

Yoga Manual for Beginners

Yoga Poses, Postures & Yoga Exercises



breath, movement & stillness

Yogic Works

Dr. Freedom and Leela



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Safe Effective Yoga Techniques passed on through generations to help cope with the Modern Day Technical Lifestyle



A step-by step Yoga Manual to Stretch, Strengthen & Relax the entire body

A definitive guide for: **beginners** Yoga, fitness and exercise experts, Pilates practitioners, and for back pain therapy

Yoga Manual

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The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious – the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science.

- Albert Einstein -
Living Philosophies, 1931

Dedicated to all the practitioners of yoga.

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SoundBodyYOGA

& FOREWORD

Sound Body YOGA® is a state of the art yoga practice that works on the premise that a 'sound' body is a catalyst to a healthy mind and spirit. Dr. Freedom and Leela have founded this unique yoga practice which uses breath and sound as the energy source to strengthen, stretch, and balance the body. Dr. Freedom, using the ancient wisdom of his ancestors from India, coupled with his western scientific knowledge in Chiropractic and Leela, through her studies in Western classical voice with emphasis on breath and sound have developed a safe and powerful yoga practice that naturally aligns the body, relaxes the mind, and rekindles the spirit.

Sound Body YOGA® programs are individually designed using sequences from various yoga and health disciplines which balance the body and mind to its peak level of performance. Specific yogic and relaxation response techniques are also prescribed as treatment and preventative measures.

FOREWORD

Dr. Freedom is a Chiropractic physician, yogi (living with yoga), a writer, a musician, and the author of, Yogic Works. Dr. Freedom's partner, Leela Barbara Fraser, a classical vocalist and also a yogi is the co-author.

For many of us the practice of yoga is to attend a class two to three times a week in a studio with a sticky mat. Although this is one aspect of my ancient tradition, there is a lot more to yoga than what we know as 'yoga' in the west. Asana practice or yoga postures are just an initiation to the great tradition of yoga. Yoga is a way of life. To us, the practice of yoga continues not only during asana practice, but is part of the business day. Yoga is sitting in traffic, smiling at a child, recuperating from an illness, sitting silently, or watching a beautiful sunset. Yoga is to be 'present' in the moment, to breathe consciously and observe how the inner and outer worlds interact with each other. Yoga is taking the outer journey in, and the inner journey out, finding the space in the 'middle' where these journeys meet as one, and always observing with virgin eyes.

Most of us are afraid of change and yoga is all about change. Change is the only consistent aspect of life. Asana practice, breathing, and meditation all unleash us from our conditioned patterns into the unknown self. As in her book, Parable of the Talents, Octavia Butler writes, "All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you. The only lasting truth is change."

Living with yoga or practicing as a yogi has been a crucial aspect of Dr. Freedom's human earthly journey. Through my ever-changing lifestyle, I have had a multitude of life changing experiences at unusual places and with profound personalities.

The practice of yoga has not only kept me physically fit, but my mind remains flexible, calm, alert, and in the moment. My love and compassion for fellow humans, exploring the depths of the human potential and the kinetic body, understanding the mind, travel, adventure, music, interaction with nature, and yoga have continued to cycle me around the globe.

In the early 80's I began my Chiropractic practice. I had a passion for sharing the dynamics of the human body. I wanted everyone to live without pain in their bodies. I soon realized many physical pains were rooted deep in mental and emotional issues. No matter how much I changed the structural dysfunctions, the pains remained. I wanted to know ways to undo my sufferings and those of my fellow humans. At this time I published my first book, Treating Neck Problems the Natural Way.

In the early 90's a sudden flash, a paradigm change lifted me from a busy chiropractic practice in Delta, British Columbia to a lovely shrine in the village of Makindu, Kenya. Here, I would spend thousands of hours sitting silently under the canopy of stars. In the daytime I would overlook Mt. Kilimanjaro and the lovely cornfields rising from the red earth. Soon I became immersed in chanting and singing (a powerful devotional aspect of yoga). For almost a decade I travelled around this lovely earth collaborating with various musicians, spiritualists, swamis, sages, monks, and yogis. Leading meditations, chants, and relaxation practices became part of my daily lifestyle. I visited, sang, and stayed at shrines, temples, schools, homes, villages, executive offices, and concert halls.

I wanted people to know how to live 24 hours a day, not just for the length of a yoga class. I wanted people to recognize how we grasp rigid ideas of the way we think things ought to be, and in reality how life unfolds its own play. I would ask, "Are we peaceful inside?" I wanted people to live in compassion - to enjoy, enjoy, enjoy, and then move on.

Since 2000, I travelled a new journey along with my partner Leela which took us across Canada, throughout America, Mexico, Malaysia, United Kingdom, India, Kenya, and now has rested us in the tropics of Costa Rica.

These four years took us from the tranquil Oregon Coast to the dynamic yoga studios of California. We drove across to central Canada, enjoyed the glacier waters of Lake Louise, and sang relaxation music to the athletes at the Pan American Games in Winnipeg. We practiced yoga at the rising full moon on the peaks of the Grand Canyon and witnessed snow flakes practicing the TREE asana in the red mountains of Sedona. We soaked in the blazing hot springs of Death Valley in the morning and froze in the glacier waters of Yosemite in the evening. Saw a beautiful sunrise at the Red Rock Canyon in Las Vegas, led a lovely chanting concert in a yoga studio, and concluded with the dancing waters at The Bellagio. We shared yoga on the beach with corporate computer executives in Clearwater, Florida. We sang with hundreds at a 4 a.m. music concert in a 300 year old hacienda in Queretaro, Mexico.

For a full year we traversed through my genetic homeland, India. From the river banks of the Ganges in Varanasi, we travelled to Sarnath where Buddha delivered his first sermon. We paid homage at the tomb of St. Mother Teresa in Calcutta. We visited Gandhi's home in Mumbai and sought audience with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, McLeod Ganj. We spent a month at the sacred Golden Temple in Amritsar. We strolled through the deserts of Rajasthan, rested under the coconut groves of South India, and climbed to the base of the Himalayas. We were barraged by the ever-increasing human population of this land. With cramped rickshaw rides on bumpy, chaotic dirt roads with excessive noises, smells, and ever-staring passers by, hours of sitting and stretching the body and mind at all levels was absolutely necessary. This was the true practice of yoga - living in the muddy waters and staying afloat above it. We collaborated with some of the finest musicians in South India and sang, recorded, and produced our 7th relaxation and meditation recording titled, 'RU'.

Travel was not always positive and fun. The horrid events of 9/11 had a slight trickle in my life. I often became a target of slurs. The worst was a group of young men shouting, "That's Osama Bin Laden, kill him". It is in these moments that I lived my practice of yoga.

Of course a couple of trips to Kenya, to my birthplace, always made me feel grounded. Here I felt connected with my inner self. Sitting in the ARK National Park watching the elephants, rhinos, and buffaloes interact took me to a higher space. In nature 'change is the rule', animals live from moment to moment. Watching the animal postures has always given me a better insight on the way the 'animal' asanas are to be practiced.

Costa Rica is a land of rich coasts and the people greet each other with the saying 'PURA VIDA' – pure life. For the past year we have enjoyed interacting with the countless practitioners of yoga who attend regular classes at the chain Grupo Multi Spa. The president of the spa, David Mears, shared this wonderful saying which clearly summarizes the practice of living yoga:

1. SPEAK THE TRUTH –THERE IS LESS TO REMEMBER (Sat)
2. NO RAIN, NO RAINBOWS (Chitt)
3. THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO BECOME RICH –
MAKE MORE OR DESIRE LESS (Anand)

Although this book deals primarily with asana practice, below are 12 easy and practical ways which have helped us stay healthy and enjoy a balanced lifestyle:

1. Eat moderately and regularly
2. Exercise and get plenty of fresh air
3. Choose a pleasant occupation
4. Develop an easy-going personality
5. Maintain great personal hygiene
6. Drink wholesome liquids
7. Avoid stimulants and sedatives
8. Get plenty of rest
9. Have a daily bowel movement
10. Enjoy a healthy sex life
11. Get prompt health care when ill
12. Be in nature at least twice a day

Enjoy this book as it unfolds years and years of our experiences living in yoga. Remember change is the only lasting truth. Enjoy your changes....

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WHAT IS YOGA?

Yoga योगा literally means 'to unite with the self' or 'become one'. The root word of yoga is 'yuj', which means to yolk or go within the center. In the simplest terms, yoga is a practice of uniting the body, thought, and breath for living in the present without 'suffering'. There are 3 fundamental components in the journey of yoga:

Asana – the practice of static and dynamic body movements to align and balance the physical components;

Prana – the practice of coordinating all body and mind activities with the breath;

Dhayana – the practice of focusing thoughts inward, awakening creative awareness, and relaxing the mind.

Yoga is an ancient art which gives a wealth of knowledge on how to exercise the mind and body to unlock the full human potential. Asana practice is one way to achieve this. The practice of asanas challenges thought and breath patterns. Regular practice of yoga unites the body, mind, and breath in a synchronous flow. There are many other dimensions to the discipline of yoga, some of which include: spiritual undertakings, dietary rules, sound and mantra techniques, awareness of subtle energy levels, etc. All these practices, including those discussed in this book, are aimed at bringing consciousness to a state of 'awakened contentment'.

This book primarily emphasizes the physical aspects of the body - asana and prana. Yoga is the mother of all physical exercises. It encompasses: flexibility, strength, balance, coordination, conditioning, cardiovascular training, visceral balancing, and mind-body fitness. Asanas influence the nervous, cardiovascular, respiratory, musculo-skeletal, endocrine, reproductive, and digestive systems. The systems in the body work in a harmonious unit where a change in one system manifests a complimentary change in all others.

THE MUSCULO-SKELETAL SYSTEM & YOGA

Yoga is a whole body practice. Every muscle, joint, and ligament are part of the whole body system. When the range of motion of one joint is increased it affects the entire system, and vice versa. Ultimately, the body will go where the mind leads it to. The best starting point is to have an inspired, focused, committed mind, with an attitude of wanting to balance the body.

An open, flexible mind is the beginning to a healthy yoga journey. Many seekers of yogic study want to see quick changes, and fast results. The reality is that on a physical level, stretching and committing to improve flexibility takes time, hard work, and patience, requiring a lot of trust in the body's ability to improve. There is NO instant gratification, but positive results become evident over time when one is PATIENT and PERSISTENT, maintaining a regular asana program.

Body postural alignment is a crucial component of asana practice. In our material world all machines require that the composite parts are in alignment with one another in order to function properly. The doors in the home, the zipper on the purse, the tires on the car, etc. all require the parts to be in alignment with one another in order to function properly. Likewise, yoga is a structural and mechanical practice with a dynamic component that involves the joints and muscles to function in alignment with each other. If the structural body alignment is not correct, severe damage of the joints and supporting ligaments may result. We have overemphasized postural alignment in this book so YOU may have the best experience practicing yoga, injury free. Postural re-alignment is a major component of asana practice. Optimum postural alignment in every asana will prevent soft tissue injuries, and give maximum benefit.

The body joints function best when they remain within their given range of motion, the muscles surrounding the joints provide balanced tension maintaining alignment both at the joint, and between the joints. Loss of mechanical alignment at the joint level or at a compensating joint can lead to extreme wear, tear, and pain.

Most of us look at the body through a very narrow scope, focusing on the 'tree' instead of the 'forest'. In regards to localized joint imbalance or injury, an attitude of specialization is far too common. For example, if a runner has a knee problem, all too often the tendency is to treat the knee without regard to other parts of the body that might be causing damage. The knee problem could easily be the result of a hip or back dysfunction, or a foot imbalance, both common causes of knee injuries. On the other hand, if a cyclist has a back problem, the root of the injury will more than likely be the position of the legs on the bike, or possibly the position of the foot on the pedal.

An overall description of the musculo-skeletal system is described to insure a deeper understanding of the body. Knowing the science and mechanics of the body helps create positive changes in the yoga journey.

I. MECHANICAL ALIGNMENT & POSTURE

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSTURE IN YOGA

Posture is basically the way the body mechanically aligns and positions itself in space throughout the day. Body posture changes every few minutes in adaptation to various activities and stresses. The total visual posture is therefore the long-term average of the total alignment in space. Postural habits developed over the years often reflect the unconscious patterns of the mind. Yoga is a practice that will bring the body back to optimum posture.

WHAT IS OPTIMUM POSTURE?

Optimum posture is when the body is mechanically aligned with minimum strain on the muscles, ligaments, and joints. In this efficient position the fewest restrictions are imposed on the muscular and nervous systems, energy is not wasted to simply hold the body up. This energy can be utilized for creativity and productivity. Optimum posture consists of a combination of the following: chin lock, neutral spine, core engagement, sternum lift, shoulder blade retraction, joint mobility, muscle flexibility, and diaphragmatic breathing. These qualities are discussed later in greater detail.

BENEFITS OF OPTIMUM POSTURE:

- Decreased stress and tension in the supportive skeletal muscles
- Less wear and tear in the joint structures
- Increased contracting/relaxing ability of the diaphragm enhancing the amount of air capacity in the lungs
- More flexibility in joint movement
- Reduced strain on the neck, jaw, and upper back muscles
- Increased amount of energy
- More positive, confident self-image
- Relaxed state of mind, carrying the body effortlessly

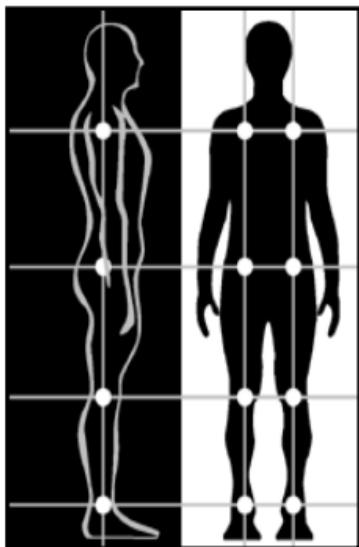
DETERMINING OPTIMUM STANDING POSTURE

A complete structural alignment and postural evaluation is necessary to ascertain the main deviations that have developed within the musculo-skeletal system of the body. Here is a quick reference check to evaluate your posture.

Check Points (the back against a wall)

- Stand at ease, feet parallel, hip-width apart
- The heels touch the wall
- The knees are relaxed, neither bent nor hyper-extended
- The gluteals touch the wall and pelvis is neutral
- There is a light hollow space between the contact points of the neck, low back, and the wall
- The shoulder blades contact the wall
- The shoulders and hips are parallel to the ground
- The back of the head touches the wall, and the head lies directly over the trunk
- The ears align directly over the middle of the shoulders
- The eyes and chin are parallel with the ground

A general rule of thumb for maintaining optimum posture is to maintain maximum height without feeling any strain in the muscles and joints.



NEUTRAL SPINE

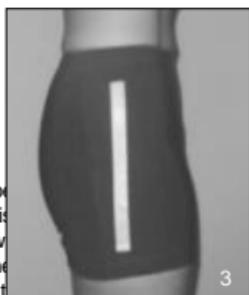
WHAT IS NEUTRAL SPINE?

Neutral spine is the position of the spine where every joint is held in optimal position, allowing an equal distribution of force through the entire body structure. In neutral spine the body is in a natural upright position where the spine retains its natural curves.

DETERMINING ‘NEUTRAL SPINE’ IN STANDING POSTURE

Stand with the back against a wall, feet hip-width apart, in alignment with the knees.

Rotate the bottom of the tailbone forward, under the body, into a full pelvic tilt (this position will straighten the curve in the low back). Image 1. Now rotate the hips so the tailbone is pointing in the opposite direction, away from the buttocks (this position will increase the curve in the lumbar spine). Image 2. These two points represent full lumbar flexion/extension range, and neutral, of course, is in the middle. Image 3.



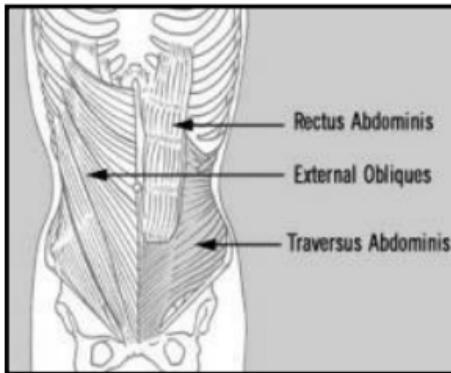
Repeat this movement several times slowly decreasing the range until the middle (neutral) is found. Another way to find this neutral space is to place hands on the outer edges of the pelvis with the finger tips below the tailbone. The objective is to pivot the hips back and forth until the tailbone is absolutely perpendicular to the mat. When neutral spine is isolated, the deep transversus abdominis and multifidus spinal muscles (the CORE) are engaged together with equal effort. To maintain this neutral position, the deep and often weakest transverse abdominis muscle must be activated. Gently pull the navel up and in, contracting the lower abdominal muscles, to activate this muscle.

THE CORE

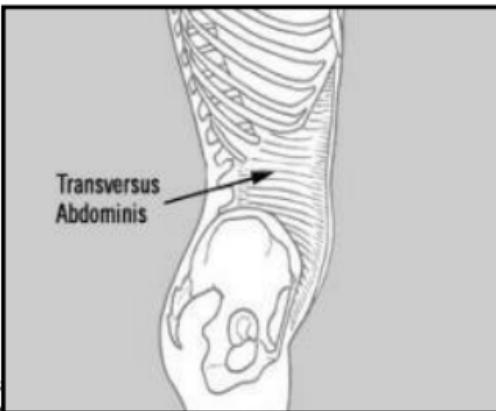
The core involves the muscles between the ribs and the hips. Collectively the muscles of the core function as a supportive girdle, placing the body in optimum posture. If the core is strong, the upper body is held up easily and the weight in the spinal joints are distributed evenly without stress. On the other hand, if the core is weak, the posture collapses, there is overcompensation of the primary muscle groups, and breathing technique becomes improper. The navel, at the center of the core, is the starting point for all yoga asanas.

There are five muscle groups that make up the core in the trunk region: Rectus Abdominis, External Obliques, Internal Obliques, Transverse Abdominis, and Multifidus. These muscles control the movement of the trunk in flexion, extension, side bending, and rotation. These muscles are part of almost every body movement, they are the core of strength and power. These muscles are essential for optimum postural alignment and also prevent back injury.

1. **The Rectus Abdominis** muscle runs the length of the central abdominal area, from the pubic bone to the sternum. The Rectus Abdominis flexes the trunk toward the hips.
2. **The External Obliques** run diagonally down from the lower ribs, and connect to the front top of the pelvis and pubic bone. External Obliques aid in the rotation of the trunk. When the right External Oblique is activated, the trunk rotates to the left.
3. **The Internal Obliques** lie underneath the External Obliques, and run diagonally in the opposite direction of the External Obliques. The Internal Obliques start from the top of the hips, and connect to the lumbar region and the lower ribs. Internal Obliques aid in rotating the trunk in the same direction as the side they are on. The left Internal Oblique twists the torso to the left, therefore, the left Internal Oblique, and the right External Oblique work together to twist the trunk to the left.



4. The Transverse (Transversus) Abdominis Muscle is the most important stabilizer in the abdominal muscle quartet. The Transverse Abdominis Muscle runs horizontally across the abdominal wall, underneath the External and Internal Obliques. The Transverse Abdominis runs from the top of the hip, lumbar region, across the pelvis, and connects to the pubic bone. This muscle bridges the gap between the ribs and hips, and lies closest to the intestinal region. The muscle wraps around the body from the navel to the spine and its primary function is to stabilize the body, and pull the belly in. The Transverse Abdominis Muscle is often weakened by pregnancy, chronic sitting, and general inactivity; and when weakened, it cannot provide the stability and support necessary to protect the lower back from injury. Weakness in the Transverse Abdominis Muscle is often the cause of that little belly bulge seen, even in slim individuals.



To identify the Transversus Abdominis Muscle, place the fingers of the left hand slightly below the navel. Activate and feel the transverse abdominis muscle.

the fingers of the left hand slightly below the navel 'up and in' to activate and feel the transverse abdominis muscle.

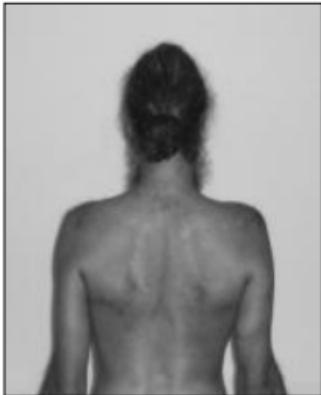
5. The Multifidus are a small group of muscles that stabilize the vertebrae of the back, and are often recruited as a result of successful optimum posture.

To identify these muscles, stand in neutral and place the fingers of the left hand slightly left of the middle lower back. Wave the right arm up and feel the Multifidus Muscles activate.

RIB CAGE EXPANSION & SHOULDER BLADE RETRACTION

Most individuals typically elevate and roll their shoulders forward, collapsing the chest. To insure efficient stress-free posture, lift the sternum, expand the ribcage, and retract the shoulder blades to encourage proper shoulder blade positioning. To practice ribcage expansion, stand with the back against a wall, feet hip-width apart, in alignment with the knees. Maintain a neutral spine and face the palms forward by the sides of the body. The shoulders are level with each other. Instead of forcefully retracting the shoulder blades back, think of opening the ribcage from the front, as this uses a different set of muscles, and lets the shoulder girdle remain soft and free.

In the second phase, maintaining a neutral spine, lift the chest out and slowly raise the arms laterally along the wall in a circular motion till the arms are at shoulder height, parallel with the mat. The goal is to bring awareness to the movement of the shoulder blades without losing the integrity of the CORE. Once the arms are parallel with the mat, drop the shoulder blades down further and keep the chin retracted. Keep the shoulder blades secured against the wall, the rib cage expanded, and the core locked as the arms are lowered back down to optimum posture.

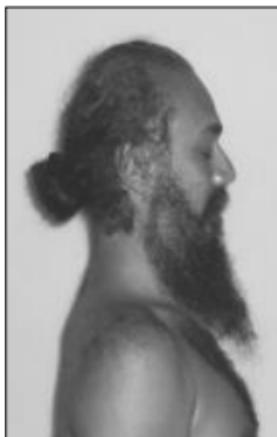


CHIN LOCK & NECK RETRACTION

The posture of the neck determines the position in which one holds the head. Many postural adaptations develop during adolescence. For example, if you are tall during high school you probably have to look down at your peers and begin to hunch over. On the other hand, if you are short, you often develop the habit of extending the neck backward as you look up. Over time the body adapts to these postures. Under such circumstances the slightest trauma to the neck will result in acute, or short and severe symptoms flaring up.

In ideal posture (looking at the head from the front) both the eyes, ears, and shoulders are parallel to the ground. From the side profile the ears are in line with the shoulders and form a perpendicular line with the ground.

Most individuals stand with their head thrust forward. When the head is forward, the chin is slightly extended, and a great deal of muscle tension, tightness, and fatigue is experienced at the base of the neck and the top of the upper back. If one holds a 10-pound weight with the arms extended forward, after a short while, the muscles employed to support this weight become fatigued, and pain sets in throughout the arms and neck. Take the same weight, brace it tightly to the body so minimal or zero muscle effort is required, and one can easily hold this weight for extended periods. For every one-inch shift from the head's center of gravity, the neck and shoulder muscles must recruit an additional 10-pound force.



For example, a person employed as an assembly line quality-control checker, who is required to bend over a moving conveyor belt to eyeball products as they pass by is in a position where the head leans forward 4 inches from the normal center of gravity. In this case, the muscles supporting the head will require an extra 40-pound force to do their job – that is, to hold the head up! When this type of activity is pursued over long periods, the body considers this to be an imbalance of what nature intended. The muscles revolt against the undue stress on the ligaments and joints of the neck. This out-of-alignment posture may eventually lead to osteoarthritic changes in the neck.

Similarly, in individuals with bad neck posture, the center of gravity of the head shifts away from the neck and body. The poor posture stresses the neck muscles, causing the muscles to work harder and burn more energy just to hold the head up all day!

If one has a tendency to walk with the shoulders hunched forward, during episodes of physical and mental stress this misaligned posture becomes worse, the head slouches forward, causing undue stress on the neck.

Remember the three "P's":

PRACTICE

PERFECT

POSTURE

Optimum chin and neck posture is achieved by gently drawing the chin backward, not dropping, into the neck and lifting the top of the head up to the sky.

When practicing extension asanas, work into the asana with neck retraction and then let the head tilt back gently. Keep the tongue touching the roof of the mouth and keep the mouth closed. This position will protect the muscles in the front of the neck from over stretching.

II. STRETCHING OF MUSCLE GROUPS

The primary function of muscles is to move the joints and to stabilize the body posture. Stretching muscles in a controlled, systematic manner is an integral part of yoga asana practice. It is necessary to have a deep understanding of the mechanisms and benefits of stretching before embarking on the yoga journey. Stretching muscles has several positive effects which include:

IMPROVED JOINT MOTION: The greatest benefit of stretching is the enhanced ability of the body to perform physical activity. The more flexible a joint is within its 'normal' range, the greater its ability to move through a wider range of motion, and the more efficient the joint function. Stretching muscle groups 20 minutes, 3 times a week, can increase the joint range of motion by 30 percent.

PREVENTION FROM INJURY: Normal flexibility, within the joint range of motion prevents joint injury. The majority of traumatic muscular or ligamentous injuries occur when a joint is pushed beyond its normal range of motion. The nerves that control muscle function and give muscles their memory are surrounded by a sheath of muscle. If the sheath surrounding the nerve is elongated through controlled stretches, the memory of the muscle adapts to this greater range of motion. When a joint is pushed beyond its 'normal' range, the muscles are able to react effectively, reducing the likelihood of injury.

IMPROVED COORDINATION: Optimum flexibility and range of motion increases neuromuscular coordination. The speed of nerve impulses is enhanced by stretching the muscles around the joints. When coordination is improved the central nervous system becomes more sensitive to physical demands placed on it, opposing muscle groups function more efficiently, faster, and in a coordinated manner.

PROMOTION OF JOINT ELASTICITY: Stretching increases the temperature of the muscle tissue being stretched, in turn increasing the blood nutrients supplied to the joint structure. This process promotes greater elasticity in the surrounding tissue.

ENHANCED POSTURE AND MOVEMENT: Stretching helps to realign and regenerate soft tissue structures that have less than optimum development due to normal biomechanical wear and tear, and poor posture. The realignment of tissue structure improves muscular balance and kinesthetic awareness. This realignment of tissue structure also promotes and maintains optimum posture, healthy movement in daily activities, and healthy movement during regular asana practice.

BASIC RULES ABOUT STRETCHING

NO BOUNCING: Hold a static stretch to build up soft tissue tension so change occurs in tissue length. Bouncing can tear tissues or cause injuries in other affected areas.

NO PAIN: Stretching should not cause a sensation of discomfort; sharp pain, particularly, indicates that the muscle is being stretched too far.

DO NOT HOLD THE BREATH: Relax, breathe slowly and rhythmically, and focus on the muscles when stretching. Lengthen and stretch the muscle tissue upon exhalation.

KNOW WHAT AREA NEEDS TO BE STRETCHED AND WHY: Each individual requires different areas of flexibility. Assessments are helpful to recognize the tight, unstable areas, and appropriate stretches need to be prescribed. Maintain a balance between stretching and strengthening exercises to insure joint stability, minimizing the chance of joint injury.

WATCH FOR MUSCLE SUBSTITUTION: Be specific on the muscle group being stretched. Make sure that compensatory muscle groups are not overpowering.

GENERAL STRETCHING TIPS

Stretching the muscle groups is only beneficial when done correctly. Just as there is more than one way to achieve a set goal, there is more than one stretch to enhance flexibility. Based upon our experiences, gradual, slow, sustained stretches, reaching away, using correct technique prevents injuries from occurring. Stretch to the point of moderate tension and maintain the stretch for a minimum of 30 - 45 seconds, preferably 45 seconds – 1 ½ minutes. Relax for 5 - 10 seconds between stretches and repeat on the other side. Spend additional time stretching muscles that are chronically tight. Perform 2 - 3 sets per stretch, time permitting, repeating the stretch on the same muscle group. Once the body is warmed up, stretches may be held for longer periods of time.

WARM UP & COOL DOWN

WARM UP

Warming up the body by increasing the blood circulation and heart rate is an essential part of yoga. Although some individuals use the Sun Salutation as a warm-up in yoga, if convenient, we recommend a 10 - 12 minute warm-up consisting of a brisk walk, cycling, running, etc. The warm-up should be intense enough to increase body temperature, to warm up the muscles and cause a slight sweat but not cause any fatigue.

THE BENEFITS OF WARMING UP

- Increase body and tissue temperature
- Increase blood flow through the active muscles
- Increase the heart rate, preparing the cardiovascular system for work
- Increase the exchange rate of oxygen and carbon dioxide from hemoglobin in the blood
- Increase the speed at which nerve impulses travel, facilitating body movements
- Increase reciprocal innervation efficiency, allowing muscles to contract and relax faster and more efficiently
- Decrease muscular tension
- Enhance the ability of connective tissue to elongate

COOL DOWN

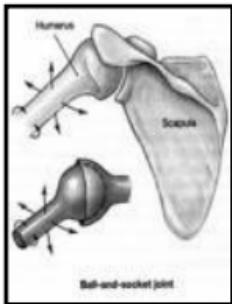
The cool-down period is just as important as the warm up. The cool-down period helps the body return to its pre-yoga practice state, a small investment of time for the many benefits received. A minimum cool down of 10 – 15 minutes is recommended after each yoga session. *CORPSE* is commonly practiced during the cool-down period. A properly performed cool down will:

- Help clear the muscles of accumulated lactic acid
- Lessen excessive fatigue
- Reduce soreness and cramps
- Keep muscles from tightening up
- Lower blood pressure
- Return the body temperature back to resting levels
- Restore the heart rate to a resting level

In short, a cool down speeds overall recovery in preparation for subsequent yoga sessions. A cool down is also helpful to relax and unwind the mind, a transition from the intensity of the yoga session to the day-to-day activities. Cooling down is a wonderful way to re-align or re-position the body's postural mechanics. Positioning the body in anatomical optimum posture in *CORPSE*, minimizes the stress on the body joints and muscles. Maintaining this posture for at least 10 – 15 minutes re-educates the body (hardware) and mind (software) to adapt to this comfortable, stress-free posture.

III. JOINTS

There are more than 180 joints in the body which can be broken down into 3 basic types:



1. Ball and socket



2. Hinge



3. Multiple

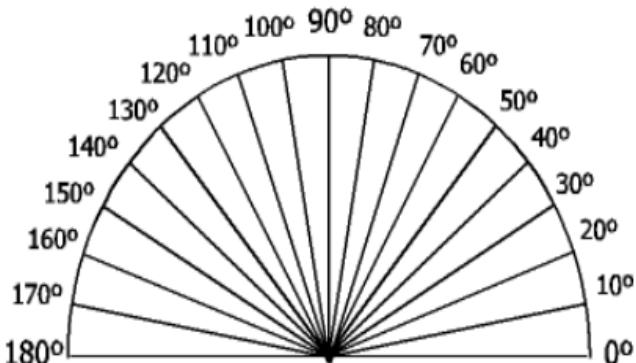
The larger ball and socket joints located at the pelvis, and the smaller ball and socket joints of the shoulder comprise the core structure. The 4 limbs then follow the pattern of strong but less flexible hinge joints, followed by more flexible multiple joints.

JOINT RANGE OF MOTION

—Each joint has a general range of motion within which it efficiently functions. All movement requires a coordination of joints that emanates from the core structure outward to the extremities. As long as this integrated joint system remains in alignment, overall motion is fluid, accurate, and energizing. Should postural deviations develop, however, the whole structure starts wrenching out of alignment and the range of the joint can become restricted or hyper-mobile.

Be aware not to overextend the 'normal' range of body joint movement. Constant overstretching of the joint range is counterproductive, can result in lax or hyper-mobile joint movement, eventually effecting optimum posture causing wear and tear. Below is a list of the 'normal' range of body joint movement.

WHAT IS THE 'NORMAL' RANGE OF BODY JOINT MOTION?



CERVICAL (Neck)

Flexion: 45 degrees
Extension: 55 degrees
Lateral Bending: 35 degrees
Rotation: 70 degrees

Touch sternum with chin
Point up with chin
Bring ear close to shoulder
Turn chin to shoulder

THORACIC AND LUMBAR SPINE (mid-low back)

Flexion: 75 degrees
Extension: 25 degrees
Lateral Bending: 35 degrees
Rotation: 45 degrees

Bend forward at the waist
Bend backward at the waist
Bend spine to the side
Turn spine backward

SHOULDER

Abduction: 180 degrees
Adduction: 45 degrees
Internal Rotation: 70 degrees
External Rotation: 90 degrees
Vertical Extension: 45 degrees
Vertical Flexion: 180 degrees

Bring arm up sideways
Bring arm toward the midline of the body
Rotate shoulder inward
Rotate shoulder outward
Raise arm straight backward
Raise arm straight forward

ELBOW

Flexion: 145 degrees
Supination: 90 degrees
Pronation: 90 degrees

Bring forearm to the bicep
Turn forearm so palm faces up
Turn forearm so palm faces down

HIP

Flexion: 125 degrees
Extension: 30 degrees
Abduction: 45 degrees
Adduction: 25 degrees
Internal Rotation: 45 degrees
External Rotation: 45 degrees

Flex knee and bring thigh close to abdomen
Move thigh backward without moving pelvis
Swing thigh away from midline
Bring thigh toward and across midline
Flex knee and swing lower leg away from midline
Flex knee and swing lower leg toward midline

KNEE

Flexion: 135 degrees

Touch calf to hamstring

ANKLE

Dorsi Flexion: 20 degrees
Plantar Flexion: 45 degrees
Inversion: 35 degrees
Eversion: 20 degrees

Bend ankle so toes point up
Bend ankle so toes point down
Turn foot so the sole faces in
Turn foot so the sole faces out

JOINT TISSUE FUNCTION

Of the five main types of joint tissue: muscle, bone, tendon, ligament, and cartilage; muscle and bone tissue have the greatest blood supply, and heal most quickly if damaged. At the other end of the spectrum, cartilage receives no blood supply and heals the slowest when traumatized.

The rate of healing of most body tissue is directly related to the degree of blood vessel supply. The circulatory system is the transport infrastructure that services the joints, and the blood cells are the transport vehicles that bring oxygen, nutrition, and remove waste. The greater the blood supply, therefore, the faster the healing process.

Cartilage, however, does not have the ability to heal itself, it relies on a completely different mechanism. Cartilage is a tough, jelly-like substance that covers the articulating surfaces of joints. Within this jelly are pockets where cells live. These cells can divide and multiply adding layers of cartilage from within. The articulating joints are surrounded by a liquid filled capsule that bathes the joint with a lubricating fluid called synovial fluid. The inside of the capsule contains cells that release nutrients into this synovial fluid, and remove waste products from the fluid. The cartilage cells, therefore, clean and repair themselves via the synovial fluid rather than a direct blood supply.

An important distinction to be made between blood and synovial fluid, however, is that blood has a pump, the heart, that keeps blood moving at approximately 72 beats per minute, 5,700 liters per day. Synovial fluid does not have a pump to keep the fluid circulating, it depends on movement to keep it fresh. This mechanism is often referred to as the 'joint-pump'. Much like stirring sugar in coffee, joint movement circulates the synovial fluid, enabling it to seep through the cartilage, nourishing the cells and removing cell waste. This is a practical mechanism, as long as a joint keeps moving. Asana practice is a fantastic way to mobilize joints and to maintain optimum function of the 'joint-pump'.

JOINT HEALTH

MAINTENANCE & JOINT PAIN

All movement creates a slight amount of wear and tear that causes the involved cells to break down and be replaced. With more than 100 trillion cells in the body, roughly 3 billion of them are replaced every minute. The body is equipped with a marvelous cellular repair and replacement mechanism that works non-stop without disrupting normal organ function. This everyday maintenance mode is called stasis, where the maintenance crew 'keeps up with the upkeep' of the body.

If injury or trauma occurs, the body's repair mechanism kicks into overdrive to restore the injured site as quickly as possible. Although the rest of the body continues receiving maintenance, grand-scale renovation now takes place at the site of injury. Like a building under renovation, the injured area becomes busy with activity. White blood cells actively demolish injured cells and red blood cells actively deliver new building materials needed for cell replication. This microbiological repair activity in the injured area leads to the crowding of cells, in turn leading to heat and swelling. The swelling itself often brings with it various degrees of discomfort, but it is a part of the body's natural self-repair mechanism that should be permitted to function as much as is bearable. If the body is well-nourished, mechanically aligned, and functionally mobile, swelling decreases usually 24 hours after the repair process begins.

If proper postural alignment is lacking, however, the normal, everyday joint wear becomes replaced by constant low-level joint trauma. If the breakdown process is greater than the repair process can handle, then the swelling and resultant discomfort can become chronic, spreading to other joints. A vicious negative chain reaction of misalignment-compensation occurs among the joints, and chronic breakdown occurs within the joints. A growing nightmare cycle of pain and inactivity is manifested.

JOINT PAIN

Joint pain occurs when muscles move the joints and bones in ways that violate the body's natural design. Pain is the body's way of communicating that there is a problem and it needs to be fixed. Ignoring or suppressing pain signals with 'pain killers' increases joint damage if the fundamental cause is not corrected.

Pain in the low back, shoulders, neck, elbows, wrists, hips, knees, feet, and so on are frequently a result of compromised postural alignment leading to excessive wear within the moving, load-bearing parts of the system. Every time we turn around, take a step, move our wrist, etc. the deviated joint experiences another micro trauma. Life literally becomes a daily grind as the joint wears down and becomes debilitatingly painful.

The core muscle tone of the postural muscles must be balanced to restore this structural alignment and symmetry to the musculo-skeletal system.

JOINT BREAKDOWN MECHANISM

If the body is subjected to prolonged periods of sitting or standing in misaligned, fixed positions, two separate destructive processes begin to occur within the joint.

1. CARTILAGE DETERIORATION

Firstly, when cartilage deterioration occurs the nourishing, cleansing 'JOINT PUMP' mechanism ceases to function efficiently, cell nourishment is compromised, and cell function becomes sluggish. In this deterioration, the structural integrity of the cartilage starts to weaken, making it less wear resistant and more susceptible to injury. At the same time, the cleansing mechanism within the joint becomes increasingly inefficient. Like rusting hinges and clogging water pipes, waste starts accumulating within the joint itself causing it to become increasingly rigid and painful.

2. EXTREME JOINT WEAR

Secondly, when extreme joint wear occurs the postural muscles surrounding the joint start to weaken. The postural muscles lose the ability to keep the joint in structural and mechanical alignment. The joint lacks structural stabilizers, so the wobbling joint starts tilting, twisting, and grinding down stressed areas on the cartilage surface. The resulting discomfort leads to increased joint wear and discomfort, decreased activity, and postural muscle weakness. The resulting cycle of increased wear - decreased activity - increased waste build-up sets the stage for chronic joint breakdown, commonly referred to as ARTHRITIS.

JOINT REPAIR AND MOBILITY RESTORATION

The rehabilitation or repair of joint movement begins with the restoration of proper structural realignment within the overall musculo-skeletal system. This four part rehabilitation process must be coordinated simultaneously, and may take weeks or months to return the joint to a balanced state.

1. If the joint has been in a fixed dysfunctional position and has lost its normal joint flow, it is necessary to have it mobilized by a professional and adjusted into dynamic motion. The adjustment is like jump starting a sluggish car battery.
2. The brain, the software, needs to be re-programmed to co-ordinate and execute a newly realigned postural pattern throughout the day.
3. The responsible postural muscle groups, the hardware, need to be re-trained to structurally support the realigned posture.
4. The aligned posture must be maintained with regular asana, joint movement, and stability practice.

MULA BANDHA

In yoga there are three classic areas of focused potential and dormant energy in the human body:

Pelvis - Mula
Solar – Uddiyana
Throat – Jalandhara

The pelvic or mula region is the most powerful of the three areas where there is an abundance of potential energy. This energy is generally scattered and used intermittently for sexual acts. Asana practice is a wonderful way to cultivate and use this energy for physical strength and mental clarity. The powerful technique used to awaken and direct this energy is called the Mula Bandha.

The word 'bandha' is defined as 'a seal' - to seal within, interconnect the inner systems. The bandhas are engaged physically, but their effects are on the overall energy and awareness levels of the mind. The Mula Bandha used in yoga asanas has many benefits. The Mula Bandha works synergistically. Engaging the 'core lock' enables the asanas to be held longer, protecting the low back muscles, making the practice of asanas safer. When the Mula Bandha is fully engaged, dormant potential energy is activated into the conscious network resulting in more support in the core lock. The distal muscle groups relax drawing the body energy levels from the periphery to the center.

Females engage the Mula Bandha by exhaling, contracting the muscles between the pubic bone and the tailbone, and lightly drawing the perineum up and in toward the abdomen. Pull the pelvic floor up toward the spine and feel the lower, deep abdominal muscles engage. Initially the anus and genitals need to be contracted, but with practice over time these areas become relaxed and the contraction is isolated to the perineum (the space between the anus and genitals). Specifically draw the opening of the cervix up and in.

Males engage the Mula Bandha by lifting up the space an inch above the perineum, forming a triangle. The perineal space becomes indented, domed, and sucked in and up, creating empty space for the front of the pubic bone and sacrum to move toward each other.

The intensity of the Mula Bandha contraction can be carried from 15 - 100 percent and it may be held for as long as possible. The Mula Bandha may be rhythmically engaged and released with each breath. The Mula Bandha can be engaged in most yoga asanas and is very effective in extension asanas such as: COBRA, BRIDGE, UPWARD FACING DOG, and CAMEL. Engaging Mula Bandha is not a straining act, but a controlled, focused practice.

The practice of Mula Bandha may appear very simple at first glance, but to fully grasp the subtleties at an awareness level requires several months of persistent practice.

YOGA PRACTICE TIPS

Yoga is a delicate form of body/mind exercise and therapy. Specific yoga asanas assist to realign the joints, increase flexibility, restore normal range of motion, and improve overall posture. Asanas also indirectly balance the nervous, cardiovascular, respiratory, endocrine, and digestive systems. The systems in the body work as a symbiotic unit, where a positive change in one system usually results in a complimentary change in all the other systems. On the other hand, if asanas are incorrectly practiced, serious complications may result in the systems mentioned above. Regular asana, breathing, and meditation practice maintains the physical body in optimum condition, and promotes healing in an unhealthy body.

Here are several yoga practice tips that will enhance your journey of reaching a balanced physical and mental state.

AGE LIMITATIONS: Asanas may be practiced by all age groups, male and female.

AWARENESS: Do not practice the yoga asanas mechanically, be aware of your mental and physical state throughout the practice.

BATHING: Take a cool or lukewarm shower before asana practice to awaken and prepare the mind and body for a focused practice.

BREATHING: Breathing is the mainstay of yoga. Often when the asana becomes difficult, the tendency is to hold the breath without realizing. Keep breathing, even during the most complex asanas. Conscious breathing provides more energy during the asana practice and helps to prevent injury.

CLOTHING: Wear loose, light, non-binding, comfortable clothing; and remove any jewelry, or constricting accessories that may restrict the blood circulation when practicing yoga as the body must bend, twist, or elongate easily. It is helpful to wear regular workout clothes. Leggings and tank tops for women, and a t-shirt or tank top and shorts for men are recommended. Yoga is practiced bare foot.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS: Avoid yoga practice if you are: experiencing fractured bones, suffering from an acute or chronic ailment or disease, or recuperating from an operation. Consult a primary health care practitioner before commencing asana practice.

CONSULTATION: It is advisable to consult your physician before embarking on the journey of yoga. Find out if your body is physically fit to endure all the asanas.

COUNTER-ASANA: It is important that asana practice is balanced, backward bends are followed by forward bends and vice versa, and that whatever is practiced on one side of the body is repeated on the other side. This concept of counter-asana is necessary to bring the body back to a balanced state. Specific counter-asanas are recommended for certain asanas described in this book. However, in some cases, when practicing a particular asana prescribed for therapeutic reasons, a counter-asana may not be needed.

DIET: There are no special dietary rules for asana practitioners although it is healthier to eat natural fresh foods in moderation. Eat foods that digest and assimilate easily and make the body feel energetic.

DISTRACTIONS: Mute the cellular or telephone during asana practice. It is also helpful to silence the thoughts.

EMPTY STOMACH: Practice at least 2 or 3 hours after consuming food to ensure the stomach is empty. This is one reason why early dawn or dusk practice is recommended.

EMPTYING THE BOWELS: It is helpful to empty the bowels and bladder before commencing the asanas.

FLUID REPLACEMENT: Drink plenty of water before, during, and after yoga practice. Keep the body well hydrated. Drink small sips of water at room temperature. A lemonade drink with sugar and salt is very refreshing and balances the metabolites well.

FREQUENCY: Practice yoga daily, if possible, but no less than three times a week. Practicing yoga daily is like feeding nutritious food to the body and the mind daily. The ultimate benefit of yoga arrives when yoga becomes a daily habit in taking care of the body and mind. As the frequency of practice increases, the mind benefits from stress relief, and the body becomes stronger, more flexible, energetic, and balanced.

HAIR: Tie the hair back or in a bun when practicing yoga.

INVERSION ASANAS: Do not practice any inverted asanas if there is excessive gas or fermentation in the intestines, during menstruation, or in the later stages of pregnancy. Those experiencing high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, or retinal disorders should also refrain from inversion asanas.

LENGTH OF PRACTICE: It is healthy to practice 1 - 1½ hours of yoga every other day, if not daily. If experiencing exhaustion after yoga practice, reassess the length of practice time.

LIMITS: Recognize the limits of the body's normal range of motion, do not overstretch or force yourself into any asana; do not exceed the body's capacity.

MAT: Always use a non-slip yoga mat surface, adding stability to the asana practice. The mat prevents the feet, hands, and elbows from slipping and sliding. The contact friction provided by the mat helps the body stretch further without straining to hold slipping limbs. The mat also provides a cushioned, warm insulation, and clean surface between the body and the floor. The yoga mat can easily be rolled and/or folded for use in various asanas, for travel, or to simply carry to yoga class.

MAT MAINTENANCE: The yoga mat is best maintained by wiping it by hand with a soft cloth with vinegar or mild detergent and warm water. Top loading washing machines should NOT be used to clean the mat, the mat can be damaged during the spin cycle. Front loading washing machines may be used if the mat becomes very soiled. Place no more than four mats in a large front loading washing machine with a little mild liquid detergent in cold water. Roll the mat in a towel to gently squeeze the water out, and allow the mat to air or drip dry.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS: Yoga is therapeutic when asanas are practiced to suit your specific needs. Some asanas can be damaging and counter productive. Seek professional advice for your specific body type and condition prior to beginning yoga practice.

MENSTRUATION: It is best to avoid any difficult asana practice during the 2 days of heavy flow. Do NOT practice any inversion asanas, stick to easy, relaxed breathing asanas.

MIRROR: If possible, practice under the direct supervision of a professional teacher, if this is not possible, practice in front of a mirror to maintain proper body positioning. Be aware of proper joint alignment, especially in the ankle, knee, shoulder, and neck regions.

NO STRAINING: Do not exert undue force or overstretch while practicing asanas. Beginners may find the muscles stiff at first, but after several weeks of regular practice the muscles become very supple.

PAIN: The yoga routine should be pain free. If any unusual pain or discomfort is felt, please stop and consult a professional.

PLACE OF PRACTICE: Practice in a well-ventilated room where it is calm and quiet. Asanas may also be practiced outdoors in a pleasant surroundings around nature. Do not practice in a strong wind, in the cold, in the direct sun, around polluted air, or near unpleasant odors. Do not practice in the vicinity of furniture or anything that prevents free fall to the ground, especially while performing inversion asanas. Often accidents occur because of falls against an object.

PREGNANCY: Prenatal Yoga is a perfect time to nourish and positively influence a growing fetus. Just as a wonderful seed when properly cared for with healthy nutrition, air, water, and light blossoms into a flower, then into a delicious fruit; yoga gives the growing child a great head start. In the 9 months in the womb followed by the 3 subsequent years with the mother, the child establishes fundamental rhythm, thought, breathing patterns, and a core value system to cope with in life. After this period, the child becomes a product of its ever-changing environment. The sitting asanas described in this book are very helpful during pregnancy as they stretch open the pelvis, making the delivery process easier. The standing asanas strengthen the legs and thighs, and assist to carry the baby in the womb. The core and Mula Bandha locks are paramount to practice throughout the day during early pregnancy. These locks are helpful in recognizing and releasing tension in the pelvic muscles. During labor this practice also helps to relax between contractions and prevent fatigue. During pregnancy, the body produces the hormone 'relaxin' which increases flexibility in the ligaments and joints. Many asanas become easier to practice as the pregnancy progresses.

RELAXATION: Conclude each yoga practice session with a minimum of 10 - 15 minutes cooldown in a relaxation, breathing, or meditative asana.

REST: After every 2 - 3 asana sequences it is helpful to sit silently in *EASY SITTING* or *SITTING ON KNEES* with the eyes closed, being aware of the natural breath, of the parts of the body that have just been stretched, and of any thoughts or feeling that have risen in the mind. After 3 long and easy breaths, continue the practice. This not only rests the body, but also develops awareness of the internal energy patterns, and the mental and emotional processes. This rest period is as important as the asanas themselves and should not be neglected. If extensive fatigue or tiredness is experienced at any point during the asana session, rest in *CORPSE* or *CHILD*.

SEQUENCE OF YOGA ASANAS: In the Yoga Series, it is very important that the asanas be practiced in the order described. They are designed in a sequential pattern for a specific reason where one asana leads and prepares the body for the next without causing any injury.

SUNBATHING: Never practice asanas for extended periods under the direct sun or after a long period of sunbathing as the body temperature is overheated.

SWEATING: It is common to sweat during the practice of yoga. Use a towel to wipe the sweat dry and change into dry clothing before the relaxation asanas to prevent a chill. Do not bathe or shower until the sweat has dried naturally.

TERMINATION OF ASANA: Pain that arises during asana practice should only be temporary and not sharp. If the pain from asana practice persists, then the asana practice may be incorrect. Terminate the asana practice immediately and, if necessary, seek professional care.

TIME OF PRACTICE: Asanas may be practiced at any time of the day, except after meals. In traditional yoga it is recommended to practice asanas two hours prior to dawn, finishing at sunrise, as the environment is quiet and tranquil at this hour. The activities of digestion have stopped, the mind has no deep impressions on the conscious level, and is relatively empty of thoughts at this time. Although the muscles are more stiff early in the morning compared to late afternoon, nevertheless, this time has a unique awakening and refreshing experience. Dusk, or the two hours around sunset, is also a wonderful time to relax, unwind, and rejuvenate.

WALL: It is very difficult to recognize whether the body is in neutral, or rotating. The use of a wall as a reference guide is very helpful to instil neutral positioning during asana practice. In most asanas, alignment is in a linear plane. Always think of lifting and reaching up from the navel to the crown of the head, and grounding down from the navel to the heels.

WATER: Keep the body well hydrated during yoga practice. Drink small sips of water at room temperature.

BREATHING

IMPORTANCE OF BREATHING IN YOGA

The practice of yoga is intimately connected with the breath capacity. The greater the breath capacity, the stronger the quality of the asana practice.

Yoga brings more awareness to the body and breath. Just as levels of flexibility and strength become obvious through asana practice, so do the different types of breathing patterns. Breathing can be quiet or noisy, heavy or soft, relaxed or tense, deep or shallow, and energizing or depleting.

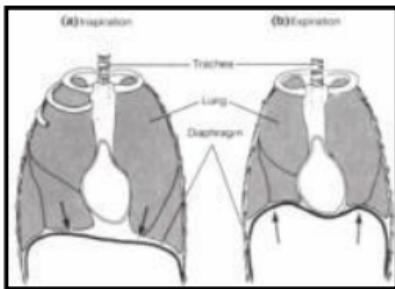
Yoga practice reveals the power of breath on the body and mind, and vice versa. When an individual is tense or guarded, for example, the tendency is to hold the breath and then take fast, shallow breaths. Relaxed breathing is slower and softer, and has a steady, gentle, even pattern. This deep, slow, relaxed breathing helps relax the mind and provides immediate energy to the body.

THE DIAPHRAGM MUSCLE

The term diaphragm literally means 'through a fence'. The diaphragm muscle sits in the middle of the trunk and regulates the pattern of breathing. This large dome-shaped muscle separates the heart and lungs above it from the abdominal cavity and digestive organs below. The muscle fibers extend inward, toward the center of the body and insert into a central tendon that has no attachments to the skeleton. The diaphragm muscle coordinates the amount of breath (air) entering and leaving the lungs.

BREATHING MECHANICS

The diaphragm works like a balloon. When relaxed, the diaphragm is curved upward like a dome. On inhalation, the diaphragm contracts, pushes the intestines down into the abdomen and lengthens the chest cavity above. As the diaphragm contracts, lowers, it takes on a funnel shape, creating a vacuum effect in the lungs causing an increased volume of space. The lungs have no capacity to expand or contract on their own, they simply respond to the size and shape of their container, the chest cavity. When the chest expands air rushes in to fill the vacuum in the lungs. When the container shrinks, the lungs are compressed and air is pushed out. The lower the diaphragm distends on contraction, the greater the resulting vacuum and subsequent air filling in the lungs. When air enters the lungs, the muscles in the ribs and chest contract, causing them to lift up and away from the body. This action also assists the diaphragm by increasing the pressure outside the lungs, allowing more air to inflate the lungs. The amount of air exhaled and the rate of expulsion is of equal importance. When the diaphragm relaxes and the abdominals contract, a recoil action results in the lungs and ribs. This recoil action decreases the pressure outside the lungs expelling air out, much the same way as a balloon expels air.



HOW TO BREATHE

In basic yoga practice breathing in and out through the nose extends the length of respiration. When breathing out of the mouth, the exhalation can become very short. Often, in difficult poses there is a tendency to hold the breath completely. Avoid holding the breath by keeping the awareness on the breath. As a general rule, breathe through the nose in an even, rhythmical pattern, extending the duration of the exhalation. Allow the breath to flow in a pattern of an outgoing and incoming ocean wave. In certain asanas it is also helpful to exhale on a vocal chant which focuses the mind in the present moment, lengthening the duration of exhalation.

WHAT EFFECTS BREATHING PATTERNS

Breathing patterns are directly related to optimum posture. Toned and supportive spinal muscles assist in deep rhythmic breathing. The spine forms a strong column that supports the expansion of the ribs up and out. The erector spinae muscles run up each side of the spine acting like guy-wires supporting the spine and rib cage. When optimum posture is lost the body curves over in a slump, the head tips forward, and the chest collapses. Dysfunctional posture significantly limits the capacity to breathe deeply. The collapsed chest puts pressure on the diaphragm, limiting its ability to expand and contract.

Breath movements can also be limited by short or tight abdominal muscles. Chronic pain in the low back, pelvis, or abdomen also effects breathing patterns as this restricts movement of the diaphragm. In fact, most pain, chronic or acute, is accompanied by abnormal breathing patterns.

BENEFITS OF DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

- Utilizes the lower lobes of the lungs
- Causes equal expansion of the alveoli in the lungs
- Improves lymphatic drainage from the lower lungs
- Massages the liver, stomach, intestines, and other organs that lie immediately below the diaphragm
- Exerts a positive effect on the cardiac functions and coronary supply
- Improves oxygenation of the blood and circulation
- Relaxes the abdomen
- Slows the fluctuations of the mind

ALIGNMENT & POSITIONING

It is important to keep the body in alignment during asana practice to prevent joint injury and to improve the quality of the practice. Be conscious of the following:



ARM AND HAND ALIGNMENT: When raising the arms overhead, keep the arms parallel with the ears and lightly contact the tips of the thumbs or face the palms inward.



CHIN LOCK AND NECK RETRACTION: Maintain a neutral spine in most asanas to avoid vertebral damage of the facets in the neck. In neutral spine the chin and neck are drawn back, not down.



FEET POSITIONING: Flare the toes and ground them into the mat.



HAND POSITIONING: Flare the hands and fingers open, flattening them as pancakes into the mat.



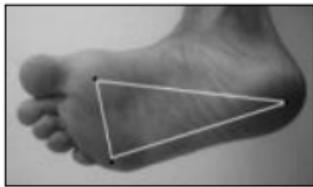
KNEE AND ANKLE ALIGNMENT: In asanas such as WARRIOR where the knee is bent, align the knee directly over the ankle to avoid excessive stress on the knee joint.



KNEELING: When sitting on the knees, place the body weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone just below the kneecap. Do not place the body weight on the kneecap. Double fold the mat to soften the area below the knees for protection.



MOVEMENT FROM THE NAVEL: Use the navel as the center of axis in any asana where there is movement. Pivot movement from the navel.



PLACEMENT OF THE BODY WEIGHT IN THE FEET: In standing asanas, distribute the body weight in a triangular format. Lift up on the toes whenever possible, fully grounding the feet.



PLACEMENT OF THE BODY WEIGHT IN THE HANDS: Do not place the body weight in the wrists in asanas where the weight is distributed in the hands. Place the body weight in the palms in a triangular format.



SHOULDER AND WRIST ALIGNMENT: In asanas such as *NEUTRAL TABLE*, align the shoulders directly over the wrists to avoid excessive strain on the wrist joints.



SHOULDER BLADE MOVEMENT: Keep the shoulder blades free, floating, and retracted. Lift the sternum up and out, away from the body. This position automatically retracts the shoulder blades.

AWARENESS DURING ASANA PRACTICE

There are 4 sequential ways to direct awareness during asana practice:

BODY: The awareness is focused on the actual physical movements, the interaction between the various components of the body, i.e. bones, joints, ligaments, muscles, abdominal organs, etc.. This method of practice includes single-pointedness in the physical body.

MIND: The focus is placed on disassociating from the thoughts arising in the mind as the body stretches further into the asana.

BREATH: The body and mind focuses are integrated through breath. In addition to the awareness of physical and mental movements described above, individual movements are synchronized with the breath. The movements become slower, which in turn slows the brain waves, increasing the breath capacity, further enhancing relaxation and awareness. Breathing should be practiced as indicated in the description of each asana.

SOUND: The final practice is to coordinate and integrate the following: reaching with the body, stilling the mind, enhancing the breath, and releasing sound. In each asana in Sound Body YOGA the breath is exhaled on the mantra 'AUM', uniting all the participants with one sound and synchronous breath.

WHAT MAY BE EXPERIENCED FROM YOGA PRACTICE

Beginners may experience a mild soreness or achiness the day following each practice session. This soreness is due to the release of built up toxins and lactic acid. The discomfort is short-lived, and with regular practice, it too shall pass.

The body may feel lethargic or tired during the initial weeks. The body is detoxifying, cleansing, and regenerating.

Some individuals have extra energy after their yoga practice, making it difficult to fall asleep. If this happens, practice yoga in the morning. This heightened state of energy will balance in a few days.

Yoga directly effects the biochemistry of the body. Many individuals experience a change in their appetite, an increase in urination, or regular bowel movements. Keep the body hydrated.

Peaks and valleys are common to all yoga practices. Some days the body will be very strong and on others very flexible. There may be weeks where there is no significant change at all. Continue the practice persistently.

ASANA CATEGORIES

RELAXATION ASANAS

The importance of Relaxation Asanas cannot be over-emphasized. They must be practiced before and after the asana session and at any time when the body becomes tired. The asanas may appear very easy at first, yet to practice them correctly is difficult as the tension in all the muscle groups of the body must be consciously released. The muscles often seem to be completely relaxed but, in fact, tightness still remains. Even during sleep, relaxation is elusive. Relaxation Asanas give the body and mind the rest it badly craves. Constant postural abnormalities put excess strain on the muscles around the spine which rarely relax even in the supine position. In these cases, the prone relaxation asanas are very relaxing to the spine and related structures. Relaxation Asanas may be practiced during any time of the day for rejuvenation. They may be combined with daily relaxation activities.

Relaxation Asanas fall into 5 categories: *kneeling, sitting, standing, supine, and prone.*

SITTING ASANAS

Sitting Asanas stretch the entire spine, enhance flexibility, and often relieve lower back complications caused by compression in the spine. Seated flexion stretches elongate the lower back and hamstring muscles. The Sitting Rotational Asanas stimulate the digestive system, and aid in massaging the abdominal organs. They also improve lateral flexibility in the spine, removing stiffness in the neck and shoulders. Sitting Relaxation Asanas calm the mind, bring a fresh supply of oxygen to the brain, and assist in rejuvenation.

Sitting Asanas fall into 4 categories: *Sitting on the gluteals, forward flexion, and spinal rotation.*

KNEELING ASANAS

Kneeling Asanas allow for coordinated pivoting movement between the hips and the spine. Flexion and extension movements can easily be made while being in close contact with the mat. In these asanas the spine can move in a coordinated manner while remaining in optimum posture. Kneeling Asanas are generally recuperating and relaxing, and are beneficial for the reproductive and digestive systems. Extra care must be taken to double fold the mat under the knees when in this asana position.

Kneeling Asanas fall into 4 categories: *kneeling, flexion, extension, and relaxation.*

STANDING ASANAS

In general, this series of asanas have a stretching and strengthening effect on the back and lower extremity muscles. Standing Asanas are particularly helpful in correcting problems for those who spend a lot of time sitting, and have stiffness or pain in the back. These asanas improve posture, balance, and muscular coordination. They also strengthen the muscles used to keep the back erect during meditation, increasing the oxygen capacity. Many Standing Asanas are influential in developing body strength and balance. Those individuals suffering from low back pathologies will find great comfort in simply practicing the basic GAZE.

Standing Asanas fall into 5 categories: *standing, balance, rotation, extension, and inversion.*

BALANCE ASANAS

Balance Asanas develop the cerebellum, the brain center that controls the body in motion. Many of us are uncoordinated in our movements. The body constantly compensates for the lack of balance which is why optimum posture is not maintained. This inefficient method expends maximum effort and energy with minimum results, creating considerable additional strain on the whole physiological system. Balance Asanas induce physical balance, stilling unconscious movement. As the moving body attains balance it becomes increasingly free to rely on other forces, such as gravity to support and propel it, instead of working against it. This way, the body conserves its own energy and achieves grace and fluidity of motion.

As well as inducing physical balance, Balance Asanas develop an equilibrium of the mind, giving a more mature outlook on life. The focus required to perform these asanas with steadiness and stillness assists in developing concentration and balance at the emotional and mental levels. Balance Asanas revitalize the nervous system and assist in removing stress and anxiety. Balance Asanas may be difficult to perform at first if a sense of balance has not been developed, however, the body is very adaptable and progress is made very quickly with regular practice. When practicing these asanas, it is most important to steady the mind through concentration on a fixed point. Gazing at a spot or mark on the wall allows the body to maintain seemingly difficult positions for long periods of time.

Balance Asanas fall into 2 categories: standing (combinations of balancing on the hands, feet, or knees) and inversions.

EXTENSION ASANAS

Extension, or Backward Bending Asanas, are postures that turn the body out to face the world. They are stimulating and extroverting. Inhalation is encouraged because they expand the sternum and ribcage out. These asanas are also dynamic postures which move counter to gravity, and therefore, require strength and energy to practice.

Extension Asanas challenge the rigid body armour as they stretch the abdominal muscles and assist in toning and strengthening the muscles that control the spine. The spinal column is a 'stack pile' of vertebrae and discs. Groups of muscles extend along the spinal column, covering and supporting it from all sides. Maintenance of the spine in a straight and aligned position, despite all movement, depends totally on the balanced, supportive contraction and tone of these muscles. The majority of backache has its origin in muscular imbalance. If these imbalances are prolonged, then the 'stack pile' of the vertebral column misaligns, the ligaments are strained, and symptoms of spinal pathologies begin to manifest.

Regular practice of Extension Asanas can prevent postural defects and neuromuscular imbalances of the vertebral column. As with all asanas, it is important to perform these practices with proper control and synchronization of breath so the whole group of muscles are uniformly contracted.

Extension Asanas often invoke fear in beginners. Not knowing where the body is going can be a frightening experience. Often the body does not have strength or flexibility to support itself in these positions because it is working against the forces of gravity. A great way to develop confidence and strength in Extension Asanas is to begin practicing Extension Asanas against the wall. A simple practice is to stand in OPTIMUM POSTURE, 12 - 18 inches facing away from the wall, lean back, reach the arms and hands overhead, and place the palms against the wall, fingers pointing down. Push the hips and sternum away from the wall, straightening the arms. Let the neck and head drop back gently and keep the mouth closed. As this practice becomes easier. Walk the feet further away from the wall and reach down lower with the palms keeping the arms straight.

Extension Asanas fall into 4 categories: standing, kneeling, supine, and prone.

FLEXION ASANAS

As a general rule, Flexion Asanas are easier to practice compared to Extension Asanas. Flexion Asanas, or Forward Bending Asanas, are passive in that the force of gravity is used to stretch the specific muscle groups. Extension Asanas move the body against gravity, while Flexion Asanas use gravity to help release tension, reaching and lengthening the muscle fiber. This is a process of curling in or going inward, counteracting the extroversion and dynamic opening up of the Extension Asanas. In forward flexion the chest and abdomen are compressed in exhalation, inducing a state of relaxation.

In our sedentary lifestyles of little or no exercise, we often become stiff and inflexible, unable to bend forward easily. Our minds are becoming increasingly active while our bodies have become physically more rigid. Flexion Asanas are very effective to relax both the mind and body. In the East, Forward Bending Asanas are also associated with lowering the self, bowing, projecting the act of humbleness. The inability to bend forward can indicate a personality which is arrogant, stiff, proud, or stubborn.

Flexion Asanas primarily loosen the spine, restoring optimum health, increasing vitality. These Flexion Asanas direct the spine into the primary curve, or the shape the spine originates within the womb. In Flexion Asanas the articulations of the vertebrae are separated, stimulating the nerves, improving circulation around the spine, restoring the natural flow of the cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) nourishing the spinal cord. Normal flow of the CSF balances the activity in the brain. Flexion Asanas are very important in restoring and maintaining flexibility and strength in the spine. These asanas act by compressing and massaging the abdominal structures, influencing the digestive and elimination organs.

Most day-to-day activities involve flexion movement of the limbs. Although the body joints flex, they do not stretch and flex fully to their end range of motion. For example, one may bend over to tie shoelaces for a few seconds but the low back and hamstring muscles do not get a complete stretch. The axis of pivoting for most Flexion Asanas is the pelvis, not the waist. Bending from the hips gives greater flexibility of movement and creates a stronger pressure against the abdomen. Do not force the back to bend further forward than present flexibility allows. The muscles should be relaxed, allowing gravity and the exhalation to stretch and move the body toward the feet. With regular practice, even the most rigid spine develops flexibility. Bending and reaching the head toward the feet creates a great stretch in the low back. The greatest culprit or the weakest link invariably restricting flexion movement is the hamstring muscle group. In most individuals the hamstring muscle is generally weak and tight. Great focus and concentration needs to be addressed to these powerful muscles in the back of the thighs. They need not only be stretched but also strengthened, alternating with various yoga asanas.

It is not necessary to practice all the Flexion Asanas one after the other. Begin with the easier preliminary practices and gradually build up to the more advanced ones as the spine becomes more flexible.

When practicing Flexion Asanas from a sitting position, particularly those in which the legs are separated, it is helpful to sit with the gluteals and perineum on the mat, rather than on the coccyx. The correct position is obtained by sitting with the legs slightly separate and placing the hands on the mat, on either side of the hips, with the fingertips pointing forward. Then, using the arms and hands as support, lift the buttocks slightly from the floor and, while lowering them, tilt the pelvis forward. Always lengthen the spine and reach out and away when practicing flexion asanas.

Flexion Asanas fall into 4 categories: *standing, kneeling, sitting, and inversion.*

INVERSION ASANAS

Inversion Asanas reverse the action of gravity on the body. Instead of everything being pulled down toward the feet, the orientation shifts toward the head. On a mental level, Inversion Asanas turn everything upside-down, throwing a new light on old patterns, giving a new perspective. Generally these asanas improve health, reduce anxiety and stress, and increase self-confidence. They also increase mental power, concentration, and the capacity to sustain large workloads without strain.

Inversion Asanas encourage a rich blood supply to the brain, nourishing the nervous tissue, and flushing out toxins. Blood and lymph accumulated in the lower extremities and abdomen are drained back to the heart, then circulated to the lungs for oxygenation, cleansed, and recirculated back to the rest of the body. This process nourishes the cells in the entire body. While in the Inversion Asana, the breath becomes slow and deep, maximizing the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide, encouraging proper respiration.

Inversion Asanas fall into 4 categories: *kneeling, standing, supine, and inversion.*

PRONE ASANAS

Prone Asanas are dynamic postures which move counter to gravity, requiring energy and strength to practice. In the prone position the front of the body and face are in direct contact with the mat, positioning in a surrendering posture. Lifting the body or limbs up from a neutral prone position against gravity requires tremendous effort, coordination, and concentration. Using the breath as a fulcrum, the body can sustain in a Prone Asana much longer with great stability. Prone Asanas are exhausting to practice but rejuvenating in the relaxed phase.

Prone Asanas fall into 3 categories: *extension, relaxation, and flexion.*

SUPINE ASANAS

Supine Asanas are generally rejuvenating. When lying on the back, face up, in the supine position the body rests more comfortably with the assistance of the equal balance of gravitational force. Supine Asanas are generally more passive and easier to practice compared to Prone Asanas. They are often used at the end of the yoga session to unwind and rejuvenate the body before sinking into CORPSE. The Supine Asanas are very helpful for individuals experiencing low back complications. The spine can be securely grounded into the mat while the surrounding areas are systematically stretched or strengthened.

Supine Asanas fall into 3 categories: *flexion, rotation, and extension.*

ROTATION ASANAS

Rotation Asanas are very effective for spinal rejuvenation. Every asana series must include at least one asana from this group, preferably following the Flexion and Extension Asanas. The twist imposed on the spine and the whole trunk exercises and stretches the muscles, making the spinal column more flexible, stimulating the spinal nerves. It also has a strong influence on the abdominal muscles, alternately stretching and compressing the abdominal contents, as the body twists from one direction to the other. Beginners must be very careful to gently twist the trunk only to the point where the body comfortably allows.

Most of the Rotation Asanas stimulate the region around the navel. This nourishes organs such as the pancreas, kidneys, stomach, small intestines, liver, and gall bladder; relieving associated disorders. These asanas have a strong influence on the total health and vitality of the body.

Rotation Asanas assist in resolving complicated problems that appear too difficult to solve. These asanas often untangle physical knots giving insight and inspiration, helping the mind to systematically approach the tangled knots of life.

Rotation Asanas fall into 3 categories: *sitting, supine, and standing.*

For everything there is a season,
And a time for every matter under heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to seek, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to throw away;
A time to tear, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate,
A time for war, and a time for peace.

- Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 -

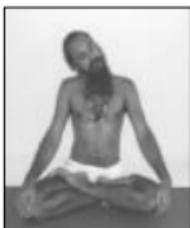
RELAXATION ASANAS



WARM UP & COOL

Sitting, Relaxation

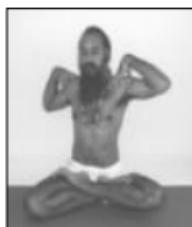
DOWN ASANAS



NECK MOVEMENTS GREEVA SANCHALAN asana

Sit in *EASY SITTING*, *SITTING ON KNEES*, or *LOTUS*, in optimum posture. Close the eyes and slowly move the head in a circular, clockwise motion, do not strain. Feel the muscles in the entire neck stretch fully. Synchronize 3 full cycles with 3 respirations. Repeat in a counter-clockwise direction. In the next sequence, side bend the neck to the right, maintain the asana for 3 respirations, and then repeat on the other side. Next, forward flex the head bringing the chin toward the chest and maintain the asana for 3 respirations. Extend the neck back, chin up, and maintain the asana for 3 respirations.

Precaution: Practice the neck movements very gently as there are several sensitive nerves and arteries in the neck region which may be damaged if the movement is rapid and excessive.



SHOULDER ROTATIONS SKANDHA CHAKRA asana

Sit in *EASY SITTING*, *SITTING ON KNEES*, or *LOTUS*, in optimum posture. Place the fingers on each shoulder. Rotate both elbows together in a backward circular motion. Synchronize 3 full cycles with 3 respirations. Repeat by rotating both elbows in a forward circle. In the next sequence, alternate simultaneously rotating the right elbow forward and the left elbow backward. Synchronize 3 full cycles with 3 respirations. Repeat in the other direction.



SUFI ROLLS UPAVISTHA CHAKRA

Sit in *EASY SITTING* or *LOTUS*, in optimum posture. Place the palms on the knees. Bend in full forward flexion and slowly rotate the upper body in a circular, clockwise direction to right lateral flexion, extension, left lateral flexion, and back to forward flexion. Increase the arc of movement with each sequential circle. Synchronize 5 full cycles with 5 respirations. Keep the eyes closed. Repeat in the other direction.



COW'S FACE GOMUKH asana

Sit in *EASY SITTING* or *SITTING ON KNEES*, in optimum posture. Internally rotate the left shoulder and place the back of the left hand on the spine between the shoulder blades. Reach the right hand over the right shoulder and clasp the fingers of the left hand. Press the head against the raised elbow. Pull the right elbow toward the crown of the head and the left elbow to the sacrum. Keep the eyes closed. Maintain the asana for 15 respirations. Repeat on the other side.



REVERSE PRAYER PARIVRITTA NAMASTE asana

Sit in *EASY SITTING* or *SITTING ON KNEES*, in optimum posture. Internally rotate the left shoulder and place the back of the left hand on the left side of the spine, next internally rotate the right shoulder and place the back of the right hand on the right side of the spine. Approximate both the palms together contacting the wrists with the fingers pointing up toward the head. The thumbs are touching, and the forearms are parallel with the mat. Gaze at a fixed point or keep the eyes closed. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.



ANKLE ROTATION GOOLF CHAKRA asana

Sit in *SEATED BASE*, feet separated, legs extended, and heels in contact with the mat. Curl the toes, rotate the right foot clockwise from the ankle synchronizing 10 cycles with 10 respirations. Repeat in a counter-clockwise direction. Gaze at the toes. Repeat the sequence with the left foot.



PALMING HAST ANKHA asana

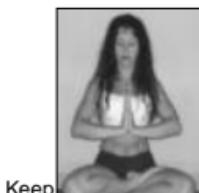
Sit in *EASY SITTING*, *SITTING ON KNEES*, or *LOTUS*, in optimum posture with the eyes closed. Vigorously rub the palms together until they become hot. Place the palms gently over the eyelids and massage the outside of the eyes. Feel the warmth and energy transmit from the hands into the eyes, relaxing the eye muscles. Remain in this position until the heat from the palms is absorbed by the eyes. Rub the hands and repeat this procedure 2 more times.

EYE GAZING NASIKAGRA DRISHTI asana

Variation 1: Sit in *EASY SITTING*, *SITTING ON KNEES*, or *HALF LOTUS* in optimum posture. Place the left hand on the left knee and reach out with the right arm straight, at eye level. Hold the right hand in a fist with the thumb pointing up to the sky. Gently make a circular arc motion with the right arm and follow the thumb with the eyes. The head remains still. Synchronize 5 full cycles with 5 respirations. Repeat in the other direction. Next, place the right thumb directly in front of the nose, focus on the thumb nail, exhale and take the thumb away in a straight line parallel with the mat, inhale and take the thumb back. Repeat this sequence 5 times with both hands.



Variation 2: Sit in Easy Sitting or Sitting on Knees posture. Bring your hands to prayer position in front of the nose, or gaze at the eyebrow center.



Keep the hands in the asana for 10 respirations.

GAZE

Standing, Relaxation



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times during the asana.
- Retract the chin and shoulder blades.
- Distribute the weight evenly between the balls and heels of the feet.
- Maintain optimum posture throughout the asana.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral position, and the palms face forward. Feel total awareness of the body, and do not be distracted by sounds, smells, tactile impulses, or stray thoughts. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps, squeeze the thighs and gluteals, keep the legs straight and knees unlocked. Inhale, lift up from the navel, stretch the crown of the head up, and lengthen the spine. Exhale, draw the shoulder blades down and back, and lift the sternum. Reach down with the arms and stretch the fingers open. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

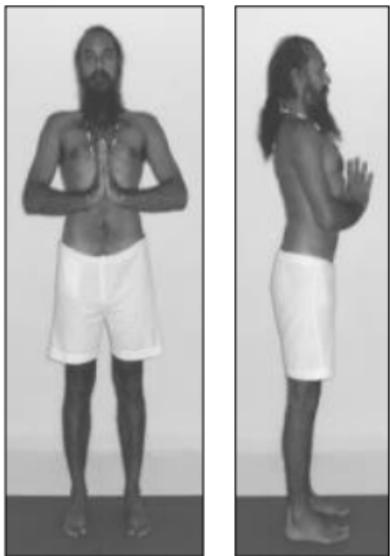
PRIMARY GOALS

- Stabilize the optimum neutral standing posture
- Encourage equal balance on both sides of the body
- Coordinate the movement of breath, stillness of mind, and balance of posture

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Avoid distractive thoughts that prevent uniting the breath with the stillness of the body.

DRISHTI asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Develops strength in the ankle and feet muscles
- Establishes balance coordination
- Improves posture

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – **GAZE PRAYER:** Inhale, place the palms together into prayer position over the heart with the forearms linear. Exhale, lower the shoulders down, retract the chin, squeeze the hands together and lift the crown of the head up. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

Between each standing asana neutralize in **GAZE** before proceeding to the next asana. Maintain a particular focus on either the navel, the tip of the nose, the midpoint between the eyebrows, or a fixed point during yoga practice. Fixing the gaze on a particular point is helpful in steadyng the mind. Wandering eyes are accompanied by distracting thoughts. Traditionally, yoga was practiced in solitude, not in groups, for a particular reason. In a yoga class with many students there are countless distractions (such as comparing one's self to others or wondering who just entered the room). No matter where one is, thoughts continuously arise. Concentrating on the breath, with a fixed gaze at a point, enables one to observe these thoughts without being involved and distracted by them. In time, the mind begins to silence, a degree of balance develops, and one is no longer tossed around by emotional responses to situations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

None

CHILD

Kneeling, Prone, Inversion, Relaxation



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The pelvic and abdominal muscles must remain active during the entire asana.
- Pivot from the hips when bending forward.
- The chin is retracted into the neck and shoulders are drawn back during the entire asana.
- Maintain a focus on the breath.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright on the knees and heels, and lower the forehead to the mat.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Kneel on the mat with the tops of the feet flat on the mat. The big toes are together and heels separated. Lower the gluteals down to the inside surface of the feet. The heels touch the sides of the hips. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, and lift up from the crown of the head. Lift the sternum and draw the shoulder blades further down. Place the palms face down beside the head, elbows bent. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Increase flexibility in the hips
- Elongate and stretch the spine
- Enhance the breath

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Practice these asanas to align the body, internalize the focus, and restore energy. Do not rush in and out of these asanas. Surrender the forehead and thoughts to the mat and let go tension. 0

BAL asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and hips
- Relaxes the body and mind
- Elongates the spine from the sacrum to the base of the skull
- Facilitates mental and physical balance without causing strain or pain
- Restores energy
- Assists in digestion

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – *FETUS*: From *CHILD*, roll to one side and rest the head on the folded hands.

Intermediate – *RABBIT*: From the final position in *CHILD*, inhale, internally rotate the shoulders, reach back, and grasp the heels with the hands. Exhale, squeeze both the arms into the body and approximate the head to the knees. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.

Advanced – *HARE*: Sit upright on the knees and heels, inhale, reach the arms overhead, palms face forward. Lengthen the neck, retract the chin and lift up from the crown of the head. Lift the sternum and draw the shoulder blades further down. Engage the core, exhale, pivot from the hips and lower the forehead to the mat. The arms fully extended in front, and the palms are face down on the mat. Close the eyes. Reach forward with the extended fingers and lower the tailbone into the mat. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: high blood pressure or retinal disorders.

PRECAUTION

When sitting on the knees, place the body weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone just below the kneecap. Do not place the weight on the kneecap. Double fold the mat to soften the area below the knees for protection.

DIAPHRAGMATIC

BREATHING

Supine, Relaxation



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up, knees bent, and palms face up beside the body.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Retract the neck and shoulder blades and maintain optimum posture. Place the right palm below the navel, the left palm over the center of the heart, and breathe through the nose. Observe the spontaneous breath without controlling it in any way, allow it to be absolutely natural. The right hand rises and falls with every breath, and there is no movement in the left hand. Try not to expand the chest or move the shoulders. Close the eyes. Breathe with a slow, deep, even rhythm. Inhale deep, dropping the diaphragm as much as possible without expanding the rib cage. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Engage the diaphragm and increase the quality and quantity of breath

COMMON OVERSIGHT

There may be a feeling of light-headedness due to the extra breath. Breathe slow and deep.

SWAS asana

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Relax the abdomen.
- Be aware of each inhalation and exhalation.
- Breathe only through the nose.

BENEFITS

- Massages the abdominal organs
- Relaxes the body and mind
- Increases and improves the exchange of incoming oxygen and outgoing carbon dioxide gases during respiration

Most individuals loose the technique to breathe properly after the age of three. Yoga practice provides a wonderful opportunity to re-learn the connection between breath, posture, and movement.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

None

CORPSE

Supine, Relaxation



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up, legs extended, and arms by the sides.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The feet are relaxed, hip-width apart. The palms are face up, and the shoulder blades are comfortably retracted in optimum posture. The head and spine are in a straight line and the chin is retracted. Close the eyes and be aware of the natural rhythmic breath flow without controlling it in any way.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Relax the entire body
- Regulate the rhythm of breath
- Bring awareness of stresses in the body and mind

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not be distracted by sounds and thoughts. Breathe slow and deep, focusing inward. Maintain this asana for at least 5 – 10 minutes to experience the full benefits.

SHIV asana

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Check the entire body for signs of tension and relax muscles that are tense, tight, or contracted.
- Use a wiggling or rocking motion to relax these muscles.
- Be aware of each inhalation and exhalation.
- Breathe only through the nose.

BENEFITS

- Relaxes the body and mind
- Increases and improves the exchange of incoming oxygen and outgoing carbon dioxide gases during respiration
- Decreases thoughts, stress, and tension

It is extremely essential to end every yoga asana session with *CORPSE*. This asana can also be used briefly in the beginning or middle of every session to recognize areas requiring relaxation.

RE-POSTURING: Lying in *CORPSE* is a wonderful way to re-align the body postural mechanics. By positioning the body in anatomical optimum posture there is minimum stress on the body joints and muscles. Maintaining this posture for at least 10 –15 minutes re-educates the body (hardware) and mind (software) to adapt to this comfortable and stress-free posture.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

None

REVERSE CORPSE

Prone, Relaxation



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Check the entire body for signs of tension, and relax muscles that are tense, tight, or contracted.
- Use a wiggling or rocking motion to relax tension in the muscles.
- Be aware of each inhalation and exhalation.
- Press the navel into the mat on every inhalation and lengthen the duration of respiration.
- Breathe only through the nose.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face down, forehead on the mat, arms overhead, and palms face down.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The tops of the feet rest on the mat, hip-width apart. Inhale and fully extend the arms overhead, parallel with the ears. The fingers are separated and grounded. Exhale, retract the shoulder blades, and stretch the toes away from the body. Relax the body and mind from any distracting activity. Close the eyes. Be aware of the natural rhythmic breath flow without controlling it in any way. Feel the navel press into the mat on inhalation.

To return to seated position, increase the depth of the breath, move the fingertips and toes, exhale, and roll to the right into *FETUS*. Inhale and slowly rise to a seated position. The eyes remain closed throughout this movement.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Relax the entire body
- Regulate the rhythm of breath
- Be aware of stresses in the body and mind

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not be distracted by sounds and thoughts. Breathe slow and deep, focusing on the navel area. Maintain the asana for at least 5 – 10 minutes to experience the full benefits.

ADV asana



BENEFITS

- Relaxes the body and mind
- Increases and improves the exchange of incoming oxygen and outgoing carbon dioxide gases during respiration
- Decreases thoughts, stress, and tension
- Aligns the body posture
- Elongates the spine

MODIFICATIONS

Reverse Corpse 2: The arms may be folded with the forehead resting on the mat or on the forearms.

This is an extremely powerful alternative to end a yoga asana session. *REVERSE CORPSE* can also be used briefly in the beginning or middle of every session to recognize areas requiring relaxation.

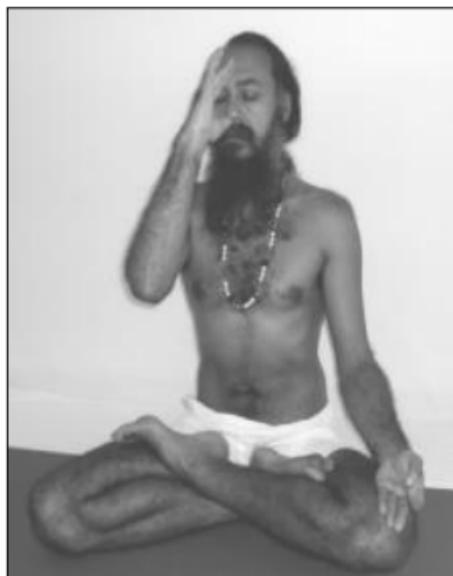
CONTRA-INDICATIONS

None

ALTERNATE NOSTRIL

Sitting, Relaxation

BREATHING



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Maintain an optimum seated posture throughout the asana.
- Retract the chin into the neck, and expand and lift the rib cage during the entire breath sequence.
- Concentrate on balancing the right and left sides of the body.
- Keep a focus on the breath, and do not be distracted by thoughts.
- Do not force the breath, allow the air to gently draw into the nostril.
- Feel the diaphragm drop on the inhalation.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright, cross-legged, or on the knees.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Maintain optimum seated posture and gaze at the eyebrow center or close the eyes. Take the right hand and gently place the thumb against the right nostril. Inhale slowly through the left nostril as deep as possible and sustain the breath for a count of 3. Close the left nostril with the right ring finger, simultaneously release the thumb from the right nostril and exhale fully out of the right nostril. Sustain the exhalation for a count of 3. Inhale in the right nostril and gently press the thumb against the right nostril. Sustain the breath for a count of 3 and exhale fully out of the left nostril. This is one cycle. Repeat for 10 cycles.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Optimize the function of both sides of the brain
- Relax and balance the body and mind

COMMON OVERSIGHT

It is important to maintain an optimum seated posture. Practice *PRANAYAMA* after yoga and before meditation.

PRANAYAMA asana

BENEFITS

- Balances the natural breathing cycle
- Alleviates headaches
- Increases the breath capacity
- Reduces the effects of stress
- Facilitates mental and physical balance without causing strain or pain
- Enhances mental clarity

Although breathing is mainly an unconscious process, the quantity, duration, and flow of breath can be managed. Mastering the flow of breath forms a bridge between the conscious and unconscious areas of the mind. The practice of *PRANAYAMA* releases the energy trapped in nervous unconscious mental patterns toward creative and positive activity.

PRANAYAMA is a unique practice that balances breath between the two nostrils. Normally the flow of breath alternates from one nostril to the other at various times during the day. In a healthy person the breath will alternate between nostrils every 2 - 3 hours. Most of us are not in optimum health so this time period varies considerably and may sometimes fluctuate between 4 - 6 hours, creating imbalance, draining energy in the body and mind.

The breath flow in nasal cycle corresponds with brain function. The right hemisphere, or the right side of the brain, fosters the abstract, creative, and emotional nature, influenced by the left nostril. The logical, rational, mental, and numeric thought is accomplished by the left hemisphere and responds to the flow of the right nostril.

As a rule, when the right nostril is restricted, the result is mental and nervous disturbance, and if the left nostril is involved, there is chronic fatigue and reduced creative energy.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice *PRANAYAMA* if the nasal passages are blocked due to a cold. During the infectious period of a cold, forced breathing through the nose may lead to complications.

PRECAUTION

Be slow and rhythmic in the breathing. There may be a sensation of dizziness or light headedness due to the excessive intake of oxygen.

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile,
but sometimes your smile can be the source of
your joy.

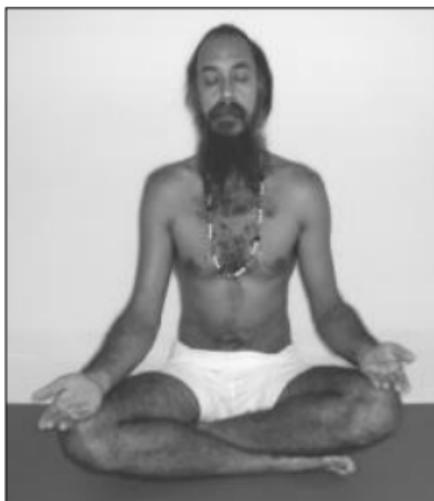
-Thich Nhat Hanh -

SITTING ASANAS



EASY SITTING/LOTUS

Sitting, Relaxation



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The pelvis and abdominals must remain active during the asana.
- Retract the chin into the neck, and expand and lift the rib cage.
- Concentrate on physical balance equalizing the weight on the right and left sides of the body.
- Maintain a focus on the breath.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright on the gluteals, legs straight in front of the body.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Bend the right leg and place the right foot under the left thigh. Bend the left leg and place the left foot under the right thigh. Lift the sternum and retract the shoulder blades. Place the hands on the knees, palms face up. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, and lift the crown of the head. Draw the shoulder blades further down. Gaze at the eyebrow center or close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.

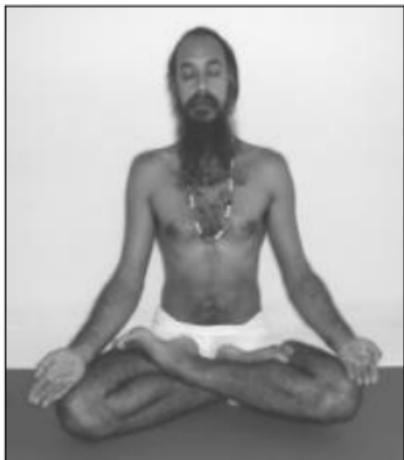
PRIMARY GOALS

- Improve upper body posture
- Increase flexibility in the hips
- Strengthen the core
- Elongate the spine
- Enhance the breath
- Relax the body and mind

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Although *EASY SITTING* is a simple, relaxing meditation posture, it is difficult to sustain for long periods of time unless the knees are close to the mat, or touching the mat. In this position most of the body weight is supported by the gluteal muscles, causing the low back to stiffen. One easy way to overcome this difficulty is to prop the gluteals on to a cushion, automatically dropping the knees to the mat. It is extremely important to keep the upper body in optimum alignment in all sitting asanas so the breath flows freely.

SUKH/PADAM asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and hips
- Increases breath capacity
- Elongates the spine from the sacrum to the base of the skull
- Facilitates mental and physical balance

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – HALFLOTUS: Sit upright with the legs straight in front of the body. Bend the right leg and place the bottom of the right foot against the inner left thigh. Bend the left leg and place the left foot on top of the right thigh. Without straining, try to place the upper heel close to the abdomen. Lift the sternum, retract the shoulder blades, and engage the core. Place the hands on the knees, palms face up. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, and lift the crown of the head. Draw the shoulder blades further down, and expand and lift the rib cage. Gaze at the eyebrow center or close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

Advanced – LOTUS: Sit upright with the legs straight in front of the body. Slowly and gently bend the right leg and place the right foot on top of the left thigh. The bottom of the right foot faces upward and the heel is close to the pubic bone. Bend the left leg and place the left foot on top of the right thigh. Without straining, place the upper heel close to the abdomen. In the ideal position both knees eventually touch the mat. Lift the sternum, retract the shoulder blades, and engage the core. Place the hands on the knees, palms face up. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, and lift the crown of the head. Draw the shoulder blades further down, and expand and lift the rib cage. Gaze at the eyebrow center or close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 20 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: hip, knee, or ankle problems; sciatica; low back complications; or injuries to the coccyx.

SEATED BASE

Sitting, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The pelvis and abdominals must remain active.
- Maintain an optimum posture.
- Retract the chin, lift the sternum, and draw the shoulders back.
- The legs and thighs remain in contact with the mat.
- Keep a focus on the breath.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright with the legs extended, and feet together.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. The legs are outstretched, hamstrings and calves contact the mat, feet are together, and the toes point toward the head. The arms are beside the body and the palms rest on the mat face down. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, lift up from the crown of the head. Draw the shoulder blades down and lift the sternum. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Develop the core
- Elongate the spine
- Balance the pelvis

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not lose the integrity of optimum posture. Keep the upper body vertical. The lower extremity and heels remain fully connected with the mat.

PRARAMBHIK STHITI

asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and hips
- Strengthens the core
- Increases breath capacity
- Elongates the spine from the sacrum to the base of the skull

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – The arms are straight, elevated to the sides at shoulder height, and the palms face forward. Reach the arms out in opposite directions. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

Advanced – The arms are straight, elevated above the head, parallel with the ears, and the palms face inward. Reach the arms up. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: abdominal complications or injuries to the coccyx.

SEATED BUTTERFLY

Sitting



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the abdominals and lift the rib cage to maintain the integrity of optimum posture.
- Retract the chin into the neck and draw the shoulders back.
- Lower the knees further to the mat on each exhalation.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright on the gluteals with the bottom of the feet in contact with each other.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Interlace the fingers on the upper, outer parts of the feet. Contract the abdominals, lower the ribs toward the pelvis, round the spine, and approximate the knees toward each other. Inhale, engage the core lock, and lengthen the neck and the crown of the head. Draw the shoulder blades down and back, and lift the sternum. Exhale, maintain a straightened arm position, keep the spine straight, and lower the knees to the mat. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Increase flexibility in the hips
- Strengthen the core
- Open the chest cavity
- Elongate the spine
- Balance the pelvis

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not lose the integrity of optimum posture in exchange for opening the hips and lowering the knees to the mat.

TITTALI asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and mobilizes the spinal joints
- Improves upper back posture (rounded shoulders)
- Massages the abdominal organs
- Very helpful in menstrual disorders and pregnancy

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - Maintain optimum neutral posture and lower the knees to the mat minimally. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

Intermediate - Maintain optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Lower the knees as close to the mat as possible. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: hip pathologies, injuries to the sacro-iliac or coccyx, groin injuries, or inguinal hernias.

SEATED FORWARD

Sitting, Flexion, Inversion

FOLD



INITIAL POSITION

Sit with the legs extended, hip-width apart. The arms are overhead shoulder-width apart, palms face inward.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Draw the shoulder blades down, lift the sternum, and elongate the neck. The arms are overhead, parallel with the ears. The legs are fully extended and the toes point toward the head. Inhale, exhale and pivot forward from the hips. Reach out, lengthen the arms, and flex the body forward. The arms remain parallel with the ears and approximate the feet. Move through the spine one vertebra at a time engaging the core at all times. Keep the eyes closed. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Increase articulation, flexibility, and lengthen the spine
- Strengthen the core
- Stretch the hamstrings

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Visualize the body sitting tall against the wall. Roll the spine off the wall without allowing the hips to move. Keep the hips fixed as the spine moves forward toward the feet.
- Maintain a neutral spine even when the body moves forward. The hips are fixed; there is no change in the hip position.
- As the body moves forward, the spine moves one vertebra at a time. The abdominals contract to maintain the spinal stretch.
- The feet are flexed, and the toes face directly up.

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Many individuals do not have the flexibility to sit upright in optimum posture. Beginners may sit on a pillow to attain neutral optimum posture. Do not grab the toes upon full forward flexion. Maintain the integrity in the abdominal and spinal muscles.

PASCHIMOTTANA asana



BENEFITS

- Stretches the hamstrings
- Increases the flexibility of the hip joints
- Massages the abdominal contents
- Elongates the spine from the sacrum to the base of the skull



MODIFICATIONS

Variation 1: Extend the left leg straight and place the bottom of the right foot against the inner left thigh. The arms are held overhead maintaining optimum posture. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

Variation 2: Extend the left leg straight and place the bottom of the right foot against the inner left thigh. The arms are held overhead. Maintain optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Pivot from the hips and reach out toward the feet keeping the arms parallel with the ears. Keep the eyes closed. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing lumbar pathologies.

SEATED HIP OPENER

Sitting, Rotation, Balance



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Contract the abdominals and elevate the rib cage to secure the integrity of optimum posture.
- Extend the reach between both hands.
- Retract the chin into the neck and draw the shoulders back.
- Keep the spine erect, perpendicular to the mat.
- Stretch the hamstrings further with each exhalation.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright with the legs extended, and feet together.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the sternum and retract the shoulder blades. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Bend the right knee and place the bottom of the right foot on the inside of the left thigh, the heel approximates the groin. Inhale, grasp the instep of the left foot with the left hand and extend the knee elevating the leg and foot in the air to a 45 degree angle. Push the left heel out straightening the leg. Exhale, elevate and externally rotate the right arm out, palm face up. Form a straight line between both arms maintaining an optimum neutral spine. Gaze at the right palm. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Increase flexibility in the hips
- Open the chest cavity
- Elongate the spine
- Balance the pelvis
- Stretch the hamstrings
- Develop total body strength
- Stretch and open the shoulder blades

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not lose the integrity of optimum posture in exchange for opening the hips.

UPAVISTHA SHRONI

PRASARITA asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and hips
- Opens the hip joints
- Elongates the spine from the sacrum to the base of the skull
- Opens the chest cavity
- Stretches the hamstrings

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – Sit upright with the legs extended, and feet together. Lift the sternum and retract the shoulder blades. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Bend the knees, grasp the instep of the right foot with the right hand and the left foot with the left hand. Lower and balance the body weight back onto the gluteals. Push the heels out extending the legs into a straightened position, and elevate both the legs and feet in the air to a 45 degree angle. Keep the spine erect. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: hip or shoulder pathologies, injuries to the sacro-iliac or coccyx, groin injuries, inguinal hernias, or in the last 3 months of pregnancy.

Your vision will become clear
only when you look into your
heart.

Who looks outside, dreams.

Who looks inside, awakens.

- Carl Jung -

KNEELING ASANAS



NEUTRAL TABLE

Kneeling, Relaxation



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to protect the spine and rib cage.
- Retract the chin and lengthen the neck.
- Maintain optimum spine, stabilizing the hips in neutral without rotating from one side to the other.
- Flatten the palms into the mat.
- Maintain a straight line from the crown of the head to the base of the spine.

INITIAL POSITION

Position the body on the hands and knees.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The shoulders are directly over the hands and hips over the knees. Place the hands flat on the mat shoulder-width apart, fingers spread apart and pointing forward. The feet are hip-width apart. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. The chin is retracted, and neck lengthened. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Spinal and core balance
- Relax the body and restore energy

COMMON OVERSIGHT

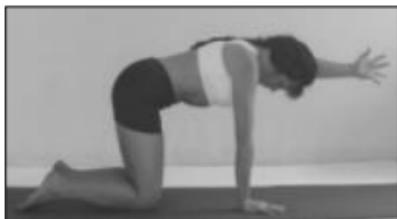
Place the weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone under the knee, to avoid stress on the kneecap. If the trunk is not fully engaged in the intermediate and advanced asanas, the spine will sag and the hips will rotate from side to side as the leg raises or the arm extends. Be conscious of the core lock, especially during movement.

ADHO PURVOTTANA asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and shoulder joints
- Enhances the integrity of posture, core, and Mula Bandha locks
- Encourages awareness of breathing techniques



MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – Variation 1: *NEUTRAL TABLE RAISED LEG*: From *NEUTRAL TABLE*, inhale, exhale, then extend and reach the right leg out straight back. Maintain the stillness and integrity of the trunk. The raised leg is parallel with the mat. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Return to *NEUTRAL TABLE*. Repeat on the other side.

Beginners – Variation 2: *NEUTRAL TABLE RAISED ARM*: From *NEUTRAL TABLE*, inhale, exhale, then extend and reach the left arm out straight, palm faces inward. Maintain the stillness and integrity of the trunk. The raised arm is parallel with the mat. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Return to *NEUTRAL TABLE*. Repeat on the other side.

Intermediate – *NEUTRAL TABLE ALTERNATE ARM/LEG*: From *NEUTRAL TABLE*, inhale, exhale, then extend and reach the left arm out straight, palm faces inward. Extend the right leg back while maintaining the stillness and integrity of the trunk. The raised arm and leg form a straight line with each other. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Return to *NEUTRAL TABLE*. Repeat on the other side.

PRECAUTION

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice the advanced asana if experiencing: knee, shoulder, or hip complications; or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

When sitting on the knees, place the body weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone just below the kneecap. Do not place the weight on the kneecap. Double fold the mat to soften the area below the knees for protection.

COW / CAT

Kneeling, Extension, Flexion



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core all times to protect the spine and rib cage.
- Maintain optimum spine at the start and end positions of the asana.
- Inhale upon extending the entire spine and exhale upon flexion, slowly moving vertebra by vertebra.
- Retract the shoulders down and back upon extension of the spine.
- Do not bend the elbows, and align the arms vertically, parallel with the thighs.



INITIAL POSITION

Position the body on the hands and knees.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Place the hands face down on the mat directly under the shoulders, the fingers are flat and spread apart. The hips are over the knees and the feet are hip-width apart. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Retract the chin and lengthen the neck. Gaze at the tip of the nose. This is *NEUTRAL TABLE*. Inhale, raise the chest and head upward and accentuate the lordotic curve of the entire spine into *COW*. The core is fully engaged and the arms are straight. Exhale, pivot from the navel and curl the entire spine slowly bringing the head toward the navel making a kyphotic curve with the spine into *CAT*. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Repeat the *COW/CAT* Cycle for 5 respiration.

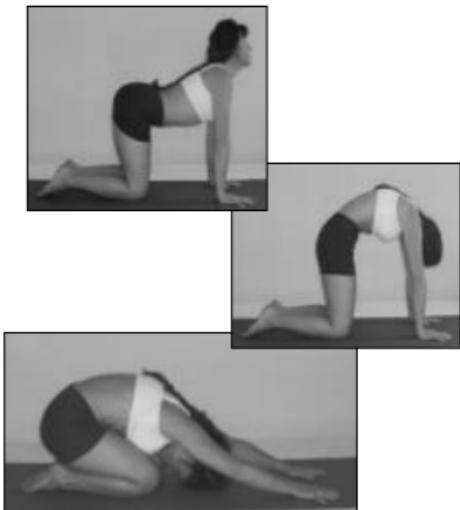
PRIMARY GOALS

- Spinal flexibility
- Shoulder and hip mobility

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Be conscious of the core locks, especially during movement. Lead each movement with the breath commencing the spinal movement from the navel and continuing the respiration till the very end of the sequence.

MARJARI asana



BENEFITS

- Increases the flexibility of the spine
- Stabilizes the pelvis and shoulder joints
- Enhances the integrity of posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha
- Encourages awareness of breathing techniques
- Decreases lower back tension
- Gently tones the female reproductive system and is helpful for the relief of menstruation cramps

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – *COW/CAT/HARE Cycle*: From *NEUTRAL TABLE*, inhale, raise the chest and head upward and accentuate the lordotic curve of the entire spine. The core is fully engaged and the arms are fully extended. Exhale, pivot from the navel, curl the entire spine slowly bringing the head toward the navel making a kyphotic curve with the spine. Continue lowering further down bringing the gluteals to the heels and place the forehead on the mat in *HARE*. The hands remain shoulder-width apart. Inhale, keep the arms straight and lift up from the navel extending the entire spine, moving one vertebra at a time. The Intermediate Asana is practiced as a cycle going from *COW* on inhalation to *CAT*, and then to *HARE* on exhalation. This *COW/CAT/HARE Cycle* is known as *CHAKRA VAK ASANA*. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Repeat this cycle for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: symptoms of whiplash, spinal complications, or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

PRECAUTION

When sitting on the knees, place the body weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone just below the kneecap. Do not place the weight on the kneecap. Double fold the mat to soften the area below the knees for protection.

STRIKING COBRA

Kneeling, Prone, Extension, Flexion



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to protect the spine.
- The hands do not move during the entire asana.
- The nose and chest should brush the surface of the mat when the body moves forward and backward.
- Inhale on the forward movement and bring the chest as close to the mat as possible.
- The hips and thighs are raised off the mat.
- Increase the extension of the entire spine by pushing the chest out, lifting the shoulders up, and retracting the shoulder blades.
- The pelvic and abdominal muscles must remain active.
- Coordinate movement with the breath.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit on the knees and put the weight on the bottom of the toes.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Inhale, reach the arms overhead shoulder-width apart, palms face forward. Lengthen the neck, retract the chin, lift the crown of the head, draw the shoulder blades further down, and lift the sternum. Exhale, pivot from the hips and lower the forehead to the mat with the arms fully extended in front of the shoulders and come into *HARE* on the toes. The palms are face down on the mat. Engage the gluteal and pelvic girdle muscles. Ground the hands into the mat, and without moving their position, slowly lift and hover the head and chest over the mat moving forward into the final position of *COBRA*. Lift the knees off the mat, engage the gluteals and abdominal muscles, and place the body weight between the palms and the bottom of the feet. Retract the shoulder blades and lift the crown of the head. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations and return back slowly to *HARE* on the toes, in the reverse sequence. Repeat the sequence 5 times.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Improve spinal flexion and extension range
- Encourage shoulder blade retraction
- Strengthen the arm and shoulder muscles
- Stretch and expand the chest cavity
- Develop body strength

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The forward movement is made with a unified effort of the core engagement, erector spinae, pelvic girdle, and shoulder muscles. Practice this asana to align the body, internalize the focus, and restore energy. Do not rush the movements of the asana. In the final *HARE*, surrender the forehead and thoughts to the mat and let go tension.

SHASHANK BHUJANG asana



1



2

BENEFITS

- Opens and stretches the chest cavity
- Stretches the anterior spinal ligaments and abdominal contents
- Aligns upper body posture, especially rounded shoulders
- Strengthens the upper body
- Enhances breath capacity
- Increases the flexibility of the entire spine



3



4



5

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: lumbar disc problems, sciatica, visceral or lung complications, high blood pressure, retinal disorders, or after 3 months of pregnancy.

PRECAUTION

When sitting on the knees, place the body weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone just below the kneecap. Do not place the weight on the kneecap. Double fold the mat to soften the area below the knees for protection.

TIGER

Kneeling, Extension, Flexion, Balance



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to protect the spine and rib cage.
- Inhale upon extending the entire spine and exhale upon flexion. Slowly move vertebra by vertebra.
- Retract the shoulders down and back upon extension of the spine.
- Keep the arms and thighs vertical.
- The head to knee movement is similar to the bellows of an accordian, expanding upon inhalation and contracting on exhalation.
- The knee and leg are aligned so there is no rotation of the hips during movement.

INITIAL POSITION

Position the body on the hands and knees.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Shoulders are directly over the hands and the hips over the knees as in *NEUTRAL TABLE*. The feet are hip-width apart. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. The chin is retracted and neck lengthened. Inhale, pivot from the navel and raise the right leg and thigh keeping the knee bent to a height parallel with the mat. Point the toes of the right foot to the back of the head, simultaneously extend the head and spine, and look up at the eyebrow center. Create a lordotic curve of the entire spine. Hold this position. Exhale, pivot from the navel, bend the right knee and swing it under the hips toward the head. Simultaneously flex the head down toward the right knee. Create a kyphotic curve of the entire spine. Gaze at the knee. Repeat this asana 5 times on one side. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Spinal mobility
- Hip flexibility

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Place the weight in the tibial tuberosity, the bumpy bone under the knee, to avoid stress on the kneecap. Be conscious of the core locks especially during movement. Lead each movement with the breath commencing the spinal movement from the navel, continuing the respiration till the very end of the sequence. The movements of the head and knee are synchronized. The arms remain fully extended. The hips do not rotate from side to side.

VYAGHR asana



BENEFITS

- Increases the flexibility of the spine
- Mobilizes the hip joints
- Stabilizes the pelvis and shoulder joints
- Enhances the integrity of posture, core, and, Mula Bandha locks
- Encourages awareness of breathing techniques
- Strengthens the gluteal muscles

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: symptoms of whiplash, menstruation, spinal complications, hip pathologies, or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

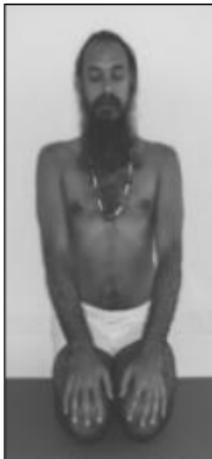
SITTING ON KNEES

Kneeling, Relaxation



INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright on the knees and heels.



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The pelvis and abdominals must remain active during the asana.
- Maintain optimum posture.
- Retract the chin, lift the sternum, and draw the shoulders down and back during the entire asana.
- Concentrate on physical balance.
- Equalize the weight on the right and left sides of the body.
- Maintain a focus on the breath.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Improve upper body posture
- Increase flexibility in the hips
- Strengthen the pelvic muscles
- Elongate the spine
- Enhance the breath
- Relax the body and mind
- Assist in digestion

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Although *SITTING ON KNEES* and variations are simple meditation postures, they can become difficult to sustain for long periods of time as the legs begin to 'fall asleep'. A folded blanket or a small cushion may be placed between the gluteals and the heels to remedy this imbalance. It is extremely important to keep the upper body in optimum alignment in all sitting asanas so the breath flows freely.

VAJR asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and hips
- Helps with hernias and hemorrhoids
- Helps with digestion after meals (sit and breathe rhythmically for 5 minutes)
- Elongates the spine from the sacrum to the base of the skull
- Facilitates mental and physical balance without causing strain or pain
- Stretches the muscles of the feet
- Helpful in sciatica and sacral infections
- Alleviates menstrual cramps
- Assists in labor

SITTING ON KNEES is an effective alternative meditation asana for individuals having difficulty sitting cross-legged. The body can maintain an upright position without much effort and breath flows freely in this asana.

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – HERO: Assume **SITTING ON KNEES**, raise the left knee and place the left foot on the mat beside the inside of the right knee. Place the left elbow on the left knee and rest the chin in the palm of the left hand. The right palm rests on the right knee. The body is completely motionless, and the spine and head are in neutral posture. Gaze at a fixed point or close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations. Repeat on the other side. (This asana is a reflective posture, balancing the mind and increasing the power of concentration.)

Advanced – SITTING ON TOES: Assume **SITTING ON KNEES**, lift the heels and place the weight into the bottom of the toes and the palms on the knees. Gaze at a fixed point or close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. If there is pain in the thighs or ankles, the knees may be separated slightly while maintaining the asana. Keep a focus on the breath when the toes begin to cry for attention.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

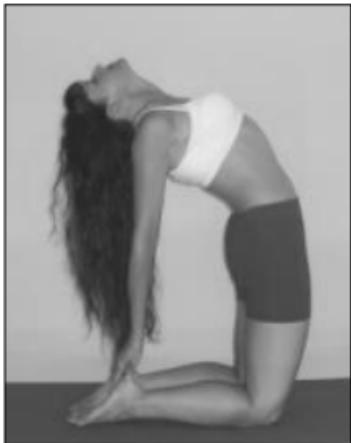
Do not practice this asana if experiencing: problems in the hips, knees, or ankles; varicose veins; or blood circulation complications.

PRECAUTION

When sitting on the knees, place the body weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone just below the kneecap. Do not place the weight on the kneecap. Double fold the mat to soften the area below the knees for protection.

CAMEL

Kneeling, Extension



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Contract the gluteal and thigh muscles.
- Press the shin bones down and lift up from the heart.
- Contract the core, drop the shoulder blades, and push the pelvis forward.
- The weight of the body is evenly support by the legs and arms.
- The arms anchor the shoulders to maintain the arch of the back.
- Relax the spinal muscles into the stretch.
- Focus on the breath.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright on the knees.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The feet are hip-width apart with the tops of the feet flat on the mat. The arms are at the sides of the body. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Inhale, retract the chin, lengthen the neck, and lift up from the crown of the head. Draw the shoulder blades down, lift the sternum, and raise the arms to shoulder level. Exhale, lean back and slowly grasp the right heel with the right hand and the left heel with the left hand. Do not strain. Push the abdomen and thighs forward and extend the spine in a controlled manner. The thighs are vertical. Extend the head gently back. Gaze at the eyebrow center. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Improve upper body posture
- Stretch the chest and abdomen
- Open the hips
- Open the heart, the emotional center
- Retract the shoulders

COMMON OVERSIGHT

It is extremely important to engage the core and lower back muscles to protect the spine. Full benefits of the posture are attained when the shoulders are dropped, the hips are pushed forward until the thighs are vertical, and the shins are grounded into the mat. Be very careful when extending the neck. (Due to the extensive stimulation of this asana, the body must be balanced with a flexion counter-asana such as *CHILD*.)

USHTRA asana



BENEFITS

- Stretches the anterior portion of the spine
- Increases flexibility in the extension range of the body
- Stretches and stimulates the abdominal contents
- Improves shoulder posture
- Opens the heart and evokes emotional responses
- Stretches the hips

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - MODIFIED CAMEL: The feet are hip-width apart with the tops of the feet flat on the mat. Sit on the heels. The hands are placed beside the heels on the mat, palms face forward. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Inhale, retract the chin, lengthen the neck, and lift up from the crown of the head. Inhale, draw the shoulder blades down, lift the sternum, and raise the gluteals off the heels. Keep the hands grounded on the mat. Do not strain. Push the abdomen and thighs forward and extend the spine in a controlled manner. Extend the head gently back. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

Intermediate - HALF CAMEL: From the initial kneeling position in CAMEL, inhale, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Exhale and rotate the upper body to the right. Reach back slowly with the right hand and grasp the left heel. Simultaneously lift from the core, stretch the left arm straight above the head parallel with the left thigh, palm faces inward. Gaze at the finger tips. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: chest, shoulder, or knee ailments; problems in the low back; sciatica; whiplash symptoms; or in the late stages of pregnancy.

PRECAUTION

When sitting on the knees, place the body weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone just below the kneecap. Do not place the weight on the kneecap. Double fold the mat to soften the area below the knees for protection.

SUPINE QUAD STRETCH

Supine, Extension



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Retract the chin into the neck, lift the sternum, and draw the shoulders down and back.
- Keep the knees in contact with the mat and separate them if necessary.
- Do not put pressure on the knees.
- Keep a focus on the breath.
- Push the weight into the shins and lift up on the hips.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright on the knees and heels.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Place the big toes together and separate the heels. Lower the buttocks onto the inside surface of the feet with the heels touching the sides of the hips. Place the hands face down beside the feet. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, and lift the crown of the head. Lift the sternum and draw the shoulder blades further down. Exhale, bend and walk the hands back until the body weight is supported by the forearms and elbows. Roll the upper spine and bring the back or crown of the head to the mat. Place the palms face up beside the thighs. Gaze at the eyebrow center. Relax the arms and follow the breath. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the quadriceps
- Open the chest
- Extend the spine
- Invigorate the abdominal contents
- Stretch the ankles

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Maintain the pressure and weight in the shins when extending backward. Do not rush out of the asana. Return in reverse order lifting from the core with the assistance of the elbows.

SUPTA VAJR asana

BENEFITS

- Stretches the quadriceps
- Massages and stimulates the abdominal contents
- Elongates the spine from the sacrum to the base of the skull
- Facilitates deeper breathing

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – From a kneeling position, gluteals resting on the heels, place the palms face down beside the hips. Bend backward creating a slight extension in the spine gently stretching the quadriceps, keeping the chin locked.

Follow this asana by counter balancing with **CHILD**.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: problems in the hips, knees, or ankles; a quadricep strain; sciatica; sacral complications; whiplash injuries; spinal osteoporosis; or after 3 months of pregnancy.

PRECAUTION

When sitting on the knees, place the body weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone just below the kneecap. Do not place the weight on the kneecap. Double fold the mat to soften the area below the knees for protection. DO NOT attempt this asana if experiencing any knee problems.

Listen to the Exhortation of the Dawn!
Look to this Day!
For it is Life, the very Life of Life.
In its brief course lie all the
Verities and Realities of your Existence.
The Bliss of Growth,
The Glory of Action,
The Splendor of Beauty;
For Yesterday is but a Dream,
And To-morrow is only a Vision;
But To-day well lived makes
Every Yesterday a Dream of Happiness,
And every Tomorrow a Vision of Hope.
Look well therefore to this Day!
Such is the Salutation of the Dawn!

- Kaildasa -

STANDING ASANAS



HALF MOON LUNGE

Standing, Balance, Lateral



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The front knee is lined over the ankle.
- The front thigh is parallel to the mat.
- The back leg and thigh are straight.
- Distribute the weight evenly between both feet.
- Align the hips parallel with the mat.
- Lift the ribcage up to the sky.
- Palms face forward with the fingers flared open.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides, in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Heel/toe the feet approximately 4 - 5 feet apart. Pivot both feet 90 degrees to the right, parallel with each other. The back heel will raise off the mat. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, and raise the arms laterally reaching out in a circular motion overhead. The arms are straight, parallel with the ears, and palms face forward. Square the hips parallel pushing the right hip back, and the left hip forward. Exhale, sit and lower the hips down until the front thigh is parallel to the mat, and the left knee is over the ankle. The back right leg is fully extended with the knee locked, the heel is raised with the body weight evenly distributed in the ball of the back foot and the sole of the front foot. The head, neck, and spine are linear. Reach up with the arms and ribcage. Gaze at a fixed point ahead. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Strengthen the lower body, leg, ankle, and feet muscles
- Develop hip flexibility
- Integrate overall body strength
- Lengthen the spine

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Align the front knee directly over the front ankle. Keep the back leg straight and fully aligned. Reach up tall in the trunk lifting the sternum and rib cage.

ARDHA ANJANEY asana



BENEFITS

- Builds lower body strength
- Opens the hips
- Focuses energy in one direction
- Coordinates body balance
- Develops concentration

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - To decrease the intensity of this asana, drop the back knee gently so it contacts the mat.

Advanced - *PRAYER TWIST LUNGE*: From final *LUNGE* Position, place the palms over the heart in prayer position pushing the hands into each other. Contract the shoulders back and rotate the upper body to the side of the extended straight leg. Rotate the left elbow to the inside of the left thigh and the right elbow parallel with the left. Lower the hips and straighten the arms so the folded hands are parallel with the mat. Bring the lower shoulder blade back and the upper shoulder blade forward.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: ankle, knee, or hip complications; shoulder problems; or symptoms of whiplash.

FIVE POINTED STAR

Standing, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times throughout the asana.
- Retract the chin and shoulder blades.
- Distribute the weight evenly between the balls and heels of the feet.
- Maintain optimum neutral posture throughout the asana.
- Reach out fully to the sides with the arms.
- The body stretches in five separate directions - pushing down into both feet, out through both arms, and up through the crown.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum neutral posture.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The body weight is evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The arms are straight, elevated to the sides at shoulder height, and palms face forward. The feet are aligned under the elbows. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Inhale, keep the body tall, push down on the mat with the feet and lift from the knees while squeezing the thighs and the gluteals. Open the webs of the hands, stretch the fingers, and reach out with the palms. Exhale, drop and retract the shoulder blades gently lifting the sternum. Stretch the crown of the head up, retract the chin, and gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stabilize the optimum neutral standing posture
- Facilitate equal distribution of body weight in both feet
- Encourage equal balance on both sides of the body

COMMON OVERSIGHT

When the arms are fully extended the shoulders must remain retracted, down, and back. Engage the core and maintain optimum posture at all times.

PANCH TARA asana

BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Develops strength in the muscles of the shoulders and feet
- Establishes balance and coordination
- Improves posture
- Increases breath capacity
- Stretches the upper body

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – Close the eyes and accentuate the stretch further with every exhalation. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: whiplash symptoms, or complications in the chest and shoulder region.

HALF FOLD

Standing, Flexion, Inversion



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times throughout the asana.
- Lock the chin and retract the shoulder blades.
- Distribute the weight evenly between both feet.
- Ground the feet in the mat, stretch the arms away from the body, and push the tailbone back.
- In the final position the palms face each other and hands are fully flared.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps and squeeze the thighs and gluteals. The legs are straight and knees unlocked. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, and raise the arms laterally reaching out in a circular motion overhead. The palms face each other and are parallel with the ears. Pivot the body forward from the hips until the spine and arms are horizontal, parallel to the mat, forming a right angle with the thighs and legs. The head, neck, arms, and spine are linear. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stabilize the pelvic region
- Encourage equal balance on both sides of the body
- Elongate the spine
- Develop core and upper body strength

COMMON OVERSIGHT

It is important to reach out fully with the arms, and to retract the shoulder blades and chin, maintaining optimum posture.

ARDHA HAST PAD asana

BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Stretches the muscles of the upper body and spine
- Improves posture
- Develops upper body balance and strength

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: complications in the chest and shoulder region, lumbar injuries, or symptoms of whiplash.

CRESCENT MOON

Standing, Balance, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times throughout the asana.
- Retract the chin and shoulder blades.
- Distribute the weight evenly between the balls and heels of the feet.
- The palms face inward and the fingers are spread apart.
- Reach and extend the distance between both hands without rotating the spine.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum neutral posture, feet hip-width apart, the hands are by the sides, palms facing inward.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps, squeeze the thighs and gluteals, keep the legs straight, and knees unlocked. Inhale, raise from the navel, stretch the crown of the head up, and lengthen the spine. Exhale, drop the shoulders and lift the sternum. Slowly raise the right arm laterally in a circular motion above the head and simultaneously reach down with the left hand bending sideways to the left. The palms face toward the body. The right arm is in line with the right ear. Reach up with the right hand and approximate the left hand down to the mat increasing the concavity of the curve on the left side. Gaze at the raised hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the lateral and oblique muscles
- Stabilize optimum neutral standing posture
- Massage abdominal contents
- Open the shoulder girdle and chest cavity

COMMON OVERSIGHT

It is common to rotate the body when extending the arms overhead. Lock the core, stabilize and retract the shoulder blades, and then raise the arms.

ARDHA CHANDR asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Opens and stretches the sides of the body
- Promotes increased breath capacity
- Stretches the shoulders and upper body
- Improves posture

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate - *Crescent Moon 2:* Inhale, raise from the navel, stretch the crown of the head up, and lengthen the spine. Interlace the fingers in prayer, index fingers pointed, and slowly raise both arms overhead. Exhale, side bend to the left stretching the fingers, arms, and upper body to the left, increasing the concavity of the curve on the left side. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps, squeeze the thighs and gluteals, keep the legs straight, and knees unlocked. Gaze at the hands. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: shoulder or chest complications, hernias, or whiplash symptoms.

LUNGE

Standing, Balance, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to maintain the integrity of the spine.
- Retract the chin and elongate the neck during the entire asana.
- Keep both legs fully active during the asana.
- Distribute the body weight evenly between the feet and the palms.
- Retract the shoulder blades back.

INITIAL POSITION

Position the body on the hands and knees.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The hands are placed directly under the shoulders, the chin is retracted, and the neck lengthened. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Extend the right leg fully and balance the weight in the ball of the right foot. Bend the left knee and place the left foot beside the left thumb. Align the shoulders, elbows, and wrists in a straight line. From a side view, the head, body, and extended heel are linear. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Develop upper body
- Improve core abdominal muscle strength
- Stretch the hips
- Align posture

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Focus on the individual components of the asana. The spine sags and the hips rotate if the core is not fully engaged throughout the movement. Maintain a neutral position in the neck, do not extend up, and retract the shoulder blades. Distribute equal weight in both feet and the palms are flat on the mat.

ASHWASAN CHALAN asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and strengthens the transverse abdominis muscle
- Develops stability in the shoulders and hips
- Encourages full body stabilization and coordination
- Develops the arches of the feet
- Improves upper body posture

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – Contact the knee of the extended leg with the mat. Gaze at a fixed point. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: abdominal hernias; stomach ulcers; shoulder, hip, or wrist problems; menstruation; or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

RAISED ARMS

Standing, Extension, Balance



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times during the asana.
- Distribute the weight evenly between both feet.
- Reach up and back with the arms.
- The hands are fully flared open in the final position.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps and squeeze the thighs and gluteals. The legs are straight and knees unlocked. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, and raise the arms laterally reaching out in a circular motion overhead. The palms face forward and are parallel with the ears. Pivot back from the hips and gaze at the finger tips. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Elongate the spine
- Encourage equal balance on both sides of the body

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Slowly reach up and out with the arms, coordinating the breath with the movement. Lift up from the navel.

HAST UTTHAN asana



BENEFITS

- Elongates the muscles of the upper body and spine
- Improves posture
- Stretches the contents of the chest region

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: complications in the chest and shoulder region, middle ear problems, or symptoms of whiplash.

REVERSE TRIANGLE

Standing, Rotation, Balance



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the legs and hips.
- Distribute the weight evenly between both feet.
- Lift the sternum up to the chin.
- Reach and extend from hand to hand.
- Drop the lower rib cage to the mat.
- Draw the shoulder blades toward the hips.
- Rotate the hips to the center.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Heel/toe the feet approximately 3 - 4 feet apart. Extend both knees and turn the left foot to the left side, perpendicular to the right. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, and bring both arms level at shoulder height. The arms are parallel with the mat and palms face forward. Exhale, pivot forward and rotate to the left, reach and place the right palm on the mat beside, or outside the left foot. Push the right hip back minimizing the rotation. Inhale, draw the left shoulder back and push the right hand into the mat. Exhale, reach the left arm up to the sky and ground the feet into the mat. Flare the fingers of the raised hand. Both arms are parallel with each other. Gaze up at the left hand and lift up on the tailbone and kneecaps. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side. To return to initial position, slowly heel/toe back to center, and lift up very slowly into GAZE.

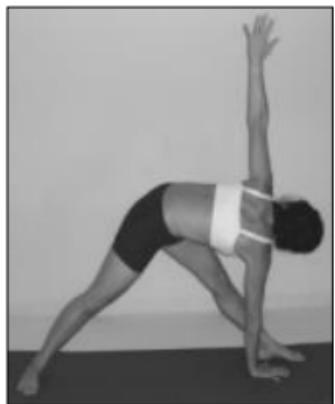
PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the upper back and shoulders
- Improve body balance
- Develop oblique muscles
- Open the rib cage and chest
- Stretch the hamstring, inner thigh, and calf muscles

COMMON OVERSIGHT

To prevent the feeling of fainting or dizziness, make controlled heel/toe movements to the center, and return very slowly to initial standing position.

PARIVRITTA TRIKON asana



BENEFITS

- Stretches the hamstring and spinal muscles
- Develops body balance and strength
- Massages and tones abdominal contents, stimulating digestion
- Develops oblique trunk muscles
- Stimulates the nervous system
- Strengthens the pelvic region
- Opens up the upper spine, chest, and shoulder blades



MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - The legs may be separated 3 - 4 feet, and the knees may be slightly bent. Support the left hand on the right shin, and when comfortable, work it down the leg. Gaze down at the mat if there is strain on the neck. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

Intermediate - Pivot forward from the hips, rotate the body to the left, and reach down with both hands to the left foot. Place the palms flat beside the left foot. Approximate the forehead to the left knee, lift the tailbone and shoulder blades up to the sky, and lock the front knee. The body weight is evenly distributed in both feet. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side. Slowly pivot and heel/toe the feet to the center, lift up slowly, and return to initial position.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, spinal and hip complications, sciatica, heart disease, abdominal hernias, shoulder complications, symptoms of whiplash, or in the last 3 months of pregnancy.

SQUAT

Standing, Strength, Balance



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Place the majority of the body weight in the heels.
- Lower the hips and raise the chest.
- Raise the arms fully and flare the hands.
- Squeeze the gluteal, pelvic, and thigh muscles.
- Engage the core at all times.
- Retract the chin and shoulder blades during the entire asana.
- Ground the feet into the mat and stretch the arms up, away from the body.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps and squeeze the thighs and gluteals. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head. Raise the arms laterally and reach out in a circular motion overhead. The palms face each other and the arms are straight, parallel with the ears. Exhale, bend at the knees, lower down into a full squat and sit like a crow. Keep the weight evenly distributed in the feet. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations.

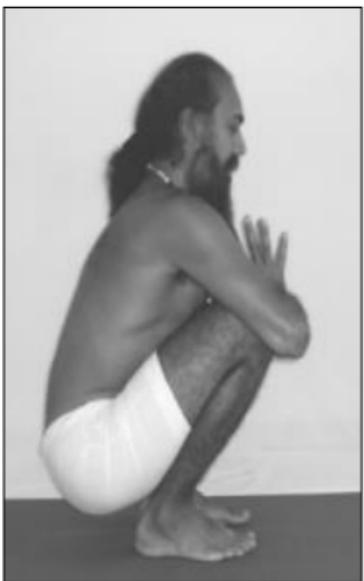
PRIMARY GOALS

- Tone the gluteal, pelvic, and thigh muscles
- Stimulate the circulatory and metabolic systems
- Elongate the spine
- Develop core and upper body strength

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The gluteals are lowered and engaged at all times. Maintain optimum neutral posture at all times. Keep the knees aligned with the ankles. Focus on the breath, especially when the asana becomes difficult. The heels remain in full contact with the mat.

KAKI asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Builds strength in the low back
- Assists for easier bowel movements
- Strengthens the gluteals and lower extremities
- Invigorates the metabolic systems of the body
- Very helpful in childbirth

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – SQUAT PRAYER: In the final position of SQUAT, lower the arms and fold the hands in prayer over the heart. Maintain a neutral spine and keep the shoulders retracted. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

Squatting is an active way of sitting, it stretches the low back and engages the hips. In the Eastern and Oriental cultures squatting is a -normal- way of sitting instead of using chairs. Eastern cultures often assume a squatting position when using the toilet. It is also common for women of the East to deliver their babies in maternity wards in the squatting posture.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: varicose veins; or complications in the knee, hip, or ankle regions.

THUNDERBOLT

Standing, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Place the majority of the body weight in the heels.
- Lower the hips and raise the chest.
- Reach out with the arms fully, and flare the hands.
- Squeeze the gluteal, pelvic, and thigh muscles.
- Contract the knees together without separating them.
- Level the thighs parallel with the mat.
- Engage the core at all times throughout the asana.
- Retract the chin and shoulder blades.
- Ground the feet into the mat and stretch the arms away from the body.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet together.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps and squeeze the thighs and gluteals. The legs are straight and knees unlocked. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, raise both arms in a circular motion overhead, parallel with the ears, palms face inward. Exhale, bend at the knees, squat as if sitting in a chair and bring the thighs parallel with the mat. Contract the abdominal muscles, draw the gluteals back and align the knees over the ankles. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Tone the gluteal, pelvic, and thigh muscles
- Stimulate the circulatory and metabolic systems
- Elongate the spine
- Develop core and upper body strength

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The gluteals are lowered and engaged at all times. Focus on the breath especially when the asana becomes difficult to maintain.

UTKAT asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Builds strength in the mid and low back
- Strengthens the gluteals and lower extremities
- Invigorates the metabolic systems of the body



MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate - **THUNDERBOLT PRAYER:** Assume **THUNDERBOLT** with the feet together. Lower the arms and fold the hands over the heart. The chin and shoulder blades are retracted. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

Advanced - **THUNDERBOLT PRAYER TWIST:** From the final position of **THUNDERBOLT PRAYER**, rotate the left elbow to the outside of the right thigh. The feet and knees are together. Lower the hips, and straighten the arms so the folded hands are parallel with the mat. Bring the lower shoulder blade back and the upper shoulder blade forward. Do not rest the elbows on the knees. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: complications in the chest, shoulder, knee, or ankle regions.

TRIANGLE

Standing, Balance, Strength, Inversion, Lateral



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The legs are active.
- Distribute the weight evenly between both feet.
- The hips, head, and chest are in the same plane.
- The arms are linear.
- Reach and extend out with both hands.
- Drop the lower rib cage to the mat.
- Draw the shoulder blades back.
- Maintain lateral bending.
- Rotate the upper hip back.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Heel/toe the feet approximately 4 - 5 feet apart. Extend both knees and turn the right foot out to the right side, perpendicular with the left. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, bring both arms level at shoulder height, parallel with the mat, palms face forward. Exhale and side bend to the right; do not rotate the body forward. Slide the right hand down the front of the right leg and place the right hand on or near the right heel. Reach the left arm up to the sky, the palm faces forward, and fingers flare open. Both arms are parallel with each other. Gaze up at the left hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side. To return to initial position, heel/toe back slowly and lift up very gently into GAZE.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the upper back and shoulders
- Improve body balance
- Develop oblique muscles
- Open the rib cage and chest

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Beware of keeping the upper shoulder up and lowering the bottom side to the mat. Do not flex and bend forward. Pay particular attention to the hips and maintain a complete lateral side bend. To prevent the feeling of fainting or dizziness, make controlled heel/toe movements and return very slowly to initial standing position.

TRIKON UTTHITA asana



BENEFITS

- Stretches the hamstring and spinal muscles
- Improves posture
- Massages and tones abdominal contents
- Improves blood flow to the brain
- Enhances circulation
- Opens the upper spine and shoulder blades

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – The legs may be separated 3 - 4 feet and the knees may be slightly bent. Slide the right hand down to the shin, and when comfortable work it down the leg. Gaze down at the mat if there is strain on the neck. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

Variation 1 - TRIANGLE 2: Keep the left knee extended and bend the right knee. The right thigh is parallel to the mat and the right knee lines up over the right ankle. Gaze up at the left hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side. To return to initial position, pivot the feet heel/toe to the center and lift up very slowly.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice the asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, spinal complications, sciatica, heart disease, abdominal hernias, shoulder complications, symptoms of whiplash, or in the last 3 months of pregnancy.

WARRIOR

Standing, Balance, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The heels are linear.
- The back foot is turned in 90 degrees and fully grounded in the mat.
- The front knee is lined over the ankle.
- The front thigh is parallel to the mat.
- Distribute the weight evenly between both feet.
- Align the hips parallel with the mat.
- Lift the sternum up to the sky.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Heel/toe the feet approximately 4 - 5 feet apart. Turn the left foot out to the left side, perpendicular to the right. The heels are linear. Inhale, lift up from the waist, stretch the crown of the head up, and raise the arms laterally reaching out in a circular motion overhead. The arms are straight, parallel with the ears and palms face forward. Line the hips parallel, then bring the right hip back and the left hip forward. Exhale and lower the hips down until the left thigh is parallel to the mat and the left knee is over the ankle. The back right leg is full extended. The head, neck, and spine are linear. Reach up with the arms and the ribcage. The body weight is evenly distributed between the feet. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Strengthen the lower body, leg, ankle and feet muscles
- Develop hip flexibility
- Integrate overall body strength

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Align the front knee directly over the front ankle. Keep the back leg straight and fully aligned. Maintain the integrity of the neutral hips.

VIRABHADR asana



BENEFITS

- Builds lower and upper body strength
- Opens the hips
- Focuses energy in one direction
- Coordinates body balance
- Develops concentration

MODIFICATIONS

Variation 1 - WARRIOR 2: Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Heel/toe of the feet approximately 4 - 5 feet apart. Turn the left foot out to the left side, perpendicular to the right. Align the hips and raise the arms to shoulder height, parallel with the mat, palms face up. Exhale and lower the hips down until the left thigh is parallel to the mat and the left knee is over the ankle. The back left leg is full extended. The head, neck, and spine are linear. Create a tug-of-war between the arms. Align both shoulders over the hips. The body weight is evenly distributed between the feet. Gaze at the fingers of the right hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

Variation 2 - WARRIOR 3: BOW AND ARROW: From the final position in *WARRIOR 2*, clasp the left hand into a fist, thumb pointing up, to hold an imaginary bow. Lower the right hand to chest height, grasp an imaginary arrow, and pull the bow string back with the right hand. Create a stretch in the chest cavity between the left and right hands. Gaze at the clenched fist ahead. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: ankle, knee, or hip complications; shoulder problems; or symptoms of whiplash.

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.

- Anais Nin -

BALANCE ASANAS



TREE

Standing, Balance



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to avoid pelvic rotation and collapse in the trunk.
- Maintain a straightened leg on the side contacting the mat.
- Distribute the weight evenly in the foot supporting the body weight.
- Externally rotate the hip on the elevated thigh.
- Retract the shoulders when the arms are elevated.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Stabilize the hips and pelvis, and keep the body tall. Ground the right foot into the mat and bend the left knee. Grasp and place the sole of the left foot on the inside of the right thigh. The left heel is close to the perineum, upper inner thigh; the toes point down; and the left knee points out laterally to the side. Grasp the left foot until the body posture balances, then place both hands in prayer position in front of the chest with the forearms parallel to the mat. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

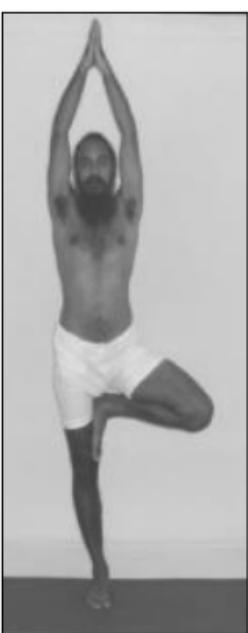
PRIMARY GOALS

- Stabilize the pelvic muscles
- Correct postural deviations
- Encourage body equilibrium

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not rush through the movement of raising the foot to the thigh and lose the focus of engaging the pelvic and core muscle groups, resulting in the rotation of the pelvis and collapse of the hips on the straight leg side. Keep the palms in direct contact with each other.

VRIKSH asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Develops strength in the muscles of the ankles and feet
- Opens up the hips
- Establishes balance and coordination
- Improves posture

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate - TREE 2: From the final prayer position in the Beginners, raise both arms extending them overhead, palms together. The palms are parallel with the ears and the elbows are bent. Retract the chin, lift the sternum and lower the shoulders. Maintain a steady gaze on a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

Advanced - TREE 3: From the final position in the Intermediate, *TREE 2*, raise both arms extending them overhead, palms together. The arms are straight, parallel with the ears. Retract the chin, lift the sternum and lower the shoulders. Maintain a steady gaze on a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: injuries to the foot and ankle, varicose veins, dizziness, or middle ear complications.

PALM TREE

Standing, Balance



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times.
- Distribute the weight evenly on the balls of the feet.
- Retract the shoulders and chin when the arms are elevated.
- Maintain an optimum spine throughout the asana.
- Palms face forward.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet together.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Ground the feet into the mat, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha stabilizing the hips and pelvis. Keep the body tall and raise the arms overhead, palms face forward. Stabilize the feet into the mat then slowly lift up on the balls of the feet. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stabilize the pelvic muscles
- Correct postural deviations
- Encourage body equilibrium
- Develop muscles of the legs and feet

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not rush through the movement of raising up on the balls of the feet losing the focus of engaging the pelvic and core muscle groups.

TAD asana



BENEFITS

- Develops strength in the ankles and arches of the feet
- Opens up the hips
- Establishes balance and coordination
- Improves posture

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate - **PALM TREE SQUAT:** From the final elevated Beginner's position, stay on the balls of the feet, and lower down into a full squat. The arms are elevated and palms face forward. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Raise the body up and return to neutral standing position.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: injuries to the feet or ankles, varicose veins, knee problems, dizziness, or middle ear complications.

AIRPLANE

Standing, Balance, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to avoid pelvic rotations and trunk collapse.
- Maintain a straightened leg and thigh on the side fixed vertical to the mat.
- Distribute the weight evenly in the foot supporting the body weight.
- Retract the shoulders when the arms are elevated.
- The raised leg, upper body, head, and arms are all in the same plane, mimicking an airplane.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet together.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral position. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps and squeeze the thighs and gluteals. Keep the legs straight. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, raise both arms parallel to the mat at shoulder height, palms face forward. Gaze at a fixed point. Exhale, pivot forward from the hips bringing the upper body to a *HALF FOLD* keeping the arms to the sides at shoulder height. Balance the body weight in the right foot and raise the left leg and thigh back, parallel to the mat, in line with the upper body. In the final position the palms face down. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Build overall body strength
- Strengthen the ankles and arches of the feet
- Develop balance, strength, and coordination
- Correct postural deviations and develop body balance
- Coordinate hip and shoulder strength

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Beware of hyper-extending or collapsing on the standing knee. Avoid rounding the upper back or rotating the hips on the elevated leg. Stabilize the standing knee.

DEK asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Develops strength in the ankle and feet muscles
- Opens the hips
- Establishes balance and coordination
- Improves posture and body strength

MODIFICATIONS

Advanced – AIRPLANE 2: From the final position, rotate the arms forward in front of the head in prayer. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

Like the *FIVE POINTED STAR*, there are five vectors of pull: two arms, two legs, and the head. Radiate out in these five directions from the navel center.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: injuries in the feet or ankles, shoulder problems, varicose veins, dizziness, or middle ear complications.

DANCER

Standing, Balance, Strength



INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet together.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral position. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps, and squeeze the thighs and gluteals keeping the legs straight, and knees unlocked. Lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, lengthen the spine, and bend and lift the right leg. Raise the left arm to shoulder height, arm straight, parallel with the mat, palm facing inward. Bend the right knee and grasp the instep of the right foot with the right hand, maintaining balance. Gaze at a fixed point. Inhale, slowly raise, extend, and stretch the right thigh and leg back as high as possible. Raise the right leg directly behind the body, avoiding rotation of the left hip. Simultaneously bend forward from the hips with the left leg perpendicular to the mat. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Develop balance and stability
- Strengthen the ankles and arches of the feet
- Stretch open the hips
- Develop hip and shoulder strength

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The core must be engaged at all times to avoid pelvic rotation and trunk collapse.
- Maintain a straightened leg on the side fixed to the mat.
- Distribute the weight evenly in the foot supporting the body weight.
- Retract the shoulders when the arm is elevated.
- Reach the raised arm forward and push the elevated leg back into the hand.
- Feel the legs as a bow and the trunk and raised arm as the arrow.
- Keep the spine in optimum neutral.

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not rush through the movement of raising the leg and thigh losing the focus of engaging the pelvic and core muscle groups resulting in the rotation of the pelvis and collapse of the hips. Beware of hyper-extending the neck and the standing knee.

NATRAJ asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Develops strength in the ankle and feet muscles
- Opens the hips
- Establishes balance coordination
- Improves posture
- Stretches the hamstring muscle group
- Cultivates strength with stability

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – Elevate the thigh and leg maximally without compromising the core lock.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: shoulder, hip, foot, or ankle injuries; varicose veins; dizziness; or middle ear complications.

STANDING ONE LEG RAISE

Standing, Balance, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to avoid pelvic rotations and trunk collapse.
- Maintain a straightened leg on the side fixed to the mat.
- Distribute the weight evenly in the foot supporting the body weight.
- Go through the motion very slowly.
- Maintain optimum neutral posture.
- Keep the hips level.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral position. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps, squeeze the thighs and gluteals, the legs are straight, and knees unlocked. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, and lengthen the spine. Fully extend the right leg in front of the body, parallel with the mat. Exhale, drop the hips in line with each other and draw the shoulder blades down and back, arms are at the sides, palms face forward. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the hamstrings
- Strengthen the ankles and arches of the feet
- Enhance body balance
- Stretch and open the pelvic and hip muscles
- Develop hip strength

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do NOT rush through the movement of raising the leg and thigh out, losing the focus of engaging the pelvic and core muscle groups, resulting in the rotation of the pelvis and collapse of the hips on the straight leg side. Do not raise the leg too high so the hips remain square.

UTTHITA HASTA PADANGUSTH

asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Develops strength in the ankle and feet muscles
- Opens up the hip joints
- Establishes balance and coordination
- Improves posture
- Stretches the hamstrings



MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - Keep the elevated knee slightly bent and support the raised leg under the knee with the hands.

Advanced - STANDING SIDE LEG RAISE: Maintain a straight spine, extend the right leg and simultaneously rotate the right hip to the right. Raise the left arm above the head, keep the arm straight, palm faces inward.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: injuries in the feet, ankles, or hips; varicose veins; dizziness; or middle ear complications.

PATIENT CRANE

Balance, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times during the asana.
- Balance the body weight in the palms, knees, and upper arms.
- Straighten the arms as much as possible.
- Align the body parallel with the mat.
- Focus on the breath and remain calm.

INITIAL POSITION

Squat on the mat.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Place the feet hip-width apart. Place the palms face down in front of the feet, shoulder-width apart, fingers point forward. Lift the heels and balance the weight on the balls of the feet. Let the knees fan outward. Engage the core lock and Mula Bandha. Lean forward so the outer elbows are cupped in the inside of the knees. Gaze at a fixed point. Squeeze the elbows into the knees, tip the body weight forward raising one foot off the mat, then raise the other foot. Balance the body weight in the hands and knees. Bring the big toes together and try to straighten the arms. Align the body parallel with the mat. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stimulate the circulatory and metabolic systems
- Improve body balance
- Develop the core and upper body strength
- Enhance focus and concentration

COMMON OVERSIGHT

This asana requires more coordination than strength. Be patient, engage the core and use the breath to balance the body weight in the palms. Keep a steady focus on a fixed point and practice being still.

BAK DHYAN asana

BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Builds strength in the upper body
- Develops balance and coordination
- Invigorates the metabolic and vascular systems

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – Lift only one foot off the mat.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: complications in the wrists, shoulders, or upper extremity; high blood pressure; or vascular disease.

SIDE PLANK

Balance, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The core must be engaged at all times to maintain the integrity of the spine.
- Distribute the weight between the bottom foot and palm.
- Do not place all the weight on the supporting wrist.
- The heels, heart, and chest are linear
- The hips are aligned one on top of the other - lift them high.
- Lift the ribcage high.
- The arms are perpendicular to the mat - press them away from each other.
- Reach out from the crown of the head to the bottom of the feet.

INITIAL POSITION

Position the body face down on the mat with the weight distributed in the balls of the feet and the hands - as in *HIGH PLANK*.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The hands are placed directly under the shoulders, the neck is retracted but lengthened with the head facing down in neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. From a side view, the body is linear from the crown of the head to the heels and the weight is evenly distributed between the toes and the palms. Align the shoulders, elbows, and wrists in a straight line. From the final position of *HIGH PLANK* bring the feet together and rotate on to the right side so the inner thighs are in contact. Engage the core fully and lift up. Straighten the right arm and stabilize the weight between the right palm and the outside of the right foot. The lower right hand is directly under the shoulder. The chest faces sideways, perpendicular to the mat. Slowly raise the left arm parallel to the right arm. The left palm faces forward and the fingers of the right palm face away from the crown of the head. Gaze at the left hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Develop and tone upper body and arms
- Improve core abdominal muscle strength
- Coordinate balance
- Integrate muscle coordination of the lower and upper body

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Focus on the individual components of the asana. The spine and hips sag if the core is not fully engaged, placing extra pressure on the wrists.

PARSAVAKONA asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis
- Strengthens the transverse abdominis muscle
- Develops stability in the shoulders and hips
- Encourages full body stabilization and coordination
- Integrates full body muscle balance



MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – From the final position of *HIGH PLANK* bring the feet together and rotate on to the right side so the inner thighs are in contact. Straighten the right arm and stabilize the weight between the right palm and the outside of the right foot. Bend the left knee and place the left foot on the mat in front of the right knee. Place the left hand on the left hip. The left arm may be raised, the palm faces forward. Gaze at the left hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

Intermediate – From the final position of *HIGH PLANK* bring the feet together and rotate on to the right side so the inner thighs are in contact. Straighten the right arm and stabilize the weight between the right palm and the outside of the right foot. The lower right hand is directly under the shoulder. The chest faces sideways, perpendicular to the mat. The left arm rests on the left hip. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: abdominal hernias, stomach ulcers, shoulder or wrist problems, menstruation or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

We rarely hear the inward
music,
but we're all dancing to it
nevertheless.

- Jellaludin Rumi -

SUPINE ASANAS



SUPINE KNEE TO CHEST

Supine, Flexion, Relaxation



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Keep the head and spine fully connected with the mat.
- Draw the knees into the chest very gently maintaining the core lock. Do not force the hip movement.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up and bring both knees to the chest.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lie face up, knees bent, feet together, and neck and shoulder blades retracted in optimum posture. Inhale, interlock the fingers, and grasp the legs below the knees. Exhale, retract the head and shoulders into the mat and gently draw the knees to the chest. The elbows are close to the sides of the body. Relax the eyes. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the low back
- Open the hips
- Massage the abdominal organs

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not lift the hips and head off the mat. The goal is to stretch the lower back and hip region.

SUPTA PAVANMUKT asana

BENEFITS

- Stretches the muscles in the low back
- Elongates the spine
- Massages the abdominal organs

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: lumbar disc problems, sciatica, visceral complications, or in the final 3 months of pregnancy.

SUPINE LEG RAISE

Supine, Flexion



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to protect the lumbar spine.
- The lowered leg and hip remain fixed to the mat.
- Maintain optimum posture at the start and end positions of the asana.
- The palms remain face up beside the body with no engagement.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up and extend the legs flat on the mat.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The palms are face up beside the body. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Inhale and vertically raise the left leg without moving the right leg and pelvis off the mat. Gaze at the toes of the raised leg. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

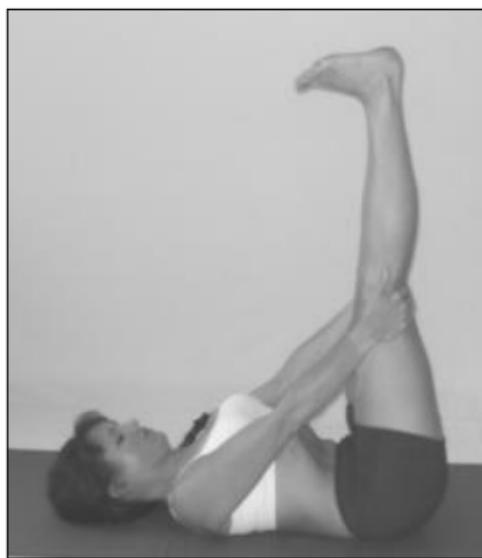
PRIMARY GOALS

- Open the hips
- Strengthen the low back
- Stretch the hamstrings

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not rush through the movement of raising the legs, losing the focus of engaging the pelvis and core.

SUPTA UTTHAN PAD asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis
- Stretches the hamstrings
- Develops the core abdominal muscles
- Isolates individual pelvic movement
- Massages the abdominal organs

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate - **SUPINE DOUBLE LEG RAISE:** The palms are face up beside the body. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Inhale, raise the left leg as high as possible and follow by raising the right leg. Both legs and thighs are vertical and parallel with each other and may be supported with the hands. Gaze at the toes. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: hamstring muscle tears, abdominal hernias, stomach ulcers, during menstruation, or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

BRIDGE

Supine, Extension, Balance



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to protect the lumbar spine.
- Consciously move very slowly through each vertebra, one by one.
- Maintain optimum posture in the start and end positions of the asana.
- Exhale upon lowering to start position, slowly moving vertebra by vertebra.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up, knees bent.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The feet are stabilized, hip-width apart. The arms are beside the body, palms face up. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Inhale and move through the spine, one vertebra at a time, raising the hips off the mat. Lift the body so the weight stabilizes on the upper shoulder blades. The chest and navel are in a straight line and the chin is retracted. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Mobilize spinal joints
- Improve leg strength
- Develop core abdominal muscles
- Stabilize the hips and pelvis

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not rush through the movement losing the focus of moving one vertebra at a time. When practicing *BRIDGE 3*, be fully aware that the hips do not rotate. Practice the asana with full stability.

SETU asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis
- Mobilizes the spinal joints
- Improves upper back, rounded shoulder, posture
- Massages the abdominal organs
- Very helpful in menstrual disorders and pregnancy



MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate - BRIDGE 2: From the raised position, maintain optimum posture, core lock, Mula Bandha, and raise both arms laterally in a circular motion overhead. The arms rest on the mat above the head, palms face up. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

Advanced - BRIDGE 3: From BRIDGE 2, maintain optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Exhale and extend the right leg fully, parallel with the left thigh. Hold for 2 respirations. Gaze at a fixed point. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: abdominal hernias, stomach ulcers, lumbar pathologies, menstruation, or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

DEAD BUG

Supine

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Keep the head and spine fully connected with the mat.
- Draw the shoulder blades into the mat.
- Gently pull the knees into the mat with each exhalation.



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up on the mat with the knees bent.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The feet are hip-width apart and the neck and shoulder blades are retracted in optimum posture. Inhale and grasp the instep of both feet with the hands respectively. Exhale, externally rotate the hips, knees, and ankles pushing the feet away from the hands. Straighten the legs perpendicular to the mat. Gently pull the feet down so the thighs are parallel with the mat. Keep the low back grounded to the mat. Align the ankles over the knees and lengthen the spine. Retract the chin, head, and shoulders into the mat. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the hamstrings and inner thighs
- Open the hips

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not force the hips and knees into the mat. Stretch very gradually.

TITIB asana

BENEFITS

- Stretches the hamstring muscles
- Opens the hips
- Elongates the spine
- Massages the abdominal organs

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: hip or knee problems, or visceral complications.

FISH

Supine, Extension

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Raise the chest with the least amount of weight on the head.
- Recruit the core when lowering the head to the mat.
- Point the toes away from the body and engage the thighs.
- Retract the shoulder blades down.
- Ground the hips and lift the heart.
- Relax and extend the neck back.



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up, legs extended, and arms by the sides.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The feet are together. Place the palms face down underneath the gluteals. The hands rest side-by-side in the shape of a triangle. Draw the elbows as close to the spine as possible. Inhale, press down on the elbows and forearms, and lift the chest recruiting the core muscles. Extend the spine and arch the back. Lower the head back until the crown rests on the mat. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the chest cavity
- Retract the shoulders
- Extend the spine

COMMON OVERSIGHT

It is important to lift the chest and lower the head in a controlled manner. If there is pain or strain in the neck, immediately draw the chin into the chest.

MATSYA asana

BENEFITS

- Improves upper body posture
- Stretches the abdominal contents
- Opens the chest cavity and the front of the neck



MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – *CROSS-LEGGED FISH*: Lie face up and place the legs in cross-legged posture, one leg over the other, as in *HALF LOTUS*. Place the palms face down underneath the gluteals. The hands rest side-by-side in the shape of a triangle. Gently bend back supporting the body weight with the forearms, elbows, and core lowering the head and spine to the mat. Draw the elbows as close to the spine as possible. Inhale, press down on the elbows and forearms and lift the chest recruiting the core muscles. Extend the spine and arch the back. Lower the head back until the crown rests on the mat. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Lower the body to the mat and repeat on the other side, switching legs.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: cervical disc problems, abdominal hernias, chest complications, shoulder or neck problems, menstruation, or after 3 months of pregnancy.

SUPINE BUTTERFLY

Supine, Relaxation



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Lower and relax the hips on the exhalation.
- Keep the spine in optimum neutral position on the mat.
- Lower the shoulder blades down.
- Ground the hips and gluteals into the mat.
- Relax and retract the chin into the neck.
- Push the soles of the feet into each other.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up, legs extended, and arms by the sides.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Place the palms face up beside the body. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture and core lock. Inhale, bend the knees, place the bottom of the feet in contact with each other and approximate the heels toward the tailbone. Exhale and lower the knees into the mat. The spine remains flat and in contact with the mat. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Increase flexibility in the hips
- Balance the pelvis
- Elongate the spine
- Stretch the inner thigh muscles

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Keep the spine and low back in contact with the mat when lowering the hips.

SUPTA PADAM TITALI asana



BENEFITS

- Improves posture
- Stretches the abdominal contents
- Helpful during menstruation and pregnancy
- Stretches and opens the hips

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – *SUPINE CROSS-LEGGED BUTTERFLY*: Lie face up, extend the legs, arms are by the sides, palms face up. Retract the shoulder blades, maintain optimum neutral posture, and engage the core lock. Inhale, bend the left leg and place the left heel under the right gluteal. Bend the right leg and place the right foot over the web of the right leg and thigh. Without straining, try to place the upper heel close to the abdomen. Exhale and lower the knees into the mat. The spine remains flat and in contact with the mat. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side, switching legs.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: knee or low back complications; sacro-iliac, coccyx, or groin injuries; inguinal hernias; or hip and shoulder pathologies.

REVERSE TABLE

Supine, Extension, Balance, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The pelvis and abdominals must remain active during the entire asana.
- Keep the palms flat on the mat.
- Straighten the arms so the shoulders are in line above the wrists.
- The feet are grounded into the mat.
- The arms and legs form a 90 degree angle with the mat and the body.
- Engage the core.

INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright on the gluteals, knees bent.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Sit upright, lift the sternum, and retract the shoulder blades. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. The knees are bent, the feet are hip-width apart and firmly grounded into the mat. The palms are face down on the mat, shoulder-width apart, fingers point toward the feet, 8 - 12 inches behind the hips. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, and engage the core. Press through the arms and hands, straighten the elbows, and lift the hips and body up, parallel with the mat. Press the feet into the mat and let the crown of the head gently roll back toward the mat. Lift the rib cage up. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Open the rib cage, chest, and shoulders
- Elongate the spine and balance the upper and lower extremities

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not lose the integrity of the core. Make the lift from the core. Place the body weight evenly in the palms and feet.

URDHV PURVOTTANA asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and hips
- Strengthens the core
- Stretches open the chest cavity and shoulders
- Releases upper body tension and creates expansion in the joints



MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – REVERSE TABLE 2: From the final position in *REVERSE TABLE*, extend the right leg and thigh straight, parallel with the mat, toes point toward the head, avoiding pelvic rotation. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

Advanced – REVERSE TABLE 3: Sit upright with the legs fully extended. Lift the sternum and retract the shoulder blades. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. The feet are together, and the toes point away from the body. The palms are shoulder-width apart, fingers point toward the feet, 8 - 12 inches behind the hips. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, engage the core, press through the arms and hands, straighten the elbows, and lift the hips up. Press all the 10 toes into the mat and let the crown of the head gently roll back toward the mat. The bottom of the feet are firmly grounded into the mat. Lift the sternum and rib cage up. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: wrist, shoulder, or ankle problems; high blood pressure; chest complications; or symptoms of whiplash.

PRECAUTION

Keep the mouth closed so the tip of the tongue contacts the roof of the mouth to protect the muscles of the neck.

BOAT

Supine, Flexion, Balance, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Keep the core engaged.
- Retract the chin and maintain neutral spine.
- The body weight pivots from the sacral region.
- Draw the navel into the spine.
- Roll the trunk off the mat one vertebra at a time, while the legs are extended.
- Keep the shoulder blades retracted and off the mat.
- The arms are parallel with the mat.
- Point the toes away from the body.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up, knees bent, arms by the sides.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lie face up, knees bent, feet together, neck and shoulder blades retracted in optimum posture. The arms are by the sides, palms face up. Inhale, stabilize the pelvis, exhale and engage the core. Contract the abdominal muscles, roll the upper body off the mat, and reach the arms toward the feet. Simultaneously lift both legs and thighs up forming an angle of 30 degrees with the mat. Retract the head and shoulders. The elbows are close to the sides of the body. Gaze at the feet. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations. When returning to initial position bend one leg and place the foot on the mat and then bring the other foot down.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Strengthen the core
- Massage the abdominal organs
- Build overall strength

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Engage the core fully prior to lifting up. Lift up using the navel as the center. Be careful not to forcefully lift the neck up. If there is strain in the low back, bend the knees and bring the feet to the mat.

NAUK asana



BENEFITS

- Strengthens the core and low back
- Coordinates upper, mid, and lower body strength
- Massages the abdominal organs

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - Bend the knees and keep the feet on the mat when lifting the spine off the mat.

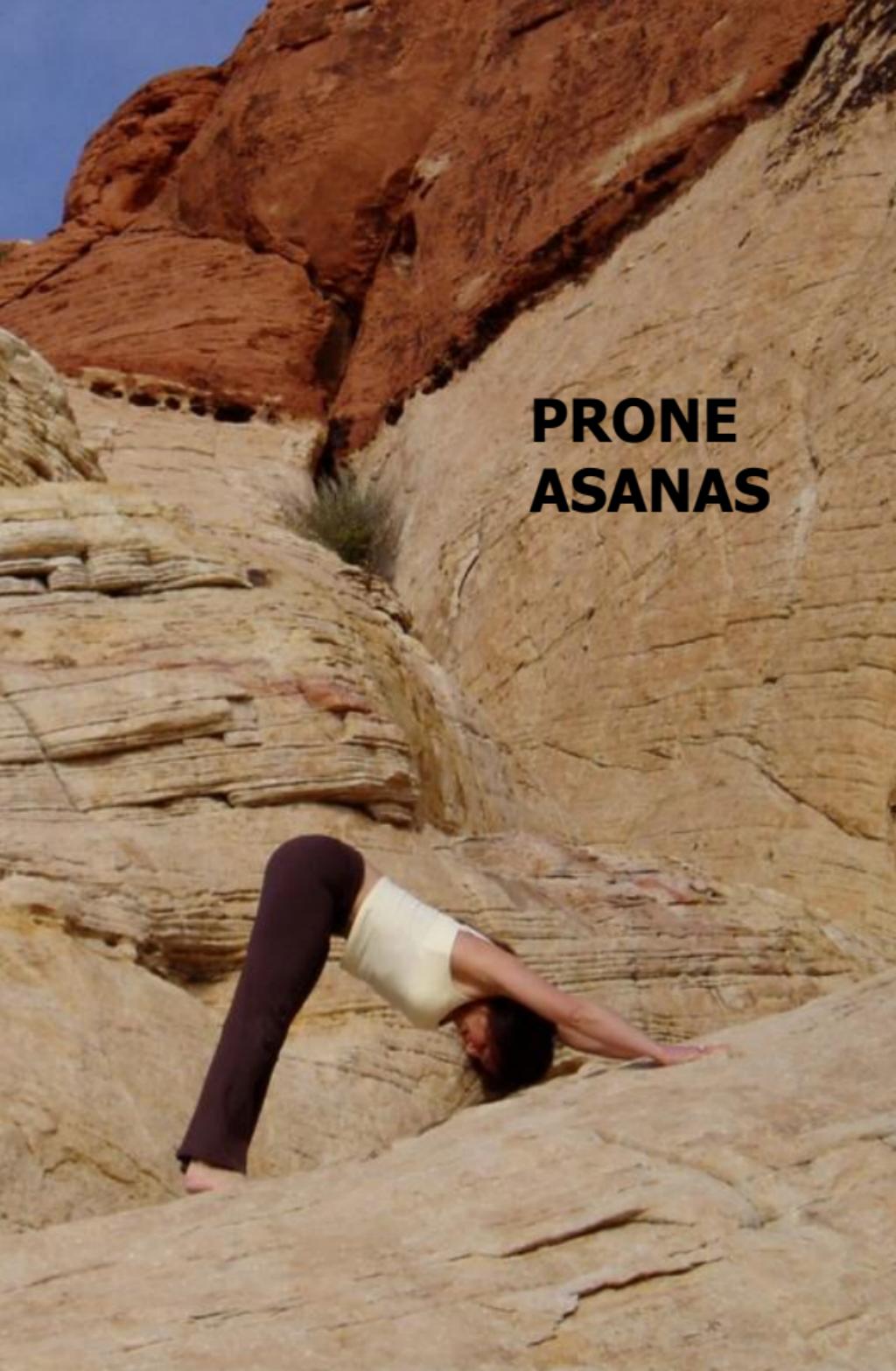
Intermediate - BOAT 2: Lie face up, knees bent, feet together, neck and shoulder blades retracted in optimum posture. The arms are by the sides on the mat beside the thighs, palms face down. Inhale, stabilize the pelvis, exhale, and engage the core. Contract the abdominal muscles, and roll the upper body off the mat. Simultaneously lift both legs and thighs up, forming an angle of 30 degrees with the mat. Retract the head and shoulders. The arms remain straight with the palms contacting the mat. Gaze at the feet. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations. When returning to initial position bend one leg and place the foot on the mat and then bring the other foot down.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: lumbar disc problems, sciatica, visceral complications, or in the final 3 months of pregnancy.

No matter how you think it is,
it's different than that!

- Rumi -

A photograph of a person performing a downward dog yoga pose on a light-colored, layered rock formation. The person is in a V-shape, with their hands on the ground and feet lifted. They are wearing a white t-shirt and dark purple leggings. The background shows more of the same rock formations under a clear blue sky.

PRONE ASANAS

DOWNWARD FACING DOG

Standing, Inversion, Flexion, Strength



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times during the asana to protect the spine and rib cage.
- Lengthen the neck, retract the chin, and face the head toward the feet.
- Ground the heels into the mat and walk the hands forward.
- Lift the pelvis up in the air.
- Pull the navel into the spine for an upward lift.
- Place the body weight in the finger pads, not the wrists.
- Maintain a straight line from the crown of the head to the tailbone and another straight line from the tailbone to the heels, forming an inverted 'V'.
- Maintain an inverted 'V' position, press the chest toward the mat, and let the head align in neutral with the arms.

INITIAL POSITION

Position the body on the hands and knees in *NEUTRAL TABLE*.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The shoulders are directly over the hands, and hips over the knees. Place the hands flat on the mat, shoulder-width apart, the fingers are evenly spread, pointing forward. The tops of the feet contact the mat, hip-width apart. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. The chin is retracted, and neck lengthened. Roll onto the bottom of the feet and ground the heels fully into the mat. Inhale and raise the hips up in the air. Walk the hands to the front of the mat. Exhale, press the chest toward the mat, draw the shoulder blades back, and let the head fall in neutral posture. Keep the heels grounded into the mat and align the ears parallel with the arms. The arms, spine, and legs form two sides of an equal triangle or an inverted 'V'. Gaze at the feet. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the spine, the lower extremity, and hips
- Open the chest cavity
- Strengthen the upper extremity

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Balance the body weight between the bottom of the feet and the pads of the fingers. Use the breath to assist the core to raise the hips. In the *DOWNWARD FACING DOG 2*, if the trunk is not fully engaged, the spine sags and hips rotate from side to side as the leg raises. Be conscious of the core lock, especially during movement.

ADHO MUKHA SVAN asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvic and shoulder joints
- Enhances the integrity of optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha
- Encourages awareness of breathing techniques
- Increases circulation to the head and feet
- Massages abdominal organs
- Aligns the spine
- Builds upper body strength
- Balances the upper and lower body

MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – DOWNWARD FACING DOG 2: From the final position in *DOWNTWARD FACING DOG*, inhale, exhale fully, then extend the right leg back forming a straight line from the right wrist to the extended heel. Maintain stillness and the integrity of the trunk. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Gaze at the lowered foot. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations. Return to *DOWNTWARD FACING DOG*. Repeat on the other side.



CONTRA-INDICATIONS

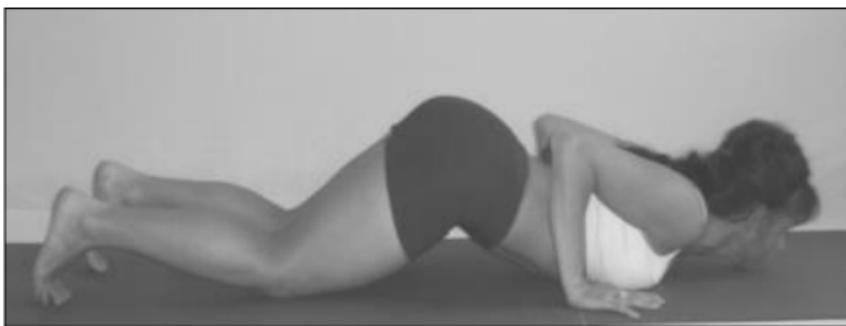
Do not practice this asana if experiencing: wrist, shoulder, or hip complications; high blood pressure; chest complications; or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

EIGHT LIMB SALUTATION

Prone, Extension

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Distribute the weight evenly between the toes, knees, palms, chest, and chin.
- Increase the extension of the entire spine in this asana by pushing the palms into the mat and retracting the shoulder blades.



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face down, forehead on the mat.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The palms face down on the mat beside the shoulders with the elbows bent. The feet are hip-width apart, and the bottom of the toes contact the mat. Inhale, lift the buttocks, hips, thighs, abdomen, and forehead off the mat; and keep the chin, chest, hands, knees, and toes in contact with the mat. Retract the shoulder blades. Engage the gluteal and pelvic girdle muscles. Gaze at the eyebrow center. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Improve spinal extension in the lumbar and cervical spine
- Strengthen the arm and shoulder muscles
- Stretch and expand the chest cavity

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The lift is made with a unified effort of the low back, pelvic girdle, and shoulder muscles. Balance the weight evenly in all areas that contact the mat.

ASHTANGA NAMASKAR asana

BENEFITS

- Opens and stretches the chest cavity
- Stretches the anterior spinal ligaments and abdominal contents
- Aligns upper body posture, especially rounded shoulders
- Strengthens the upper body
- Increases the stability of the pelvic region
- Enhances the breath capacity

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: lumbar disc, shoulder, or wrist problems; sciatica; visceral or lung complications; or after 3 months of pregnancy.

HALF PIGEON

Prone, Inversion, Flexion

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Place the front leg parallel with the front of the mat.
- Maintain central alignment of the upper body.
- Elongate the neck.
- Press the upper foot and shin into the mat.
- Place the body weight in the hands, forearms, and shins.
- Use the exhaling breath to release muscle tension in the hips.



INITIAL POSITION

Position the body on the hands and knees in *NEUTRAL TABLE*.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Place the hands flat on the mat shoulder-width apart, directly under the shoulders. The fingers rest flat on the mat, evenly spread, pointing forward. The hips are directly over the knees and the feet are hip-width apart. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. The chin is retracted, and neck lengthened. Lift up to *DOWNTWARD FACING DOG*. Look up between the hands, place the top of the right ankle near the left wrist and drop the right knee near the right wrist. Roll the upper part of the left foot on the mat and drop the right hip. The right shin is in contact with the mat and parallel to the front edge of the mat. The right foot is parallel with the body. Reach both hands forward, bend the elbows, and rest the forearms on the mat. Gently lean the entire trunk toward the mat and rest the forehead between the palms. Square the shoulders to the mat. The back leg and foot are stretched straight back. The left foot and knee remain in contact with the mat. Line the body by rolling the hips down to the mat. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the pyriformis muscle
- Open the hips
- Stretch the iliopsoas muscle

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Use the core and breath to engage the spine in neutral, otherwise, the hips will rotate from side to side causing imbalance. Maintain optimum posture from the sacrum to the crown of the head. Maintain a focus on stretching the pyriformis muscle in the hip region.

AADHO MUKHA EKA PADA

RAJAKAPOT asana

BENEFITS

- Releases and opens the hip joints
- Stretches the pyriformis and iliopsoas muscles

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – The front leg may be bent and not fully squared with the top of the mat.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: wrist and hip complications, pelvic pathologies, or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

LOCUST

Prone, Extension

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the gluteal, thigh, and pelvic girdle muscles.
- Contract the lower back and gluteal muscles, apply pressure into the hands, and elevate the lower extremities.
- Contract the abdominal muscles to prevent hyper-extension of the low back.



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face down, forehead on the mat, palms face down beside the body.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The feet are together and the top of the feet contact the mat. Retract the shoulder blades. Inhale, and in one fluid movement lift the thighs and legs off the mat. Engage the gluteal, thigh, and pelvic girdle muscles. The legs and thighs are straight and the bottom of the feet face up in the air. The arms remain straight and the upper body is in neutral posture. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Strengthen the low back muscles
- Improve extension range of the lumbar spine
- Develop the pelvic and gluteal muscles
- Tone the abdominal contents

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The lift is made with a unified effort of the low back and pelvic girdle muscles.

SALABHA asana

BENEFITS

- Stimulates the abdominal contents
- Strengthens the lower back and the gluteal region
- Increases the stability of the pelvic region



MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – LOCUST 2: Place the palms face up underneath the pubic bone. Raise both legs and thighs simultaneously to an equal height. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: lumbar disc problems; sciatica, visceral, or cardiac complications; hernias; or after 3 months of pregnancy..

747 and SNAKE

Prone, Extension

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to protect the spine.
- Raise the head and palms 6 - 8 inches off the mat.
- Raise only the chest, upper body, head, and arms off the mat.
- Lengthen the body from the crown of the head.
- There is no contraction in the low back.
- The head and neck are in neutral posture to prevent hyper-extension of the neck.



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face down, forehead on the mat, palms face down beside the body.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The feet are hip-width apart and the top of the feet contact the mat. Retract the shoulder blades and engage the core lock. Inhale, draw the shoulder blades down and together, raise the chest and lift the palms 6 - 8 inches off the mat. The head, neck, and upper body are raised off the mat in neutral posture. The legs and thighs are in contact with the mat. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Strengthen the upper back and shoulders
- Improve posture
- Tone the abdominal contents

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The lift is made with a unified effort of the core engagement and muscles in the shoulder blade region. Avoid hyper-extension of the neck.

747 and NAAG asana



BENEFITS

- Improves upper body posture
- Develops the muscles in the shoulder blade region
- Stretches the chest cavity
- Decreases stress and tension in the upper back
- Tones the abdominal contents



MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate - **747 LEGS RAISED:** Place the palms face down beside the body. Raise the head, upper body, and arms 6 - 8 inches off the mat. Simultaneously raise both legs to an equal height off the mat. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

SNAKE: Interlock the hands behind the back, raise the arms and chest, and squeeze the shoulder blades back toward each other. Reach back with the hands, and reach out from the crown of the head. The chin is retracted into the neck. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

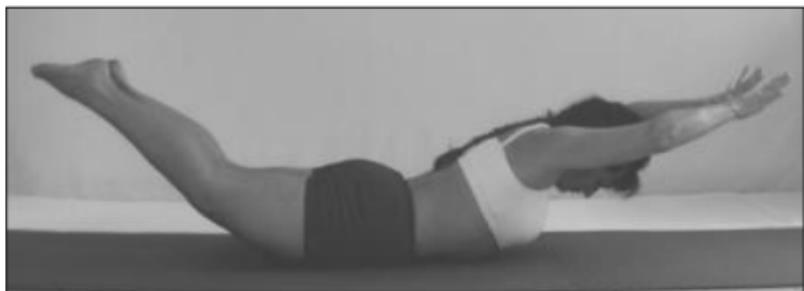
Do not practice this asana if experiencing: shoulder or chest complications, whiplash symptoms, or in the final 3 months of pregnancy.

SUPERMAN

Prone, Extension, Balance, Strength

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to protect the spine.
- Contract the lower back and gluteal muscles and elevate the lower extremities.
- Extend and lengthen the body from the crown of the head to the base of the feet.
- Contract the abdominals to prevent hyper-extension of the low back.



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face down, forehead on the mat, arms overhead, and palms face down.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The feet are hip-width apart, and the tops of the feet contact the mat. Retract the shoulder blades and engage the core lock. Inhale, and in one fluid movement lift the thighs, legs, chest, arms, and head off the mat. Engage the gluteal, thigh, and pelvic girdle muscles. The legs and thighs are raised and held straight. The bottoms of the feet are face up in the air. The arms and head are raised 6 - 8 inches off the mat, the head is in neutral position, the arms are straight, and the palms face down. There is a longitudinal pull between the top of the head, hands, and feet. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Strengthen the low back muscles
- Improve extension range of the lumbar spine
- Engage the core
- Develop pelvic and gluteal muscles
- Strengthen the shoulders
- Tone the abdominal contents

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Lift the body with a unified effort of the core engagement, low back, pelvic girdle, and shoulder muscles. Lift up and away.

MAHAPURSH asana

BENEFITS

- Stimulates the abdominal contents
- Strengthens the lower back and the gluteal region
- Improves posture
- Increases the stability of the pelvic region



MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - **SUPERMAN ALTERNATE ARM/LEG RAISE:** The right arm is beside the body, palm face down; and the left arm is extended overhead parallel with the ear, palm facing in. Simultaneously raise and extend the left arm, right leg and thigh. The head is raised 3 - 4 inches off the mat. The left foot and right hand remain in contact with the mat. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: lumbar disc problems; sciatica, visceral, or cardiac complications; shoulder problems; hernias; or after 3 months of pregnancy.

HIGH PLANK

Prone, Strength, Balance

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The core must be engaged at all times to maintain the integrity of the spine.
- Retract the chin and elongate the neck.
- Both legs are fully active.
- Retract the shoulder blades, and lower the tailbone toward the heels.



INITIAL POSITION

Position the body on the hands and knees in *NEUTRAL TABLE*.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

From *NEUTRAL TABLE*, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Extend both the legs fully. From a side view the body is linear from the crown of the head to the heels, and the weight is evenly distributed between the balls of the feet and the palms. Align the shoulders, elbows, and wrists in a straight line. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

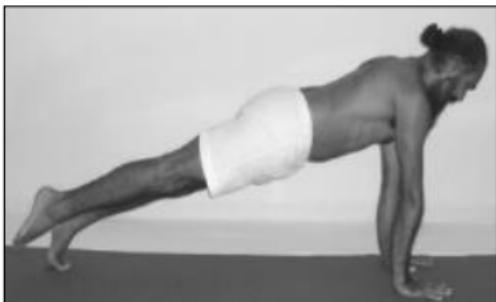
PRIMARY GOALS

- Develop upper body
- Improve core abdominal muscle strength
- Align posture

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Focus on the individual components of the asana. The spine sags and the hips rotate if the core is not fully engaged throughout the movement. Drop the shoulder blades down and back, and do not raise the neck. Maintain a neutral position.

CHATURANGA DAND asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and strengthens the transverse abdominis muscle
- Develops stability in the shoulders and hips
- Encourages full body stabilization and coordination



MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – HIGH PLANK 2: Lift one foot a couple of inches off the mat without compromising technique. Hold for one full breath. Repeat on the other side.

Advanced – LOW PLANK: From HIGH PLANK, maintain optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Stabilize the body weight in the hands and the balls of the feet. Lower the body down and forward on to the bottom of the toes to approximately 4 inches off the mat. The elbows are bent and align over the wrists, forming a 90 degree angle with the mat. Maintain the integrity of the technique, keeping the body linear. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 2 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: abdominal hernias, stomach ulcers, shoulder or wrist problems, menstruation, or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

BOW PRONE

Prone, Extension



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The legs are the anchor for the weight of the upper body.
- The legs move back and the rest of the body moves up.
- Use the breath to lift the legs and chest off the mat.
- Balance the body weight in the navel.
- The lower body is active and the upper body is relaxed.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face down, forehead on the mat.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

The legs are extended, feet hip-width apart, the arms and hands are beside the body, and the palms face up. Bend the knees, clasp the hands around the ankles, and bring the heels toward the gluteals. Retract the chin and shoulder blades. Inhale, engage the quadricep, hamstring, and gluteal muscles. Push the feet away from the body into the hands. Extend the spine and simultaneously raise the thighs, chest, and head off the mat. The arms are straight, neck is neutral, and the abdomen supports the entire body off the mat. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Extend the spine
- Open the chest and front of the shoulders
- Stretch the hips and thighs

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The lift is made with a unified effort of the core engagement, low back, and thigh muscles. Align the knees with the hips. Do not extend the neck.

ADHO DHANUR asana

BENEFITS

- Stretches the spinal ligaments and muscles
- Massages the entire abdominal contents
- Opens and stretches the upper body
- Aligns the spine, and improves mid-back posture

MODIFICATIONS

This asana can be held in a steady position for 5 breaths or gently rock in unison with the breath, lifting on inhalation and lowering on exhalation.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: cardiac problems, lumbar disc problems, sciatica, symptoms of whiplash, visceral complications, hernias, colitis, ulcers, menstruation, or during pregnancy.

COBRA

Prone, Extension



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times during the asana to protect the spine.
- The pelvis and the palms carry most of the body weight in the movement.
- Increase the extension of the entire spine by pushing the sternum out and retracting the shoulder blades.
- Do not over-extend the neck back in the extension position, keep the chin retracted.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face down on the mat.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Place the palms face down on the mat beside the top of the head with the elbows bent. Engage core lock and Mula Bandha. Inhale, lift up from the chest, roll off the elbows, straighten the arms, and place the body weight in the palms, thighs, and the bottom of the toes. Retract the shoulder blades and lengthen from the crown of the head. Engage the gluteal and pelvic girdle muscles. The thighs remain on the mat. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Strengthen the low back muscles
- Improve spinal extension range
- Encourage shoulder blade retraction
- Strengthen the arm and shoulder muscles
- Stretch and expand the chest cavity

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The lift is made with a unified effort of the core engagement, low back, pelvic girdle, and shoulder muscles. Use the breath and the core to extend the spine.

BHUJANG asana



BENEFITS

- Opens and stretches the chest cavity
- Stretches the anterior spinal ligaments and abdominal contents
- Aligns upper body posture, especially rounded shoulders
- Strengthens the upper body
- Increases the stability of the pelvic region
- Enhances breath capacity
- Helps with menstrual disorders

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – Keep the elbows bent and the navel in contact with the mat. Limit the extension of the neck and low back. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations.

Intermediate – Straighten the arms and retract the chin and shoulder blades. Lift the knees and thighs off the mat. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: lumbar pathologies, sciatica, visceral or lung complications, menstruation, or after 3 months of pregnancy.

SPHINX

Prone, Extension

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to protect the lumbar spine.
- The pelvis carries most of the body weight in the movement.
- The tops of the feet are compressed into the mat.
- The neck is elongated in neutral position.



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face down, feet hip-width apart, and forehead on the mat.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Place the palms and forearms face down on the mat beside the ears with the elbows bent. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Inhale, place the body weight in the pelvis and palms, and lift the upper body and head off the mat without releasing the core lock. The palms, forearms, abdomen, legs, and tops of the feet remain on the mat. Engage the quadriceps and gluteal muscles. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Strengthen the low back muscles
- Engage the core
- Enhance shoulder blade retraction

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The lift is made with a unified effort of the core engagement and low back muscles. These muscles protect the spinal vertebral joints during movement.

URDHAV asana

BENEFITS

- Stretches the anterior spinal ligaments and abdominal contents
- Stimulates digestion

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners— Lift up only to the point where the neck remains in neutral with the rest of the spine.

Intermediate— Extend further keeping the spine aligned.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: lumbar disc problems, sciatica, visceral complications, symptoms of whiplash injury, menstruation, or pregnancy.

UPWARD FACING DOG

Prone, Extension, Strength

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS



- Engage the core at all times to protect the spine and rib cage.
- Inhale upon extending the entire spine and exhale upon flexion.
- Slowly move vertebra by vertebra.
- Retract the shoulders down and back upon extension of the spine.
- Keep the arms and thighs vertical.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face down on the mat.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Place the palms on the mat beside the chest, the elbows are bent, and the feet are hip-width apart with the top portion of the feet in contact with the mat. Retract the shoulder blades, engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Inhale, place the body weight in the pelvis and palms, and lift the upper body and head off the mat, extending the elbows without releasing the core lock. As the trunk moves forward through the arms, press the feet into the mat. Engage the quadriceps and gluteal muscles and raise the thighs and legs off the mat. Retract the shoulder blades and chin. In the final position, optimum posture is maintained from the navel up. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Strengthen the low back muscles
- Develop the core
- Enhance shoulder blade retraction
- Strengthen the muscles of the arms and shoulders

COMMON OVERSIGHT

The lift is made with a unified effort of the core engagement, low back, and pelvic girdle muscles. Engage the core to support the lift and place minimal pressure in the palms and feet. The chin and shoulder blades remain retracted throughout the movement.

URDHAV MUKHA SVAN

asana

BENEFITS

- Opens and stretches the chest cavity
- Stretches the anterior spinal ligaments and abdominal contents
- Aligns the upper body posture
- Strengthens the upper body
- Enhances the breath capacity

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners – Raise the upper body only, not the thighs. Maintain the asana for 3 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: visceral or lung complications, lumbar disc problems, sciatica, menstruation, symptoms of whiplash injury, or during pregnancy.

Maui says,

The best things in life aren't things ...

1. Speak the truth, there is less to remember.
2. There are two ways to become rich – make more or desire less.
3. No rain, no rainbows.

ROTATION ASANAS



SEATED HALF SPINAL

TWIST

Sitting, Rotation



INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright with the legs extended.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the sternum and retract the shoulder blades. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Bend the left knee and place the left heel outside the right hip. The outside edge of the left foot is in contact with the mat. Bend the right knee and place the right foot flat on the mat with the Achilles Tendon in contact with the left knee. The foot is in line with the left thigh. Both the gluteals remain in contact with the mat. The right arm is placed directly behind the tailbone with the palm flat on the mat and the fingers point away from the body. Inhale and place the left elbow outside the right knee. Use the right arm as a lever, exhale and rotate the spine to the right pivoting from the tailbone to the base of the skull. Keep the spine erect and look over the right shoulder. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the muscles of the back and abdomen
- Increase spinal and hip flexibility

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not lose the integrity of optimum posture in exchange for the rotation of the spine. Keep the gluteals fixed on the mat.

ARDHA MATSYENDR asana



BENEFITS

- Stretches the abdominal contents
- Increases spinal mobility
- Elongates the spine from the sacrum to the base of the skull
- Opens the rib cage



MODIFICATIONS

Variation 1 - SEATED HALF SPINAL TWIST 2: The legs and feet remain in the same position. Inhale, bring the right arm in front of the body and reach the palm to the inside of the right foot. The left arm is placed directly behind the tailbone with the palm flat on the mat, fingers pointing away from the body. Use the left arm as a lever, exhale and rotate the spine to the left pivoting from the tailbone to the base of the skull. Keep the spine erect and look over the left shoulder. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: hip pathologies, injuries to the spine, abdominal complications, hernias, or in the last 3 months of pregnancy.

UNIVERSAL SPINAL TWIST

Supine, Rotation, Relaxation

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Create a long straight line from the crown of the head to the heel of the straight leg.
- Keep the shoulder blades on the mat.
- The palm of the elevated arm is face up.
- Rotate the spine further with each exhalation.
- Feel the spinal joints stretch up and out.
- Push the upper knee and hip down on every exhalation.



INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up, legs extended, and feet together.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Keep the left leg fully extended, and place the right foot on the mat. Lift the sternum, retract the shoulder blades, and engage optimum posture. Inhale, grasp the outside of the right knee with the left hand and pull it to the chest. Exhale and rotate the right knee over to the left side of the body. Gently press the right knee down. The right leg may be bent or straight. Stretch the right arm to the side at shoulder height, palm facing up. Rotate the head to the right and gaze at the right hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Mobilize the spine
- Open the hips

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Keep the lower hip and leg fixed to the mat. Increase the rotation and stretch with every exhalation. Do not force the stretch.

SHIV UDARAKARSHAN asana

BENEFITS

- Relieves tension and fatigue in the low back
- Opens spinal and hip joints
- Massages the abdominal organs
- Stretches the shoulder articulations



MODIFICATIONS

Variation 1 - UNIVERSAL SPINAL TWIST 2: Bend both knees and bring them to the chest. Exhale and rotate the knees over to the left side of the body with the left hand. Gently press the knees down. Stretch the right arm to the side at shoulder height, palm face up. Rotate the head to the right and gaze at the right hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: abdominal hernias, lumbar disc pathologies, hip disorders, or in the last 3 months of pregnancy.

STANDING TRIANGLE

Standing, Rotation,
Balance, Inversion

SPINAL ROTATION



INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.



POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides, in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Heel/toe the feet approximately 3 - 4 feet apart. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head. Exhale, pivot the body forward from the hips and grasp the outside of the right leg, near the ankle, with the left hand. Inhale, internally rotate the right shoulder, reach behind the spine, and approximate the back of the right hand close to the left hip. Rotate the head to the right and look over the right shoulder. Further accentuate the rotation lifting the right shoulder up to the sky and dropping the left shoulder into the mat. Lift the tailbone and the back of the knees up to the sky. Gaze at a fixed point over the shoulder. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the upper back and shoulders
- Rotate and stretch the trunk
- Open the chest
- Invert the upper body
- Stretch the hamstrings

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Fully rotate the entire spine, not just the neck. To prevent the feeling of fainting or dizziness, make controlled heel/toe movements and return very slowly to initial standing position.

PARIVARTANA TRIKON asana



BENEFITS

- Stretches the hamstring and spinal muscles
- Develops body balance and strength
- Massages and tones the abdominal contents
- Improves spinal rotation mobility
- Enhances circulation
- Opens the upper spine and shoulder blades



MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate – STANDING TRIANGLE SPINAL ROTATION 2: Exhale, pivot the body forward from the hips and place the left palm on the mat in the center between both feet. Inhale, externally rotate and elevate the right arm over the shoulder, perpendicular to the mat. Both arms are parallel with each other. Gaze up at the right hand. Further accentuate the rotation between both hands by simultaneously reaching up with the right arm, and pressing down into the mat with the left palm. Lift up behind the knees and up on the tailbone. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side. Pivot the feet heel/toe to the center, and lift up very slowly to return to initial position.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, spinal complications, sciatica, heart disease, abdominal hernias, shoulder complications, symptoms of whiplash, or in the last 3 months of pregnancy.

SUPPORTED KNEE SPINAL ROTATION

Standing, Rotation, Balance



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to avoid pelvic rotations and collapse of the trunk.
- Maintain a straightened leg on the side fixed to the mat.
- Distribute the weight evenly in the foot supporting the body weight.
- Maintain the hip in neutral position on the elevated thigh.
- Retract the shoulders when the arms are elevated.
- Maintain optimum posture throughout the asana.
- The palm is face up on the elevated arm.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture and ground the feet into the mat.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Stand in optimum posture, engage core lock and Mula Bandha, stabilizing the hips and pelvis. Keep the body tall. Flex the right knee and elevate the right thigh parallel to the mat. Inhale, lift the right arm above the head and internally rotate the right shoulder. Exhale reach down with the right hand and hold the inside of the right knee. Inhale, raise the left arm overhead and externally rotate the shoulder. Exhale and lower the left arm to shoulder height, parallel with the mat, palm faces up. Rotate and reach back with the left arm and look over the left shoulder. Gaze at the left hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Develop the core
- Open the chest cavity
- Develop shoulder strength
- Encourage body equilibrium

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not rush through the movement of elevating the thigh, losing the focus of engaging the pelvic and core muscle groups, resulting in the collapse of the hips on the straight leg side. Rotate the shoulder and arm from the trunk keeping the spine in neutral.

SALAMBA JANU MERU DANDA PRIVARTANA PURVOTTANA

asana



BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and core
- Develops strength in the ankle and feet muscles
- Opens up the shoulders and chest
- Establishes balance and coordination
- Develops focus and concentration
- Improves posture

MODIFICATIONS

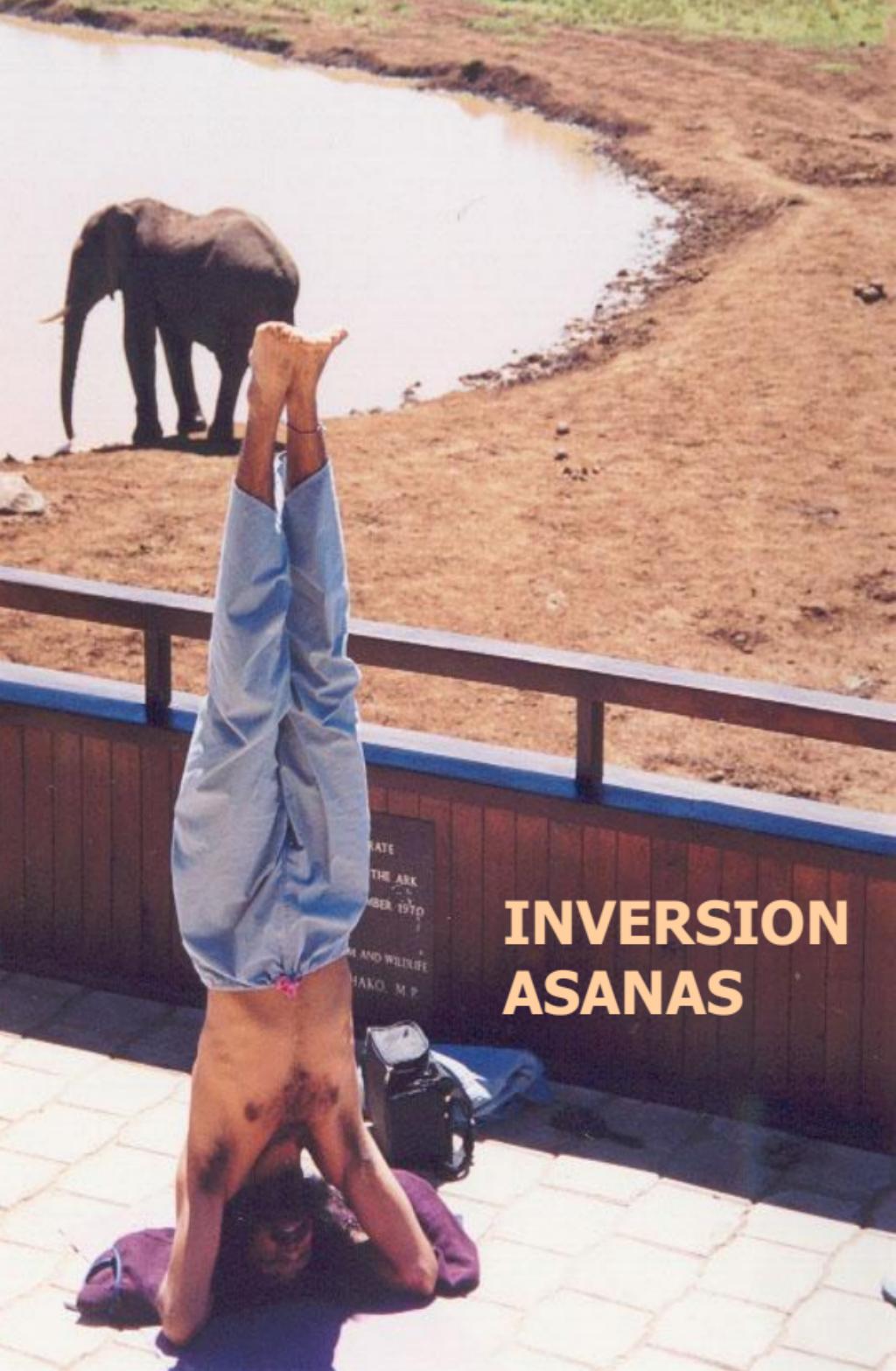
Intermediate - *SUPPORTED KNEE SPINAL ROTATION 2:* Stand in optimum posture, engage core lock, and Mula Bandha. Stabilize the hips and pelvis, keeping the body tall. Flex the right knee and elevate the right thigh parallel to the mat. Inhale, lift the left arm above the head and internally rotate the right shoulder. Exhale and reach down with the left hand, holding the outside of the right knee. Inhale, raise the right arm overhead, externally rotate the shoulder and lower the right arm to shoulder height, parallel with the mat, palm facing up. Rotate and reach back with the right arm. Rotate the head, and look over the right shoulder. Gaze at the right hand. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: injuries to the shoulders, feet, and ankles; varicose veins; dizziness; or middle ear complications.

People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child -- our own two eyes. All is a miracle.

- Thich Nhat Hanh -



INVERSION ASANAS

DATE
THE ARK
NUMBER 1970
WILDLIFE
SHAKO, M.P.

FORWARD FOLD

Standing, Flexion, Inversion



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Distribute the weight evenly between both feet.
- Maintain an optimum neutral posture throughout the asana, elongating the spine.
- Bring the chest in toward the thighs.
- Relax the neck and allow the head to hang freely.
- Stretch the crown of the head to the mat.
- The palms are fully flared open and rest flat on the mat.
- Lift the tailbone up toward the sky.
- Breathe and accentuate into the stretch.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps and squeeze the thighs and gluteals. The legs are straight and knees unlocked. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head. Raise the arms laterally reaching out in a circular motion overhead. The palms face forward and the arms are parallel with the ears. Exhale and pivot forward from the hips. Reach out and forward maintaining optimum posture until the palms reach the mat on either side of the feet. Gaze at the knees. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch hamstrings and low back
- Elongate the spine
- Massage internal organs

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Bend the knees to release the stress on the low back. Do not force the stretch. To prevent the feeling of fainting or dizziness, return very slowly to initial standing position.

HAST PAD asana



BENEFITS

- Stretches the hamstring and spinal muscles
- Improves posture
- Massages and tones the abdominal contents
- Improves blood flow to the brain
- Enhances circulation

MODIFICATIONS

Variation 1 - RAG DOLL: From FORWARD FOLD, grasp the elbows with the opposite hand so the arms are folded. Drop the head and neck. Shake the head motioning 'yes' and 'no' to fully relax the upper body and neck. Gaze at the knees. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.

Variation 2 - DOUBLE ANGLE: From FORWARD FOLD, externally rotate the shoulders and interlock the hands behind the spine. Inhale and raise the arms parallel to the legs. Retract the shoulder blades. Lift the hands and tailbone up toward the sky, and push the feet into the mat. Maintain a neutral upper body posture. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

Variation 3 - GORILLA: From FORWARD FOLD, place the hands under the feet, palms face up, and walk the toes to the wrists. The knees may be slightly bent to protect the low back. Inhale and lift the upper body and neck looking straight up. Exhale and fold the head down to neutral. Straighten the knees, inch by inch, to increase the stretch. Gaze at a fixed point. Repeat the asana cycle for 5 respirations.

Variation 4 - FORWARD FOLD GRASPING ANKLES: From FORWARD FOLD, exhale and drop the head lower, down to mat and grasp the Achilles Tendons. Lift up from the tailbone to increase the stretch. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations. Lift up very slowly and return to initial standing position.

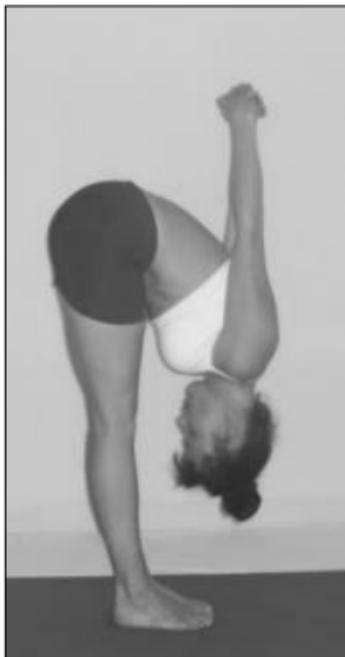
CONTRA-INDICATIONS

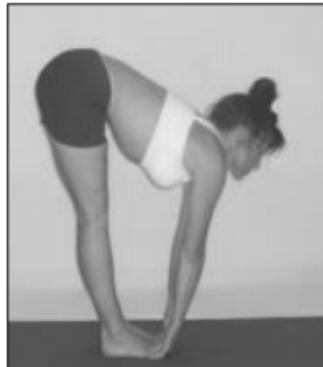
Do not practice this asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, spinal complications, sciatica, heart disease, abdominal hernias, or symptoms of whiplash.



Variation 1 - RAG DOLL

Variation 2 - DOUBLE ANGLE





Variation 3 - GORILLA

Variation 4 - FORWARD FOLD
GRASPING ANKLES



CRANE

Standing, Flexion, Inversion



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Maintain optimum neutral posture throughout the asana, elongating the spine.
- Relax the neck and allow the head to hang freely.
- Stretch the crown of the head to the mat.
- The palms are fully flared open and pushed flat on the mat.
- The elbows are straight.
- Do not rotate the hip of the elevated leg.
- Lift the tailbone up toward the sky.
- Bring the chest in toward the thigh.
- Breathe and accentuate into the stretch.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance in the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps and squeeze the thighs and gluteals. The legs are straight and knees unlocked. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head. Raise the arms laterally reaching out in a circular motion overhead. The palms face forward and the arms are parallel with the ears. Exhale and pivot forward from the hips. Reach out and forward maintaining optimum posture until the palms reach the mat beside the toes. Keep the right leg straight and elevate the left leg straight back, pointing the toes away from the head. Gaze at the knees. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch hamstrings and low back
- Lengthens the spine
- Massage the internal organs
- Strengthen the hip region

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Bend the knees to release the stress on the low back. Do not force the stretch. Reach down into the stretch instead of forcing and bouncing. To prevent the feeling of fainting or dizziness, return very slowly to initial standing position.

BAK asana

BENEFITS

- Stretches the hamstring and spinal muscles
- Improves posture
- Develops the muscles of the hip region
- Massages and tones the abdominal contents
- Improves blood flow to the brain
- Enhances circulation
- Improves body balance and strength

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, spinal complications, sciatica, heart disease, hip pathologies, abdominal hernias, or symptoms of whiplash.

CROWN BASED

Standing, Flexion, Inversion

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Keep the feet straight and parallel.
- Distribute the weight evenly between both feet, pushing into the mat.
- The legs remain active throughout the asana.
- Lift the tailbone up to the sky.
- Point the fingers forward and press the palms into the mat.
- Retract the chin and shoulder blades.



INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, feet hip-width apart.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Heel/toe of the feet approximately 4 - 5 feet apart. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head. Raise the arms laterally reaching out in a circular motion overhead, palms face forward. Exhale, pivot the body forward from the hips and set the palms on the mat, shoulder-width apart. The head, neck, and spine are linear, and the arms are straight. The body weight is evenly distributed between the hands and feet, and the head hangs in a relaxed, inverted position. Lift the tailbone up to the sky. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the calf and hamstring muscles
- Strengthen the ankle and feet muscles
- Elongate the spine
- Invert the upper body

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Avoid overstretching the leg and thigh muscles when separating the feet. To prevent the feeling of fainting or dizziness, make controlled heel/toe movements and return very slowly to initial standing position.

PRASARITA PADOTTAN asana



BENEFITS

- Stretches the hamstring and spinal muscles
- Improves posture
- Massages and tones abdominal contents
- Improves blood flow to the brain
- Enhances circulation
- Opens the upper spine and shoulder blades



MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - The arms are vertical and the crown of the head is lowered toward the mat.

Intermediate - *CROWN BASED*: Heel/toe the feet further apart. Bend the elbows and rest the crown of the head on the mat in a relaxed position. Drop the forearms beside the head, and interlock the hands around the crown of the head. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, spinal complications, sciatica, heart disease, abdominal hernias, shoulder complications, symptoms of whiplash, or in the last 3 months of pregnancy.

SHOULDER STAND

Supine, Inversion, Balance, Flexion



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Engage the core at all times to protect the lumbar spine.
- Consciously move very slowly through each vertebra, one by one.
- Lift the body up and away from the shoulders.
- Use the palms to support the low back.
- Draw the shoulder blades and elbows toward each other.
- Bring the chin into the chest.
- Maintain optimum posture at the start and end positions of the asana.
- Exhale upon lowering to the initial position, slowly moving vertebra by vertebra.

INITIAL POSITION

Lie face up, knees bent.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

1. Lie face up, bend the knees toward the chest, and push the feet and knees together. The neck and shoulder blades are retracted in optimum posture, the arms are beside the body, and the palms are face down.
2. Engage core lock and Mula Bandha. Raise the legs perpendicular to the body. The hips remain in contact with the mat.
3. Inhale, push down on the arms and hands, smoothly roll the gluteals off the mat, moving through the spine one vertebra at a time raising the hips off the mat. Move the legs over the body past the head and the arms and palms face down on the mat. Raise both legs to a vertical position, keeping them straight and together.
4. Turn the palms up, bend the elbows shoulder-width apart, and place the hands behind the rib cage beside the spine. Lift the body so the weight stabilizes in the upper shoulder blades. The palms cup the rib cage to support the weight of the body. The chin is retracted and approximates the chest. The legs are vertical with the trunk, and the body is supported by the shoulders, arms, neck, and the back of the head. The arms provide stability. The toes point away from the head. Gaze at the toes or close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Mobilize spinal joints
- Invert and flush the physiological systems in the body
- Develop core abdominal muscles
- Stabilize the hips and pelvis

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not rush through the movement and lose the focus of moving through, one vertebra at a time. In the Intermediate and Advanced Asanas become fully aware of the placement of the body so the asana may be performed with full stability. Keep the neck in neutral position during rotation.

SARVANG asana

5. To return to initial position, bring the legs forward until the feet are above and behind the back of the head and the legs are straight. Slowly release the position of the hands and place the arms on the mat beside the body, palms face down. Using the abdominal contraction, gradually lower each vertebra of the spine to the mat followed by the gluteals and the legs, resuming to their initial vertical position. Lower the legs to the mat by slowly bending the knees. Balance and control the movement so the body contacts the mat slowly and gently.

BENEFITS

- Stretches the entire spine
- Improves circulation of blood in the lower extremity
- Massages abdominal organs
- Stimulates the glandular systems

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - Follow the sequence from positions 1 – 3 only.

Intermediate - *PLOW*: From the final raised position in *SHOULDER STAND*, bring the legs forward and begin to lower the feet until they are above and behind the back of the head. The legs remain straight. Slowly release the position of the hands and place the arms on the mat beside the body, palms face down. Lower the legs further directly behind the head, parallel to the mat. The bottom of the toes contact the mat behind the head and the legs remain straight. The chin is retracted, the palms and arms are face down on the mat with the weight of the body in the arms, shoulders, head, and toes. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.

Advanced - *DEAF MAN*: From *PLOW*, slowly bend and drop the knees beside the ears. Rotate the arms around and grasp the ankles. The top of the feet and shins rest on the mat. The gluteals are in the air and the body weight rests in the shoulders, head, and feet. Close the eyes. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: low back injuries, sciatica, spinal pathologies, neck trauma, symptoms of whiplash, spinal osteoporosis, cardio vascular disease, or in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

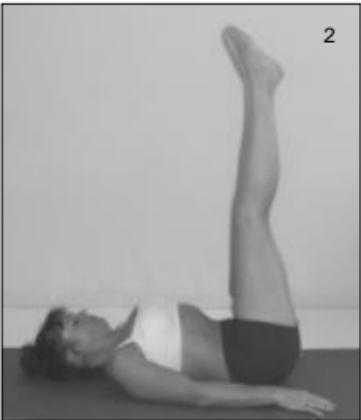
PRECAUTION

Keep the neck straight. Do NOT turn the head from side to side. This may cause severe damage.

SHOULDER STAND SEQUENCE



1



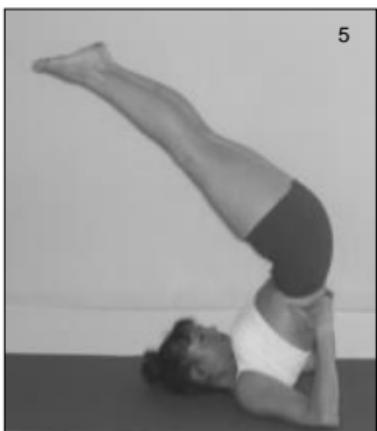
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PLOW

9



DEAF MAN

11



10



12



13



HEADSTAND

Inversion, Balance, Strength



INITIAL POSITION

Sit upright on the knees and heels in *SITTING ON KNEES*.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Sit facing a wall with the knees approximately 2 feet from the wall. Lift up on to the toes, place the forearms on the mat, fingers interlocked (knuckles touching the wall), and elbows about 6 inches in front of the knees. The distance between the elbows is equal to the distance from each elbow to the interlocked fingers, forming an equilateral triangle. Lower the crown of the head on the mat between the interlocked fingers, and wrap the hands around the head to make a firm support. Lock the core, come up on the toes, and raise the gluteals in the air. Slowly walk the feet toward the trunk and head, gradually moving the spine toward the wall in a vertical position. Bend the knees slightly and push the weight in the feet and forearms. Transfer the body weight from the toes to the forearms, and to the crown of the head. Maintaining a steady balance, raise one foot off the mat approximately 10 inches. Maintain the balance and then raise the other foot balancing on the forearms and head. Bend the knees and gradually raise the legs in a controlled movement. Adjust the upper body slightly to balance the weight of the legs and thighs. Contract the muscles of the low back and fold the legs back so the feet move toward the gluteals. The thighs are parallel with the mat and the feet are

PRIMARY GOALS

- Reverse the body flow and cleanse the physiological systems
- Enhance the breath
- Relax the body and mind
- Assist in digestion
- Develop focus and strength
- Awaken awareness

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The pelvic and abdominal muscles must remain active throughout the entire asana.
- Pivot from the hips when raising the body.
- Keep the body weight in the forearms.
- Maintain a focus on the breath.
- The body must remain linear.

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Do not rush in and out of this asana. Surrender the forehead and thoughts into the mat and let go all the tension. The body weight is placed primarily in the forearms and when the asana is in neutral, the crown of the head rests on the mat. When releasing from the asana, stay in *CHILD* for at least one minute to restore blood pressure and blood flow to the head. Sudden movement to an upright position can result in fainting.

SIRSH asana

together, parallel with the mat. Begin raising the knees to a vertical position. Slowly straighten the hips raising the thighs upward, in line with the upper body. Straighten the knees and raise the legs until both the heels and legs contact the wall. The entire body is in a straight line. Slowly transfer the body weight fully into the forearms and head, moving one heel at a time away from the supportive wall. Maintain a steady balance. In the final position the body is linear and the feet are parallel with the mat. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 10 respirations.

To return to starting position, contact both heels back with the wall and slowly bend the right knee. Continue lowering the right knee and foot toward the mat. As the right foot approaches the left knee, bend the left knee, and in a controlled manner bring both feet down to the mat. Distribute the body weight in the toes, knees, forearms, and head. Lower down to the initial position with the fingers interlocked. Rest in *CHILD* for a minute before returning to an upright position.



BENEFITS

- Increases blood flow to the brain releasing toxins
- Reverses the effects of gravity on the body
- Revitalizes the visceral organs
- Encourages deeper respiration
- Relaxes the body and mind

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - Follow the asana sequence, with Position 5 as the final position. Gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

Intermediate - Use the wall as a support.

Advanced - After holding the final asana position daily for one minute over a period of 30 days, attempt can be made to practice this asana without the wall as a support. It is advisable to have a spotter.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, heart disease, vascular disease, retinal disorders, ear infections, neck complications, headaches, symptoms of whiplash, spinal osteoporosis, menstruation, or during pregnancy.

HEADSTAND SEQUENCE



1



2



3



4



5



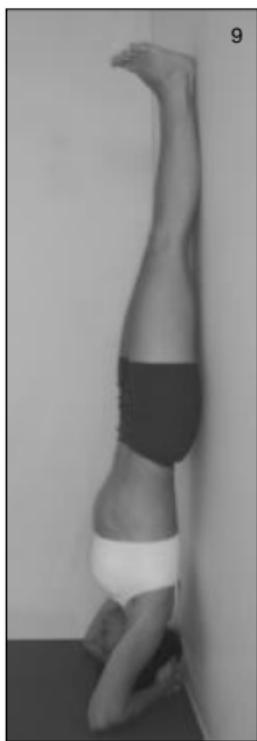
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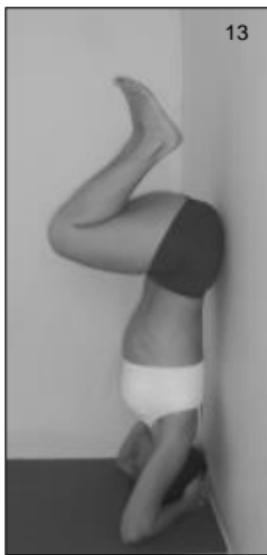


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PARTNER ASANAS



PARTNER YOGA

Partner Yoga is a wonderful alternative to the traditional practice of yoga. This addition to the yoga journey can be practiced by anyone - couples, friends, parents, or children. For couples, practicing Partner Yoga is a great way to strengthen the relationship by fortifying trust and communication. It is also a wonderful way for parents and kids to bond together. Friends can use Partner Yoga to help each other stay motivated and committed to their wellness plan. Practicing yoga with a partner is uplifting and inspiring, and it helps raise both individuals to greater heights.

Partner Yoga asanas require 100% participation and trust by both parties. Partners have the opportunity to support and assist each other. The skills of observation and communication are developed fostering the qualities of trust and vulnerability. Virtually any yoga asana can be modified to be practiced with a partner. Like most yoga asanas, Partner Yoga asanas also focus on the breath and mind, and increase strength and flexibility. Partners have to rely on each other's support to maintain correct body alignment, balance, and concentration to dissolve each other's physical tension. In a deeper sense, this physical support fosters deeper feelings of nurturing and acceptance. Introduce another individual to the journey of yoga using Partner Yoga asanas.

Like traditional yoga, there are hundreds of various Partner Yoga asanas. Three basic Partner Yoga asanas are demonstrated in the following pages:

1. Easy Sitting Spinal Rotation
2. Child - Fish
3. Standing Forward Flexion

PARTNER EASY SITTING

SPINAL ROTATION

Sitting, Rotation,
Relaxation



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The pelvis and abdominals must remain active.
- The gluteals are fixed to the mat.
- Maintain optimum posture.
- The chin is retracted into the neck and the shoulders are drawn back during the entire asana.
- Concentrate on the physical balance, equalizing the weight on the right and left sides of the body.
- Push gently into both the hands.
- Keep the focus on the breath, breathing in unison with your partner.
- Rotate further with each exhalation.

INITIAL POSITION

Both partners sit upright, legs straight in front of the body, back to back in contact with the partner.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Both partners bend the right leg and place the right foot under the left thigh. Bend the left leg and place the left foot under the right thigh. Lift the sternum; retract the shoulder blades; and engage the core, Mula Bandha and optimum posture lock. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, and lift up from the crown of the head. Exhale, rotate to the left, place the right palm on the left knee and reach and place the left palm on your partner's right knee. Close the eyes or gaze at a fixed point. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Repeat on the other side.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Improve upper body posture
- Increase flexibility in the spine
- Relax the body and mind
- Connect with the partner's spine and breath

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Although *EASY SITTING* is a simple posture, it is difficult to sustain for long periods of time unless the knees are close to the mat, or touching the mat. Otherwise, most of the body weight is supported by the gluteal muscles and the low back stiffens up. One easy way to overcome this difficulty is to prop the gluteals on to a cushion, which will help drop the knees to the mat. It is extremely important to keep the upper body in optimum alignment in all sitting asanas so the breath flows freely.

DWI SUKH-MATSYENDR

asana

BENEFITS

- Stabilizes the pelvis and hips
- Develops spinal flexibility
- Increases the breath capacity
- Elongates the spine from the sacrum to the base of the skull
- Facilitates mental and physical balance with the partner without causing strain or pain

MODIFICATIONS

Beginners - Sit in *EASY SITTING*.

Intermediate - Sit in *HALF LOTUS*.

Advanced - Sit in *FULL LOTUS*.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: injuries to the coccyx or hips, sciatica, knee or shoulder problems, or low back complications.

PARTNER CHILD-FISH

Kneeling, Prone, Supine, Inversion, Flexion, Extension



Partner 2

Partner 1

VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- Partner 1 raises the chest with the least amount of weight on the head.
- Partner 2 points the toes away and engages the thighs.
- Partner 1 lowers the shoulder blades down.
- Partner 1 grounds the hips and lifts the heart.
- Partner 2 relaxes the neck back into the extension.
- Partner 1 recruits the core when lowering the head to the mat.

INITIAL POSITION

Both partners sit back to back. Partner 1, kneel on the mat with the tops of the feet flat on the mat and Partner 2, sit upright with the legs straight in front of the body.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Partner 1: Place the big toes together, separate the heels and lower the gluteals onto the inside surface of the feet. The heels touch the sides of the hips. Inhale, lengthen the neck, retract the chin, lift up from the crown of the head, and lift the sternum. Raise the arms laterally overhead, parallel with the ears. Exhale, pivot from the hips and lower the forehead to the mat, elbows bent on the mat, palms face down.

Partner 2: Sit on Partner 1's gluteals, facing away from Partner 1. Gently, with awareness, roll back, over Partner 1's spine, moving one vertebra at a time. In the final position the back of the heads will be in contact. Partner 2 reaches the arms overhead and Partner 1 reaches up and holds Partner 2's wrists, slowly lengthening Partner 2's arms. Close the eyes and breathe in unison. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

To return to starting position, Partner 2 remains passive and relaxed while Partner 1 pushes his/her hands into the mat, raising and returning to a sitting position as Partner 2 slides off Partner 1. Both partners return sitting back to back for 3 respirations and switch positions.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the chest cavity
- Increase flexibility in the hips
- Elongate and stretch the spine
- Enhance the breath capacity
- Relax the body and mind

COMMON OVERSIGHT

It is important to lift the chest and lower the head in a controlled manner. If there is any pain or strain in the neck immediately draw the chin into the chest.

DWI BAL-MATSYA asana



BENEFITS

- Improves posture
- Stretches the abdominal contents
- Opens the chest cavity
- Develops breath synchronicity between partners



CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: cervical problems, abdominal hernias, chest complications, shoulder or neck problems, high blood pressure, retinal disorders, whiplash injuries, menstruation, or after 3 months of pregnancy.

PRECAUTION

When sitting on the knees, place the body weight on the tibial tuberosity, the thick bumpy bone just below the kneecap. Do not place the weight on the kneecap. Double fold the mat to soften the area below the knees for protection.

PARTNER FORWARD FOLD

Standing, Flexion,
Inversion



VERBAL SUGGESTIONS

- The core must be engaged at all times.
- Retract the chin and shoulder blades.
- Distribute the weight evenly between both feet.
- Maintain optimum posture throughout the asana.
- Bring the chest in toward the thighs.
- The head hangs freely and the neck is relaxed.
- Stretch the crown of the head to the mat.
- Breathe and accentuate into the stretch.

INITIAL POSITION

Stand in optimum posture, back to back with the partner, one foot away from each other.

POSITION, MOTION, and BREATH

Place the feet are hip-width apart. Lift the toes, spread them apart, then lower them down with the weight evenly distributed and grounded in the mat. The hands are by the sides in anatomical neutral posture. Engage optimum posture, core lock, and Mula Bandha. Keep the body tall. Maintain the balance with the bottom of the feet. Lift up from the kneecaps, squeeze the thighs and gluteals, the legs are straight and knees unlocked. Inhale, lift up from the waist and the crown of the head, reach back and interlock hands with your partner. Exhale and pivot forward from the hips. Reach forward to *HALF FOLD*, maintain a neutral spine and lengthen the chest. Gently pull the partners arms as the gluteals come into contact. Gradually move the hands to hold your partner's forearms lowering into *FORWARD FOLD*. Gaze at the knees. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the hamstrings and low back
- Elongate the spine
- Massage the internal organs

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Listen to the partners cues, do not force into the stretch. Bend the knees to release the stress on the low back. To prevent the feeling of fainting or dizziness, return very slowly to initial standing position.

DWI HAST PAD asana



BENEFITS

- Stretches the hamstring and spinal muscles
- Improves posture
- Massages and tones the abdominal contents
- Improves blood flow to the brain
- Enhances circulation
- Builds a closer connection with the partner



MODIFICATIONS

Intermediate: Partner 1 inhale, and lift up to *HALF FOLD* parallel with the mat. Partner 2 exhale, and flex further into *FORWARD FOLD*. Maintain the asana for 5 respirations. Both partners return to *FORWARD FOLD*. Next, Partner 2 inhale, lift up to *HALF FOLD*, parallel with the mat. Partner 1 exhale, and flex further into a *FORWARD FOLD*. Maintain asana for 5 respirations. Both partners return to *FORWARD FOLD* and then slowly return to starting standing position together.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice the asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, spinal complications, sciatica, heart disease, abdominal hernias, or symptoms of whiplash.

If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music.

- Albert Einstein -

A pregnant woman with short dark hair is sitting cross-legged on a green mat in a prenatal yoga pose. She is wearing a white tank top and dark grey leggings. Her eyes are closed, and she is holding her hands in a mudra position. In the background, there are several colorful exercise balls (red, green, blue) and a window. The text "PRENATAL YOGA" is overlaid in the upper right corner.

PRENATAL YOGA

PREGNATAL YOGA

Pregnancy is a wonderful opportunity for the mother to not only connect with the growing child but to reconnect with the neglected 'inner child'. Prenatal Yoga provides a perfect time to nourish and positively influence a growing seed. Just as a wonderful seed when properly cared for with healthy nutrition, air, water and light blossoms into a flower and then a delicious fruit, you too can give the growing child a great head start. In the first 9 months in the womb followed by the subsequent 3 years with you, the mother, the child establishes fundamental rhythm, thought, breathing patterns, and a core value system to cope with in life. After this period the child becomes a product of its ever-changing environment.

Prenatal Yoga allows the mother to balance herself inside out and influence the child in healthy way. During this growth in the womb the placenta is the exchange barrier for the child. The mother not only influences the feeding and excreting of the child but every thought and action of the mother directly or indirectly influences the child. Pregnancy is a delicate time and correct asana practice is a must as. Improper practice may result in complications to the mother and the growing fetus.

Prenatal Yoga allows the mother to:

- Breathe relaxed using the diaphragm
- Learn asanas to increase flexibility, balance and strength
- Relax the mind and body
- Manage stress
- Connect and influence the child positively
- Take the worry away from pregnancy
- Give the child the healthiest start in life

In the following pages are a few special asanas that pregnancy. Adapt the asanas to meet your particular needs. You may not be able to do all asanas. Likewise, do not be too easy on yourself. Listen to your abdominal muscles and the amniotic sac in the womb. Listen to the body – be the best judge of what asanas YOU can practice during pregnancy.



The Sitting Asanas are very important, as they stretch open the pelvis, making the delivery process easier. The Standing Asanas strengthen the legs and thighs and assist to carry the baby in the womb. The body secretes a hormone called 'relaxin' during pregnancy which increases flexibility in the ligaments and joints. Some asanas are easier to practice as the pregnancy progresses. It is more effective to practice yoga 15 minutes daily than practicing a 1 ½ hour session once a week. Rest, relax, and incorporate the breathing exercises in the daily routine. Observe the delicate changes in the body and enjoy the growth of the child.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Although this asana routine is safe, it is advisable to consult your primary health care practitioner to know if there are any asanas which may be contra-indicated for your individual case.

PREGNATAL YOGA & LOW BACK

During pregnancy, as the abdominal contents distend due to the growing fetus, extra stress is placed on the low back, increasing the lordosis in the lumbar region. The perineal, pelvic tilt, and Mula Bandha are paramount to practice to counter-balance the stress in the low back. Learn to consciously recognize and release tension in particular muscles of the pelvis. During labor, this practice will help to relax between contractions and prevent the body from fatiguing. Rest is as equally important component to decrease stress in the low back. Below are four positions that will help relieve the stress in the low back when lying or sleeping



1. Lie on the side with a pillow under the neck. Bend both legs to 90 degrees and place a cushion between the knees.



2. Lie on the side with a pillow under the neck, bend the top leg to 90 degrees and rest the top leg and thigh on the cushion. The bottom leg is straight.



3. Lie on the side, bend both legs to 90 degrees, and place small cushions under the abdomen.



4. Lie on the back with a pillow under the neck, bend the legs and place a cushion under the knees so the low back is grounded.

PREGNATAL YOGA ROUTINE



1. DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING



2. SUFI ROLLS



3. HALF LOTUS



4. COW'S FACE



5. REVERSE PRAYER



6. SEATED BUTTERFLY



7. SEATED BASE



8. COW



9. CAT



10. NEUTRAL TABLE ALTERNATE ARM/LEG



11. HARE



12. MODIFIED HEADSTAND



13. RABBIT



14. SITTING ON KNEES



15. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



16. CROWN BASED



17. FORWARD FOLD



18. THUNDERBOLT



19. SQUAT



20. RAISED ARMS



21. STANDING SPINAL TWIST



22. GAZE PRAYER



23. FIVE POINTED STAR



24. TREE



25. SUPPORTED KNEE SPINAL ROTATION 2



26. TRIANGLE



27. REVERSE TABLE



28. SUPINE DOUBLE LEG RAISE



29. BRIDGE SUPPORTED



30. SUPINE CROSS-LEGGED BUTTERFLY



31. SUPINE BUTTERFLY



32. DEAD BUG



33. SUPINE KNEE TO CHEST



34. SUPINE CRESCENT MOON



35. FETUS



36. CORPSE



37. EYE GAZING



38. ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING



39. LOTUS

MEDITATION



Hinduism Discord Server <https://dsc.gg/dhar>

MEDITATION

Meditation is an extremely important component of yoga practice. Meditation is one of the oldest relaxation techniques, and increased research and interest in the mind-body connection has made it possible for this ancient practice to become part of the mainstream society today.

The effects of meditation involve various physiological and psychological mechanisms.

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL MECHANISMS INCLUDE:

- reduced blood pressure
- brain wave resonance and coherence
- a shift in the balance between the activating and quieting components of the automatic nervous system
- decreased effects of aging
- decreased muscle tension
- reduced levels of fear
- rhythmic heart and respiration rate
- increased circulation of endorphins

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS INCLUDE:

- relaxation and alertness
- effective handling of stressful stimuli
- habituation
- deautomatization
- freeing from conditioned responses
- healing stress-related disorders

Meditation improves overall mental and physical health, making it possible to relax and live a balanced life. The positive effects of meditation begin to show at various levels of practice. Generally, one develops a greater feeling of self-respect and deals with issues more confidently. Emotionally, the mind becomes more stable, balanced, and centered. Psychosomatic symptoms decrease and the body experiences an abundance of energy.

The effects of meditation are also visible in work-related areas. Decisions can be made with greater clarity. Responsible decisions are made naturally, intuitively, and energetically. One's outlook or perspective of situations becomes broader, and the relationships with co-workers becomes easier and more harmonious. In this relaxed state, work is enjoyable, with less seriousness and greater creative thought. The ability to function at optimum potential and contribute with maximum ability increases.

On a personal level, meditation brings about positive, significant changes in the quality of friendliness and the respect of another's space. The levels of understanding and trust are heightened. Family issues are dealt with more honesty, love, and with a supportive, relaxed attitude.

MEDITATION PRACTICES

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

Meditation is a practice that trains the mind to transcend the thought process, focusing and living in the present moment, instead of wandering into past and futuristic thoughts. Being in the present moment is an extremely difficult task in our hurried and busy lives. The goal of meditation is to be aware and live in the present moment. The practice allows one to enter each moment with wisdom, lightness, and a sense of humor. It is the art of opening and letting go (emptying), rather than closing and holding (filling).

WHAT TECHNIQUE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Finding what works for you is important. Like the practice of yoga, it is important to find a facilitator, experienced in meditation, who can design a meditation program specifically for you. Remember, no previous experience is necessary.

BASIC GUIDELINES:

Meditate daily - make this a personal practice for life. Begin meditating for 10 - 15 minutes, working up to 20 - 30 minutes, twice daily. Find a location that is quiet, and set it aside for meditation only.

Sit comfortably on the mat with the spine erect, in optimum posture, preferably in *HALF LOTUS*. The eyes are parallel with the mat, chin is retracted, tongue is slightly touching the upper palate with an inner smile, and the hands are on the lap with the right hand resting in the left. Breathe diaphragmatically letting the belly expand with each inhalation and contract with exhalation. Breathe slowly and gently. When a feeling or thought arises, do not chase it away, but recognize it 'just as a thought', let it pass, and maintain a focus on the breath. Program the mind with suggestions such as, "I am as steady as a mountain" or "I am becoming motionless like a statue". This way the asana will quickly become still and, after a while, will be comfortable for extended periods of time. This practice is known as complete body stillness and mind alertness.

Do not judge the quality of the meditation practice as good or bad. Meditation is a transformational change and every day the 'relaxation response' is reinforced by simply being there.

Maintain the feeling of mindful meditative awareness throughout the day; use it to center while performing worldly tasks. Over time, after regular meditation practice, the mind becomes extremely calm, centered, and focused. Use the moments after meditation as an opportunity to be creative in making personal and business decisions. The big picture becomes very clear.

KNOWLEDGE LOCK

GYAN MUDRA

Knowledge is a unique characteristic of consciousness. Knowledge may be developed by practice, or by revelation of knowledge through exposure of awareness. The knowledge developed through the senses and the mind is known as intellect. When this knowledge is applied through experience and is shared with others it becomes *gyan* - wisdom. A major part of retaining knowledge is the development of short and long term memory.

The Gyan Mudra, *KNOWLEDGE LOCK*, is used for the development of memory and knowledge. The awareness of wandering thoughts becomes focused into the light touch and energy exchange between the fingers and thumbs. This brings the focus into the body and slowly directs it back into the mind.

Sit in *HALF* or *FULL LOTUS*, keep both the hands together the upper tip of index finger and upper tip of thumb. Gently contact with light pressure. Keep the other three fingers straight and touching each other. The thumb and index finger form the letter O. To experience the full effects from the Gyan Mudra, practice at least 15 minutes of continual contact in one sitting.



- Develops memory
 - Changes the behavioral attitudes of: irritation, instability, anger, impatience, and restlessness
- BENEFITS**
- Increases concentration
 - Assist in relieving tension headaches

MEDITATION & CONCENTRATION PRACTICES

The yoga asana practice prepares the body for Dhayana practice. Dhayana is the practice of focusing thoughts inward, awakening awareness, and coordinating the mind activities with the breath.

The main purpose of the Meditation Asanas is to allow the body to sit for extended periods of time without movement or discomfort so the body may relax, rejuvenate, and revitalize. Only when the body is still and steady for some time is the sensation of meditation experienced. Deep meditation requires the spinal vertebra to remain steady, in optimum posture, without conscious effort. The more still the body remains the greater the ability to concentrate with a single-pointed mind. Why not lie in *CORPSE*, then, for meditation since it satisfies all the requirements? In *CORPSE* there is a tendency to drift into sleep. It is essential to remain awake and alert while going through the various stages experienced in meditation.

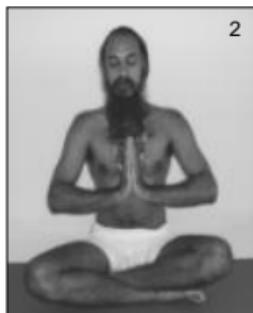
Listed below is a powerful series of Dhayana practices progressing from Beginners to Advanced. Practice one of the variations at the Beginners' level for at least 40 continuous days before progressing to the Intermediate level. Practice one of the Intermediate sets for at least 90 continuous days before progressing to the Advanced level. Practice the Advanced set for at least 120 continuous days to experience the complete results. It is best to practice a set immediately following asana practice. Do not rush through the practice, enjoy the positive changes the journey unfolds.

BEGINNERS

Variation 1 - Sit in *EASY SITTING* or *SITTING ON KNEES* in optimum posture, hands in prayer over the heart. Gaze at the eyebrow center. Maintain a gentle rhythmic breath flow. Sit in the asana for 1 minute.

Variation 2 - Sit in *EASY SITTING* or *SITTING ON KNEES* in optimum posture, hands in prayer over the heart. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain a gentle rhythmic breath flow. Sit in the asana for 2 minutes.

Variation 3 - Sit in *EASY SITTING* or *SITTING ON KNEES* in optimum posture, hands in *KNOWLEDGE LOCK* resting on the knees. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain a gentle rhythmic breath flow. Sit in the asana for 2 minutes.



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INTERMEDIATE

Variation 1 - Sit in **HALF LOTUS** or **SITTING ON KNEES** in optimum posture, hands in **KNOWLEDGE LOCK** resting on the knees. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain a gentle rhythmic breath flow. Sit in the asana for 5 minutes.

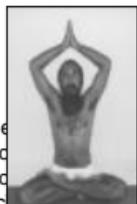
Variation 2 - Sit in **HALF LOTUS** or **SITTING ON KNEES** in optimum posture. Fold the hands in prayer overhead with the elbows straight. Gaze at the eyebrow center. Maintain a gentle rhythmic breath flow. Sit in the asana for 3 minutes.



ADVANCED

Variation 1 - Sit in **LOTUS** or **SITTING ON KNEES** in optimum posture. Fold the hands in **KNOWLEDGE LOCK**, elbows bent to 90 degrees, palms face forward. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain a gentle rhythmic breath flow. Sit in the asana for 3 minutes.

Variation 2 - Sit in **LOTUS** or **SITTING ON KNEES** in optimum posture, hands in **KNOWLEDGE LOCK**, elbows bent to 90 degrees, palms face forward. Gaze at the tip of the nose. Maintain a gentle rhythmic breath flow. Sit in the asana for 5 minutes.



PRECAUTION: If there is any discomfort in the knee, ankles, or joints after sitting for some time in a Mediation Asana, the legs may fall 'asleep' and feel numb, 'pins and needles'. When the blood circulation returns slowly up the legs, a sensation of pins and needles tends to no longer cause any pain. However, be aware that the knee is a very delicate and often abused joint of the body. Be careful not to strain the knee, especially while moving into or out of the Meditation Asanas. Do not on any account use undue force or strain to sit in a Meditation Asana. Stretch the legs fully before returning to a standing position.

In all the Meditation Asanas it is arbitrary which leg is placed uppermost. It is a matter of personal preference and depends on which ever is the more comfortable. Ideally, the leg position should be alternated so that the balance on both sides of the body is maintained.

PRACTICE NOTE: A useful suggestion to overcome this difficulty of sitting cross-legged on the mat is to prop the gluteals on to a cushion, automatically dropping the knees to the mat. It is extremely important to keep the upper body in optimum alignment in all sitting asanas so the breath flows freely.

SOUND AND GROUP CHANTS

The attraction to meditation is increasing due to the extremely busy and active lifestyles we lead. Silent and still meditations offer an antidote to the active distractions in our lives.

Another dominant form of meditation in East Asia, and India in particular, is chanting (now becoming very popular in the West). This kind of meditation is widespread and utilized by more individuals than other forms of silent meditation. Chanting is often done collectively using a short phrase (a mantra), a simple melody, or is sometimes sung on a single tone. The simplicity of the melody allows for group participation; no one needs a developed sense of musicianship in order to participate.

Chanting, as a meditative practice, has great efficacy. First, chanting unites the body, breath, and mind into a single activity. This is a very effective means for developing concentration, one-pointedness of mind. Other forms of concentration meditations are more difficult because the mind tends to wander easily from the object of concentration. In chanting, however, because the body, breath, and mind are all united on a single activity, the development of concentration happens rapidly and with less effort.

Chanting unites the musical and discursive (wandering) functions of the mind which do not normally work together. However when chanting, the discursive functions of the mind become one with the music. The result is an energizing of the mind, with a positively altered state of consciousness.

Chanting creates a state of relaxation with an abundance of energy. Chanting meditation, as a social activity, unites participants, creating a feeling of closeness between fellow humans. The collective voice of a group chant is a clear example of the core understanding of dependent origination, inter-dependent transformation. The sound of the chant constantly changes; this displays the core truth of constant change.

Finally, when the chant ceases, this is a clear display of the truth of impermanence. There is a great silence, and as John Cage quotes: "My favorite piece of music is the one we hear all the time if we are quiet."

The experience of chanting is essentially audible breath, and in the sounds of chanting, one begins and ends with breath. Chanting is, "life's mystery," the gateway between earth and the unknown.



BENEFITS OF SOUND ENHANCEMENT

- Develops and increases the lung capacity, increasing the oxygen content deeper into the body tissues, and releasing more carbon dioxide.
- Allows for complete self-expression, and is a vehicle to release pent-up emotions.
- Increases self-confidence allowing the expression of thoughts and feelings with full emotion.
- Increases the breath capacity by developing the muscles in the diaphragm and abdominal regions.
- Allows a focus in the present state-of-mind, there is less preoccupation about events in the past or future.
- Promotes a healthier attitude toward the body, as relaxed muscle groups in the upper body allow a free passage of air during sound production.
- A richer, pleasant speaking and sounding voice improves the expression of speech and enhances the personality.
- Improves overall health, increasing the levels of creativity, imagination, bringing a zest of energy to all those with whom you interact.

ACOUSTIC POSTURE

TONGUE POSITION

The acoustic posture of the jaw, tongue, and lips determines the quality of vocalization and sound production. There is an extensive amount of nervous sensation in the lips and tongue. Vocalization with true feeling is a sensory experience and can be fully expressed and communicated when the vocal apparatus is correctly utilized.

The tongue is a large flexible muscle which fills most of the lower jaw. The position of this muscle determines the quality of enunciation, articulation and resonance of sound. The tongue, along with the vocal cords, form and shape words and sounds by way of a reflex mechanism sent by impulses from the mind. The tongue movements may be slight but changes in sound will be dramatic. A relaxed tongue is the key to a full and clear sound.

JAW POSITION

It is also extremely important to keep the jaw relaxed during vocalization. The jaw must relax and drop naturally swinging, down and back. This is the only movement necessary for vocalization. Tension and stress are the greatest enemies of the jaw and often hinder this free swinging motion. The clenched jaw not only causes tension and tightness in the jaw muscles, but also restricts sound production.

In the neutral position the jaw lies slightly behind the upper face and is rotated down so the back molars are separated. Hold the head and neck in an optimal posture and relax the muscles of the lower face and neck. Now grab the jaw at the chin and gently push it down and up to open and close the mouth respectively. Let these movements be simple, making sure the tongue lies flat and still in the mouth. Imitating a yawn is one way to experience this natural dropping of the jaw. If the jaw juts forward or up, relax the cheek muscles under the eyes and the jaw will naturally start dropping.

RESONANCE AND HUMMING

Resonance is amplification of the vocal tone which gives sound quality, richness, projection, and beauty. Do not confuse resonance with loudness. Even the softest tones have a component of resonance in them. When you 'hum' with an open throat, feel a vibration in the mask (front of the face). This phenomenon is known as resonance.

As sound passes the upper vocal tract, including the throat and mouth cavities, certain aspects of the sound are amplified or suppressed depending upon the positioning or tension of the muscles in the pathway. This phenomenon of vibration and amplification of sound is known as resonance. Resonance is usually felt more in singing than in speaking, but it exists in both functions.

Humming will improve the efficiency of resonance. When the throat, jaw, and tongue are relaxed, it is an effective way to feel forward resonance in the mouth. Relax the jaw, rest the tongue, keep the soft pallet high, and create an open throat feeling. Let the lips loosely touch by separating the teeth.

On an easy light tone, in the middle range, 'hum' the consonant 'm' establishing a vibration in the mask.

Hummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm ...

Are the lips closed lightly, but not too tight?

Let the buzzing sensation spread as far as possible through the head and body. Bending the head forward will increase the sensation of buzzing.

Feel a buzzing sensation in the following areas when you hum:

- top of the head
- sinus cavities (cheekbone area)
- mask (front of the face)
- teeth
- back of the neck
- rib cage
- forehead
- nose
- lips
- throat
- chest
- upper back

MANTRA CHANTS

Mantras are mystic syllables which are sung to specific sounds in a chant form to create a state of inner balance.

The mantra AUM – (OM) signifies the vibrational energy resonating in every molecule in the universe. AUM also signifies the oneness of the mind, body, and breath. AUM represents:

'A' - creation, the sound of the manifest world, the sound of waking consciousness, and the sound of gross experience.

'U' - sustenance, the sound of the unmanifest world, the sound of dreaming consciousness, and the sound of subtle experience.

'M' - death, the non-manifest world, the sound of dreamless sleep, and the sound of potential experience.

The fourth sound is the ultimate silence, the sound of the unmanifest world, it is the ultimate goal, the incomparable target.

Over time one gradually comprehends and practices the essence of the mantra AUM, with an increased insight into the natural play of life. Eventually one moves to the direct experience of the Absolute Reality, the consciousness that permeates in everything.

Here are three powerful ancient mantras written in specific chant form to be practiced before, during, and after yoga practice.

1. AUM

Variation I



$J=60$

Variation II

$J=80$

2. AUM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI

Variation I

$J=69$

Aum shan-ti shan-ti shan-ti shan-ti i, aum shanti shanti

shan-ti shan-ti

Variation II

$J=69$

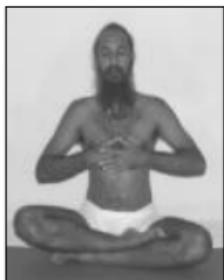
Aum shan-ti shan-ti shan-ti shan-ti i, aum shanti shanti

shan-ti shan-ti

3. HUM SAY SO HUM

$J=69$

Hum say so-o-o Hum



On the following pages you will find several asana series which are designed for specific areas and conditions. In all the series hold the asanas for a minimum of 3 breaths, and where applicable repeat on the other side.

ASANA SERIES



SUN SALUTATION

1. GAZE PRAYER
2. RAISED ARMS
3. FORWARD FOLD
4. LUNGE
5. HIGH PLANK
6. EIGHT LIMB SALUTATION
7. UPWARD FACING DOG
8. DOWNWARD FACING DOG
9. LUNGE
10. FORWARD FOLD
11. RAISED ARMS
12. GAZE PRAYER

BENEFITS

- Stretches the upper and lower body muscle groups
- Improves posture
- Massages and tones the abdominal contents
- Improves blood flow to the brain
- Enhances circulation
- Opens the upper spine and shoulder blades
- Develops core and upper body strength

The Sun Salutation is a wonderful, powerful series of asanas that awaken the entire body systems. The Sun Salutation stimulates and balances the circulatory, digestive, endocrine, excretory, musculo-skeletal, nervous, and respiratory systems. The name itself means to give reverence to the internal sun as well as the external sun. Stay focused on the internal light and warmth the body creates during this salutation series.

In this series, 12 asanas are linked by a continuous flowing motion accompanied by 5 deep breaths (inhalations and exhalations). To experience the best effects from this series, practice all the asanas slowly and consciously, staying focused on the correct technique and breath. It is best to practice this series focusing on the rising or setting sun.

MODIFICATIONS

Advanced:

The Jump Back is a highly proficient alternative that can be used in the Advanced Sun Salutation series going from *FORWARD FOLD* to *HIGH PLANK*, omitting the *LUNGE*. The core must be fully engaged to avoid any injuries.

The *LOW PLANK* may be substituted for the *EIGHT LIMB SALUTATION*.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the musculo-skeletal system
- Strengthen the core
- Elongate the spine
- Invert and stretch the entire body
- Develop inner focus

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Make controlled synchronous movements when practicing this series. Do not rush through the asanas. Initiate each asana with the support of the breath.

SURYA NAMASKAR

JUMP BACK



CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, spinal complications, sciatica, heart disease, shoulder or wrist complications, symptoms of whiplash, or in the last 3 months of pregnancy.



1. GAZE PRAYER



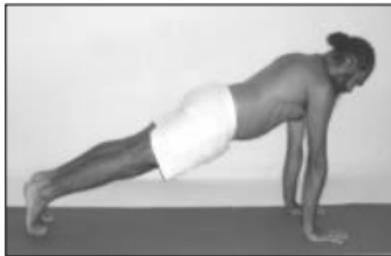
2. RAISED ARMS



3. FORWARD FOLD



4. LUNGE, RIGHT FOOT BACK



5. HIGH PLANK



6. EIGHT LIMB SALUTATION



7. UPWARD FACING DOG



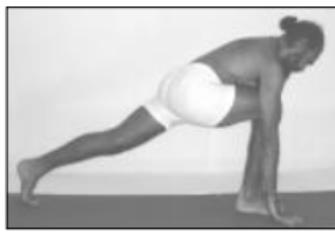
8. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



10. FORWARD FOLD



11. RAISED ARMS



9. LUNGE, RIGHT FOOT FORWARD



12. GAZE PRAYER

MOON SALUTATION

1. GAZE PRAYER
2. RAISED ARMS
3. FORWARD FOLD
4. LUNGE
5. HALF MOON LUNGE
6. HIGH PLANK
7. LOW PLANK
8. UPWARD FACING DOG
9. DOWNWARD FACING DOG
10. LUNGE
11. HALF MOON LUNGE
12. FORWARD FOLD
13. RAISED ARMS
14. GAZE PRAYER

The Moon Salutation is quite similar to the Sun Salutation except there is an addition of the *HALF MOON LUNGE*. This asana adds the dimension of balance and concentration to the series. The Sun Salutation consists of 12 asanas which reflect the 12 hours of the day. The Moon Salutation comprises of 14 asanas relating to the 14 lunar phases. Practice this series at night especially under the moon light. Full moon is a powerful time to practice the Moon Salutation. Stand in *GAZE PRAYER* for a few minutes keeping a steady focus on the moon before practicing this series.

The Moon Salutation stimulates and balances the circulatory, digestive, endocrine, excretory, musculo-skeletal, nervous, and respiratory systems.

PRIMARY GOALS

- Stretch the musculo-skeletal system
- Strengthen the core
- Elongate the spine
- Invert and stretch the entire body
- Improve balance and coordination
- Develop inner focus

COMMON OVERSIGHT

Make controlled synchronous movements when practicing this series. Do not rush through the asanas. Initiate each asana with the support of the breath.

CHANDRA NAMASKAR



BENEFITS

- Stretches the muscle groups in the upper and lower body
- Improves posture
- Massages and tones abdominal contents
- Improves blood flow to the brain
- Enhances circulation
- Improves body balance
- Opens the upper spine and shoulder blades
- Develops core and upper body strength

CONTRA-INDICATIONS

Do not practice this asana if experiencing: high blood pressure, spinal complications, sciatica, heart disease, abdominal hernias, shoulder complications, symptoms of whiplash, or in the last 3 months of pregnancy.



1. GAZE PRAYER



2. RAISED ARMS



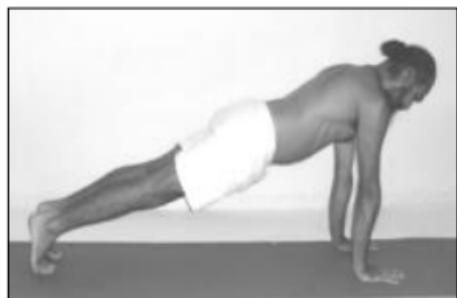
3. FORWARD FOLD



4. LUNGE, RIGHT FOOT BACK



5. HALF MOON LUNGE



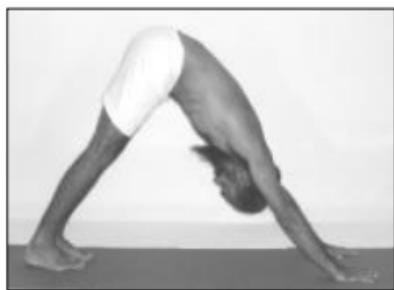
6. HIGH PLANK



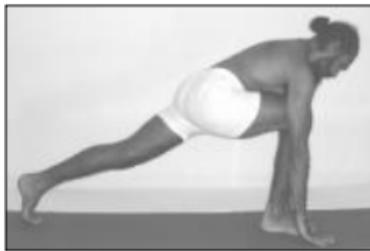
7. LOW PLANK



8. UPWARD FACING DOG



9. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



10. LUNGE, RIGHT FOOT FORWARD



11. HALF MOON LUNGE



12. FORWARD FOLD



13. RAISED ARMS



14. GAZE PRAYER

BALANCE SERIES



1. GAZE



2. PALM TREE



3. TREE 3



4. HALF FOLD



5. AIRPLANE 1



6. AIRPLANE 2



7. HALF MOON LUNGE



8. THUNDERBOLT PRAYER TWIST



9. DANCER



10. STANDING ONE LEG



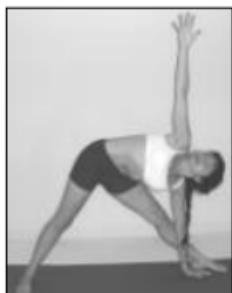
11. STANDING SIDE LEG RAISE



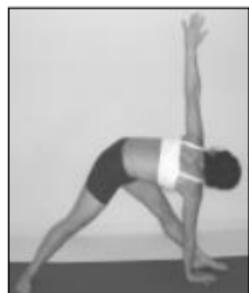
12. WARRIOR 1



13. WARRIOR 2



14. TRIANGLE



15. REVERSE
TRIANGLE



16. STANDING SUPPORTED
KNEE SPINAL ROTATION 1



17. STANDING SUPPORTED
KNEE SPINAL ROTATION 2



18. GAZE
PRAYER

EASY SERIES



1. GAZE PRAYER



2. FIVE POINTED STAR



3. TREE 3



4. PALM TREE



5. RAG DOLL



6. COW



7. CAT



8. CHILD



9. SITTING ON KNEES



10. KNEELING 5 STAR



11. SEATED SPINAL TWIST



12. SEATED BUTTERFLY



13. BRIDGE



14. SUPINE LEG RAISE



15. UNIVERSAL SPINAL TWIST 1



16. CORPSE

ENERGY BOOSTER SERIES



1. GAZE



2. THUNDERBOLT



3. FORWARD FOLD



4. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



5. LUNGE



6. HALF MOON LUNGE



7. PRAYER TWIST LUNGE



8. WARRIOR 3



9. TRIANGLE



10. GAZE PRAYER

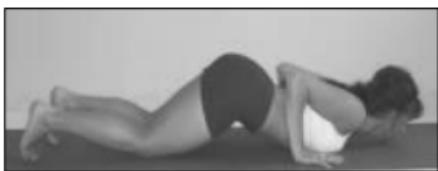
FLEXION/EXTENSION MAT SERIES



1. CHILD



2. HARE



3. EIGHT LIMB SALUTATION



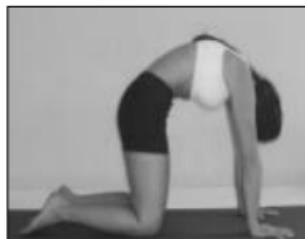
4. UPWARD FACING DOG



5. NEUTRAL TABLE



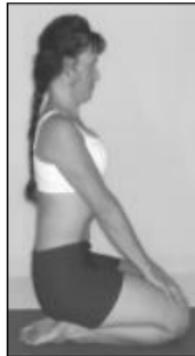
6. COW



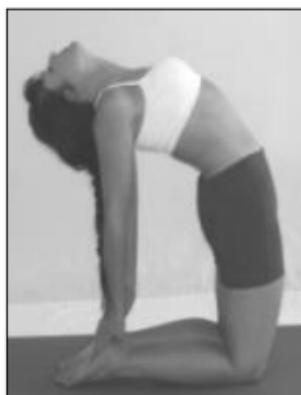
7. CAT



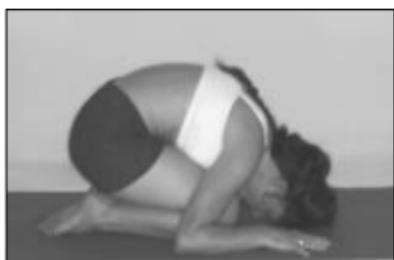
8. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



9. SITTING ON KNEES



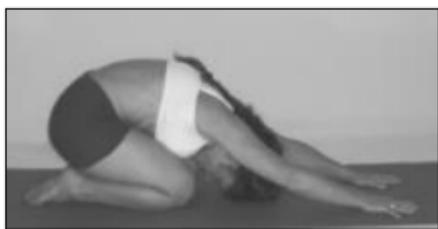
10. CAMEL



11. CHILD



12. SUPINE QUAD STRETCH

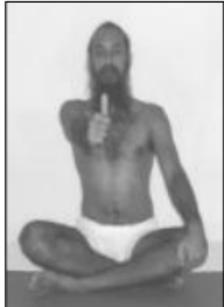


13. HARE

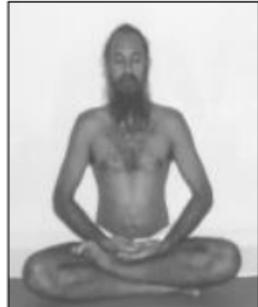
FOCUS & CONCENTRATION SERIES



1. EYE GAZING VAR. 1



2. EYE GAZING VAR. 1



3. EYE GAZING VAR. 2



4. CHILD



5. MODIFIED HEADSTAND



6. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



7. FORWARD FOLD



8. SQUAT



9. CRANE



10. HEADSTAND



11. SQUAT PRAYER



12. TREE 3



13. SUPPORTED KNEE
SPINAL ROTATION 1



14. WARRIOR 2



15. WARRIOR 3



16. HERO



17. RABBIT

HEAD TO HEART SERIES



1. HALF FOLD



2. AIRPLANE 1



3. AIRPLANE 2



4. TRIANGLE



5. REVERSE TRIANGLE



6. STANDING TRIANGLE
SPINAL ROTATION 1



7. STANDING TRIANGLE
SPINAL ROTATION 2



8. CROWN BASED



9. DOUBLE ANGLE



10. FORWARD FOLD



11. RAG DOLL



12. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



13. MODIFIED HEADSTAND



14. CHILD

HEALTHY SPINE SERIES



1. CORPSE



2. SUPINE KNEE TO CHEST



3. UNIVERSAL SPINAL TWIST 2



4. BRIDGE



5. SUPINE LEG RAISE



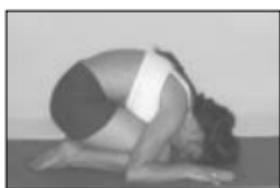
6. BOAT 2



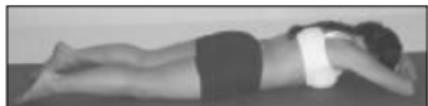
7. COW



8. CAT



9. CHILD



10. REVERSE CORPSE 2



11. LOCUST 1



12. SPHINX



13. 747



14. GAZE



15. FIVE POINTED STAR



16. THUNDERBOLT



17. SQUAT



18. SITTING ON KNEES



19. RABBIT

INTENSIVE SERIES



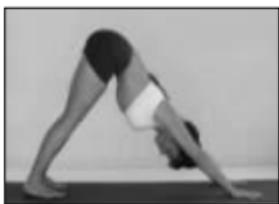
1. PATIENT CRANE



2. SQUAT



3. HIGH PLANK



4. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



5. HEADSTAND



6. CHILD



7. COBRA



8. SIDE PLANK



9. REVERSE TABLE 3



10. SHOULDER STAND



11. BOAT 1



12. PALM TREE



13. PALM TREE SQUAT



14. THUNDERBOLT



15. THUNDERBOLT
PRAYER TWIST



16. AIRPLANE 1



17. REVERSE TRIANGLE



18. WARRIOR 2



19. DANCER



20. THUNDERBOLT



21. SQUAT



22. CHILD

KNEELING SERIES



1. SITTING ON KNEES



2. HALF CAMEL



3. HARE



4. COW



5. CAT



6. CAMEL



7. TIGER A



8. TIGER B



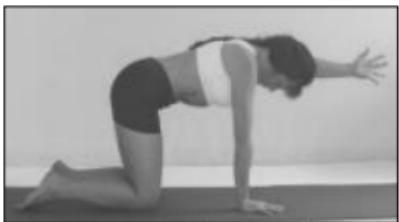
9. REVERSE QUAD STRETCH



10. RABBIT



11. NEUTRAL TABLE



12. NEUTRAL TABLE RAISED ARM



13. NEUTRAL TABLE RAISED LEG



14. NEUTRAL TABLE ALTERNATE ARM/LEG



15. HALF PIGEON

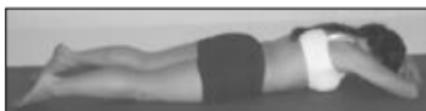


16. SITTING ON TOES



17. HERO

LONG SERIES



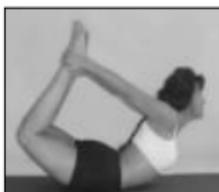
1. REVERSE CORSPE 2



2. LOCUST 2



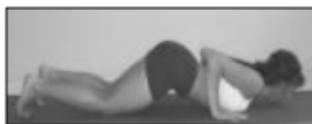
3. SUPERMAN



4. BOW PRONE



5. UPWARD FACING DOG



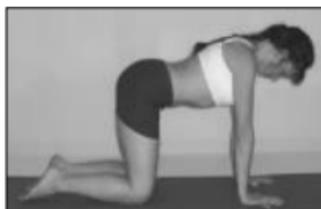
6. EIGHT LIMB SALUTATION



7. HIGH PLANK



8. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



9. NEUTRAL TABLE



10. COW



11. CAT



12. TREE 3



13. GAZE



14. SUPPORTED KNEE
SPINAL ROTATION 1



15. DANCER



16. AIRPLANE 1



17. HALF FOLD



18. THUNDERBOLT



19. SQUAT



20. SEATED BUTTERFLY



21. SEATED HIP OPENER



22. SEATED FORWARD FOLD



23. REVERSE TABLE



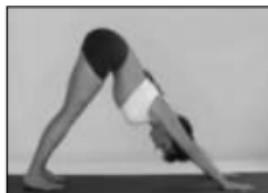
24. TIGER A



25. TIGER B



26. HARE



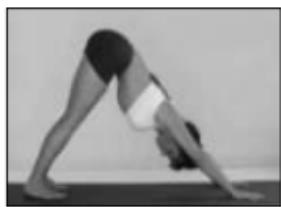
27. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



28. LUNGE



29. PRAYER TWIST LUNGE



30. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



31. TRIANGLE



32. CROWN BASED



33. STANDING TRIANGLE SPINAL TWIST 1



34. REVERSE TRIANGLE



35. WARRIOR 1



36. SUPINE KNEE TO CHEST



37. BRIDGE



38. SHOULDER STAND



39. FISH



40. BOAT 2



41. DEAD BUG



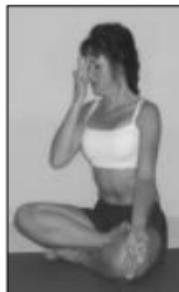
42. UNIVERSAL SPINAL TWIST 2



43. CORPSE



44. FETUS



45. ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING



46. PALMING

MENSTRUATION SERIES



1. GAZE PRAYER



2. CRESCENT MOON 1



3. NECK MOVEMENTS



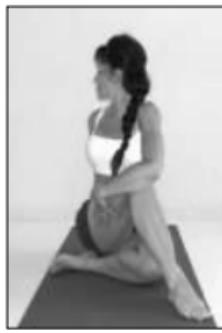
4. SHOULDER ROTATIONS



5. SUFI ROLLS



6. SEATED BUTTERFLY



7. SEATED HALF SPINAL TWIST



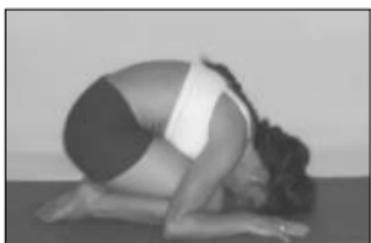
8. COW'S FACE



9. COW



10. CAT



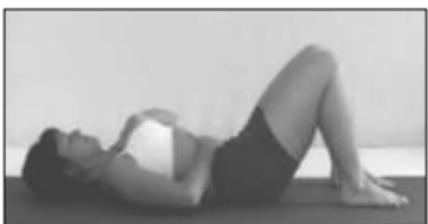
11. CHILD



12. SUPINE CROSS-LEGGED
BUTTERFLY



13. UNIVERSAL SPINAL TWIST 2



14. DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING



15. PALMING



16. EASY SITTING/LOTUS

OFFICE STANDING

SERIES



1. GAZE



2. RAISED ARMS



3. FIVE POINTED STAR



4. TREE 1



5. THUNDERBOLT



6. DOUBLE ANGLE



7. HALF FOLD



8. COW'S FACE



9. CRESCENT MOON 2



10. SUPPORTED KNEE SPINAL
ROTATION 1

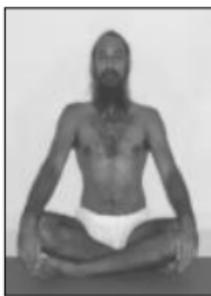


11. STANDING SPINAL
TWIST

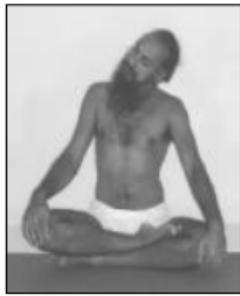


12. GAZE

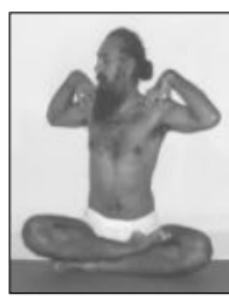
RELAXATION SERIES



1. EASY SITTING



2. NECK MOVEMENTS



3. SHOULDER ROTATIONS



4. SUFI ROLLS



5. CHILD



6. COW



7. CAT



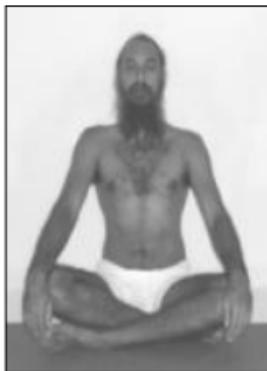
8. SUPINE KNEE TO CHEST



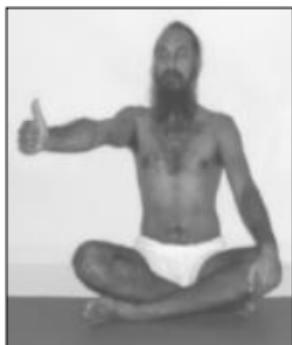
9. DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING



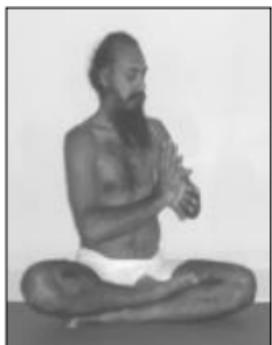
10. SEATED HALF SPINAL TWIST



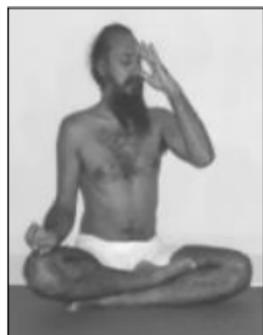
11. EASY SITTING



12. EYE GAZING VARIATIONS 1,2



13. PALMING



14. ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

SEXUAL BALANCE SERIES



1. SITTING ON KNEES



2. COW



3. CAT



4. HIGH PLANK



5. EIGHT LIMB SALUTATION



6. LOCUST 2



7. SUPERMAN



8. HARE ON TOES



9. COBRA



10. UPWARD FACING DOG



11. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



12. SQUAT



13. BRIDGE



14. SUPINE DOUBLE
LEG RAISE



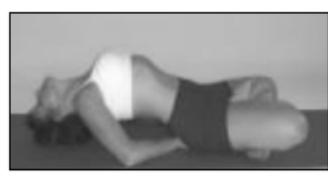
15. SUPINE BUTTERFLY



16. DEAD BUG



17. DEAF MAN



18. CROSS-LEGGED FISH



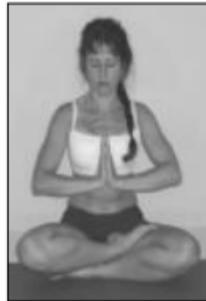
19. DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING



20. FETUS



21. SEATED BUTTERFLY



22. EASY SITTING/
LOTUS



23. ALTERNATE
NOSTRIL
BREATHING

SUPINE SERIES



1. CORPSE



2. BRIDGE 2



3. BRIDGE 2



4. SUPINE DOUBLE LEG RAISE



5. SHOULDER STAND



6. PLOW



7. DEAF MAN



8. DEAD BUG



9. SUPINE KNEE TO CHEST



10. BOAT 1

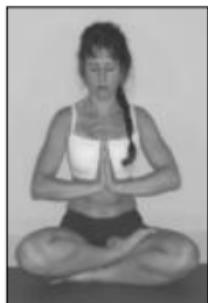


11. UNIVERSAL SPINAL TWIST 2



12. CORPSE

UPPER BACK & SHOULDERS SERIES



1. EASY SITTING/LOTUS



2. NECK MOVEMENTS



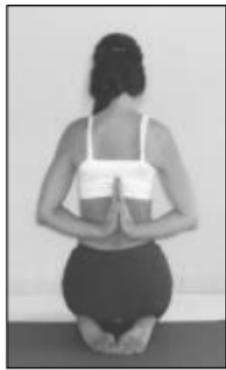
3. SHOULDER ROTATIONS



4. SUFI ROLLS



5. COW'S FACE



6. REVERSE PRAYER



7. 747 LEGS RAISED



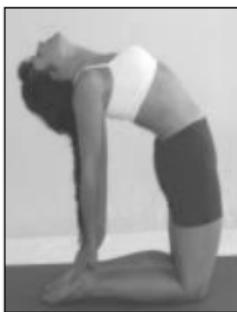
8. SNAKE



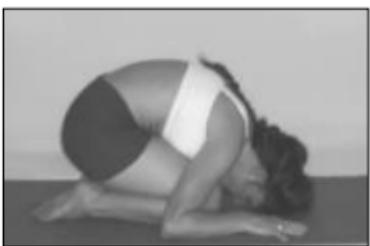
9. SUPERMAN



10. COBRA



11. CAMEL



12. CHILD



13. REVERSE TABLE



14. FISH



15. CORPSE



16. FIVE POINTED STAR



17. HALF FOLD



18. AIRPLANE 1



19. AIRPLANE 2



20. TRIANGLE



21. REVERSE TRIANGLE



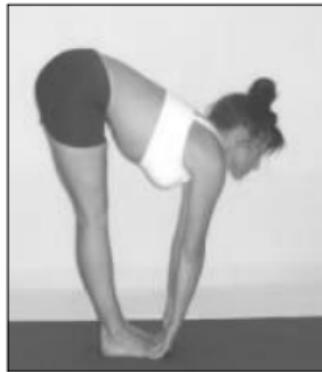
22. STANDING TRIANGLE
SPINAL ROTATION 1



23. STANDING TRIANGLE
SPINAL ROTATION 2



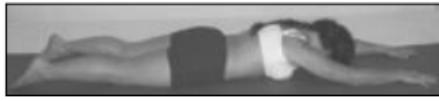
24. DOUBLE ANGLE



25. GORILLA



26. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



27. REVERSE CORPSE 1

WARRIOR/SIDE BEND SERIES



1. GAZE



2. CRESCENT MOON 1



3. CRESCENT MOON 2



4. WARRIOR I



5. WARRIOR 2



6. WARRIOR 3



7. TRIANGLE



8. HALF MOON LUNGE



9. PRAYER TWIST LUNGE



10. REVERSE TRIANGLE



11. STANDING TRIANGLE
SPINAL ROTATION 1



12. STANDING TRIANGLE
SPINAL ROTATION 2



13. FIVE POINTED STAR



14. GAZE

WHOLE BODY SERIES



1. GAZE



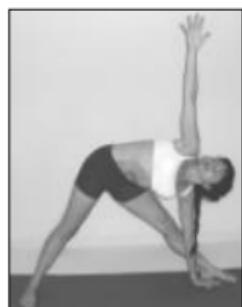
2. THUNDERBOLT



3. HALF MOON LUNGE



4. PRAYER TWIST LUNGE



5. TRIANGLE



6. DOWNWARD FACING DOG



7. UPWARD FACING DOG



8. SUPERMAN



9. HIGH PLANK



10. SIDE PLANK



11. REVERSE TABLE



12. SHOULDER STAND



13. BOAT 1



14. FISH



15. UNIVERSAL SPINAL TWIST 1



16. CORPSE

DEFINITIONS OF YOGIC TERMS

ASANA - physical position in space, the connection and movement of the physical body.

ASHTANGA - The eight paths in the journey of yoga, includes:

YAMA - Personal Values

NIYAMA - Commitments

ASANA - Physical Postures

PRANAYAMA - Energy Awareness through Breath

PRATYAHARA - Sensual Balance

DHARANA - Single-pointedness

DHAYANA - Awareness

SAMADHI - Contentment

AUM – OM - the vibrational energy resonating in every molecule in the universe sounding like the syllable OM or AUM - the feeling of oneness with the mind, body, and breath. Aum is the trinity of creation, sustenance, death, and the ultimate silence.

BANDHA - locks in the body where innervation in that specific area stimulates energy.

DHAYANA - the inner focus on a single-pointed thought.

GYAN MUDRA - finger posture lock which innervates the awareness center.

NAMASTE - a salutation to the spirit within all.

PRANA - the life force and energy within the breath.

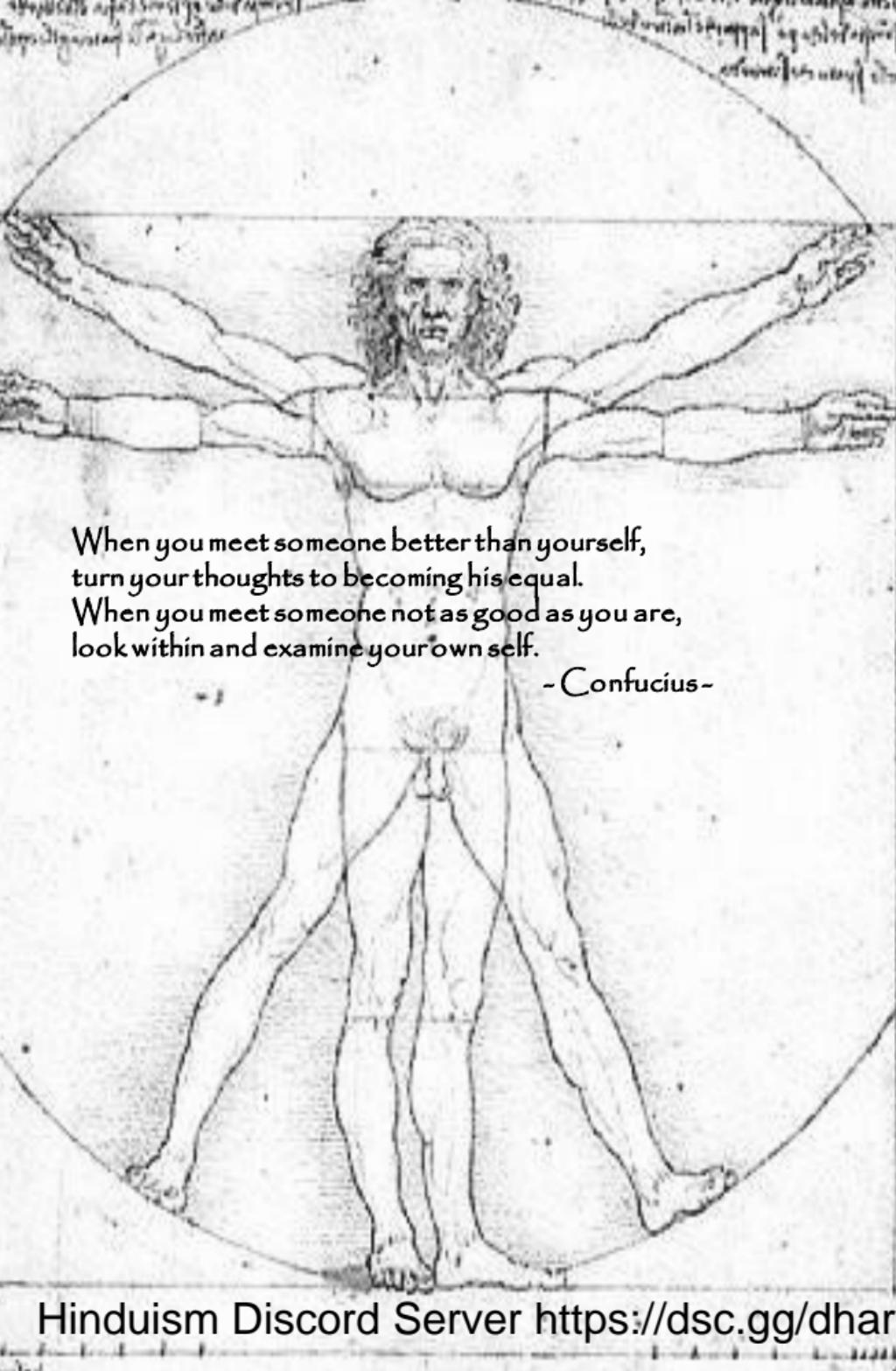
SHANTI - peace and tranquility.

TEN GATES - 2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils, 1 mouth, urinary and defecatory orifices, and the space on the crown of the head where the soul opens to the universe.

THIRD EYE - the space directly above the eyebrows, allows for intuitive focus and concentration.

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When you meet someone better than yourself,
turn your thoughts to becoming his equal.
When you meet someone not as good as you are,
look within and examine your own self.

-Confucius-



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
server)

WHAT THIS BOOK WILL DO FOR YOU?

Dr. Freedom and Leela have combined the ancient wisdom of the East with the scientific knowledge of the West to give YOU an integrated and coordinated approach to yoga. Practical techniques of yoga are described in a simple, safe, and scientific manner. Basic asanas: neutral, sitting, standing, lateral bending, rotation, flexion, extension, inversion, and combinations of these are introduced. To experience the best results, practice daily. It is more effective to practice yoga for 40 minutes daily, then to practice for 1½ hours twice a week.

For most people, yoga is simply a means to maintain health and well-being in an increasingly stressful society. In other cases, yoga practice has both physical and mental, therapeutic effects. Yoga is not a substitute for conventional medical care, but is very helpful in balancing the neuromuscular and endocrine systems which directly influence all other systems and organs of the body.

Regular yoga practice of asanas can improve and assist in: breathing, balance, circulation, concentration, confidence, digestion, excretion, energy levels, flexibility, focus, menstruation, mental dexterity, muscle tone, overall well being, patience, posture, range of motion, relaxation, sexuality, respiration, stability, stamina, strength, thought, and tone.

A regular asana, breathing, and meditation practice also helps to maintain the physical body in optimum condition, and promotes healing in an unhealthy body.

At first glance some of the asanas may appear to be simple exercises. Be absolutely aware that incorrect practice can easily result in complications. There are several different asanas discussed in this book. Find asanas that work for YOU, and practice them daily until positive changes manifest in the body.

What are waiting for? All you need to do is commit your mind, body, and breath to take you on an enhancing journey of health, joy, and contentment. Make a daily appointment with yourself and show up to enjoy the experience!