

THE SEQUENCING BIBLE

HOW TO PRODUCE YOGA SEQUENCES
THAT STAND OUT!



ELEANOR EVRARD



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THE SEQUENCING BIBLE:

HOW TO MAKE YOGA SEQUENCES

that stand out !

Eleanor Evrard

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THE SEQUENCING BIBLE

Eleanor Evrard (@elea_gisele) is an experienced osteopath and yogi whose passion for yoga brought her to travel throughout Europe and India to train teacher trainees in yin , vinyasa flow, Hatha , yoga anatomy and smart, therapeutic sequencing .

Her 25 years of yoga practice brought her to broaden her knowledge of various styles including Hatha, Anusara, vinyasa flow, ashtanga, yin, and to study with amazing teachers such as Helena Brower, Meghan Currie, Simon Borg-Olivier and Jonas Westring.

Through her extensive experience and embodied understanding of asanas and their anatomy , she is able to make complex anatomical structures and principles more simple and relevant to anyone trying to grasp the importance and relevance of the latter for creating vitality enhancing classes . She designed this book including a practice section to enable everyone to bring their sequencing skills to the next level .

PREFACE

The importance of great sequencing

These days anyone can be a yoga teacher . On some courses there is little to no anatomy !

Anyone can teach yoga , many do, some give up , however what you are teaching is something unique to you . People first come to your class to discover yoga, but come back for what you have on offer , your story , your understanding of yoga and health . Anyone can stick random asanas next to each other , but great sequencing is an art, and shows your unique understanding of what yoga asana practice is .

Anyone can stick a soundtrack of a meditation , yoga nidra, or asana class on, but it is your tone of voice , fluctuations in tone , your choice of words, their rate and rhythm that make YOU and your class unique.

It is YOU , and your energy that people will be coming to take classes with . Not necessarily the style you teach .

For me, a good asana class means entering the class feeling low, sad, grumpy, let down , angry , suffering some kind of lower back , neck , shoulder or whatever pain, and leaving that class feeling joyful, lighter, happier and full of hope. For me yoga is magic .

Now, what is the difference between :

1. a class where, a student enters in poor emotional , physical , mental shape, and leaves with happier joints, and mood ?
2. a class where someone enters without any major history of any pain and leaves with an injury ?
3. a class where someone enters in a neutral mood and leaves feeling beaten up by the difficulty of the asana (even though the class was actually that person's level) ? Etc ...

The difference , is YOU , your sequencing . And sequencing has everything to do with how subtle your understanding of asanas is from the anatomical perspective.

In this sequencing book , you will get fundamental insights into some essential specific anatomical matters . A section to help you grasp sequencing principles , or guidelines to make your vinyasa flow, and hatha classes safe and even healing . And a section to practice sequencing to make things clear in your head so that gradually you will be able to sequence more intuitively from a place of safe and sound anatomical understanding.

Once sequencing has no secrets for you , your students will leave your classes feeling like their experience was a magic trick , or will simply feel good, having lost their initial monkey mind and pain body.

This is yoga .

WHOM IS THIS BOOK FOR?

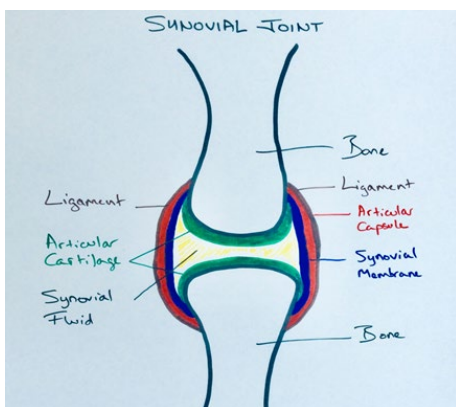
- any Hatha, vinyasa flow yogi trainee looking to grasp sequencing
- any yogi looking to create powerful healing sequences for him/ herself or others
- any yogi whom wants to be clear about the function of movements and asanas within a sequence
- Hatha, vinyasa flow (VF) practitioners who want to produce magic

Of course your creative, embodied intuitive sequencing is highly encouraged, but comes from a sound anatomical understanding and some playing around with appropriate asana combinations.

A. ANATOMY INSIGHTS

1. HEALTHY JOINTS, HAPPY YOGI

What do hips, knees, ankles, shoulders, elbows, and wrists have in common? They are joints yogis are using a lot during asana practice, and happen to be synovial type joints.



Synovial type joints are composed of two bones covered in cartilage, joined by ligaments, where you find a synovial membrane that produces synovial fluid. This synovial structure is called a capsule. The fluid along with the cartilage, ensure that the two bones don't rub against each other, unless some degenerative process such as osteoarthritis has begun.

PRACTICAL INSIGHT : the hip joint

The hip joint is a ball and socket type synovial joint , which gives it the ability to produce flexion, extension, adduction, abduction, external and internal rotation . Its stability comes primarily from its stable bone structure that makes it hard to be dislocated . Additionally , it is wrapped in very thick and dense fascia and held by pretty strong muscles including iliopsoas and the gluteals .

The capsule of the hip is strong when healthy, however for beginners it is recommended not to sequence more than three standing balances (asana on one leg) at a time . Gradually as the surrounding hip muscles become stronger, your students will be able to perform four, five, six standing balances in a row without putting unnecessary stress on the capsule .

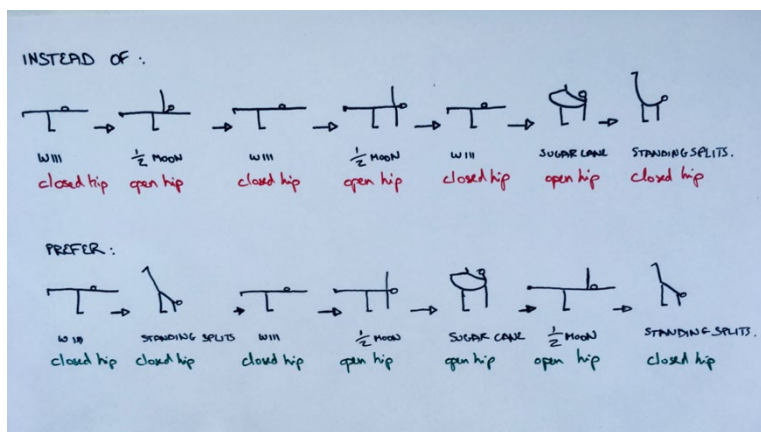
Note that the capsule will not be happy if during this standing balance sequence (on one leg) the standing / weight bearing leg goes from external to internal rotation, back to external, internal and so on, too much . Like say from warrior III to half moon to warrior III etc ... You may think this is a fantastic gluts exercise , however it isn't healthy for a capsule that may get pinched in the process. Especially in beginners or your older students that do not hold enough glut power to keep the capsule away from compression . The worst direction for hip capsule safety being from open to closed hip like from half moon to warrior III. So what to do ? **Always** prefer to **neutralize first** .

Give the following mini sequences a try, for some going back to those standing splits at the end of the preferred sequence will still give discomfort or a sensation of pinching in which case, prefer for example to go to a warrior II after that last half moon. Or if you want to continue on one leg, try a tree (neutral standing leg) followed by the standing splits.

Generally, remember not to constantly switch from external to internal rotations, strong abductions to adductions no matter the class of asanas, as you will find it is not only **counterproductive** but also **unhealthy** for the capsule.

Start noticing that internal hip rotation goes well with backbends, vs external hip rotation due to its effects on the pelvis, therefore always pay attention to where your sequence is going, to make sure your chosen asana is the right one already in terms of the hip vectors it entails.

Following these guidelines may avoid you an early hip replacement surgery, so really do not underestimate the potency of a good sequence vs a dodgy one!





- for beginners , not more than three standing balances in a row ! Increase very gradually .

- no matter the level , avoid standing balances where the weight bearing leg switches from external to internal to external rotation over and over .

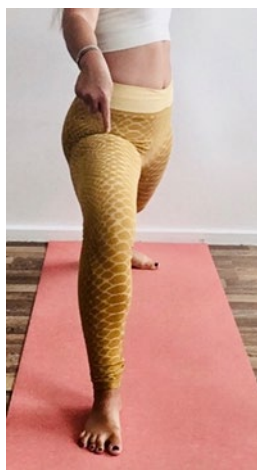
- no matter the class of asanas, switching from external to internal rotations, abductions to adductions and vice versa is counterproductive and not healthy for the hip capsule.

PRACTICAL INSIGHT: the knee joint

The knee joint is a synovial hinge type joint, meaning its structure only allows flexion and extension to happen happily. Twisting plus compression, or torque is a force that will damage its cartilages including the menisci, ligaments and synovial capsule. On standing, especially on the weight bearing leg, whatever your hip is doing (external, internal rotation etc) look at your toes! If they are going in a different direction to that of the hip, your knee is twisted and its structures compressed by gravity.

So in warrior II, your front hip, say the right one, is externally rotated, the front foot, right one, is parallel to the long edge of the mat, i.e your toes are in the same line as your thigh and shin, your knee is above your ankle, all good for the knee! (As in pic two)

But if your right knee or front knee is leaning to the left, towards the left long edge of the mat, it means your hip isn't quite externally rotated enough, so your gluts aren't active enough on that right side, your knee is no longer above your ankle joint as your shin will also be leaning to the left the knee capsule here will be aggravated, your medial ligaments overstretched, and your medial cartilaginous structures (the menisci) might even be a little compressed. Not good for the knee! (pic one)



Let's look at easy cross now, which is what most beginners, and quite frankly most westerners, even when advanced, take instead of a half or full lotus, for grounding at the start and end of classes, or for their meditation practice.

Easy cross, is indeed a little easier than a lotus, in cases where the hip won't go that much into external rotation. This can be a structural, bone on bone, compression type issue in many cases, or in some cases, like in beginners, if the bone structure allows external rotation, the issue is the need for more practice, more stretching of the muscles that currently may not allow the movement due to tightness.

In easy cross, your hips are trying hard to externally rotate enough that your knees will reach the ground. If that is so, your knee will mostly be ok as long as you watch your ankle and foot, which we will discuss in the next paragraph. However, in many cases the knee will not reach the ground (pic one) as the issue is the hip isn't able either due to bone

on bone compression or to lack of stretching . In this case your lateral ligaments will be put under strain often resulting in lateral knee pain . To avoid this, consider placing a block under the sitbones and/ or support under your knees such as a blanket or block .

In general , on standing sequences on both legs or balances, keep track of what your feet and toes are doing , remember if their direction differs from the intended and actual direction of your hip, the knee will be under some strain !



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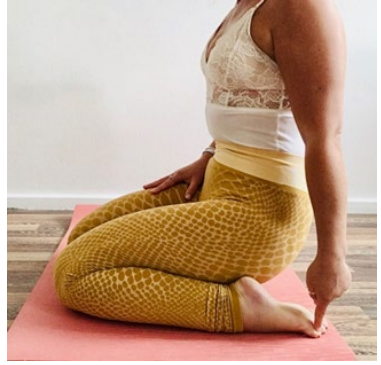


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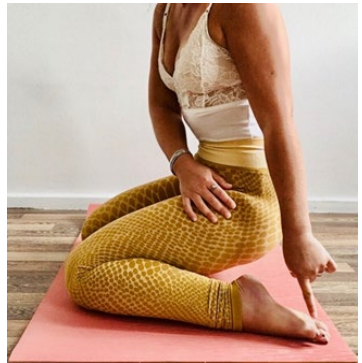
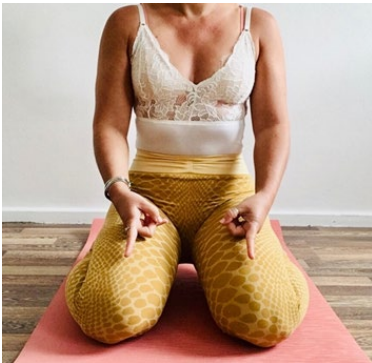
Let's now look at virasana , which is a fantastic asana to prep your backbend sequences , but if done poorly can really damage your knee !

Again, here look at your foot, make sure all ten toenails are to the ground , this aligns toe number two with the shinbones. Look at your thigh bones , they should be parallel , knees in front of hips maximum, not any wider. This will

make your knee happy, give it a strong healthy compression whilst stretching out the quads. Any other toe arrangement however (floating pinky toe) will result in some strain and potential long term knee issues.



These first two pics show you knees in line with hip joints, and pinky toe nail grounded , vs the next two that show you what to watch out for and avoid !



🦶🦶🦶 on standing , whether on two legs, or on balances
(one leg) keep track of your toes' direction .

- on sitting, place a block under your sitbones or consider placing something under your knees to avoid your lateral ligaments from overstretching so much . Remember over stretched ligaments will not go back to their healthy length if done too often .
- for a healthy virasana , all toe nails in contact with the ground, place a block under your sitbones if they aren't grounded to avoid the knees from twisting .

PRACTICAL INSIGHT: the ankle

The ankle joint, or talo-crural joint is a synovial hinge joint permitting dorsiflexion and plantarflexion of the foot. It's stability is in part due to its bony structure, and to its strong medial and less strong lateral ligaments. Of course, due to the fact it needs to be mobile enough for us to walk, it isn't the most stable joint in the body especially when we weaken the already not so strong lateral ligaments. Most twisted ankles are in the direction that overstretches the latter.

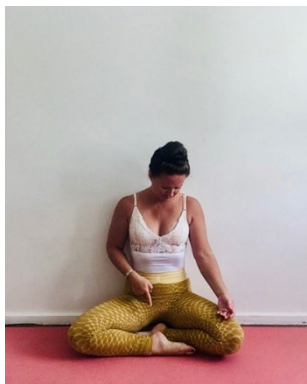
As mentioned the ankle joint is designed for dorsiflexion and plantarflexion. To make sure this is all your ankle is doing, again, keep track of your toes. If **toe number two is in line with your shin**, wonderful, whether your ankle is dorsiflexed or plantarflexed, this ensures no other vectors are introduced. However as soon as this alignment is lost due in part to lack of activity in the big toe mound, this means trouble for your lateral ankle ligaments!

The following six first pictures show you what an ankle (mine in this case) might look like either standing or sitting, in a pointed, flointed, and dorsiflexed position, when it is aligned properly, i.e when toe two is as aligned as it will get with the shin. The last three pics show you examples of what you are looking to avoid, i.e "sickled" ankles!



Now let's look at our easy cross again . But this also applies to your beginner pigeon (with front knee at less than 90 degrees due to lack of external rotation in your front hip). Remember your second toe should, for optimal knee conditions, be in line with your shin bone. Let's say your knee in easy cross isn't to the ground... then for sure your ankle is sickling , i.e in the position which will overstretch the already not so strong lateral ligaments . Solution: on a block , toenails facing down with second toe in line with shin .

On the first picture here again you see the knees floating, as a result you can see significant sickling of the right ankle, i.e the second toe is nowhere near in line with the shin bone. This is very common. Whereas on the second pic, knees are to the ground, toenails pointing down, second toe in line with shin bone.



Let's take the case of the **pigeon** with front **knee** at **90 degrees** . Here, the front hip has enough external rotation , but again , watch your toes. In this case the ankle should be actively dorsiflexed keeping the big toe mound active to avoid sickling . If you point the front foot, it increases the risk of sickling as the big toe mound will not be as active , so the second toe will have less chances of staying in line with the shin bone . If your **knee** angle is **less than 90 degrees**, like in picture two, then point your toes actively to keep the line between shin and second toe, otherwise **sickling** will happen as in pic three.



PRACTICAL INSIGHT: the shoulder

The shoulder , like the hip , is a synovial ball and socket, meaning it allows flexion, extension , internal and external rotation, adduction, abduction and circumduction movements. However , unlike the hip joint, the shoulder joint has a shallow ball and socket , meaning it's stability is mainly achieved through powerful rotator cuff and other muscles .

Given that the shoulder has a shallow ball and socket , mainly stabilized by muscles, it is essential that we keep it well integrated , meaning well plugged into its socket , at all times, surrounding muscles active, or we risk irritating its capsule and over stretching its ligaments .

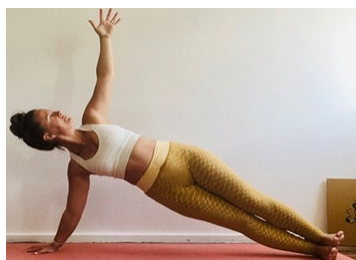
To achieve integration or to plug your shoulder into its socket on standing , just reach your arms and hands out ahead of you (first pic) as if to reach someone in front of you, then actively draw your shoulders back into their socket by activating the muscles surrounding the shoulder blades, i.e like pulling that person slightly towards you until you feel the shoulders won't go any further back. (Second pic)



To plug them into their sockets on all fours, push the ground away (picture one) then plug them into their sockets again by drawing them up, i.e lowering the back of your heart by using the muscles surrounding the shoulder blades , as you keep rolling the triceps in (picture two).



On sideplanks, to not pinch the capsule, avoid the shoulder right above elbow, right above wrist alignment (pic one) as it is very hard to activate your surrounding shoulder muscles in this arrangement, and thus the shoulder can never be properly integrated. Instead prefer keeping your shoulder slightly behind your elbow, and your elbow slightly behind your wrist, i.e hand under head rather than under shoulder (pic two).



🐦🐦🐦- on standing, reach hands ahead of you as if to catch someone then pull back by drawing shoulders back into their sockets actively

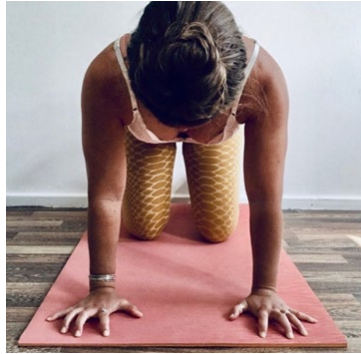
- on all fours and arm balances, activate the shoulder muscles, again by pushing the ground away too much then drawing the shoulders into their socket whilst rolling the triceps in.
- on side plank type asanas, ensure your shoulder muscles can be active by having the wrists under the head as opposed to straight under the shoulder.

PRACTICAL INSIGHT: the elbow

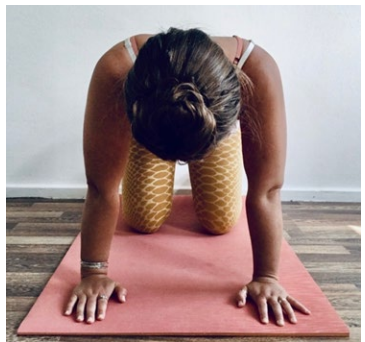
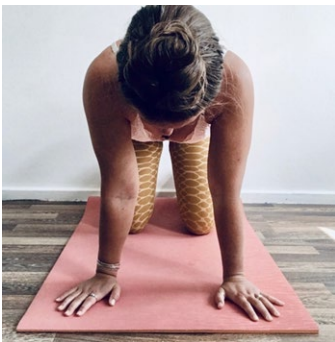
The elbow, like the knee, is a hinge type of synovial joint . Like the knee, the elbow doesn't like to be twisted and/ or compressed . Remember the part that does twist is the forearm to produce supination and pronation . This happens as the ulna and radius rotate around each other, but they are not part of the elbow joint itself.

To ensure a stable and healthy elbow alignment , make sure it is always active especially on all fours or arm balances , meaning you are keeping it **microbent** , especially if your elbow has a tendency to hyper extend . When kept in hyper extension during arm balances, which are yang asanas, the risk is to produce unhealthy bone on bone compression as well as not improving the already increased ligamentous laxity in these elbows. Keeping your elbow microbent not only improves their integrity and alignment but might also save your wrist from twisting as an active elbow prevents ulna and radius from assuming an inappropriate position. Also remember to keep rolling your triceps under to further align elbows and shoulders!

On this first picture, the wrist is properly aligned with the top of the mat, with tiger fingers, and so the elbow is able to be kept active, i.e microbent with the triceps being actively rolled under.



On these second and third pictures however, since the wrists are grossly misaligned, hasta bandha inactive etc, of course the elbows end up hyperextended. On the first one you see the consequences of the wrist crease being turned out, vs turned in on the second.



🦋🦋🦋 - on all fours, down dog and arm balances, always keep your wrists parallel to the top of the mat, and your elbows microbent.

PRACTICAL INSIGHT: The wrist

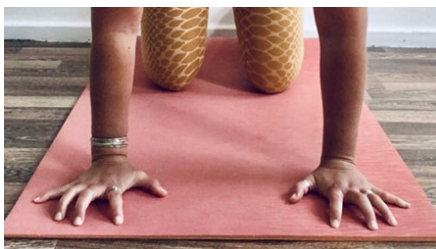
The wrist or radio carpal joint is a complex joint due to the presence of the carpal bones, which means loads of little joints. It is an ellipsoid type of synovial joint, allowing movements along two axes, meaning flexion, extension, but also adduction and abduction. The muscles of the forearm are performing your wrist movements.

The carpal bones form a tunnel, the carpal tunnel, in which important vessels and nerves are found, i.e. what we are avoiding as yogis, is compression of these important structures.

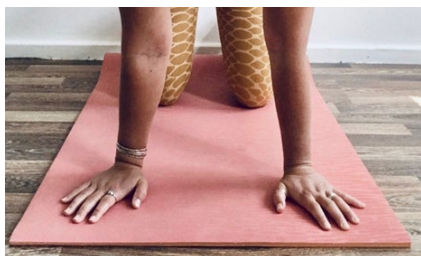
By activating our hasta bhanda, we ensure that the carpal tunnel looks like a bridge during any asana with hands to the ground thus protecting the nerves and vessels. How do we activate hasta bhanda? Simply by plugging the four corners of our hands, as we spread our fingers as wide as possible whilst grabbing the ground through the tips of our fingers.

However if the alignment is improper to start with we still may pinch structures whilst overstretching some ligaments. To avoid this, look at your wrist, make sure it is parallel to the front of your mat any time your hands are to the ground.

On the following picture, seen from above the wrists were aligned, so parallel to the top of the mat (not as clear on the picture), fingers spread as wide as possible, four corners plugged into the ground meaning the second finger mounds were grounded as the fingers gripped the floor. If you ask a friend to lift your fingertips, ideally they won't manage!



On this second picture however the wrists were not parallel to the top of the mat, fingers not spread, hasta bandha therefore not active as fingers weren't gripping the ground. As a result look at the left hand's second finger mound, it isn't firmly on the ground and check out the elbows ! Not aligned, locked hyperextended and therefore passive , all as a result of very poor wrist alignment and lack of hasta bandha !



🐾🐾🐾 -on all fours, down dog, arm balances , look at your wrist crease, make sure it is parallel to the top of your mat . **Spread** your **fingers** as **wide** as you possibly can keeping all four corners of hands plugged into the ground whilst **activating** your **hasta bhandha** meaning you are gripping the ground through your fingertips super firmly (tiger paws). The more intense the arm balance, the more your tiger paws are active, but start practicing their activation with all fours and down dogs.

2. PSOAS VS ABS , ROLE IN POSTURE AND YOGA

The iliopsoas is composed of Psoas major and Iliacus .

The psoas major originates from the vertebral bodies of T12-L4, IVDS between T12-L4, and transverse processes of L1-5 vertebrae .

The iliacus originates from the iliac fossa .

Both as a group, the iliopsoas, insert at the lesser trochanter of the femur .

Therefore, the iliopsoas produces flexion of the thigh at the hip , flexion of the trunk at the hip , external rotation of the thigh at the hip , and lateral flexion of the trunk (psoas major only and when contracted unilaterally)

As we have seen, the psoas major part inserts to the spine anteriorly , all the way to T12. At T12 , it is behind the diaphragm , where the trapezius also attaches to span the upper back all the way to the base of the head .

Your psoas is therefore the central junction and main attachment of upper to lower body as well as being a point of balance in our energy through our pelvis focal point . (which we will see in part B6)

The psoas, muscle of the soul

The psoas is also linked to our reptilian brain. Back in the day, when we saw a lion in the jungle , fear (reptilian brain , sympathetic nervous system) would make us run away ,

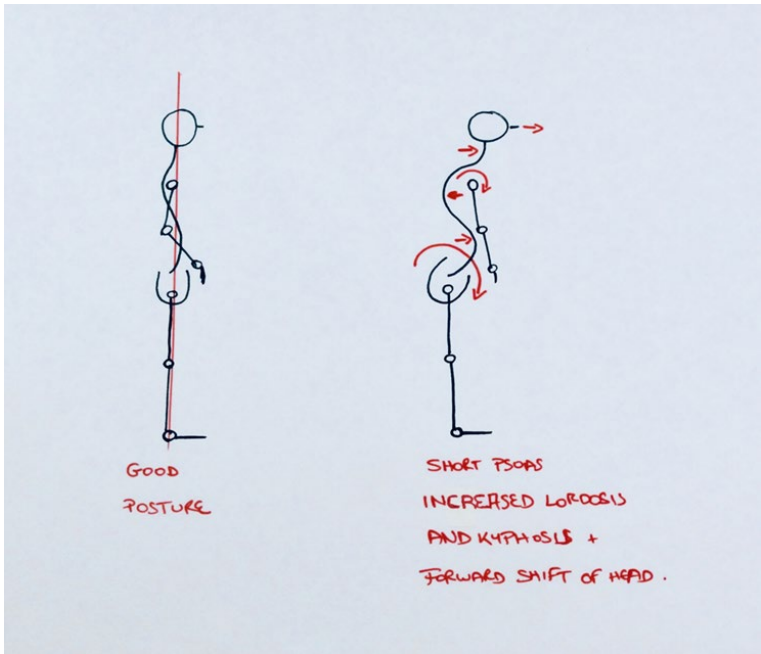
i.e the psoas would shorten, flexing our hips to initiate steps . Once we would have outrun the lion, our psoas would have gone back to its lengthened , natural state until the next attack.

These days with our modern lifestyle, seated for 10 hours a day, the psoas is constantly in a shortened state. The fear of deadlines (reptilian brain, sympathetic nervous system) has replaced that of lions, but continues to activate the reptilian brain on a constant low grade level, which means that we live most of our lives in a state of fear, producing a now chronically short psoas which has adverse effects on our lower back, hips, pelvis, and state of mind.

Indeed the psoas functions at its best when lengthened and falling back against the spine, rather than shortened, pulling the spine down and anteriorly. Normally balanced by the lumbar spine muscles, or erector spinae, when psoas is tight, the erector spinae become weak (reciprocal inhibition, see A5). When psoas is released, the erector spinae are able to function again fully supporting our rib cage.

The psoas stabilises the lumbar spine and strongly influences the tilt in our pelvis, both anterior (when both sides are equally tight) and sideways

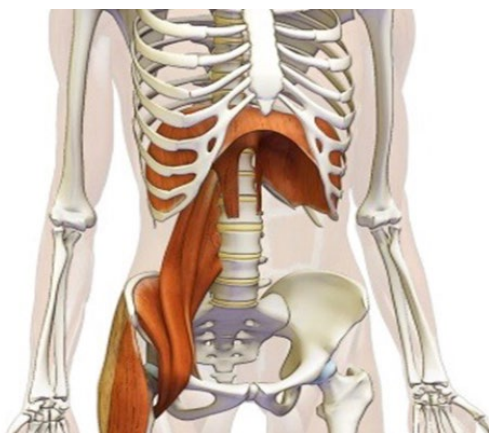
(when one is tighter, producing a twist in the pelvis resulting in adaptive scoliotic patterns) like when you look like a banana in your handstand.



Psoas vs diaphragm

The psoas meets the diaphragm at T12, posterior to the solar plexus, i.e the abdominal brain (bundle of nerves supplying the gut), and center of our power as expressed through will, corresponding to our Manipura chakra. This chakra's element is fire, and our gastric fire is fanned by our breath through the movements of the diaphragm that rhythmically compresses our gut.

The psoas also forms a shelf within the pelvis to support our abdominal and pelvic organs, and through which many important vessels pass. The health of psoas therefore affects the function of these organs by affecting their circulation. Our emotional reactions translate into muscular responses in the psoas, which can tighten, limiting the movements of the diaphragm. Therefore problems regarding menstruation, childbirth, and digestion can all be a result of a chronically tight psoas.



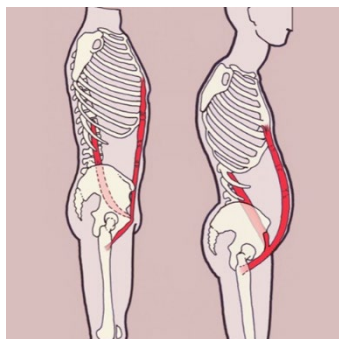
Psoas vs abdominal muscles

The psoas and abdominal muscles cradle our abdominal and pelvic organs. A good balance between these two is therefore necessary for the good health and function of these organs as well as to give a sense of structural integrity to the trunk.

A combination of a tight psoas and hyperactive abdominals through inappropriate abdominal exercises, sequencing, balance between asana types, could lead to our abdominal and pelvic organs malfunctioning. I.e problems in conceiving, irregular menstruation, digestive issues, absorption issues, IBS type presentations are more likely.

Of course if both psoas and abdominal muscles are inappropriately tight, this will also impair our ability to breathe in fully.

The combination of sitting all day, the forward bending design in bicycles, and forward folds such as paschimottanasana performed too aggressively (by using psoas) can lead to more and more issues, especially in our lower back as the erector spinae become increasingly weak.



Psoas vs SIjs

The SI (sacroíliac) joints (in pink on the picture below), as their name suggests, are found between the sacrum and two ília, one on either side. They are gliding synovial type joints, formed by the very irregular surfaces of the posterior sacrum and anterior ília. Due to this irregular flat type bone arrangement, these joints have limited movement ability (2-18 degrees) and are in addition further stabilized by sets of very strong ligaments.

When psoas is tight on both sides equally (which is rarely the case as we have a dominant side neurologically) we saw the pelvis would tilt forward.

When psoas is tighter on one side, the twist in the pelvis will create mechanical issues due to the inappropriate placement of the ília vs the sacrum , leading to an SI on one side being less mobile, and on the other, more mobile, which will, over time, make some of these ligaments inappropriately laxer. Start adding asymmetrical asanas (hanomanasana, runners lunge, lunges etc) performed without awareness, i.e without activating the leg muscles appropriately, and your initially strong SI ligaments will get really lax on one side especially.

Now, the body will try to stabilise the situation by making the psoas tighter, on the side of the more mobile SI, which in turn will make the twist worse, and aggravate the SI further. Gradually, all of the above will become worse, leading to an adaptive scoliotic pattern and a poor posture. As the SI joints are responsible for the transition of forces from right foot to left shoulder and left foot to right shoulder during walking (so that we don't walk like penguins), imbalances in the pelvis, creating SI functional imbalance, will eventually lead to issues further up, in the shoulders, neck, ears etc.



👉👉👉 - effects of tight psoas on pelvis :

- Anterior pelvic tilt , the hip joints are thrust forwards and the lumbar lordosis is increased
- Pelvic twist , which contributes to developing a scoliotic pattern

- effects of tight psoas on the thighs :

- Outwardly rotated hips due to the psoas attachment onto the inner thigh

effects of tight psoas on the rib cage :

- Rib cage is pulled down as the lumbar spine shifts forward in an increased lordotic pattern, this creates a compression around T12 so that the diaphragm cannot descend properly, forcing chest breathing
- From this increased lordosis, an increased kyphosis may appear further disrupting the muscle chains of the chest and neck

3. BACK BODY VS FRONT BODY

What is the back body? We will go, for the purpose of clarity, with what the back body is when it comes to fascia. The back body fascia starts at the base of the toe mounds, covers the entire back part of your body (rel to the anatomical position, so with palms and toes pointing forwards) and extends to the naso-frontal suture, that junction at the base of your forehead where the latter meets the nose, at eyebrow level.

As a result, the front body fascia will be all of the remaining, all along the front of your body, from base of big toe mound to top of nose, between the eyebrows.

Of course when it comes to our actual fascia network, it is a lot more complex as it wraps around our organs, bones, muscles and so doesn't just start or stop on an imaginary line outside of the body somewhere, as it is present throughout our entire body.

However in anatomy, to create clear boundaries when we talk about these structures, the points mentioned above were chosen. These boundaries aren't random and do correspond to how things are working in our body mechanically.

So when we talk about back body vs front body we will go with these anatomical references.

As we saw in A.2, our tendency is to have a tight, shortened psoas. This will lead to our diaphragm not being so effective,

the chest will be slightly collapsed, shoulders and head dragged forwards.

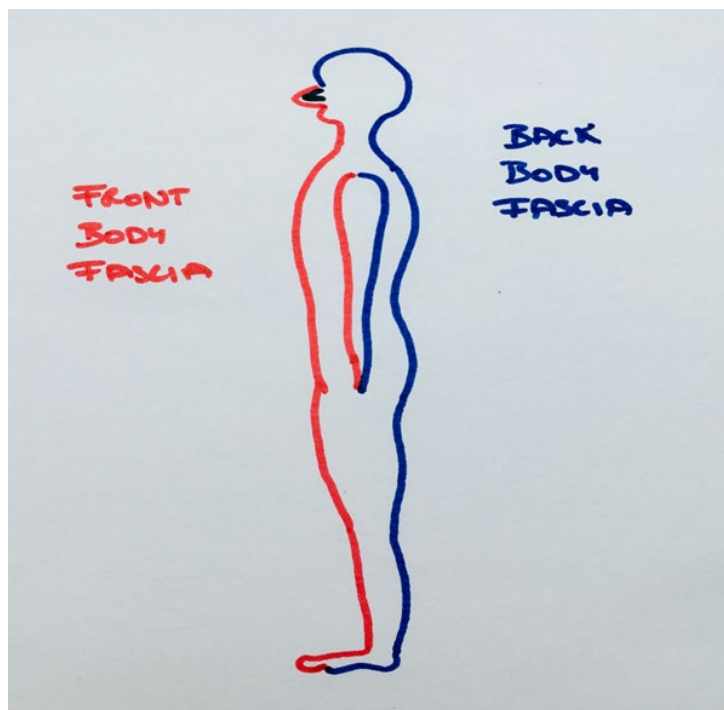
Additionally to a tight psoas, to a greater or lesser extend, these other structures make us adopt a poor posture, so that we often find that much of our front body fascia, and the muscles it wraps around, tighter than they should be and therefore less effective.

The front body is short and less effective, and the back body as a result is long and ineffective, through reciprocal inhibition. (when your prime mover, or agonist muscle is active, your antagonist muscle relaxes)

The front body muscles/fascia to watch out for, apart from psoas, will be the quads, pectorals, biceps brachii, scalenes, anterior intercostals.

Corresponding to these, in the back body, we will find weakened erector spinae, gluts, rhomboids, trapezius, latissimus dorsi, and triceps .

Also, one of the phenomenons here, is that, due to improper use of your primary breathing muscles, the diaphragm, all the accessories are having to kick in to produce breathing (pecs, traps, scalenes are all accessories that should only accompany deep inhales, in singers for example, or smokers as they also do not use their diaphragm to smoke). This inappropriate use further weakens them .

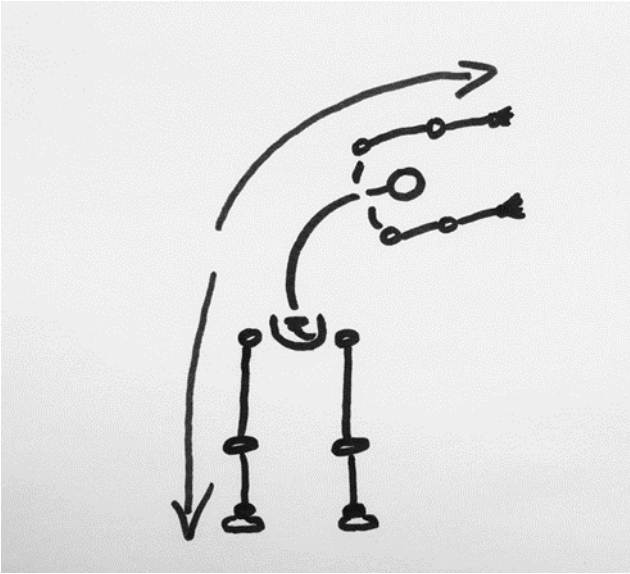


As a yoga teacher, what can you do, or how can you use smart sequencing to counteract these issues?

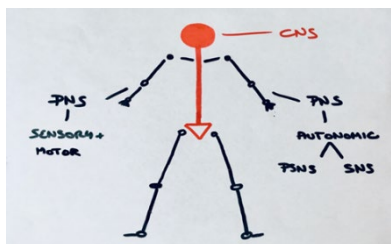
- 🦋🦋🦋 - lengthen the front body (psoas, abs, pecs, scalènes, anterior shoulders, neck and chest)
- lengthen the traps upper fibers (halasana etc)
- reactivate the back body (gluts, erector spinae, rhomboïds, traps lower fibers)
- For this , your sequencing, choice and balance of asanas are central !

Remember your side body !

Tight ITB, lateral glut fibers, erector spinae, intercostals, upper lateral traps..... they all need loving stretches too !
Your sidebending/ lateral bending asanas (bananasana etc) are perfect for this.



4. PSNS VS SNS



- CNS = CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM
- PNS = PERIPHERAL NERVOUS SYSTEM
- SNS = SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM
- PSNS = PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

The **SNS**, or sympathetic nervous system, is your flight, fright, fight, f*ck, freeze etc system. Back in the day when we saw that lion, we would run for our lives ... I.e psoas, iliacus were active and short to run. These days the same happens seated at a desk all day, stressed out about deadlines, only the stimulation is a constant low grade type stimulation and we don't run it out, so the stress hormones just accumulate.

The **SNS**, is the one that increases your heart rate, and pressure, to send increased blood flow to the big muscle groups of your legs so you can run away.

Yang classes, including vinyasa flow tend to switch our **SNS** on also as they make our heart rate go up.

This is good in short bursts, but can also be unhealthy if sustained for too long, like two hours, it is just making our body age faster, which wasn't the initial aim of asana. These are the classes where you might feel over-energised, over-active subsequently.

So what can you do as part of your smart sequencing, to avoid making your yang class into a race away from a lion?

🦋🦋🦋 - make even your vinyasa flow classes slow enough that students can keep their breath slow and deep, and gaze inwards.

- make sure to incorporate sufficient integration times (just a few moments here and there to assimilate what has been done in the last ten minutes of super active sequence)
- make sure your cool down is long enough/ appropriate to calm down before savasana
- make your savasana 10% of the total time of your class, if it means getting rid of part of your super active sequence to do so, then do so, to include the necessary cool down and savasana, remember asana classes aren't a race or about you showing how long you can make a sequence
- make sure students roll onto their right side after savasana, long enough to open up their moon channel (present in the left side)
- The **PSNS**, is your rest, repair and digest system. If you are suffering from chronic insomnia, or chronic stress the chances are you aren't in this system enough. If your digestion, or absorption isn't great, you aren't in this system enough.

So what can you do?

- follow the above advice in your Hatha, vinyasa flow classes!
- take a **yin** class as you will spend the sequence in your PSNS

5. Muscle spindles, GTOS, PNF

Worried about this title? Don't worry things aren't that complex!

When a muscle spindle, which is a stretch receptor within your muscle bellies is rapidly stretched, two things can happen :

- It may signal its muscle to contract to prevent it from overstretching
- It can inhibit its antagonist muscle (the opposite muscle producing the opposite type movement) from contracting so the latter can't contribute to any further stretching. (via reciprocal inhibition)

i.e, your muscle spindles alert the brain that a joint or soft tissues surrounding it are in danger of being overstretched.

At the end of your muscles you have tendons that attach the said muscles to bones, remember the big bones we use in yoga can only move if they're attached to a muscle. Within these tendons you have GTOS, that's Golgi Tendon Organs, that sense changes in muscle tension within their corresponding muscle whenever the said muscle is stretched or contracted.

When a GTO is activated during a stretch, it inhibits the muscle spindle in that muscle belly so that a deeper stretch can be achieved. The GTOS send info to the brain as soon as they sense any overload.

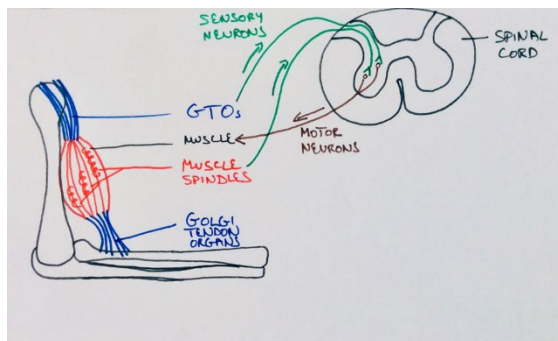
When GTOs sense a contraction, they cause inhibition of the contraction, this is autogenic inhibition and is automatic (reflex).

Now it gets interesting, when you hold a low-force stretch passively for a minute, the increase in muscle tension activates the GTOs which inhibit the muscle spindles' activity allowing for further stretching. Yes you read it right, a two second stretch doesn't even do anything to lengthen your muscle fibers, it might be fun cardio, but if you are looking to become more flexible this is not the way!

Now it gets even more interesting, we, as yogis, can also induce autogenic inhibition by contracting a muscle right before it is passively stretched. This is called PNF, or proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation. For this you need to be producing a low-grade (i.e 50% of Maximum force) contraction of the muscle you intend to stretch for 15 seconds immediately before keeping your passive stretch for 45 seconds, one minute. Pretty cool no?

We will expand on how we do this in the part about our focal points!

Here is a little simplified drawing for the visual learners:



B. GUIDELINES FOR A MAGICAL SEQUENCE

1. THE WELL ROUNDED CLASS

I once met an 84 year old lady staying, like myself, at a youth hostel, in south east Asia. Turns out she was actually 62! Puzzled and Impressed, I asked her what her secret was. She said "you see girl, all you need is flexion, extension, sidebending, and rotation right and left, 20 minutes a day to get blood, joints and spine moving." I smiled, within this simple sentence this lady had just summed up what I have been teaching hundreds of teacher trainees.

Indeed, all you need to awaken your spine are these vectors in the following circle, as well as articulating your major joints in all the directions they offer (hips, shoulders, knees, elbows, wrists, ankles), and if possible some time upside down to "reshuffle the blood and lymph around"

Spinal health, essentials:

Facet joint approximation i.e closing:

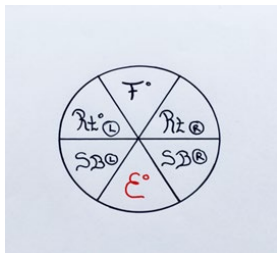
E = extension = backbends !

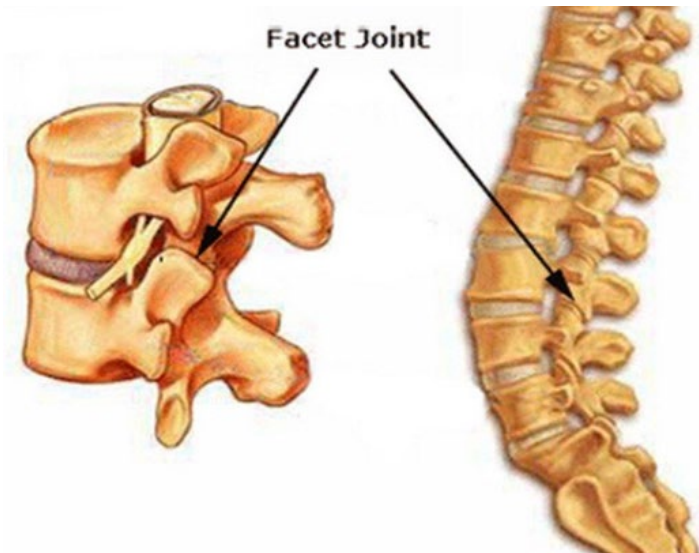
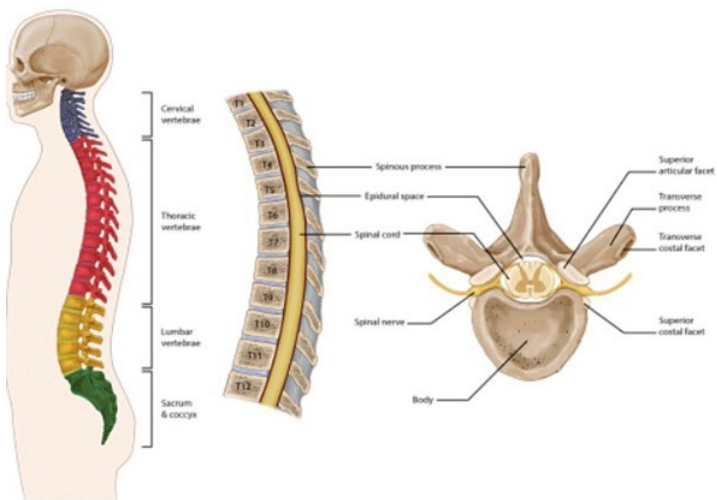
Facet joints have space:

F = flexion = forward folds !

Rt R and L = rotations = twists !

SB R and L = sidebending = lateral bends !





What are the functions of spinal flexion within a sequence, or what do we use flexion for?

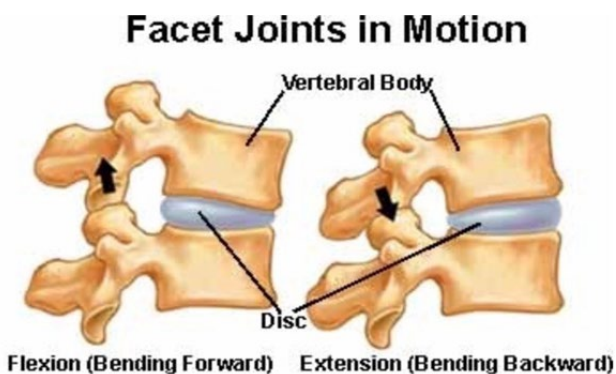
- To counteract / counterbalance spinal extension in a warm up , for instance within sun salutations when we go from up dog to down dog. Or within spinal ripples where flexion naturally follows and precedes extension.
- To bring our senses inwards (karnapidasana, baddha konasana & etc) encouraging introspection, during a cool down, before savasana
- To soothe our nervous system, bringing it back to the PSNS part
- To tone and stimulate our abdominal organs (liver, spleen, kidneys, stomach, intestines, pancreas, gall bladder)
- To increase the blood flow to our pelvic organs
- Just before savasana, as a last symmetrical cooling pose to reset our nervous system, calm the mind and cool the body

So what happens to the spine during flexion ?

The facets of the spine (posterior spinal structures, i.e back body structures) are gapped, or given space to, as the transverse processes move away from each other, which counteracts their 'compression' or decreased space given by extensions. This releases the spinal blood and nerve flow. All this whilst compressing the anterior aspect of the intervertebral discs, present between the bodies of each vertebrae.

Please **note** that therefore, between a strong extension such as a wheel or camel and a flexion such as child pose or paschimottanasana, a neutraliser or a neutral spinal position is required to avoid shocking the facet joints, and creating 'wear and tear'.

What is meant by neutral spinal position ? The position your spine is in whilst standing like in tadasana, sitting like in virasana, or lying down like in savasana. So it means your own natural curve is there.



Now what are the functions of spinal extension within a sequence? Or why do we use extension?

- To create heat by activating the nervous system, namely the sympathetic nervous system, by squeezing the facet joints and spaces via which nerves exit the spinal column. This creates a deep internal nervous system massage for spinal vessels and nerves.
- To boost the SNS, to give a boost of energy
- To deepen the breath by stretching the front body muscles (anterior intercostals, diaphragm, abdominals (whilst activating them to prevent injuries) , quads, psoas
- To enhance deep breathing means more oxygenation of the blood and cells
- To lengthen the front body, which stimulates all the chakras, or nerve bundles
- To strengthen and activate the back body, legs and shoulders
- To improve posture
- To increase spinal mobility and agility
- To decrease stress and anxiety

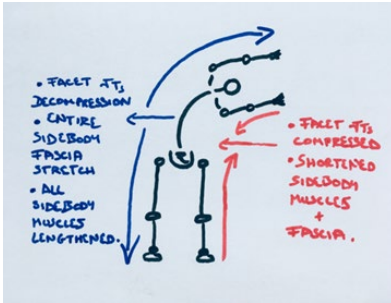
Note that in utero, our posture is curled up. The softest, most sensitive and vulnerable parts of our body are in the front (genitals, breasts, organs, face eyes). The front body is more vulnerable, so when we are being attacked we close the front just like animals do who stick their dorsal armoring out when attacked. Most chakras manifest outwardly along the front body.

Backbends, or spinal extensions, therefore require courage, trust, and to be adventurous. We must face what arises, in our field of awareness and open our sensitive, defenseless front body onto the world.

As a result backbends are effective at releasing old held emotions, and help cultivate positive qualities such as strength, enthusiasm, courage, while releasing joy.

Due to the fact they release so much heat and require energy and a certain level of spinal mobility, strong back bends need adequate preparation, and therefore won't be found in a warm up. Also since they do anything but bring us back inwards, they won't be found in a cool down. Milder backbends can of course be used to articulate the spine between flexion and extension like in spinal ripples or cat cows.

What are the functions of sidebending, or lateral bending, within a sequence? Or why do we use sidebending?



- On a spinal level, sidebending is used to open the facets unilaterally whilst closing the opposite ones.
- To compress and stretch the deep spinal muscles and lubricate spinal discs
- To increase spinal mobility
- To stretch and strengthen the side body (external obliques, QL, erector spinae, iliacus, TFL, ITB, intercostals)
- To increase our breath capacity as more space is introduced between the ribs on the side that is being stretched, meaning the lungs are also being stretched
- To improve body symmetry

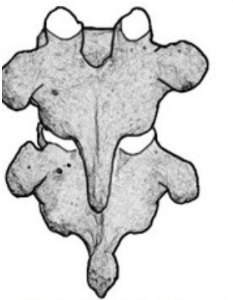
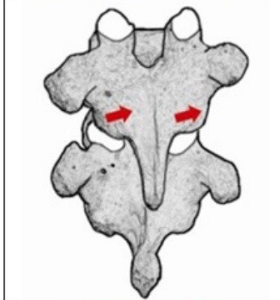
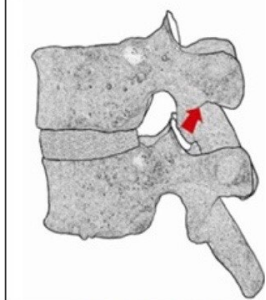
Note that therefore , sidebending is great during a warm up for the reasons above, or to prepare for an asana where lots of space is needed between the facets like astavakrasana where you need length in the lower ITB , as well as a deep twist in the spine .

But sidebending can also be used during cool down to counteract strong extensions, along with twists and/or flexions.

What are the functions of rotations of the spine within a sequence? Or why

do we use rotation?

- On a spinal level, twists deeply decompress the facet joints of our entire spine, which strongly releases the spinal blood and nerve flow
- To free the muscles, and fascia around the waist and rib cage
- To strongly stretch out the diaphragm, and increase lung mobility, and expansion, for improved breathing
- To increase the circulation to our spinal muscles and discs
- To deeply squeeze and wring out our abdominal organs
- To make fresh blood surge in to our organs, flushing out waste
- To purify massage and tone our entire visceral system.

Middle thoracic vertebrae		
		
Posterior view	Rotating left	Lateral view

As you can see on the above central picture, with just two vertebrae, the right facet joint is gapped during left rotation in this thoracic area, but the same would happen in the neck and lumbar spine.

Remember your inversions, what are they for?

- To improve circulation in the body. Use gravity to provide the brain, and glands in there such as your pituitary, hypothalamus, and pineal glands with more oxygen. This will improve concentration, memory and the functions of the said glands (they are important for sleep, appetite, hormonal levels etc) however too much time upside down can be dangerous, as it increases pressure on your neck vessels and facets, so go very gradually.
- To improve your immunity. The lymphatic system is a key player in keeping your body healthy that usually relies on muscle contractions so going upside down allows the lymph to travel more easily to your respiratory system where many toxins enter and leave the body.
- To energize ! Handstand, headstand, pincha mayurasana, Scorpio get blood flowing differently to the brain (part of your CNS remember) as the latter finds itself under heart level.
- To relax and cool down.... while heating inversions energize, cooling ones such as shoulder stand, halasana, karnapidasana (as they trigger the vagus nerve, your biggest PSNS nerve, by stretching it strongly) legs up the wall , calm the nervous system, bring you back to your PSNS, producing feelings of balance and calm.

- To improve balance, you've done it on one leg, one arm or two, now find it on your head, hands, or forearms.
- To improve your core power, meaning your total body core, not just the abs here!
- To flip your perspective on life. Inversions teach us that there are several different ways to approach a given situation, or problem.
- To stay humble. Before you get them, you fail so many times! This teaches you how important the journey is rather than just the destination!
- To increase playfulness and decrease anxiety and depression ! The more you get that blood pumping to the brain, the more serotonin levels can go up releasing loads of joy in the process !
- To conquer your fears. Once you can do a handstand, who can stop you in life? Especially not your own fears right?!

Note that rabbit, downward dog and prasarita

padotanasana are mild Inversions, as an inversion is an asana where the heart lies above head level ! If you want to practice inversions but are concerned about anything including your blood pressure, these can be options.

(Depending on how high your BP is)

Finally, why do we use hip openers in a sequence? What does hip opening mean and what is it for?

First of all, let's clear up any confusions.

Hip opening means increasing the range of motion of our hips in all vectors of motion.

Hip opening is not just increasing external rotation of the hip joint.

Hip opening means increasing hip flexion, extension, adduction, abduction, external, and internal rotation. A well rounded class for the hip doesn't mean you just did hanomanasana or flexion and extension with a degree of internal and external rotation.. That is great, but in the cool down adduction and abduction should also be present, or you cannot call your class well rounded for your hips.

With this in mind, why do we open our hips?

- To release lower back tension, knee discomfort, sciatic nerve symptoms
- To increase hip mobility, Increase blood flow to the pelvis, lumbar spine, discs, pelvic organs, intestines, and reproductive glands and organs.
- To stretch the pelvic floor, this also increases the blood flow to our pelvic organs.
- To release stored emotions in the pelvis, psoas, and lumbar spine.

Concerned that some category of asana may not be great for some students? Let's have a look at contraindications !

Forward folds, i.e spinal flexion :

- discal herniations: as the pressure to the anterior disc matter increases as we saw which means the disc could get further damaged.
- pregnant ladies may use caution to avoid putting too much pressure on fetus/organs.

Backbends, i.e spinal extension :

- facet joint arthritis
- spondylolisthesis
- vertigo made worse by cervical extension
- fractures
- abdominal hernias
- hypertension
- headaches and migraines (sensitive to heating the nervous system)

Inversions :

- high Blood Pressure
- History of stroke
- heart disease
- diabetes

- glaucoma, eye disorders
- dizziness, vertigo
- head injuries
- inner / middle ear issues including infections
- hiatus hernia
- cervical disc problems (shoulderstand, headstand)

Twists :

- go gentle during pregnancy
- discal herniation
- Spondy
- Chronic digestive issues
- SI issues, with caution, i.e very active twists with rigid pelvis to be avoided

Sidebending :

- Spinal disc injury
- Facet joint issues
- Take care that hands above head may be hard on heart issues

The question of menstruation:

I am sure I won't be the only one that finds it hilarious when a man tells me that I can or cannot practice inversions or this and that during my period because his dad is an obstetrician so he "obviously knows" what's best for me!

True story... And on a famous teacher training where we got zero anatomy knowledge as a result...

Anyway, as a woman, I wouldn't call menstruation a contraindication as such, preferring to leave the choice to women to decide as to what is going on in their own body for themselves.

Just remember that your ligaments are way laxer, in most cases, a little like during pregnancy or breastfeeding. So be mindful that if you are managing to go way beyond your normal range, this is just due to the ligaments no longer restricting your range of motion so much. Ligaments aren't structures that respond well to over stretching as over time this will increase their laxity, meaning it will decrease their stability, not good!

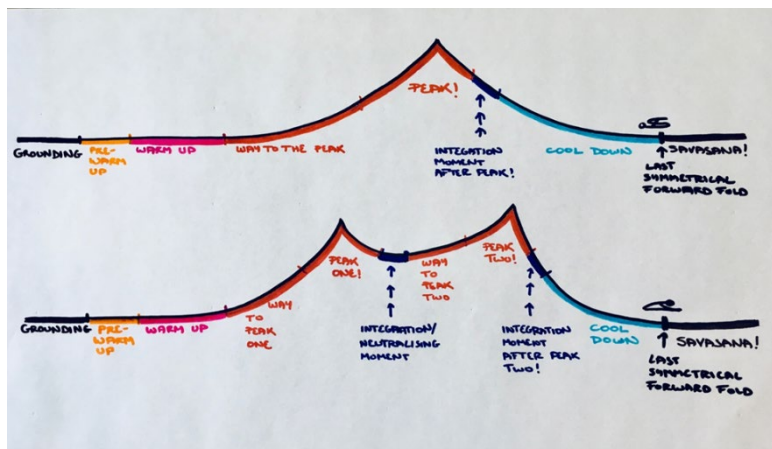
During your period, make extra sure you activate the muscles you intend to stretch to avoid over stretching your ligaments. (as seen in A5, and B8)

Regarding Inversions, personally if I do my normal 15 minute handstand plus 20 minute shoulder stand and cycle (halasana etc) practice, instead of lasting 3 days no symptoms, my period lasts 8 days on and off, with pain. Therefore, I don't practice yoga the first two days, and just

practice ripples and simple articulations, no inversions on day three. However I've met numerous ladies of up to 65 years old that tell me during their 30 years of practice they always did their Inversions without noticing Issues.

Your body, your choice ladies !

2. ONE PEAK OR TWO ?



Before we go into what is what, let's look at timing:

➤ Planning a 60 Minute class?

Grounding 4-6 minutes, pre-warm up 7-8 minutes, warm up 9-11 minutes, way to peak 9-11 minutes, peak 9-11 minutes, integration

1 minute, cool down 8 minutes, savasana 6 minutes (10% remember)

➤ Planning a 90 minute class?

Grounding 4-7 minutes, pre-warm up 8-10 minutes, warm up 15 minutes, way to peak 15 minutes, peak 15-20 minutes, integration 2-3 minutes, cool down 12-13 minutes, savasana 9 minutes (10%)

Of course these are just guidelines as long as your grounding is 4-6/7 minutes and your savasana 10% of your class, with sufficient cool down time, the rest is for you to judge. When you begin, practicing your class before you teach it is a very good idea !

What is grounding ? And why ground?

Grounding is these first four to six minutes, feet or sit bones firmly to the ground, where your students connect with their breath, calm it through pranayama or a breath guided meditation.

This way if your students came in anxious, angry, stressed or in a rush, they can take this opportunity to be grounded and embody their breath for the rest of the class, as opposed to the asana spreading whatever unwanted emotion they came in with.

By grounding, we bring awareness to our body (from sit bones, or feet upwards) and breath, using the latter and why not a mantra to help spread joy, peace and calm.

As you will see and practice in part C, which is your practice section, a peak class is great fun to design. The most productive and simple way to start here is to pick your peak asana and know it inside out. This means knowing what category/ies it belongs to, what needs to be long, what needs to be strong, and the essential actions it entails (these are the actions you take when you are in any expression of your peak in order to obtain its fullest expression, i.e what you squeeze, push, and in which directions). No matter the style you are teaching, Hatha, or vinyasa, knowing this

will help you be clear as to what needs to be long, strong and activated to produce your students' best possible peak asana. Not only this but it will also give you a clear idea of :

- the five essential asanas that absolutely need to be present before the peak
- the neutraliser or integration needed right after the peak
- the three essential asanas that absolutely need to be present after your peak

In other words, really knowing your peak saves you a LOT of time during which you may have been sequencing not only absolutely non-essential asana but even unproductive ones that may have increased the peak's difficulty for your students (by weakening the muscles that need to be active, shortening the muscles that need to be long) possibly making them lose motivation and trust in the process. Not only does it save you this time, but on top of it, in one go, you have a clear idea of what comes before and after, i.e your sequence is way closer, but on top of it you may even include a theme to your peak class. All this because you know your peak!

In section C, there is also a board for you to classify your asanas so that you can play at knowing all your similar asanas in each category which will help you immensely in your peak class design process.

So with this in mind....

What to include in your pre-warm up ?

Cat cows, gentle spinal ripples on all fours, simple spinal rotation movements, simple spinal lateral flexions...

Always ask yourself though , what is my peak today ? How could I best serve my students in this pre-warm up ?

If your peak is a really deep backbend on one leg, you could already introduce some quads stretches, on one knee, with a little more backbending than flexing here. Remember you probably only have 60 minutes, you must make productive use of your time. Any element present in the peak could and should already be present, in smaller form, in this section.

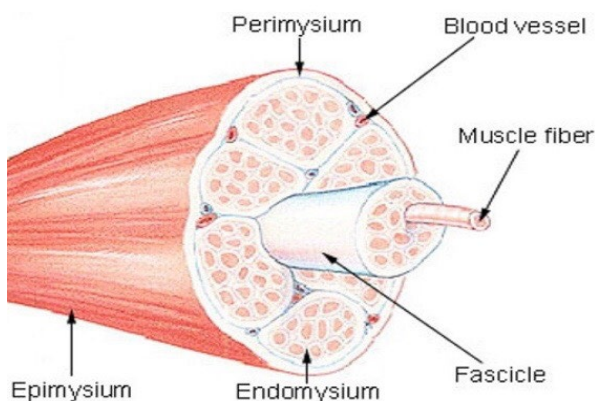
Equally if your peak is an intense arm balance requiring ultra strong abs and super open hips in external rotation, why waste the pre-warm up on endless backbends and internal hip rotations... makes no sense right ?!

Stay logical, always keeping your peak in mind, and your pre-warm up will be awesome and most importantly highly appropriate and effective in playing towards your peak.

Why warm up? What to include?

Our temperature is 37°C degrees no matter what. If you hit the 38°C degrees, that is called a fever already and doesn't happen unless you have an infection of some sort that the body is trying to clear. In the best of times we stay 37°C degrees through a process known as homeostasis.

So what is meant by "warm up", is that we are introducing more blood flow to the big muscle groups such as those in the legs. (see following picture of a muscle bundle that includes vessels within)



So what to include? Sunny A and B classical or variations relevant to your peak.

Remember what I said in the previous pre-warm up section? It applies to this section too. You can use classical sunnies (with the appropriate muscle actions) if you aren't inspired but want to be sure your students have some intrinsic heat. Or you can get as creative as you wish here, including arm

stretches in your lunges (like cowface or eagle), spinal ripples in down dog, mini gluts or abs exercises, all things relevant to your peak !

What is the way to the peak? What to include?

Remember the five asanas that absolutely needed to be present before the peak? Well if some weren't already present in mini-form in your pre-warm up, or in some form in your warm up, then go back to these parts first.... then include them in full form here so that any challenge that may be present in your peak is obliterated. However, refrain from using asanas that are as challenging as your peak asana to avoid losing your stamina! Your way to the peak gradually builds you up, lengthens what needs to be long, strengthens what needs to be strong, prepares you for all the essential actions necessary to perform your best peak.

Of course if you've picked the vinyasa (VF) version, these asanas are cleverly weaved into a flowing sequence. In this section the more you play at developing the right qualities whilst keeping the stamina going, the more the peak sequence will flow naturally, with the least difficulty! Same for Hatha, only, less asanas of course, probably just the five essential ones.

What is your peak sequence ? What to include ?

This is the opportunity to produce a playful sequence that just goes that step further from your way to the peak part. It leads you playfully into your peak asana, that will happen organically if it has been prepared optimally.

Your students will end up in it magically, it will seem easier than normal as the natural continuation from your well designed sequence. Effort, muscle action, essential actions will of course still be mandatory but will just flow as they will have been well prepared.

Make sure to at least take the peak asana twice so that students have a chance to deepen and explore it.

Integrate ! Or neutralise

One minute minimum to neutralise your spine and major joints after a deep backbend or to neutralise your major joints, and gently lengthen your super active shortened abs after a powerful arm balance, or to calm the hips, and neutralise them after a standing balance, or hip opener.

Remember that neutralizing for a minute or two is essential after your peak, but some mini integrations can also be sprinkled throughout your sequence. For example if you keep students a lot on their wrists, many won't be used to this, make sure to sit them in virasana from time to time, between sequence parts, to just simmer, stabilise their breath, whilst keeping their wrists in neutral to let the joints reset before more intensity. Remind the students to take these integration opportunities to refrain from rotating the

wrists or other big joints as this is aggressive for their capsules and given a moment they will simply reset as the blood flows back into or away from them .

What is a cool down? What to include ?

Very simply , you remember all your long areas, strong areas, essential actions that you've been building up until the peak was reached? Well now find your three asanas that are absolutely necessary to counteract what you've been doing the rest of the time to ensure your class is as well rounded as possible. I.e, what are the areas that need to be lengthened, strengthened, decompressed etc now ?

Remember not to have set rules as to what to find here. There are some guidelines, yes, you've seen the functions of the classes of asanas. Of course a wheel will never be in your cool down. You will for sure have some symmetrical forward fold to reset the brain right before savasana. But, if your peak was astavakrasana, twisting in your cool down isn't a big must as you've been twisting since your per-warm up.

Always bear your spine in mind, has it been strongly extending, i.e your peak was a back bend, then yes you absolutely need twists, maybe sidebends too, and for sure your final flexion. Always bear your hips and shoulders in mind, what have they been up to ? If they've mainly been doing flexion, extension, and some kind of rotation, make sure the cool down includes the missing vectors. What were your abs doing all along? You did huge backbends preceded by some abs and followed by a big abs work out, well that integrated your lower back already normally. (you still

need to decompress the facets with twists and flexions). You did a crazy arm balance sequence full of super active abs and strong arm exercises ? Then consider lengthening the abs with a SPHYNX or very mild passive backbend (so it isn't heating like an active one) and stretch those arm muscles... You get it, the sequence still needs to be well rounded as much as possible. It is still therapeutic rather than being a cardio workout !

Most importantly, your cool down brings everyone back to their PSNS, into their rest and repair system, ready for their meditation (optional) and savasana.

Savasana ? Why not skip it ?

No matter what twists and turns happen during your yang sequence, 10% of your class' total time is your savasana !

Your sequence is 60 minutes? Your savasana is 6 minutes?
Yes !

Your sequence is 90 minutes? Your savasana is 9 minutes?
Yes !

My studio wants me out of the room at minute 58 ? Don't skip one minute of savasana ! Skip any unnecessary part of your way to the peak (but of course you've only picked the strictly necessary right?) but don't shorten your savasana . Yoga, or asana practice is meant to bring you back to your PSNS so you can breathe fully and keep a cool mind at all times! Savasana is one of the most essential parts of your sequence ! You must leave people happier, more joyful and relaxed.

You had sixty minutes and produced a one peak class?
Great, well done.

You'd like to produce a second peak within the same class?

Do you have enough time ? If you have 90 minutes, then yes, if less than 75 minutes, it's going to be tricky. Unless you choose two peaks where some will consider peak one as part of your way to the peak and peak two as your actual peak, like say baby grass hopper and astavakrasana. Sure if you have loads of time these two might still be developed into two peaks why not, but if not it will indeed seem the first one is in fact your way to the peak asana.

So now, you do have 75 minutes, 90 minutes or even more, perfect !

How do you **chose your two peaks** then?

Well one very simple and effective way to do it is to pick your second peak, which will be the most challenging of the two and see if a first peak trickles from it. I.e, you've decided your second peak is dancer in sideplank ? (a deep backbend combined with a sideplank, the two combined producing a challenging balancing asana) then ask yourself what is similarly challenging, that would already prepare part of the asana as well as being challenging enough to be a first peak ?

Dancer or natarajasana you say ? Yes, great. Dancer is challenging enough to be a peak, deep backbend balanced on one leg which requires a strong but flexible standing leg and flexible, just as strong, leg pushing against one of

your hands to produce the said deep backbend. Perfect, the two asana are similar enough that the second has already been partly prepared by the first way to the peak, but is still different enough to require that second thorough way to the peak.

The more you play around with the board of asanas in part C, the more comfortable you will be at picking peaks and second peaks.

So what happens in your two peaks class?

Right after peak one, take that minute or two to Integrate.

But then instead of starting your cool down, now will be the time to start your second way to the peak. You should still be warm enough, already have some of the required muscle actions, long and strong areas engrained for way to peak one, and have the stamina to build the extra power you need for peak two.

Your second way to the peak should be as playfully leading you to your second peak sequence, so that peak two seems to flow in naturally.

Once the second peak has been achieved, comes your integration time, make it long enough, the students have just done two peaks.

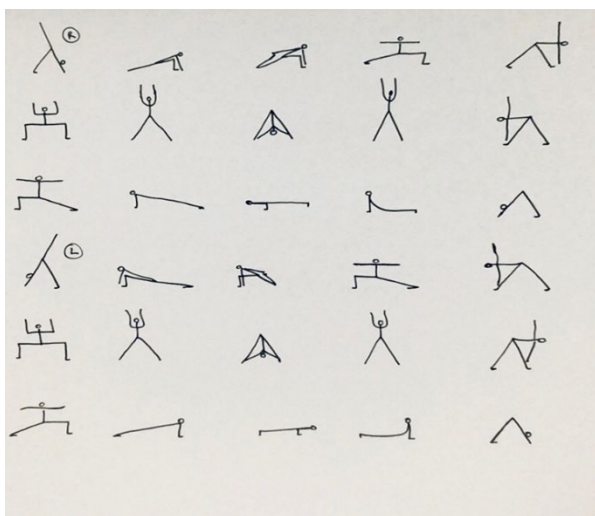
After this, you can proceed to your cool down. Again, the more the two peaks are logically combined in terms of the essential actions they entail, the easier it will be to find these three four asanas to counteract these essential actions to make a well rounded type sequence. Your cool down is still your way for students to enter their PSNs before savasana, so take the necessary amount of time here. And finally.... a well deserved savasana !

Of course if you have sufficient time, it is also possible to pick a second peak which is totally different from the first. Just make sure in this case that your second way to the peak is long and precise enough. This could actually be a way to round your class nicely by using the second peak as super

active counterbalance for peak one. Which may mean you need less asanas for the cool down, as long as your class stays well rounded and students ends up in their PSNS that is! Always practice what you teach first.

Why not include a mandala? A mandala sequence can switch things around and be fun and playful, but requires focus on your part. It basically means starting part of your sequence facing the short edge end of the mat, to then face the long edge, followed by the opposite short edge, either continuing to sequence in a 360 degree way to end up facing the front again or simply doing a 180 degree sequence. This is a great memory exercise. Maybe don't attempt it if you already have trouble remembering which side is which! Otherwise, enjoy!

Here is what a mandala flow (180 degrees) might look like in your notes whilst using stickmen, which we will talk about in section C.



3. THE THEMED CLASS (VF/ HATHA)

Before you start picking a theme, ask yourself, what are the qualities that you are looking at cultivating in yourself and your students?

Mindfulness	Endurance	Gratitude	Surrender
Compassion	Resilience	Joy	Acceptance
Gentleness	Steadfastness	Love	Devotion
Humility	Courage	Kindness	Yielding
Softness	Willpower	Sensitivity	.....
Contentment	Forbearance	Playfulness	.....
.....	Concentration	.....	.....

Believe in your theme

A themed class can give immense value, enhance the quality of your connection with your students, or it can come destroy your efforts at sequencing !

The theme you pick must therefore be at least interesting to you, it must resonate with you so you embody it with passion. You must have a real understanding and knowledge of it. But also, it needs to apply to your audience, if it does it will have a way bigger and more positive impact.

Ask yourself:

'What do they need?'

'What will best serve them ?'

Induce or reduce

Another aspect to consider about how you go about building your themed sequence is whether you want to induce or reduce.

In your deductive method, you start general to go specific

- Start with your bigger picture, to then focus your sequence around it. In this method, you believe in your theme so much so that everything else will come from it.

In your reductive method, you start with details, to then assign a meaning

- Start by designing an impeccable asana sequence, then see if a theme appears from the postures. In this method, being very clear about the history, story or meaning of your asanas will be key in associating it to a theme.

Jot it down

Whether with the deductive or inductive method, you need to fluff things out so your theme isn't only, like in many classes we've all been to, a short intro before the warm up that disappears until it reappears for one sentence before savasana .

To avoid this, jot down words, phrases, cues, Imagery, poetry, philosophy, as well as asana, pranayama, and meditations that might all be present throughout the 60 minutes of class, woven in.

Your themed class needs an Intro at the start, like a read passage, telling a personal anecdote, telling the story of your peak asana, or simply setting an intention for the class and day.

You then need to flesh it out through your choice of asanas, and language throughout whilst not talking too much. The more directly the experience is felt within the body, the more impactful your theme will be, as it will be embodied. At the end of the day, like Maya Angelou said, it isn't what you say or do but how you make people feel that they won't forget.

You may for instance have chosen a theme that goes well with a particular asana class in which case you could structure the class around a particular action in the body, continuously applying it relative to each asana. Of course in this case, for your class to be well rounded, when the cool down comes, you might have to talk about the opposite action. This may go well with themes related to opposite qualities. (such as Abhyasa and vairagya)

A theme is an offering

Remember that a theme need not be mandatory, it may not resonate with everyone on that day. So we always have the option of saying 'take what you need and leave the rest'.

Also, remember a theme may just come as an Intention rather than theme. By holding space, meeting students where they are. At the end of the day, you are here to create an experience, it is up to you as to what type of experience you want to offer.

Creating The experience

Start small, focus on feeling, keep it simple so your students will experience it in a way that makes them feel good.

- **Get into the body** : root to rise, lengthen to twist, move from the core, align the bones, umpada drishti (inward gaze)
- **Motivational** : use beautiful words from the Bhagavad Gita, the Yamas, niyamas , dharma, poetry

'Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured' B.K.S Iyengar

'The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are' C.Jung

'To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you someone else is the greatest accomplishment' R.W Emerson

- **Natural world** : use the seasons, or aspects of the natural world such as the moon and its phases, the summer of backbends, the winter of forward folds. Nature doesn't rush , yet everything gets accomplished, can be linked to the quality of resilience or patience.
- **Philosophical concepts** : the three gunas, the Yamas and niyamas, the Bhagavad Gita , an event in nature, pairing opposite qualities. All can induce a

meditation upon a concept whilst staying within the body and breath .

- **Mind, body, spirit** : why not focus on the pelvic floor, the diaphragm , your heels, a chakra, or a quality such as non-judgment, weaving all three to connect body, mind and spirit in the experience.

The possibilities are near unlimited here, just play!

The more you delve into themed classes the more you will love their intricacies and depth.

4. HATHA FOR BUILDING A POWERFUL AND BALANCED BODY

YOUR GENERAL FULL SPECTRUM CLASS:

1. Grounding
2. Per-warm up
3. Adho Mukha Svanasana
4. sunny A + B
5. Adho Mukha Vrksasana
6. Standing asana
7. Hip openers
8. Abdominals
9. Arm balances
10. Supta Virasana
11. Sirsasana
12. Backbends
13. Neutraliser
14. Abdominals
15. Sarvangasana and cycle (cooling)
16. Twists
17. Symmetrical forward fold
18. Meditation
19. Savasana

As you can see in this sequence, the abs have been placed twice. A class containing all of the above elements would probably require three hours.

So of course if you have chosen to work more on arm balances than backbends in your session, the abs will be before the arm balances and you might choose to do smaller back bends requiring less abs opening after them.

In general bear in mind that if the abs work you do is too intense, your students will not manage their deeper back bends. So be mindful, before strong back bends, do incorporate appropriate abs work, but do not overdo it, preferring to keep the stronger abs work for after your deepest wheels and camels.

Since classes these days are often rather one hour than three, your powerful balanced sequence might look like :

1. Grounding
2. Pre-warm
3. Sunny A+B or equivalent less classical variations
4. Adho Mukha Vrksasana
5. Standing poses
6. Hip openers
7. Basic backbends graded towards the deepest
8. Neutraliser
9. Abs, more or less depending on how much was incorporated in the Sunnies
10. Sarvangasana

11. Twists

12. Symmetrical forward fold

13. Meditation

14. Savasana

Now let's examine the why of what we do.

What is grounding, and why ground?

Grounding is these first four to six minutes where students are either sit bones or feet firmly anchored and focused on bringing their awareness inwards, into their body, into their breath and deepening their breath. This is their first step towards embodying any of the qualities that your class is looking to enhance in them.

Remember most people will arrive to class after rushing around all day, they might be angry or upset on arriving, and if you let them practice like so, your asana class, no matter how well sequenced, will just spread these unwanted emotions.

What is a pre-warm up and why pre-warm up?

Your pre-warm up has several purposes.

To start with, it enables students to establish a certain coordination of breath, movements, and essential actions.

It increases their sensitivity, body awareness, breath awareness, and mobility for what will follow.

The pre-warm up is a sequence of simplified versions or prep stages of classical asanas or non-classical postures.

Gradually the pre-warm up sends blood to big muscle groups and gently articulates the hips, shoulders and spine.

Adho Mukha Svanasana

Remember the aim of your asana class is to produce a powerful, balanced body, mind and spirit. The body, to be well balanced, needs not only an equally powerful front and back, but also equally powerful upper and lower parts.

This is why just having standing asanas in a sequence without either backbends such as wheel, or arm balances, doesn't really make sense, unless you know you will be doing a second session the same day for the part you missed in the morning. But really what we are looking for is a balanced asana sequence.

Bearing this in mind, downward facing dog is great after the pre warm up as from here your class can go in any direction. It is a prep for forward folds, backbends, and arm balances. It already gently opens shoulders, upper back, hips, hamstrings and calf muscles.

Sunny A and B or variations

Done towards the start, students still have strength, and stamina. The sun salutations or any variations loosen and warm up the main muscles of the shoulders, arms, hips and legs.

Adho Mukha Vrksasana

A lot of power is needed for handstands, so you will find students will perform them at their best towards the start of the sequence. They are perfect for awakening the core (full body core not just abs) , for opening the shoulders and upper back whilst also strengthening them.

Finally they are a great prep for all other inversions, arm balances and backbends. (for wheel you need as much power shooting from the back of your heart towards the ground through the hands as in handstand)

Standing sequence

Early on in the sequence, standing asanas enable students to 'warm up' due to the blood being sent to the strong upper leg muscles way better than seated asanas would.

Additionally, your standing sequence brings way more mental awareness and agility than seated asanas, but require stamina. However as they are relatively less complex than other asana categories, they will promote confidence and empowerment as they make your students more grounded and stable physically.

Hip openers

Hip openers are interesting in themselves as they promote lower back and pelvic health. However, they are also great preps for challenging hip openers such as lotus, and for challenging arm balances and inversions.

Arm balances

Arm balances require a lot of upper body and abdominal power, so they cannot be present early on due to the preparation that is necessary to produce healthy ones. In general as they strongly connect you to your heart focal point, these asana are great to diminish fear and depression, and increase your sense of playfulness.

Abdominals

Abdominal work can always be sprinkled in from your first sun salutation as they are highly recommended before your arm balances. However remember that excessive abdominal work before backbends will prevent you from performing deep back bends. So yes you want to protect the lower back facets from excess compression, but not that much that you can no longer perform your back bend. Therefore, sprinkled in from your sun salutations onwards, they are excellent in reasonable amounts before arm balances and backbends.

The stronger abdominal work is great for after your deepest back bend to give your lower back it's integrity. But remember to neutralise for a minute first.

Supta virasana

Supta virasana which can be a gentle backbend itself, should be done after your back body has been stretched, so preferably not right after your sunnies.

It is an excellent preparation for ALL your backbends as it is fantastic for lengthening psoas and your quads that are

some of the main restrictions to you performing your best backbend.

The longer you can keep it, five minutes if you wish, the freer your consecutive backbends will be.

Sirsasana and variations

If you decide to include a sirsasana in your sequence, know that it is still a heating inversion that requires shoulder opening and upper back work, so needs prep, but shouldn't be towards the end of your asana sequence as it requires stamina, a strong contracted neck and is the opposite of calming.

Also if you decide to include it, therefore you will absolutely need to include your Sarvangasana later on, which is cooling and lengthens your tight neck muscles. In any case, to regulate your blood pressure, make sure to include lots of down dogs and gentle inversions in your sequence first.

Backbends

Backbends should be sequenced in a built up order, from least challenging to most challenging. They require loose, open but strong shoulders, lower back, pelvic floor, psoas, quads. Therefore as second asana of the sequence they wouldn't be great. They should be sequenced at the climax of your class, towards the end before the cool down as they need a lot of prep. However since they greatly stimulate the SNS, it is best not to have them right at the end before Savasana.

Since backbends require engagement and contracting of the back body, these structures will need softening before the end of the class.

Neutralizing or integration

After any backbend especially deep ones, remember your facet joints have been squeezed, so you will need to let the spine simmer in a neutral spinal curve position for a minute or two to reset before going anywhere else. This is one of these times where you should refrain from squeezing the knees into the chest, preferring to have your knees together, feet mat width apart on the ground in the case you are lying supine. This will enable your SI joints and lower lumbar facet joints to breathe into space for a minute. This is also a time to integrate the teachings of the backbends, to still the breath and quiet the mind before you start your abdominal workout to integrate the lower back.

Sarvangasana and cycle

Your Sarvangasana and it's cycle including karnapidasana, halasana etc , is a great opportunity for cooling and coming inwards. The deep stretch this cycle provides to the neck muscles including the upper traps and suboccipital muscles is the only real opportunity you have to stretch this area. Additionally what you are stretching is the dura matter that surrounds the CNS, brain and spinal chord, this opportunity is unique. Also present at the base of the skull is the opening through which your vagus nerve exits the skull, and this nerve is your biggest PSNS nerve. All this to say, do not rush this cycle. In Hatha you have the

opportunity here to tune into your PSNS, improving your sleep and digestion, decreasing your stress levels etc so if you want to make this cycle take up to fifteen twenty minutes, providing you have the time, do it. Of course if you suffer from high blood pressure, tend to feel dizzy afterwards or know your neck vessel are weak, as always, do not go against the contraindications and just take your rabbit instead!

Twists

Twists are wonderful asanas that might be present in your standing sequence. You might also decide to lead a twist based class to stimulate a dull and lethargic body, as these asanas are great for detox. If you choose the more active variations, standing twisted asanas to lead this kind of class make sure to warn your students before hand as they are very effective and some students may know or not, that they may not react so nicely to the class, for example if they suffer from abdominal organ issues or allergies. Just make sure nobody ends up with bad surprises.

However, twists can also be used after your neutralizing/ integration minute, so after your backbends as they are going to deeply gap, or bring space in between the facet joints that you have been squeezing. They also have this cooling and soothing power for your nervous system if it has been agitated after backbends.

Twists can also be used after quiet forward folds and restorative postures to stimulate your system.

In any case they will bring the nervous system and glandular system back to homeostasis so are a very interesting class of asanas.

Forward folds

Your standing ones can of course be in your sun salutations and more active parts of your sequence to articulate the spine and stretch the back body.

However, the seated ones are great for the last part of your sequence for their cooling, quieting, and introverting qualities.

Since you need a symmetrical asana to reset the brain after your twists, before the savasana, your forward folds are great as the last asana of your sequence. (balasana, happy baby)

Meditation

Since the entire purpose of an asana practice is to be able to sit comfortably to meditate, meditation is great at the end of the class. The students will still be more alert than after savasana. Your body is warm enough, the mind quiet and centered so it is easier to slip into a meditative state.

Savasana

Those 10% of your class to let the nervous system rest and reset.

5. HATHA AND THE CHAKRAS



In Hatha, you could :

- Focus your class on one chakra- but keeping things balanced !
- Go from asana for chakra 7 to 1
- Focus on a theme linked to one chakra
- Produce a well rounded with all chakras being represented equally

In Vinyasa, you could :

- Produce a one or two peak class with emphasis on a chakra
- Produce a well rounded class with a theme linked to a chakra

MULADHARA , EARTH, reproductive glands:

Standing and seated poses

SVADISTHANA , WATER, adrenal glands:

Hip openings and bound poses (lotus)

MANIPURA , FIRE, solar plexus:

Warrior poses, twists and backbends

ANAHATHA, AIR, thymus gland:

Heart openers especially backbends

All poses through integration of the shoulders such as arm balances

VISHUDDHA , ETHER, thyroid gland:

Forward folds, Sarvangasana cycle and pranayama

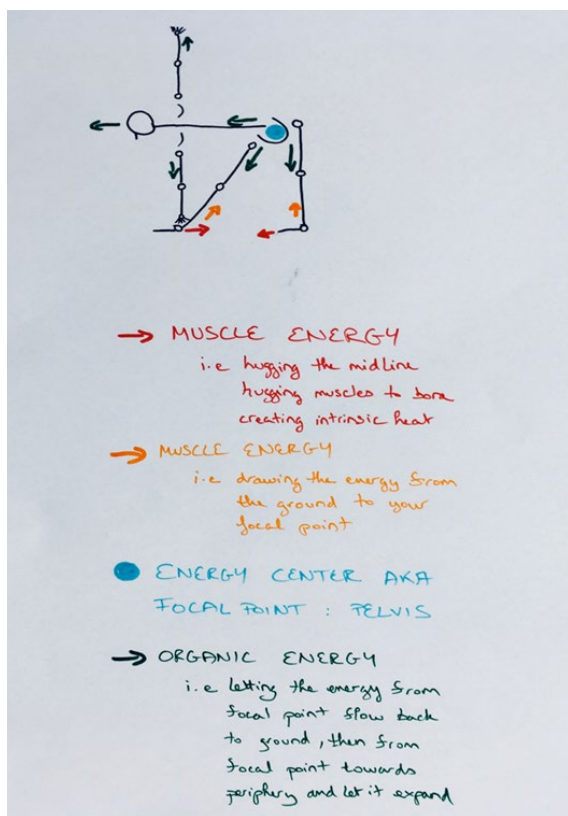
AJNA AND SAHASRARA , ETHER, pituitary and pineal glands:

Pranayama, sirsasana,, meditation directed toward knowledge

6. ENERGY CENTERS OR FOCAL POINTS

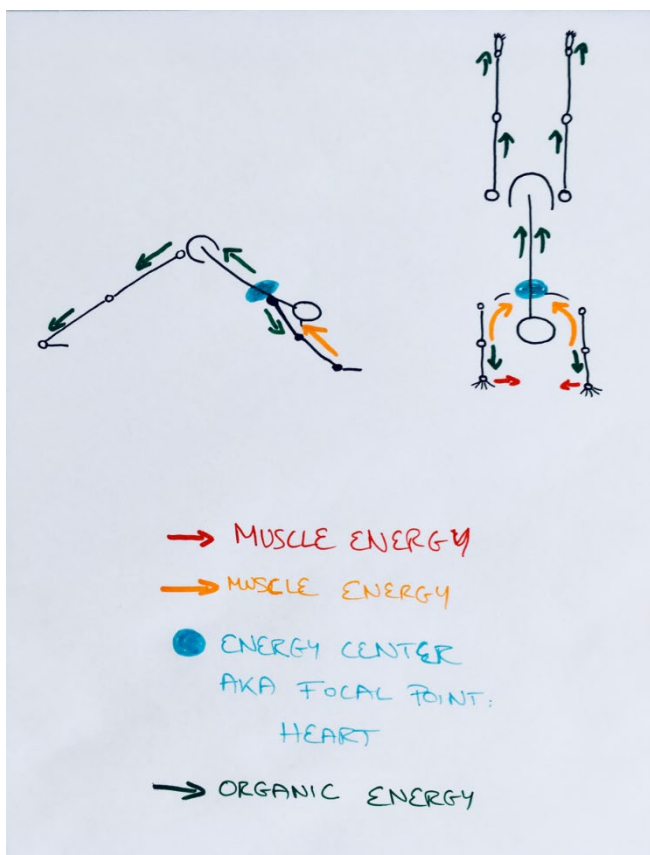
1. The core of the pelvis

- A point a few inches above the navel in line with the lower sacrum where the tailbone begins
- Active on standing, sitting asanas, in which the pelvis is the most weight bearing part of the asana



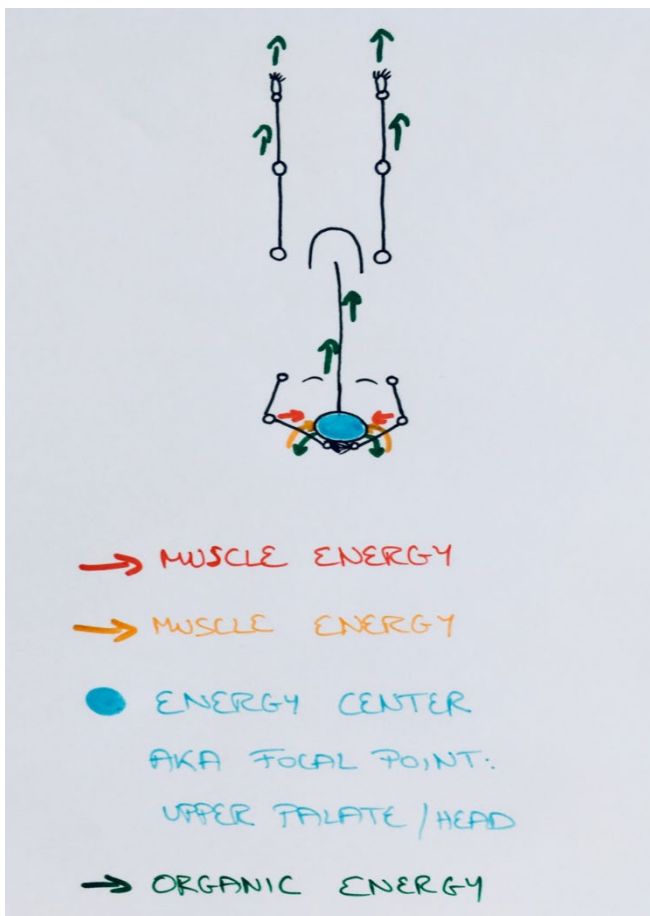
2. The base of the heart

- Where the heart rests on top of the diaphragm at the core of the chest
- Active on adho mukha Svanasana and arm balances



3. The center of the upper palate

- Active In inversions in which the head is part of the foundation such as sirsasana , or Sarvangasana and cycle



What are focal points?

They are the key places of power within each asana. The points that provide structural integrity to each asana, as you draw muscle energy towards them, and let organic energy flow from them to give that balance of contraction and expansion.

As you design your well rounded asana classes, it is important to keep these points in mind. A good balance of asanas from all three focal points will make a more wholesome class. Leaving students in their upper palate point wouldn't be recommended. Prefer to leave your students grounded with an open heart, i.e a good presence of the heart point throughout, finishing with the pelvis grounded, which if you are following the other guidelines presented here, should happen anyway.

Then in savasana, all three points are to the ground, but the last asana before that will determine where the students are.

Always prefer to leave your students happier, more joyful, but also grounded to face the world (pelvic point) rather than leaving them floating in the clouds or too much in their head (upper palate point).

How to activate these points?

On every asana where you draw your limbs to the midline, or hug muscles to bone (by activating them), to create intrinsic heat or muscular energy, you are drawing energy from the periphery of the body toward the focal point. Snuggling the heads of the bones into their socket, providing stability and integrity. Only then, from these points can you let the energy flow back down into the earth to grow roots and in an upward

direction to produce spanda or expansion with integrity within the asana.

Why create muscle energy?

If this isn't already clear, we need intrinsic heat, meaning heat from within our muscles (different to extrinsic heat, i.e. when it is 38 degrees in the room, or when you sweat due to a cardio workout), from the pre-warm up onwards in order to not damage our muscles, and tendino-ligamentous junctions. This is all about what was mentioned in the part about your muscle spindles, Golgi tendon organs, and the process of PNF or proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation applied to your asana practice.

An interesting experiment or exercise is to ask your students to start the class lying supine and ask them to quickly place their two hands on the point/s that draw/s them the most. Lead them through your class, Hatha, vinyasa flow, themed, well rounded, with peak, powerful, doesn't matter but maybe with an emphasis on muscle energy and bearing in mind these focal points. Then right before the start of savasana, ask them again and observe where their hands go this time. You may be surprised. But if your class was targeted towards opening the heart and was successful in doing so, very often the majority of your students will have shifted to place both their hands on their heart even if they didn't start the class that way. If your class was grounding, their hands will both be drawn to their pelvis. If it was both heart opening and grounding, one hand will be on the pelvis, the other on the heart.

Just observe, this can be an interesting, truly objective feedback for you!

C. PRACTICE

In this section , I invite you to play with asanas , on paper, using stick men , their Sanskrit names, or English names , just play.

This is your opportunity to quit your need for perfection. By this I don't mean you should quit looking for the best, most creative, most well rounded, or most healing yoga sequence.

What I mean is that looking for perfection is often creating more mental blocks and preventing creativity than improving the latter.

The more you are able to play freely in all the directions I suggest here, the clearer things will be in your head, so that when you experiment within your body and it doesn't feel quite right, you are able to pin down straight away what could have been done better!

Enjoy !

1. STICK MEN

2. ASANA BOARD

3. CHOOSE YOUR PEAK / PEAKS

4. WHAT THEME, WHAT ASANA

5. WHAT CHAKRA, WHAT ASANA

1. YOGA STICK MEN , OR HOW TO SEQUENCE FASTER

When you start to develop a busy yoga schedule, produce courses, or simply want to vary your own daily practice, learning how to be time effective is of primary essence.

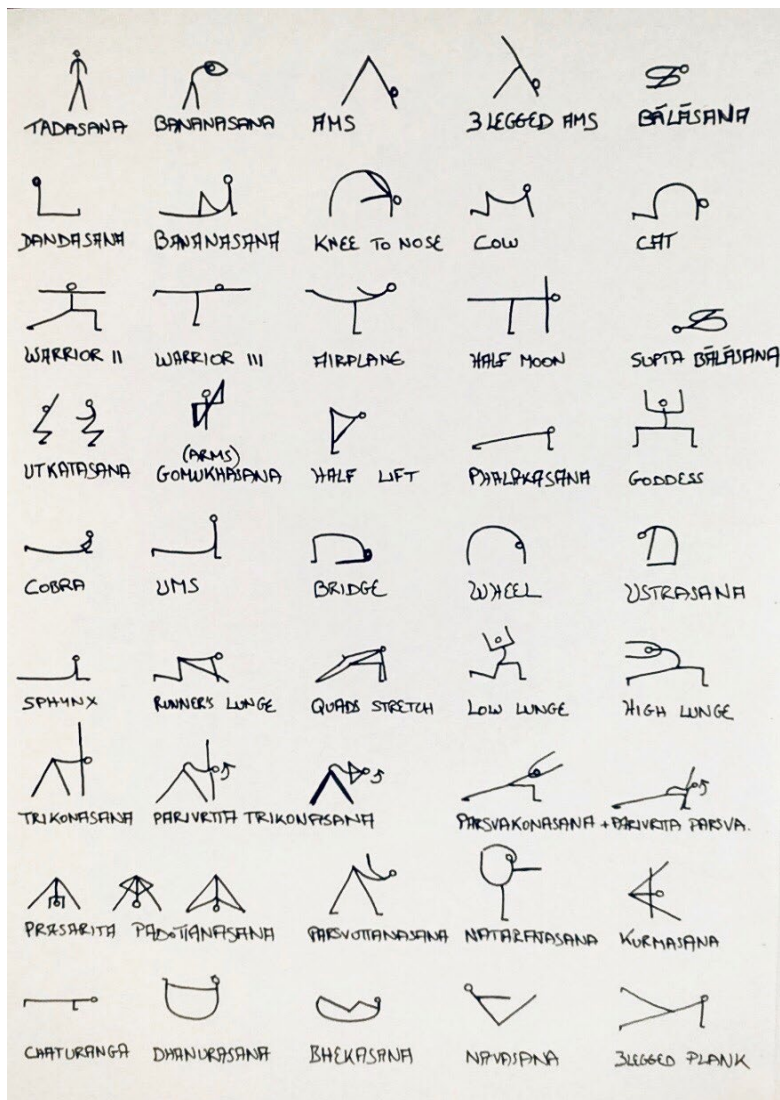
Sure, initially you may also want to practice your Sanskrit names, however for many of us, these become more or less irrelevant as students throughout the world mostly get the asana names in their own language.

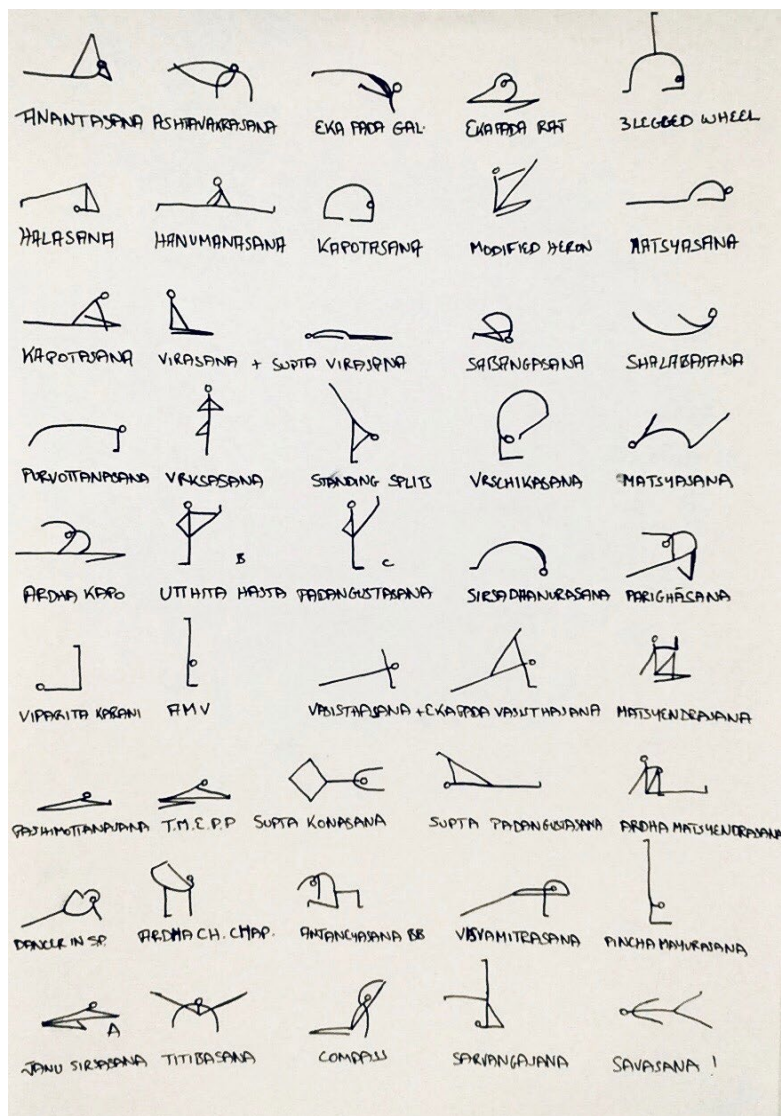
The following two pages are just examples of stickmen I might use. I drew them and included them in here like so, because I want to show you that I am far from being a graphic designer, or pro at drawing. How frequently students on 200hr and 300hr trainings tell me they will never use stickmen simply because they are scared of drawing poorly is just another example of how mainstream education doesn't help us develop our creativity or openness to making mistakes, be ok with them, and use them to grow. This will be covered up by statements that stickmen take too much time, or are too difficult for some asanas!

The point is not to publish your stickmen sequence in a famous yoga publication, unless you want to, the point is that a stickman literally takes one second or two and a fraction of paper space compared to words, especially some of the Sanskrit ones that may contain five words for one asana. Also remember if an asana wasn't a traditional one, the Sanskrit was just found recently, translated from its

English name to make it look like a more “legit” or traditional asana... once you start with stickmen, and the other exercises provided here, you will be amazed at how many healthy sequences you can plan within an hour, which might have otherwise taken you half a day in your already busy week!

Finally, this book isn't a repertoire of asanas and their modifications, as I want you to stay open, i.e not limit yourself to teaching a certain Hatha, vinyasa, ashtanga or whatever list of asanas. The more you broaden your spectrum the better. There are many lists, charts and so on available online. My advice, have fun picking new charts, containing classical, traditional and non traditional asanas and producing stickmen from them. Discovering new asanas to stick in your asana board (next part of the book), examining them to understand how they work etc will give you almost unlimited inspiration for new types of sequences!





2. ASANA BOARD

In this section, your stickmen will take up less space than words, it is the opportunity to practice! Also some asanas might end up in several boxes. I invite to get a notebook and fill it with the boards in this section, so you can add more boxes as you wish. Initially you might get confused but the more you classify them, every time you meet a new asana, the more it will become clear in your mind that several asanas might be used at some point of your sequence but since they may be equivalent you can chose which one to use instead of all of them... depending on what asana is coming next, i.e depending on the purpose of the chosen asana at that point of the sequence.

	Standing	Seated	Supine	Prone	All 4s	Side Lying
Forw. Folds						
Back Bends						
Twists						
Side Bends						

Abs						
Hip Opener						
Sh. Opener						
Balance						

Can you think of more categories you'd like to include?

Inversio n	........	.......	.......	........	.......	.........
.....						

3. CHOOSE YOUR PEAK / PEAKS

- Look at the level of the class
- Want to include a theme? Pick the peak pose relevant to it
- Want to improve on a challenging asana, chose one you are working on to see if your sequence is that good that it helps you perform it better than usually

You have a peak ? What next ?

Know it inside out, its story of course, but also :

- It's essential actions , i.e to perform its optimal form what muscular energy, and organic energy are you using, or what are you squeezing, what are you activating, what are you pushing or pulling ?
- What needs to be lengthened? Opened ?
- What needs to be strong and powerful ?

Practice with : dancer, astavakrasana, vasisthasana, dancer in sideplank, three legged wheel, goddess, crow, side crow etc

Once you know your essential actions, long and strong area, pick five asanas (Hatha, VF) that are essential or directly necessary for performing this peak optimally!

What to use now to neutralise ?

What to use to make your sequence well rounded? Pick three asanas that counteract the peak pose essential actions, long and strong areas

My peak two is :

So my peak one could be :

Choose your level , choose your peak !

For this , know your modifications and use of props!

This book isn't about modifications, if your training hasn't been clear about the latter, I would highly recommend you to pick your next training related to this, or also to use your imagination and the anatomy provided in this book to figure out what can be done safely to simplify an asana, which goes with how well you are filling your asana board.

Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Full dancer using strap	Full dancer using strap, option without it	Full dancer with option for strap
Baby grasshopper with strap	Baby grasshopper	Ashtavakrasana Grasshopper
Baby crow with block	Baby crow / Full crow option	Full crow

Chosen peak : Natarajasana / Dancer (full expression)

Essential actions:

Strong/ powerful areas:

Long/ stretched areas:

Five essential asanas to prep it:

Neutraliser / integration : Malasana

Three counterposes to round your sequence well:

Chosen peak : Ashtavakrasana / eight angle pose

Essential actions:

Strong / powerful areas:

Long / stretched areas:

Five essential asanas to prep:

Neutraliser / integration: Sphinx

Three asanas to counteract peak to round your sequence well:

The two peak sequence :

Your first peak : Natarajasana

Your second peak : Dancer in side plank

Essential actions peak one:

Essential actions peak two:

Strong/ powerful areas peak one:

Strong / powerful areas peak two:

Long / stretched areas peak one:

Long / stretched areas peak two:

Five asanas to prep peak one:

Neutralizing peak one:

Five asanas to prep peak two:

Neutralizing peak two:

Three/ four asanas to counteract both peaks, to make your sequence well rounded:

4. WHAT THEME, WHAT ASANA

a. Match a quality (mindfulness, endurance etc) with an asana, which type of asana is it?

[illegible]

C. Pick an asana, its signification and possible themes

Asana	Signification	Possible themes

D. Theme, asana, action

Theme	Asana

e. Asana, actions

<i>Asana</i>	<i>Actions</i>

E. Finding meaning in asanas

Meaning	Asana
Breaking bad habits	
Embracing your best self	
Abhyasa- vairagya	
Flip your perspective	
Acknowledge your inner light	

Meaning	Asana

F. Linking seasons, natural phenomenonons with asanas/asana category

Season, or natural phenomenon	Asana, asana category
Moon phases	
Winter vs summer	
The four seasons	

g. Philosophical concepts and asanas

h. Body part (ex pelvic floor) , action , asana

Body part	Action	Asana

j. Words / develop your cues and ways of saying things

Words have the potential of holding so much power. However like for anything in life, if you are unclear as to your objective, you cannot state clearly what you want, and therefore you won't get it and will have to settle for something else. With some extra thinking you might come to accept that "something else" as being ok, whether in business, with family or picking your life partner.

Now this book isn't about finding your soulmate, but being crystal clear as to what you want to see improving in your students' practice, or within your own practice for that matter, is the first step to actually improving these matters.

So first of all, ask yourself how well you have understood every single asana in your board. All the actions (pushing what in which direction, pulling what with what, drawing what to where etc) needed to achieve the best possible expression of your asana today.

Once you've broken down each one of these actions, are there words you could use to describe what is going on? You see if you tell a drop in, beginner to activate their abs, most people will never have even felt their abs, some will not know where they are exactly, so forget asking them to activate their abs as this will be chinese to them. Some of them will tell you that of course they know where their abs are but if asked their directions and attachment points will of course go blank, i.e most people actually don't know.

However if you tell them to bring pubis to sternum closer as you show them the latter, of course, they will usually start

activating some of their abs (rectus abdominis) because they will know what to bring, and where to.

After a while they may start feeling this area and things will start getting clearer, to the point that they will have a certain embodied awareness of what abs are. You may be surprised, but many people have no connection to their bodies, or to their breath, to the point where they will even ask you if something is painful in their own body during a manual treatment. Question that you, as manual practitioner, can obviously not answer, as, if they don't know what they feel, who can ? This is a very common issue, and as yoga teachers, you can really start connecting people to their bodies again, through breath awareness, and also through conscious activation of bodily structures.

To get back to the topic of words, clear cues will get everyone concerned far nearer to embodied awareness and conscious yoga practice than wishy washy ones.

Example, you would like your students to go from three legged down dog to high lunge? You could, like we have all heard so many times, say "on your breath out, place your right foot to the top of the mat" is that clear to you ? Let me tell you with this phrase, out of 20 students you will have just as many foot placements, indeed where exactly to the top of your mat do you want their foot ? Also, most students will have lost so much energy wondering where exactly that foot should go, which also means they are back in their head as opposed to focused on embodied breath and

movement.... you've already managed to destroy the purpose of your class in one sentence!

Now if you are clear in your head as to what high lunge means to you, and what you expect to see in your group, where you want to see peoples' feet etc, your cue will probably sound more like "as you exhale, right foot to right thumb". Suddenly students will trust you to guide them, i.e their brain will be more passive, just receiving the accurate cues, which will enable them to focus on embodying their breath and body fully.

Finally **clean your speech** ! i.e we all have bad habits when it comes to using extra useless link words that weaken cues. It could be anything from "and, so, then , and then" to extra "eehm , eeh" sounds to fill the spaces that feel empty when you aren't sure of how to cue next ! Record yourself, I promise you you might even have a good laugh :) The first step is in realizing you use these extras so you can then delete them to make your cuing sharper.

With this in mind, I invite you first to be clear as to "where you want what" in every asana from your sequence. Then to find as many words you can to describe the actions and directions needed. Finally as many synonyms you can think of to terms you would use to cue breath, movements, actions etc

Simply start playing with words as much as with your stickmen. Remember to let your need for perfection go, here also, as this will foster more creativity, even if you aren't vocabulary fans!

[illegible]

5. WHAT CHAKRA, GLAND, ENERGY CENTER,

WHAT ASANA

a. chakra , gland

Asana:



COLLECTION OF VARIOUS
-> HINDUISM SCRIPTURES
-> HINDU COMICS
-> AYURVEDA
-> MAGZINES

FIND ALL AT [HTTPS://DSC.GG/DHARMA](https://dsc.gg/dharma)

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!creator of
hinduism
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KAPWING

If you've gotten yourself a notebook, managed to fill in all these boards and have dared to start your journey with stickmen, well done !

Once you have assimilated the very essential anatomical insights presented in section one, you will find that if aches and pains had appeared in your practice, they should gradually disappear to make space for happier joints.

Once you've played for a while with filling these boards, every time you discover a new asana, you will find that the sequencing models presented in section two have no secrets for you, and some of your students will probably come to you to thank you for some of the changes that happened in their life!

In any case I hope this book has made sequencing magical Hatha, Vinyasa flow (or whatever your style is) classes more approachable and clearer to you.

Feel free to ask me questions or follow my journey on Instagram @elea_gisele and who knows maybe see you on one of my courses around the world !

Lots of love,

Elea