second support member to a predetermined location along at least one of the length and the height of the at least one second support member and then at least one of slopes and tapers outwardly from the predetermined location to the second end of the at least one second support member.

6. The exercise apparatus of claim 5, further comprising a base element connected or attached to the second end of the at least one second support member and disposed between the at least one second support member and the at least one base component when the at least one second support member is attached to, or releasably connected to, the at least one base component, the base element being sized and shaped such that the base element operates to add horizontal support or stability to the exercise apparatus or to provide a foundation or surface on which to attach or releasably connect the at least one base component thereon.

7. The exercise apparatus of claim 6, wherein the base element at least one of: (i) extends radially in all directions from the second end of the at least one second support member to add the horizontal support or stability to the exercise apparatus or to provide the foundation or the surface for the at least one base component; (ii) extends away in one or more directions for one or more predetermined distances from the second end of the at least one second support member to add the horizontal support or stability or to provide the foundation or the surface for the at least one base component; and (iii) is sized and shaped to be at least one of: a circle, a square, a rectangle, a semi-circle, and an oval.

8. The exercise apparatus of claim 7, wherein the at least one second support member comprises at least one of: (i) one support member; (ii) two or more support members; and (iii) three support members.

9. The exercise apparatus of claim 4, wherein the first end of the at least one second support member includes a surface attached to the first support member, at least one of the surface of the at least one second support member and the first end of the at least one second support member having substantially the same, or the same, shape or surface area as the at least first surface of the first support member such that the at least one second support member includes the one or more contours or indentations and the second support member and the one or more contours or indentations of the second support member extend substantially transversely, or substantially perpendicularly away, from the first support member for a predetermined distance.

10. The exercise apparatus of claim 9, wherein at least one of: the exercise apparatus further comprises a cushion disposed on, or as part of, the at least first surface of the first support member and operating to receive at least one of
a portion of the upper portion of the user and a portion of the chest of the user thereon;

at least one of the cushion, the first support member, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component comprise at least one of: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, and fiber;

the first support member further comprises a second surface on the opposite side of the at least first surface such that the at least first surface and the second surface are facing away from each other, the second surface being attached to, or releasably connected to, at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component such that at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component extends away therefrom;

the first support member further comprises a second surface on the opposite side of the at least first surface such that the at least first surface and the second surface are facing away from each other, the second surface being attached to, or releasably connected to, at least one of the at least one second support member and the first end of the at least one base component such that at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component extends away therefrom; and

at least one of the first support member, the cushion, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component are integral.

11. The exercise apparatus of claim 4, wherein the first end of the at least one second support member is attached to the first support member along a perimeter of the first support member such that the at least one second support member has a first side, a second side, a third side and a fourth side, the first side of the at least one second support member extending substantially transversely or substantially perpendicularly away from the first side of the first support member, the second side of the at least one second support member extending substantially along the first side of the first support member, the third side of the at least one second support member extending substantially along the second side of the first support member, and the fourth side of the at least one second support member extending substantially along the third side of the first support member; or

the exercise apparatus further comprises a cushion disposed on, or as part of, at least one of: the at least first surface of the first support member and operating to receive at least one of a portion of the upper portion of the user and a portion of the chest of the user thereon;

at least one of the cushion, the first support member, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component comprise at least one of: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, and fiber;

the first support member further comprises a second surface on the opposite side of the at least first surface such that the at least first surface and the second surface are facing away from each other, the second surface being attached to, or releasably connected to, at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component such that at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component extends away therefrom; and

at least one of the first support member, the cushion, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component are integral.

13. The exercise apparatus of claim 4, wherein the first end of the at least one second support member is attached to the first support member along a perimeter of the first support member such that the at least one second support member has a first side, a second side, a third side and a fourth side, the first side of the at least one second support member at least one of: being sloped and tapering away from the first side of the first support member, the second side of the at least one second support member at least one of: being sloped and tapering away from the second side of the first support member, the third side of the at least second support member at least one of: being sloped and tapering away from the third side of the first support member, and the fourth side of the at least second support member at least one of: being sloped and tapering away from the fourth side of the first support member.

14. The exercise apparatus of claim 13, wherein at least one of:

(i) at least one of the first support member, the cushion, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component are integral;

(ii) the first support member includes a cushion disposed thereon, or as part of, at least one of: the at least first surface of the first support member, the cushion operating to receive at least one of a portion of the upper portion of the user and a portion of the chest of the user thereon;

(iii) at least one of the first support member, the cushion, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component comprise at least one of: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, and fiber;

(iv) the first and second sides of the at least one second support member at least one of: include at least one of
the clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations; and each include one of the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations;

(v) at least one of the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations and the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations extend from the first support member along at least one of the length and the height of the at least one second support member to the second end of the at least one second support member;

(vi) at least one of the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations and the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations extend from the first support member along at least one of the length and the height of the at least one second support member for a predetermined distance;

(vii) at least one of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations and the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation extend from the first support member along at least one of the length and the height of the at least one second support member for a predetermined distance;

(viii) at least one of the width and the depth of the at least one of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations and the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation decreases as the at least one of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations and the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation extend away from the first support member;

(ix) the first support member further comprises a second support member on the opposite side of the at least first surface such that the at least first surface and the second surface are facing away from each other, the second surface being attached to, or releasably connected to, at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component such that at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component extends away therefrom; and

(x) the first support member further comprises a second surface on the opposite side of the at least first surface such that the at least first surface and the second surface are facing away from each other, the second surface being attached to, or releasably connected to, at least one of the first end of the at least one second support member and the first end of the at least one base component such that at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component extends away therefrom.

15. A method of performing one or more plank exercises, comprising:

placing at least one of a portion of a chest and a portion of an upper body of a user on a first support member of an exercise apparatus, the first support member having at least a first surface, a first side and a second side, the at least first surface of the first support member extending between the first and second sides a predetermined length, and the first support member being attached to, or releasably connected to, at least one of a first end of at least one base component, a first end of at least one second support member and a first end of at least one second support member where the at least one second support member is disposed between the first support member and the at least one base component, the at least one of the at least one second support member and the at least one base component extending at least one of substantially transversely and substantially perpendicularly away from the first support member;

placing at least one of a second end of the at least one second support member of the exercise apparatus and a second end of the at least one base component of the exercise apparatus on a surface or a floor for performing the one or more plank exercises such that at least one of the at least one second support member provides vertical support to the exercise apparatus and such that the at least one base component operates at least one of provide, create and add a predetermined amount of instability to the exercise apparatus, thereby increasing the difficulty of performing the one or more plank exercises; and

placing at least one of or more hands, one or more elbows and one or more forearms of the user on the surface or the floor for performing the one or more plank exercises, wherein

the first support member, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component are sized and shaped such that the exercise apparatus operates as a device for performing the one or more plank exercises.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising at least one of:

arranging one or more upper arms of the user substantially transversely, or substantially perpendicularly, to the surface or the floor for performing one or more plank exercises such that the one or more upper arms of the user extend from respective side(s) of the exercise apparatus to permit the user to perform the one or more plank exercises;

operating the plank exercise apparatus to remove at least a portion of the weight of the body of the user from at least one of the one or more hands, one or more arms and one or more clavicles/shoulders of the user, thereby reducing or removing stress from at least one of the one or more hands, the one or more arms and the one or more clavicles/shoulders of the body; and

operating the plank exercise apparatus such that the at least one base component operates to reduce the amount of contact between the exercise apparatus and the surface on which the user is exercising as compared to the amount of contact that the exercise apparatus would otherwise have with the surface when not including the at least one base component therein or thereon, thereby operating to provide, create or add the predetermined amount of instability.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein at least one of:

the second end of the at least one base component operates to provide at least one of a surface of contact, a line of contact and a point of contact with the surface on which the user is exercising;

the second end of the at least one base component comprises at least one of: a rounded surface, a pointed surface, a flat or substantially flat surface, and a spring/coil or spring-like structure;

the shape of the at least one base component is at least one of: substantially a circle, a circle, substantially a semi-circle, a semi-circle, substantially a cone, a cone, substantially a pillar, a pillar, substantially a post, a post, a spring, and substantially a spring.
the first end of the at least one base component is attached to at least one of the first support member and the at least one second support member along a perimeter thereof such that the at least one base component has one or more sides, the one or more sides of the at least one base component being sloped and tapering away from the at least one of the first support member and the at least one second support member;

the first support member further comprises: (i) a third side and a fourth side on opposite sides of the first support member, the third side and fourth sides extending between the first and second sides; and (ii) one or more contours or indentations for receiving one or more portions of a body of a user of the exercise apparatus;

the one or more contours or indentations of the first support member include at least one of:

at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation disposed on, and in communication with, at least one of the first side and the second side of the first support member, the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation operating to receive at least one of a portion of at least one clavicle and/or shoulder and a portion of at least one arm of the user;

two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations, the first clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation being disposed on, and in communication with, the first side of the first support member and the second clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contour or indentation being disposed on, and in communication with, the second side of the first support member, the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations operating to each receive a portion of at least one of at least one clavicle and/or shoulder and a portion of at least one arm of the user;

one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations disposed on, and in communication with, the third side of the first support member, the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations operating to receive at least one of a portion of at least one pectoral muscle and a portion of at least one breast of the user;

at least one chest and/or upper body contour or indentation disposed on, and in communication with, the at least first surface of the first support member, the at least one chest and/or upper body contour or indentation operating to receive at least one of a chest, a portion of an upper body and a portion of the upper portion of the user; and

at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation disposed on, and in communication, the fourth side of the first support member, the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation operating to receive at least one of a portion of a neck and a portion of a chin of the user;

at least one of a depth of the at least one clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations and a depth of the two clavicle/shoulder and/or arm contours or indentations is at least one of: about zero inches to about 5 inches; about zero inches to about 5 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 5 inches where the depth defines a radius thereof;

at least one of a length of the first side of the first support member and a length of the second side of the first support member is at least one of: about 1 inch to about 19 inches; about 1 inch to about 20 inches; about zero inches to about 19 inches, and about zero inches to about 20 inches;

at least one of a length of the third side of the first support member and a length of the fourth side of the first support member is at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; and about 3 inches to about 36 inches;

at least one of a length, a width, a thickness and a depth of the at least one second support member is at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; and about 3 inches to about 36 inches;

a depth of the at least one neck and/or chin contour or indentation is at least one of: about zero inches to about 4 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 2 inches at the deepest location thereof;

a depth of the one or more pectoral muscle and/or breast contours or indentations is at least one of: about zero inches to about 4 inches at the deepest location thereof; and about zero inches to about 2 inches at the deepest location thereof;

at least one of a height of the at least one second support member and a length of the at least one second support member is about 4 inches to about 25 inches;

at least one of a height of the chest and/or upper body contour or indentation of the first support member and a depth of the chest and/or upper body contour or indentation of the first support member is at least one of: about zero inches to about 2 inches; and about zero inches to about 4 inches;

a height of the exercise apparatus is about 4 inches to about 25 inches;

at least one of a length, a width, a thickness and a depth of the at least one base component is at least one of: about 3 inches to about 19 inches; and about 3 inches to about 36 inches;

at least one of a height of the at least one second support member and a length of the at least one base component is about 4 inches to about 25 inches; and

at least one of a length, a width and a diameter of the base component is at least one of: about 3 inches to about 36 inches.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising at least one of:

disposing a cushion on, or integrating or forming a cushion into, the at least first surface of the first support member between the first support member and at least one of the upper portion of the body of the user and the chest of the body of the user, wherein at least one of the cushion, the first support member, at least the second support member and the at least one base component comprise at least one of: plastic, clear plastic, polyurethane polymer, foam, polymer foam, balsa wood, wood, rubber, hard rubber, cork, a soft material, a material that operates to be inflated with air, textile material, polymer, thermoplastic polyurethane polymer, cloth fabric, vinyl, leather, suede, synthetics, a substantially resilient material, a hard or rigid material, metal, polytetrafluoroethylene, carbon fiber, and fiber; and

disposing a base element between the at least one second support member and the at least one base component when the at least one second support member is attached to, or releasably connected to, the at least one base component, the base element being sized and shaped
such that the base element operates to add horizontal support or stability to the exercise apparatus or to provide a foundation or surface on which to attach or releasably connect the at least one base component thereto.

19. A method of manufacturing an exercise apparatus for performing one or more plank exercises, comprising:

forming a first support member having at least a first surface, a first side and a second side, the at least first surface of the first support member extending between the first and second sides for a predetermined length by sizing and shaping the first support member to receive, or accommodate, at least an upper portion, a back or a chest of at least one of a mold of a manikin, an anatomical model of a human body and a mold of a human model;

forming at least one second support member having a first end and a second end and at least one base component having a first end and a second end by attaching the first end of the at least one second support member to the first support member, by attaching or releasably connecting the first end of the at least one base component to at least one of the first support member and the at least one second support member, and sizing and shaping the at least one second support member and the at least one base component based on the at least one of the mold of the manikin, the anatomical model of the human body and the mold of the human model such that the at least one second support member extends at least one of substantially transversely and substantially perpendicularly away for a predetermined distance from the first support member, the at least one base component extends away from the first support member for a predetermined distance and is sized and shaped to at least one of provide, create and add a predetermined amount of instability to the exercise apparatus, thereby increasing the difficulty of performing the one or more plank exercises, and at least one of the second end of the at least one second support member and the second end of the at least one base component operates to rest on at least a surface for performing one or more plank exercises, thereby providing vertical support to the exercise apparatus, the predetermined distance that the at least one second support member extends and the predetermined distance that the at least one base component extends being selected such that at least one of: (i) at least one of one or more hands, one or more elbows and one or more forearms of the at least one of the manikin, the anatomical model of the human body and the mold of the human model operate to rest on the surface for performing the one or more plank exercises; and (ii) the exercise apparatus operates to permit a user to place at least one of one or more hands, one or more elbows and one or more forearms of the user on at least the surface for the performing one or more plank exercises; and

forming one or more contours or indentations on at least one of the first support member, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component of the plank exercise apparatus, based on one or more contours of at least one portion of the at least one of the manikin, the anatomical model of the human body and the mold of the human model such that: (i) the one or more contours or indentations of the plank exercise apparatus operate to receive at least one corresponding portion of a body of a user of the plank exercise apparatus, the portion including at least one of: a back, an upper portion of a body, a side, a shoulder, a clavicle, a neck, a chin, an arm, a chest, a breast and a pectoral muscle of the user; and (ii) the first support member, the at least one second support member and the at least one base component are sized and shaped such that exercise apparatus operates as an apparatus for performing the one or more plank exercises.

20. An exercise apparatus for performing one or more plank exercises, the apparatus comprising:

a first support member having at least a first surface, a first side and a second side, the at least first surface of the first support member extending between the first and second sides for a predetermined length; and

at least one second support member having a first and second end, the first end of the at least one second support member being attached to the first support member, the at least one second support member extending at least one of substantially transversely and substantially perpendicularly away from the first support member and the second end of the at least one second support member operating to rest on at least a surface for performing one or more plank exercises, thereby providing vertical support to the exercise apparatus, wherein the first support member and the at least one second support member are sized and shaped such that exercise apparatus operates as a device for performing the one or more plank exercises; and the at least one second support member is located on the first support member such that the at least one second support member at least one of provides, creates and adds a predetermined amount of instability to the exercise apparatus, thereby increasing the difficulty of performing the one or more plank exercises.

* * * * *