



Online Yoga Teacher Training

A magical approach to Yoga Teacher Training



Maggie Anderson
CYT, RMT, IET-MI, CSC, CPLC
Lincoln, RI 02864
MaggiesBliss.com

www.facebook.com/MaggiesBlisspage

"Follow Your Bliss. It's Your Spiritual Compass."



A Magical Approach Yoga Teaching Training.

Hello beautiful Souls!

Welcome to your **Maggie's Bliss magical at-home Yoga Teacher Training.**

I'm excited to begin this journey with you in learning and transforming together! I am always the student and sometimes the teacher.

THE DETAILS

Enclosed in your welcome email you will find the link and password to your classroom page where you'll have access to Maggie's Bliss YTT robust manual and links to Maggie's Bliss YTT **VIDEOS**, playable on your computer or smart phone & all filmed at my Rhode Island yoga studio space. Together they provide a complete education in magical yoga for the soul.

Your videos will be compiled online numerically weekly numbered classes. There are 30 classes total with the opportunity of a few extra free videos offered in your secret YTT Facebook group as inspiration arises. There are also several extra free videos on my main public YouTube page of meditations and yoga classes, some of which I will refer to during this program.

Please watch them at your own pace, though it is strongly suggested to watch at least one a week to keep up with the curriculum, stay sacred with your commitment to Self and not allow procrastination to set in. It will be a great idea to partner with a student or friend for your teaching practice, hands-on adjustments and teaching techniques described within. It's a great continuing education for your partner and for you.

When you are finished with all videos and required homework assignments, please complete and send me the "final" (last section in this manual) to maggieanderson7@yahoo.com. As a part of your final you are required to write and/or teach your unique one-hour yoga class. As an option, you can upload a video to YouTube.com, send me a video or do a live video in our private YTT Facebook group of you teaching your sample class. I will critique it for vocal quality, clarity of instructions and other important teacher dynamics.

If the final is satisfactory (I can tell you grasp the foundations of magical yoga, your 'perspective on all yoga styles') I will send you a pdf of your Maggie's Bliss Yoga Teaching Certificate. If not, I will discuss with you what areas I feel were lacking and send you alternate questions to work with.

Feel free to communicate with me via email or Facebook at any time. Enjoy diving deep into your Soul.

Namaste,
Maggie

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SECTIONS

CLICK AND GO

Within this manual I have sections, as noted below. You may click on the section below that you'd like to jump right to within this PDF for ease of use.

- *Syllabus, Homework, Agenda*
- *Introduction*
- *Teaching Yoga*
- *Gentle Warm-up Poses*
- *Individual Poses*
- *Seated & Resting Poses*
- *Balance Poses*
- *Mini-Vinyasa's*
- *Sequencing*
- *Anatomy, Back & Core*
- *Healing*
- *Chakras & The Energy Body*
- *Mudras*
- *Mantras, Chanting, Music*
- *Pranayama Breathwork*
- *Bandhas & Koshas*
- *Savasana*
- *Meditation*
- *Yoga for Anxiety & Depression*
- *Yoga Philosophy*
- *Yoga Business Tips*
- *Maggie's Bliss YTT Written Final*
- *A Final Note from me...*



Syllabus, Homework, Agenda



Syllabus & Teacher's Agenda

TEACHER TRAINING TABLE OF CONTENTS

Documents Related to Studio and Program Policy

1. Maggie's Bliss Yoga Teacher Training Policies and Guidelines*
2. 2017-2018 Tuition and Class Dates
3. Required Books and Props
4. Commitment to Pay Entire Tuition*
5. Maggie's Bliss Yoga Statement of Ethics*
6. Maggie's Bliss Yoga Teacher Training Code of Conduct
7. Homework Policy
8. Inclement Weather Policy
9. Class Make-up Policy

*Indicates material will be provided in duplicate. One copy to be signed and returned to the program director. Second copy to be kept in student files.

Documents Related to Course of Study

1. Syllabus
2. Target Dates

Documents Related to Homework Assignments*

1. Posture Worksheet
2. Posture Clinic description (Posture, Alignment Asana, Clinic)
3. Sun Salutation Assignment #1
4. Heart of Yoga Assignment #2
5. Living Your Yoga Assignment #3
6. Anatomy of the Spirit Assignment #4
7. Homework Assignment Sheet
8. Observation Guide
9. Student Teacher Reflection

*Assignments for **four linked posture** and **hour long class** teach-backs will be distributed when those assignments are introduced at a later date.

Sign-Off Sheets and Class Logs

1. 40 Asana Class Log (if choosing Online & In-Person combo certification)
2. Additional Class and Workshop Sign Off Sheet
3. Observation, Assisting and Student Teaching Log

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Payments

Teacher training course fees are non-refundable, non-transferable. There are no exceptions. You are required to pay in full even if you withdraw from the course. The only instance where a refund may be provided would be if the course was canceled by Maggie's Bliss Yoga & Wellness.

All payments are due before you are able to begin this program and receive access to all YTT Videos and private YTT Facebook group. Also, please note that there is a \$30 fee for returned checks. These policies are firm.

Training Resignation

We understand that sometimes life gets in the way and circumstances may prevent you from finishing the course. Any student who wishes to resign should do so in writing. Please send to: **Maggie Anderson, 25 Smith Street, Lincoln, RI 02864**. Please note that even if you withdraw, tuition must be paid in full. Since this is an online training, you will go at your own pace. If you choose to be reinstated into the program, there is no reinstatement fee. Please inform Maggie Anderson and get back on that horse again.

Class Attendance

Students are expected to attend all weekly classes to complete the required hours of study. If illness or an emergency arises and prevents a student from attending a class know that this is online and you can catch up. It's a good idea to keep up the pace of the program so that you do not end up procrastinating or seeing this as something you'll get to "eventually". It's a sacred learning for your Soul and, if you so choose, your career path.

Finishing the Program

Students are expected to follow the timeline guidelines in your orientation packet in order to complete the coursework in a timely manner. This will enable you to finish all coursework by within one year of your start date for certification. If choosing a combination ONLINE and IN-PERSON YTT certification option, all 40 asana classes should be completed within 9 months of start date so that you will have sufficient time to complete your observing, assisting and student teaching. Even if you are an ONLINE only student, it is expected that you continue to take classes so you progress on your teaching path and help you deepen your yoga practice.

If a student has not finished all requirements within one year of starting date this will cause a delay in your certification.



Tuition and Online Dates

CLASS DATES

Our structured classes will run for nine months from the day you begin. It's structured as a once a week class. It's an online program, so you have the option to finish it sooner or take a little longer. But I strongly suggest you stick with at least one video a week and homework assignment due dates. This way you have a goal to strive for and procrastination will not set in. See this time as your sacred time with Self to deepen your knowledge and wisdom in yoga, magic and healing. A complete schedule will be provided, upon purchase of this unique program that will we talk through during the orientation introductory video.

TUITION FOR ONLINE MAGGIE'S BLISS YTT: \$2,200

Payment in the amount of \$2,200 (checks made out to 'Margaret Anderson', cash, Cash App [maggieanderson7] or credit deposit via PayPal on MaggiesBliss.com or by checking the option at the bottom of this contract agreement where you have the option to process your payment right away) are due before the start of class. Please note, if using Paypal you will need to add 2% to all payments. Students can pay four monthly installments of \$550 each (the first being your required deposit to begin class). This payment plan is available after initial first payment deposit of \$550. Your non-refundable deposit of \$550 applies to your tuition; once received, you will be billed \$550 each month thereafter for 3 more months beginning one month after your deposit payment. To hold your spot, the non-refundable deposit of \$550 and the program contract are due before you can begin the program. The remaining tuition will be charged in \$550 increments due monthly till you reach the full tuition of \$2,200. Please note, you will lose access to future classes if you stop payment. Check the appropriate payment option below.

Deposits are non-refundable. Once signed up, Teacher Training fees are non-refundable and non-transferable. All payments will be due before the first orientation class in order to gain access to all videos as they become available. There is a \$30 fee for returned checks. There are additional fees for classes and workshops if choosing the online and in-person combination certification. Way to save money: Refer a friend who is also accepted into the program and paid in full (must be referred by you) and you save \$100 (only one discount per person).

Choose one of three options with this online training:

OPTION 1: ONLINE only Program (120-hr. Certification)

OPTION 2: ONLINE only w/proof of Reiki I (128-hr. Certification)

OPTION 3: ONLINE & IN-PERSON combination (200-hr. Certification)

Way to save money:

Refer a friend who is also accepted into the program and paid in full (must be referred by you) and you save \$100 (only one discount per person).

COMMITMENT TO PAY ENTIRE TUITION - NO REFUNDS PROVIDED

By making a deposit payment and/or payment in full, I have enrolled in the teacher training course provided by Margaret Anderson of Maggie's Bliss Yoga & Wellness and I agree to pay the entire required tuition. I agree that I am obligated to pay the entire tuition regardless of whether I complete the course. No refunds will be provided.

Name: _____ Sign Name: _____
[Print Student's Name]

Date: _____



Online Yoga Teacher Training with Maggie Anderson

Program Overview

In my Yoga teacher training course you will experience learning about yoga postures and philosophy. However, this training is so much more. You're going to find the magic and healing benefits of combining the elements and spirit into your practice at a very deep level. I've never seen a Yoga Teacher Training include this type of learning.

It's my intention to awaken you at all levels of your being. So yes, this is a different YTT than what you are used to, but it is the expression I have been magically drawn to and guided to share with all of you. If you are reading this, you just may be one of the many who wants to experience truth at a deeper level than you are right now. Yoga will take you there. Magical practices will take you there. Healing energies will take you there. But when you combine the three, it's a powerful mystical force to be reckoned with. My Magical practices, 4 Elements of the Soul Program, Healing methods and Yoga expertise are deeply embedded into this program. If you're looking for something different in deepening your practice within, this is the program for you. Are you being called?

YOGA

You'll learn yoga philosophy and several yoga postures as well as how to teach them. You'll have the knowledge to teach a Vinyasa Yoga class, Gentle Yoga class and Beginners Yoga class. This YTT forms the foundation for you to jump off from and dive into your own specialty or keep it eclectic. You will learn how to teach back to a class and/or to simply dive deeper into your own personal Yoga practice. I'm excited to offer one online Specialty class and three in-person only Specialty classes where you will learn from these amazing teachers: Online:

Donald Anderson (Yoga of Drumming); In-person only: **Anthony DiLuglio (Strength in Yoga),***
Christine Maguire (Assisting & Adjusting)* and **Michelle Connolly (Prenatal Yoga)***

MAGIC

Magic is embedded throughout the entire Yoga Teacher Training. We immerse into all the elements: Earth, Air, Fire and Water as well as Spirit with my **4 Elements of the Soul Program** and mystical knowledge. You'll learn how to smudge, create magical crystal grids with intention, create your own magical altar and dive deep into meditation and soul journeys to connect more deeply with your Soul. Your soul always knows the truth. As we immerse in this training you will learn more about yourself and connect more deeply to the Divine than ever before.

HEALING

To complete the three pillars of learning in this Yoga Teacher Training you will learn how to heal the self as well as others (if you so choose) through meditation as well as my own healing modality Divine Embrace. Option: You will become Reiki I attuned and certified. I will also offer Reiki II, Reiki Master IIIa and Reiki Master Teacher IIIb as options for you throughout the YTT if you feel drawn to deepen your healing abilities and open your crown chakra more. (Note: Reiki I is included in your Yoga Teacher Training fee. Reiki II, IIIa and IIIb are offered at an additional cost.)

Our structured classes will run for 9 months from the day you begin. It's structured as a once a week class. It's an online program, so you have the option to finish it sooner or take a little longer. But I strongly suggest you stick with at least one video a week and homework assignment due dates. See this time as your sacred time with Self to deepen your knowledge and wisdom in yoga, magic and healing. A complete schedule will be provided, upon purchase of this unique program that will we talk through during the orientation introductory video.

Program Requirements for Certification:

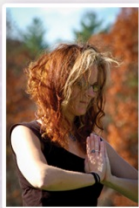
- Attend all video modules
- Attend 40 group yoga classes with Maggie or an approved teacher
- Attend 2 Pranayama and/or Meditation Classes
- Attend 1 Restorative/Yin/Svaroopa Yoga Class
- Attend 1 Singing Bowls Session or Kirtan
- 10 Student Teaching Classes (Karma Yoga)
- Sacred Reading List and Book Projects
- Final Exam; written and practical

Required Sacred Reading

- Hatha Yoga Illustrated by Brook Boon and Martin Kirk
- Yoga Anatomy by Leslie Kaminoff
- How I Found My True Inner Peace (Book 1) by Maggie Anderson
- Divine Embrace (Book 2) by Maggie Anderson
- The Heart of Yoga by T.K.V. Desikachar
- Living Your Yoga by Judith Lesater
- Anatomy of the Spirit by Caroline Myss

Investment: \$2,200

Full payment is required to receive full access to the online video program.



A teacher of teachers, Maggie Anderson, is known for her integrative, grounded approach to teaching Gentle and Vinyasa Yoga classes. Each are unique and fuse the divine energy of her experience as an Master Energy Healer, Certified Soul Coach and Psychic. Maggie is a Master Energy Healer and Certified Yoga Teacher and draws on over 16 years experience in yoga, philosophy, healing, magic and holistic coaching to provide a mystical open space for the processes of healing, awakening and transformation. She has trained in the Core Strength Vinyasa Flow methods and is a Certified teacher of Vinyasa flow, leading teacher trainings, workshops, energy healing and psychic readings sessions in person and online. Maggie regularly contributes free yoga & meditation videos and monthly Inspiring newsletters online.

Maggie Anderson, CYT, RMT, IET-MI, CSC & CPLC

Email to Schedule:

MaggieAnderson7@yahoo.com



Yoga Classes

Gentle Yoga
6-7:15p, Tue.'s

Vinyasa Flow
7:30p, Tue.'s

Gentle+Yoga Nidra
7:30p, Thurs.'s



To Register:

Complete and return the attached Application & Contract with your \$2,200 payment to:

Maggie Anderson
25 Smith St.
Lincoln, RI 02864

Payment Methods:

Check, Cash, Cash App or Paypal (For Paypal, securely taking credit cards, hit the donate button on MaggiesBliss.com. If using Paypal, you will need to add 2% to the cost.)



www.MaggiesBliss.com
www.facebook.com/MaggiesBlisspage



Online Yoga Teacher Training Contract

I understand that my **\$2,200** payment is non-refundable to hold my spot in Maggie's Bliss Yoga & Wellness Online Yoga Teacher Training. I understand that, if using Paypal, I must add 2% to all payments (**\$2,244** total). I understand if I choose to pay four monthly installments of **\$550** each (the first being your required initial deposit to begin class) that I agree to pay each payment on time in full. I understand this payment plan is available after initial first payment deposit of **\$550**. I understand my non-refundable deposit of **\$550** applies to your tuition; once received, I will be billed **\$550** each month thereafter for 3 more months beginning one month after your deposit payment. To hold your spot, the non-refundable deposit of **\$550** and the program contract are due before you can begin the program. I understand the remaining tuition will be charged in **\$550** increments due monthly till you reach the full tuition of **\$2,200**. I understand that I will lose access to future classes if I stop payments before my tuition is paid in full. Director of the program, Margaret Anderson, also referred to as Maggie Anderson, will use this money to update and provide me with videos, program manual, secure program vendors. I understand that there are additional fees for classes and workshops if choosing the 'Online and In-person Combination Maggie's Bliss Yoga Teacher Training Certification' option. I understand that the required **40** yoga classes, books, Singing Bowl Session, Kirtan, Restorative / Yin / Svaroopa Yoga Classes, Specialty Workshops as noted in Syllabus and Meditation(s) are at an additional cost not included in the tuition fee for this yoga teacher training and that the final certificate requires participation in person in these programs if choosing the full **200-hr.** yoga teacher training option. If Maggie Anderson cannot follow through with services for any reason on her end (ex. health related issues, family emergencies, need to cancel training, etc.) then my security deposit will be fully returned. If the program has begun and the full tuition has been submitted and there are any serious health/family emergency issues occurring for Margaret Anderson, I understand that a substitute teacher, approved by Margaret Anderson, will teach whatever segments of the training Maggie may need to miss due to this kind of emergency.

I understand that Maggie Anderson reserves the right to terminate me from the program for any reasons she feels are overly invasive to a group atmosphere or prove too clinical or dangerous for the training. I understand my money will not be returned if this happens. If Maggie Anderson feels that my behavior, inside or outside the training, is not in standing with her requirements to graduate I may not graduate. I understand that any make up work is my issue and I will need to pay and arrange to makeup hours of any in-person training hours missed. The makeup work must be approved by Maggie Anderson (or substitute teacher in the event of emergency). If Maggie Anderson has to cancel training for any reasons outside of weather or acts of God it is her responsibility to figure out an option for the makeup hours/work. I agree to hold aside the snow dates that are to be determined.

(Contract continued on next page)

I have permission from my doctor to participate in this program. I am signing that there are no major clinical, physical, mental or emotional concerns with participating in this program at all. By signing my name below I understand that I am participating in meditation techniques, yogic breathing techniques, and performing various Yoga postures and physical assists. If at any point I feel overexertion or fatigue, I will respect my own body's limitations and I will rest. I will also notify Maggie Anderson (or substitute instructor) of any injuries or mental limitations that would prevent me from understanding instruction. My signature verifies that I am physically, mentally & emotionally fit to participate in Yoga Teacher Training & Yoga classes and a licensed medical doctor/therapist (if needed) has cleared my physical/mental and emotional condition for this type of training. If I am actively in a treatment program of any sort I will notify Maggie Anderson (or substitute teacher if needed) of any changes in my treatment or recommendations from my treatment team/program. I fully agree to notify Maggie Anderson or any featured/substitute teacher of any changes in my medical/mental condition that might affect my safety or participation in any part of the training. If I am pregnant, or become pregnant, or am post-natal, my signature verifies that I am participating in Yoga teacher training & Yoga classes with my doctor's full approval.

By signing my name below, I acknowledge that participation in Yoga teacher training & Yoga classes exposes me to a possible risk of personal injury, accident, death, loss, cost or damage to my person or property. I am fully aware of this risk and I voluntarily assume the risk inherent in my participation in the Yoga teacher training & Yoga classes taught by Maggie Anderson, or any substitute/guest program teacher, or any other teacher/presenter in the Yoga Teacher Training (or Yoga classes). I hereby release Maggie Anderson/ Maggie's Bliss Yoga & Wellness/The Woods Yoga, or any substitute teacher/guest or featured teacher or any other persons who may teach in the training from any and all liability, negligence, or other claims, arising from, or in any way connected, with my participation in the Yoga Teacher Training & Yoga classes.

My signature further acknowledges that I release and indemnify Maggie Anderson/Maggie's Bliss Yoga & Wellness/The Woods Yoga (and any substitute teacher/guest teacher) from, and against, any and all such claims and liabilities, including attorneys' fees. I agree that any disagreement about this contract or any legal issues that arise before, for the duration and/or after the program will be dealt with through mediation and overseen by the judicial system in the State of Rhode Island. This waiver is binding on me, my heirs, my spouse, my children, my legal representatives, my successors and my assigns.

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (Home) _____ (Cell) _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Maggie Anderson
CYT, RMT, IET-MI, CSC, CPLC
Lincoln, RI 02864
MaggiesBliss.com

www.facebook.com/MaggiesBlisspage

"Follow Your Bliss. It's Your Spiritual Compass."



Online Yoga Teacher Training Application

Please fill out the below and turn in with the Contract and your \$2,200 payment in full or \$550 deposit.

Name: _____

Current Occupation: _____

Which one of the three options with this online training are you signing up for? Circle one:

OPTION 1: ONLINE only Program (120-hr. Certification)

OPTION 2: ONLINE only w/proof of Reiki I (128-hr. Certification)

OPTION 3: ONLINE & IN-PERSON combination (200-hr. Certification)

Do you believe in Healing and Magic?

Please attach a brief paragraph about yourself, your yoga background including the following:

1. When did you begin practicing Yoga?
2. What brought you to Yoga?
3. What style of Yoga do you practice?
4. Are you currently teaching yoga? If so, how long and where do you teach & what style?

Have you taken classes with Maggie Anderson or another instructor?

Do you have a special interest in any one area of yoga?

What brought you to this style of Yoga teacher training?

Do you hold any certificates or advanced degrees?

What is your personal intention for this YTT Program? What do you hope to take from this teaching? Is it perhaps to teach Yoga to others or to deepen your personal practice?

Are there any injuries or medical conditions of which we should be aware?

Please provide Emergency Contact Information:

Emergency Contact Name: _____ Phone: _____

Relation: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

MAGGIE'S BLISS STATEMENT OF ETHICS

In enrolling in Maggie's Bliss ONLINE Yoga Teacher Training Program, I agree to uphold the following standards of ethical behavior and conduct (both while a student in the program and after I graduate):

1. Uphold the integrity of my profession by conducting myself in a professional and conscientious manner.
2. Acknowledge the limitations of my skills and the scope of my practice and refer students to seek other instruction, advice or direction when appropriate.
3. Create and maintain a safe, sanitary and comfortable environment to practice yoga and conduct a class.
4. Encourage diversity by including all students regardless of race, creed, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation.
5. Respect the rights, dignity and privacy of all students.
6. Avoid words and actions that constitute sexual harassment of any kind, including overt and covert seductive speech or gestures.
7. Adhere to the traditional yoga principles as outlined in the Yamas and the Niyamas.
8. Abide by all local and national laws.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING CODE OF CONDUCT

Students in Maggie's Bliss are expected to treat one another and their instructors with kindness and respect (in-person or online). Gossip has no place in a mindful yoga practice and will not be tolerated as a part of this program. Students will, of course, encourage and support one another throughout the course of the program. However, it is important that each individual student concern themselves only with their own individual responsibilities in fulfilling the requirements of the course of study. Egos need to be checked at the door.

If a student has an issue with a particular assignment, class or workshop, he or she should speak to the director as soon as possible. The director will take every reasonable measure to respond to the issue with regard to the unique circumstances presented by the student. The resolution to that particular issue is a private matter between the student and the instructor. Such resolution applies only to the student in question and only for that particular issue. In no way should the resolution be seen as a precedent for other issues that may arise in the course of the program.

Through the years we have found that an environment of both openness and honesty is most conducive to both personal and educational growth.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING HOMEWORK POLICY

The homework assignments for the teacher training program have been carefully planned and scheduled by the instructors.

All assignments are to be type written. Please plan ahead to avoid technical difficulties.

Students are expected to come to class each week prepared to discuss reading assignments and ready to turn in all written assignments due for that class. Failure to complete assignments according to the timeline of the syllabus diminishes both your learning experience and the ability of the class to fully discuss a given topic.

Due dates for both reading and written assignments are clearly spelled out in the syllabus. Plan ahead and manage your time effectively.

All assignments are to be turned into the instructor on the assigned due date. If there are extenuating circumstances for an assignment not being completed by the due date, these must be discussed with the director of the program before the class meeting.

Repeated failure to turn in assignments by the required due date may result in the delay in the completion of the Maggie's Bliss Yoga Teacher Training Program and a delay in certification.

No student with outstanding written assignments will be allowed to begin the student teaching of the teacher training program.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING POSTURE CLINIC

We will be conducting our asana classes in a posture clinic format. Since this is an online YTT this will begin with honoring yourself and practicing teaching a few of the weekly assigned homework poses live either alone or teaching a friend. Learning by doing is one of the best ways to learn. Be prepared to teach back each of the poses you opted to write about in the posture clinic worksheets, which you are required to hand in as you get each of those weekly asana classes. Keeping up with your homework is critical to your deep immersion in yoga.

Become the "teacher" and another student will become the "model" or a pretend student. The "teacher" will instruct the "model" on how to come into the pose and then out of the pose, holding the pose in-between.

Each "teacher" will start his/her "model" in Tadasana (Mountain Pose) for standing poses or either Tadasana or Easy Pose for seated postures. While the "teacher" is bringing the "model" into the pose, he/she can discuss ways to modify and assist – if and only if he/she is comfortable with this.

If you have questions you can contact Maggie Anderson to offer help and guidance. You have the option to utilize the private YTT Facebook group feature to post questions, assignments and to get peer thoughts and feedback. The entire group has the option to then weigh in on the pose and discuss the benefits, contraindications, and modifications.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING POSTURE WORKSHEET

References: **Hatha Yoga Illustrated** and **Yoga Anatomy**. In order to get a full perspective on the pose, it is also suggested that you refer to **Yoga: Poetry if the Body** by Rodney Yee, MaggiesBliss.com/yoga/yogaposes, and/or yogajournal.com.

English Name:

Sanskrit Name:

Physical Benefits:

Mental/Emotional Benefits:

Contra-Indications:

Common Errors/Release Valves:

Assist/Modifications:

Write a paragraph describing how you can provide oral instructions guiding a class into the pose. In your narrative be sure to include at least one physical and one mental benefit of the pose. Be sure to consider alternate poses for poses with serious contraindications for those who are unable to participate. Be sure to provide adequate instruction for modification and clear cues about alignment. As you write your paragraph keep in mind how long the pose will be held. You have many benefits and oral cues to share in your class for any given pose. For poses that are to be done on both sides, consider dividing your information into "two servings". One serving for the left side of the pose and one for the right.



Maggie's Bliss Online YTT Yoga Class Log

Please bring this log with you to each Yoga class that you take. The teacher will sign your log at the end of class. **Please do not ask the teacher to sign off your log before class, as this is disruptive to the check-in process.**

Date Attended	Teacher Sign-off	Date Attended	Teacher Sign-off
1.		21.	
2.		22.	
3.		23.	
4.		24.	
5.		25.	
6.		26.	
7.		27.	
8.		28.	
9.		29.	
10.		30.	
11.		31.	
12.		32.	
13.		33.	
14.		34.	
15.		35.	
16.		36.	
17.		37.	
18.		38.	
19.		39.	
20.		40.	



Maggie's Bliss Online YTT 2 Yoga Class Assists

FIRST OF TWO

Teacher:

Style:

Location:

Date & Time:

Number of Students:

Age Range:

Condition of Students:

Opening of Class:

Class Theme:

Ending of class:

Environment:

Teacher available after class?

Overall feelings:

What would I have liked to have seen added or omitted from this class?



Maggie's Bliss Online YTT 4 Yoga Class Observes

FIRST OF FOUR

Teacher:

Style:

Location:

Date & Time:

Number of Students:

Age Range:

Condition of Students:

Opening of Class:

Class Theme:

Ending of class:

Environment:

Teacher available after class?

Overall feelings:

What would I have liked to have seen added or omitted from this class?



Maggie's Bliss Online YTT 10-Class Student Teaching Reflection

FIRST OF TEN

Style:

Location:

Date & Time:

Number of Students:

Age Range:

Condition of Students:

Opening of Class:

Class Theme:

How did I determine what I was going to teach today?

Any students with injuries or physical limitations:

Any challenges during teaching?

Did I feel I executed the class in the way in which I intended?

Overall feelings about how I taught the class:

What could I have done differently to improve the class?

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

CLASS DATES AND INFO:

Class will meet once a week. Videos will be filmed in Maggie's Bliss space in Lincoln,, RI. Please do your best as always to attend every class weekly to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

If you are local and would like the full 200-hr. YTT Certificate, students will be required to attend a minimum of 40 YOGA CLASSES at The Woods Yoga in Lincoln, RI. We recommend a minimum of two yoga classes a week to maximize your personal practice and teacher training experience. Starting after Class 4, students will be required to keep a personal practice journal whether you are local or not. After class 6, students will also be required to begin a five-minute daily minimum meditation practice and keep a journal notating their experience.

IF YOU ARE LOCAL AND WANT THE FULL 200-HR. YTT CERTIFICATION ADDITIONAL REQUIRED WORKSHOPS/CLASSES ARE REQUIRED IN PERSON (additional cost per class):

Reiki Level I – Healing is a critical pillar of this magical YTT. You are required to be at Reiki Level I (get certified for free with Maggie Anderson in Lincoln, RI or send in a copy of your certificate if you are already certified)

3 Specialty Workshops (Prenatal, Strength in Yoga and Art of Adjusting) – These three required Specialty Workshops will be at an additional fee of \$30 each. Please plan accordingly.

2 Pranayama and Meditation Classes – At location of your choice. We have a couple offerings at The Woods Yoga every week.

1 Yin, Restorative Yoga or Svaroopa Yoga – At location of your choice. **The Woods Yoga** has one Yin class weekly and **Time for You Yoga** in Cumberland, RI has many Svaroopa Yoga classes a week as a good recommendation.

1 Singing Bowl Session or Kirtan – At location of your choice. (Kirtan is a Sanskrit--ancient Indian language--word that means call and response chanting.)

We will do our best to find several options throughout the YTT for these required classes, if you are local, in case you are unable to find a studio offering these yourself.

2 Class Observations and 4 Class assists at a Studio location of your choice or, if local, at The Woods Yoga.

10 Karma Yoga Classes – Karma yoga is the practice of yogic service, which embodies the ideal of serving others without having an expectation of personal gain or reward. Teach 10 classes unpaid to Student Yoga Teacher.

All students are required to complete a final exam: Written and teach a 1-hour yoga class. You may provide a video online of yourself teaching or offer this in person. You may also choose to write out your full class if receiving the online certification.

MORE INFO TO KEEP IN MIND FOR THE 200-HR. CERTIFICATION OPTION ONLY:

Students will work with the teacher training staff to observe and assist classes, as well as absorb and assimilate all that they have learned about yoga and themselves in this transformational journey. Students will start their student teaching classes.

For full 200-hr. Certificate students must be local. Within 9 months, Students are expected to have completed their 40 yoga classes at The Woods Yoga (asana within video classes will not count).

Within one year of beginning Maggie's Bliss YTT, student are expected to have completed their online or in-person Yoga Teacher Training requirements in full, including student teaching. Certificates will be given out this month. Not completing the requirement within one year will result in a delay of your certification and late certificates will be awarded at the discretion of the TT staff. If it is deemed that you need to makeup or retake classes any in-person classes, you will need to do this at your own expense at the discretion of Maggie's Bliss.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Many of your assignments for the teacher training course will be week to week assignments. Below are 4 Homework Assignments that you will need to manage and complete (due the class week as noted in the syllabus). You can email me your assignments to MaggieAnderson7@yahoo.com. They are included in the syllabus and also outlined below. Please manage your time well and plan to begin reading the texts well before the date the assignment is due. If you wait until the last minute, you will not have time to properly digest and reflect upon what you read before completing the written portion of the assignment.

Homework Assignment #1

Practice the traditional Sun Salutation that was reviewed in class. Be prepared to lead the class in a Sun Salutation at the next class. All students will do this. Write a paragraph describing how you provide oral instructions guiding a class through a Sun Salutation. As you write the paragraph, be sure to include specific instructions about alignment.

Homework Assignment #2

Read and prepare for discussion: Chapters 1-5, 8-14 and pages 145-215 in *Heart of Yoga* and complete questions in homework packet.

Homework Assignment #3

Read *Living Your Yoga* by Judith Lasater

At the end of each chapter, she provides practice suggestions. Choose any one of those practice suggestions and engage it for at least one week. After following the practice suggestion, write a one page paper reflecting upon your experience doing so.

Homework Assignment#4

Read *Anatomy of the Spirit* and write a 1,000 word essay in response to the following: Pick a personal struggle you are having or have had and analyze it using the seven stages. Where are you now with the problem? How could the stages help you to heal?

REQUIRED SACRED READING LIST:

1. *How I Found My True Inner Peace (Book 1)* by Maggie Anderson
2. *Divine Embrace (Book 2)* by Maggie Anderson
3. *Hatha Yoga Illustrated* by Brook Boon and Martin Kirk
4. *Yoga Anatomy* by Leslie Kaminoff
5. *The Heart of Yoga* by T.K.V. Desikachar
6. *Living Your Yoga* by Judith Lesater
7. *Anatomy of the Spirit* by Caroline Myss

REQUIRED YOGA PROPS:

- Your Yoga Mat
- 1 bolster
- 2 Yoga Blocks
- 1 Yoga Blanket
- 1 Strap

OPTIONAL BOOKS:

1. *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* translated by Sri Swami Satchidananda
2. *Kriya Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and the Siddhas translation by M. Govindan (www.babaji.ca)
3. *The Bhagavad Gita: The Westerners Walkthrough* translation by Jack Hawley (or any translation of your choosing)

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

POTENTIAL CERTIFIED HOURS OPTIONS

You have one of 3 options with this online training:

OPTION 1: ONLINE only Program (120-hr. Certification)

OPTION 2: ONLINE only w/proof of Reiki I (128-hr. Certification)

OPTION 3: ONLINE & IN-PERSON combination (200-hr. Certification)

DESCRIPTION	HOURS
TOTAL ONLINE CLASS VIDEO HOURS	100
Total Homework Assignment Hours (Includes sacred reading & written '4 Elements of the Soul' Assignments)	20
Healing Immersion (Reiki I: Gives you 8 Hours Send Reiki I Certificate to receive these hours)	8
TOTAL HOURS FOR ONLINE YTT IF DOING IT ALL!	128
Class Observation (4 classes at The Woods Yoga)	5
Class Assists (2 classes at The Woods Yoga)	3
10 Student Teaching Classes (Karma Yoga)	10
40 Required Group Yoga Classes	50
2 Required Pranayama and/or Meditation Classes	2
1 Restorative/Yin/Svaroopa Yoga Class	1.5
1 Singing Bowl Session or Kirtan	2
In-person Workshops (Strength in Yoga with Anthony)	3
In-person Workshops (Art of Adjusting with Christine)	3
In-person Workshops (Prenatal Yoga with Michelle Connelly)	3
TOTAL HOURS FOR ONLINE & IN-PERSON YTT IF DOING IT ALL!	210.5

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SYLLABUS

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

Class 1 3 hours	Homework
<p>Welcome Orientation</p> <p>This class will provide a curriculum overview and a review of the learning objectives of the program as well as our teaching philosophy. Administrative matters will be tended to at this time.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read chapters 1-5 in <i>The Heart of Yoga</i> and get started on completing the written Homework assignment #2 included in your homework packet (due week 9). 2. Read about Sun Salutations in the Asana Section of your manual. 3. Read the information which corresponds to the Sun Salutation postures A –K below. (HYI = Hatha Yoga Illustrated, YA = Yoga Anatomy) 4. Complete Posture Clinic Worksheet for ONE asana A–K listed below. 5. Prepare to teach back at least one of the asanas below: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Mountain (Tadasana): HYI pp.28-30; YA p.34-39 B. Upward Salute (Urdhva Hastasana): In YTT Manual C. Standing backbend D. Standing Forward Bend (Uttanasana): HYI pp.138-139; YA pp. 42-43 A. Crescent/High Lunge (Anjaneyasana): HYI pp. 38-39 E. Plank Pose (Phalakasana) – In Manual F. Four-Limbed Staff Pose (Chaturanga Dandasana): HYI pp.86-87, YA pp.182-183 G. Cobra (Bhujangasana): HYI pp.100-101; YA pp. 164-167 H. Upward Facing Dog (Urdva Mukha Svasana): pp. 102-103 HYI; YA pp. 178-179 I. Downward Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svasana): HYI pp. 30-31; YA pp. 176-177 J. Chair Pose (Utkatasana): HYI pp. 46-47; YA 40-41 K. Warrior I (Virabhadrasana I): HYI pp. 40-41; YA pp. 54-56
Class 2 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Sun Salutation & Vinyasa Flow</p> <p>Introduction to Sun Salutations (as outlined in the Sun Salutation hand-out in your manual and books).</p> <p>In this class we will review in detail the following traditional Hatha Yoga Sun Salutation poses: Mountain, Upward Salute, standing backbend, forward fold, lunge, plank, cobra/upward dog, downward facing dog. Students will practice Surya Namaskar A and B. Students will practice with their online partner or will self teaching back a pose for our first online posture clinic.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete written Sun Salutation Assignment #1 in homework packet. 2. All students should prepare to teach back a traditional Sun Salutation A and Sun Salutation B 3. Read pages 210-216 in <i>Hatha Yoga Illustrated (HYI)</i> covering Sun Salutation variations. 4. Read the following in your manual and books which correspond to poses A-I below. Poses J and K will be covered in class. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Malasana (Garland): HYI pp.150-151; YA PP.76-77 B. Alanasana (Crescent lunge): HYI pp.38-39 C. Balasana (Child's pose): HYI pp. 194-195; YA pp.122-123 D. Wide Angle/Standing Fwd Bend (Prasarita Padottanasana): HYI pp.48-49; YA pp.7 E. Pyramid/Intense Fwd Stretch (Parsvottanasana): HYI pp.54-55; YA pp. 70-73 F. Warrior I (Virabhadrasana I): HYI pp.40-41; YA pp.. 54-56 G. Warrior II (Virabhadrasana II): HYI pp. 36-37; YA pp.58-60 H. Warrior III (Virabhadrasana III): HYI pp. 70-71; YA pp. 60-61 I. Five pointed star (Trikonasana): In Manual J. Half Standing Forward Bend Lengthening Spine (Ardha Uttanasana): In Manual K. Chair (Utkatasana): HYI pp.46-47; YA pp.40-41
Class 3 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Modified Sun Salutation, Gentle & Vinyasa Flow</p> <p>Class to begin with class warm-up with Surya Namaskar A. This class will provide review of the Moon Salutation as well as further study of Surya Namaskar B. We will, also, go over Gentle Poses. Additionally, students will review Warrior I and Chair pose in detail in our online Posture Clinic (Please note: These poses were assigned in our first class).</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the information that corresponds to poses A-J listed below. 2. Complete a Posture Clinic Worksheet for 3 of the standing poses A-J listed below. 3. Prepare to teach back poses A-I for the next class with online partner or self for our online Posture Clinic. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Triangle (Trikonasana): HYI pp. 34-35; YA pp.66-67 B. Humble Warrior/Bound Warrior (Baddha Virabhadrasana): HYI pp.52-53 C. Extended Side Angle (Utthitra Parsvakonasana): HYI pp. 32-33 ;YA PP.62-63 D. Warrior I (Virabhadrasana I): HYI pp.40-41; YA pp.. 54-56 E. Warrior II (Virabhadrasana II): HYI pp. 36-37; YA pp.58-60 F. Warrior III (Virabhadrasana III): HYI pp. 70-71; YA pp. 60-61 G. Pyramid/Intense Fwd Stretch (Parsvottanasana): HYI pp.54-55; YA pp. 70-73 H. Wide Angle/Standing Fwd Bend (Prasarita Padottanasana): HYI pp.48-49; YA pp.7 I. Half Moon (Ardha Chandrasana): HYI pp.74-75 J. Crescent/High Lunge (Anjaneyasana): HYI pp. 38-39

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SYLLABUS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

Class 4 3 hours	Homework
<p>Intro to Standing Postures and Personal Practice Journals</p> <p>Class will begin further practice in a warm-up with Sun Salutation B. This class will provide a study of several standing postures. Study will include a discussion of modifications, benefits, anatomy of the pose, possible ways to use props, etc.</p> <p>Poses for study are: Triangle (I'rikonasana), Warriors (Virabhadrasana and variations), Side Angle (Parsva konasana), Ext. Side Angel (Utthita Parsvakonasana), Pyramid/Intense Fwd Stretch (Parsvottanasana), Wide Angle/Standing Fwd Bend (Prasarita Padottanasana), Half Moon (Ardha Chandrasana), and Crescent/High Lunge (Anjaneyasana).</p> <p>An online Posture Clinic will be conducted as part of the study. Students will teach back one standing pose with an online partner or with self to get in the practice. Finally students will be provided with an introduction to the Personal Practice Journal.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read Chapter 6 and 7 in The Heart of Yoga. 2. Read sections in YTT manual on Meditation and Pranayama/Yogic Breathing. 3. Read sections on Meditation and Pranayama/Yogic Breathing in HYI book (pp. 21-26 and pp. 12-18). 4. Write in Personal Practice Journal.
<p>Class 5 3.5 hours</p> <p>Meditation and Pranayama</p> <p>Tonight we will focus on learning and practicing several Meditation and Pranayama/Yogic Breathing techniques, such as: Dirgha (3-part breath), Nadi Sodhana (Alternate Nostril Breathing), Sitali (Cooling Breath), Ujjayi breath (Ocean Breath), Breath of Fire, Kabalabati and Bhastrika Breathing, Full Wave breathing, Holotropic Breathing. Class will end with meditation to linked meditation below and introduction Meditation Journal.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the following pages which correspond to the revolved postures A-C below. 2. Complete a Posture Clinic Worksheet for 2 of the standing poses A-C listed below. 3. Prepare to teach back ALL poses A-C. Select, at least one for you to teach back to a pretend class with your online partner or self. Additional revolved poses will be covered in class. 4. Write in Personal Practice Journal <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Revolved Half Moon (Parivritta Ardha Chandrasana): HYI pp.66-67 B. Revolved Side Angle (Parivritta Parsvakonasana): HYI pp. 42-43 YA pp. 64-65 C. Revolved Triangle (Parivritta Trikonasana): HYI pp.44-45 YA pp. 68-69 5. Write in Meditation Journal.
<p>Class 6 3.5 hours</p> <p>Revolved Standing Postures</p> <p>This class will begin with a Sun Salutation warm-up led by Teacher. Following warm-up, class will provide a study of several Revolved Standing Postures. Study will include a discussion of modifications, benefits, anatomy of the pose, possible ways to use props, etc. Poses to be discussed include Revolved Crescent Lunge, Rev. Triangle/Pyramid, Rev. Chair, Rev. Half Moon, Rev. Ext. Side angle, and others that instructor will select. A online Posture Clinic will be conducted as part of the study. Students practice teaching back one revolved standing pose in the online Posture Clinic with a partner or with self to get in the practice.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the two classes from now (Class 8).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the following pages which correspond to balance postures A-E listed below. 2. Prepare Posture Clinic Worksheet sheet for 2 of the balance poses A-E. 3. Prepare to teach back all poses A-E. Select, at least one for you to teach back to a pretend class with your online partner or self. 4. Write in Personal Practice Journal <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Tree (Vrksasana): HYA pp.60-61; YA pp. 46-49. B. Eagle (Gardudasana): HYA pp. 58-59; YA pp. 50-51 C. Warrior III (Virbhadrasana IIII): HYI pp. 70-71 YA pp. 60-61 D. Dancers (Naturanjanasana): HYA pp.72-72; YA pp.52-53 E. Standing Big Toe/Outstretched Leg (Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana): HYA pp.68-69;YA pp. 44-45

REMINDER

Homework Assignment #2 is Due Week 9.
Read and prepare for discussion:
Chapters 8-14 and pages 145-215 in
Heart of Yoga and answer questions from
homework packet from chapters 1-5.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SYLLABUS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

Class 7 3 hours	Homework
<p>4 Elements of the Soul Program – Session 1 As your Certified Soul Coach® I create a safe space within which you can listen to the inner messages from your soul. Through this 4 Elements of the Soul Program you will discover your authentic self, and begin to realize the meaning of your life.</p> <p>Discover Your Authentic Self. Anyone can do it! In this Program we will meet once every 7 weeks for the duration of the YTT program all while you go through and process the weekly 4 Elements of the Soul Program.</p> <p>You will be able to contact me individually anytime throughout the program for personal coaching discussions and in our secret Facebook groups. This includes weekly emails, 5 meetings (meet once every 7 weeks during the YTT program), 28-week manual, ideas on materials for exercises.</p> <p>Session 1: Weeks 1-7 are devoted to the element of Air and is associated with Mental clearing.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the following pages which correspond to balance postures A-E listed below. 2. Prepare Posture Clinic Worksheet sheet for 2 of the balance poses A-E. 3. Prepare to teach back all poses A-E to a pretend class with your online partner or self. 4. Write in Personal Practice Journal 5. Write in Meditation Journal <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Tree (Vrksasana): HYA pp.60-61; YA pp. 46-493. B. Eagle (Gardudasana): HYA pp. 58-59; YA pp. 50-51 C. Warrior III (Virbhadrasana IIII): HYI pp. 70-71 YA pp. 60-61 D. Dancers (Naturanjasana): HYA pp.72-72; YA pp.52-53 E. Standing Big Toe/Outstretched Leg (Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana): HYA pp.68-69;YA pp. 44-45 6. For the next 7 weeks, work with weekly mini <i>Element of Air</i> meditations as often as desired. Practice the level you are comfortable with from the exercises provided each week.
Class 8 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Balance Postures/Explanation of Homework Assignments #3 and #4 This class will provide a study of balance postures. Study will include a discussion of modifications, benefits, anatomy of the pose, possible ways to use props, etc. Poses to be discussed include Vrksasana (Tree), Gardudasana (Eagle), Virbhadrasana III (Warrior III), Natranjasana (Dancer) and Uttihita Hasta Padangusthasana (standing outstretched leg): An asana lab will be conducted as part of the study. Students will teach back one balance pose in Posture Clinic.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read Chapters 8-14 AND Page 145-215 in the <i>Heart of Yoga</i>. 2. Read Chakra and Yoga Philosophy sections in the YTT manual. (The Chakra section in <i>Divine Embrace</i>, pgs. 118-153 has similar information but dives deeper.) 3. Read Chapter 6 in Divine Embrace (specifically Ascension/Kundalini Symptoms). 4. Write in Personal Practice Journal. 5. Write in Meditation Journal. 6. Homework Assignment #2 due at the next class.

REMINDER

Homework Assignment #3 is due Week 16. Students should read *Living Your Yoga* by Judith Lasater. At the end of each chapter, she provides practice suggestions. Choose any one of those practice suggestions and engage it for at least one week. After following the practice suggestion, write a one page paper reflecting upon your experience doing so.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SYLLABUS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

Class 9 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Yoga Psychology I: Chakras Class will provide a lecture and discussion about Chakras – elements, colors, sounds and which emotions and physical postures/conditions are related to each Chakra. We will conclude with a Chakra Meditation (and if time a Charka asana sequence)</p> <p>Homework assignment #2 is due today. Students have read and prepared for discussion: Chapters 1-5, 8-14 and pages 145-215 in <i>Heart of Yoga</i>.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read the following pages which correspond to the seated posture A–F below. Poses G and H will be covered in class. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Dandasana (Staff/Stick pose): HYI pp. 170-171; YA pp. 100-101 Padmasana (Lotus): HYI pp. 156-157; YA pp. 79-81 Sidhasana (Easy Seat Pose): HYI pp. 176-177; YA pp. 79-81 Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle/Seated Goddess): YA pp. 92-95 Janu Sirsasana (Head-to-Knee Forward Bend Pose): HYI pp. 140-141; YA pp. 84-87 Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend/Forward Fold): HYI pp. 136-137; YA pp. 82-83 Thread the Needle Spinal Balance Prepare Posture Clinic Worksheet for 3 of seated postures A-F. Prepare to teach back all poses A-F to a pretend class with your online partner or self. Write in Personal Posture Journal Write in Meditation Journal
Class 10 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Intro to Seated Poses This class will provide an introduction to seated postures. Study will include a discussion of modifications, benefits, anatomy of the pose, possible ways to use props, etc. Poses to be discussed include Dandasana (Staff Pose), Padmasana (Lotus), Sidhasana (Easy Seat Pose), Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle/Seated Goddess Pose), Janu Sirsasana (Head-to-Knee Pose), Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend/Forward Fold), Thread the Needle and Spinal Balance.</p> <p>A online Posture Clinic will be conducted as part of the study. Students will teach back one seated pose to a pretend class with your online partner or self.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read the following pages which correspond to the additional seated postures, seated revolved postures and prone postures A–N below. Prepare Posture Clinic Worksheet for three of the poses A–N below. Be prepared to teach back ALL poses A–O with online partner or self. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Upavistha Konasana (Wide Leg Forward Bend/Open Angel Pose): HYI pp. 144-145; YA pp. 90-91 Gomukhasana (cow face): HYI pp. 168-169; YA pp. 102-103 Navasana (Boat): HYI pp. 64-65; YA pp. 116-117 Parsva Upavistha Konasana (side Open Angle Bend): HYI pp. 146-147; YA Eka Pada Rajakapotasana (Pigeon): HYI pp. 118-120 Virasana (Hero): HYI pp. 162-163 Bidalsana (Cat & Cow): HYI pp. 116-117 Balasana (Child's Pose): HYI pp. 194-195; YA pp. 122-123 Bharadvajasana I (Simple Sitting Twist): HYI pp. 126-127 Bharadvajasana II (Bound Half Lotus Twist): YA pp. 79-81 Ardha Matsyendrasana (Half Lord of the Fishes): YA pp. 96-99 Parighasana (Gate): HYI pp. 50-52; YA pp. 130-131 Jathra Parivritti (Reclining Belly Twist): YA pp. 156-157 Parsva Balasana (Thread the Needle/Spinal Twist) Spinal Rolls/Moving Cats Write in Personal Practice Journal Write in Meditation Journal

REMINDER

Homework Assignment #3 is due Week 16.

Students should read *Living Your Yoga* by Judith Lasater. At the end of each chapter, she provides practice suggestions. Choose any one of those practice suggestions and engage it for at least one week. After following the practice suggestion, write a one page paper reflecting upon your experience doing so.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SYLLABUS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

Class 11 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Seated Postures (continued), Seated Revolved Postures and Prone Postures</p> <p>This class will provide a continuation of the study of seated postures. Study will include a discussion of modifications, benefits, anatomy of the pose, possible ways to use props. Poses to be studied include: Navasana (Boat), Parsva Upavistha Konasana (Side Open Angle Bend), Upavishta Konasana (Wide Leg Forward Bend), Gomukasana (Cow Face), Eka Pada Rajakapotasana (Pigeon), Matsyendrasana (Spinal Twist), Spinal Rolls, Virasana (Hero), Bidalasana (Cat & Cow Poses), Balasana (Child's pose). An online Posture Clinic will be conducted as a part of the study. Students will teach back one seated pose to their online partner or self.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read the following pages which correspond to the inversion posture A–D and study postures E & F below. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sarvangasana (Shoulder Stand): HYI pp. 90-91 Halasana (Plow Pose): HYI pp. 92-93 Viparita Kareani (Legs-Up-the-Wall): HYI pp. 94-95 Sirasana (Headstand): HYI pp. 96-97 Adho Mukha Vrksasana (Handstand) https://www.yogajournal.com/poses/handstand (Watch Video) Rabbit Pose: In Manual Prepare Posture Worksheet for 3 of seated postures A-D. Please note, you do not need to prepare to each back all of the poses for our online Posture Clinic. Due to the specific care and attention to the spine needed in teaching of inversion poses, these poses will be studied during our group online Posture Clinic. Write in Personal Posture Journal Write in Meditation Journal
Class 12 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Inversions</p> <p>In this class Students will learn variations of Headstand and Handstand, using the wall and props. Teacher training students will also learn how to assist and get students properly into an inversion pose whether or not he or she feels comfortable doing the pose. Instructor will demo and each student should take time to practice the poses with a partner and preferably with an experienced teacher for headstand and handstand. Students to work on the poses with online partner or self (Headstand and Handstand optional in teaching). Poses to be covered in this class will include: Rabbit Pose, Sarvangasana (Shoulder Stand), Halasana (Plow Pose), Viparita Karani (Legs-Up-the-Wall), Sirasana (Headstand), Adho Mukha Vrksasana (Handstand).</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read the following pages which correspond to the Backbend/Arm balance poses A-I below: Prepare Posture Clinic Worksheet for two of the poses A-I below. Please note, you do not need to prepare to each back all of the poses for our Posture Clinic. Due to the specific care and attention to the spine needed in teaching backbend poses these poses will be studied during our group online Posture Clinic. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose): HYI pp. 106-107 Ustrasana (Camel): HYI pp. 104-105 Salabasana (Locust): HYI pp. 110-111; YA pp. 170-171 Urdva Dhanusasana (Bow Pose): HYI pp. 108-109; YA pp. 168-169 Dhanurasana (Wheel): HYI pp. 112-113 Purvottanasana (Reverse Plank/Reverse Table/Desk): HYI pp. 78-79 Matseyasana (Fish Pose): HYI pp. 114-116 Vasisthasana (Lateral Inclined Plane/Side Plank): HYI 80-81 Bakasana (Crow/Crane): HYI pp. 82-83 ***Read Back & Core section in your YTT Manual*** Write in Personal Practice Journal Write in Meditation Journal
Class 13 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Backbends/Arm Balances/Prone Postures Continued</p> <p>This class will include study and discussion of modifications, benefits and anatomy of the backbend poses. Additionally, possible ways to use props and ways to assist students in backbend postures will be covered. The backbend postures will be studied through our group online Posture Clinic as well as online partner work and self practice. Poses to be studied include: Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose), Ustrasana (Camel), Urdhva Dhanurasana (Wheel), Matseyasana (Fish Pose), Purvottanasana (Reverse Plank/Reverse Table/Desk), Salabhasana (Locust), Adho Mukha Dhanusasana (Bow Pose), Vasisthasana (Lateral Inclined Plane/Side Plank) and Bakasana (Crow/Crane).</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Write in Personal Practice Journal Write in Meditation Journal Homework Assignment #3 (<i>Living Your Yoga</i> due Class #16)

REMINDER

Homework Assignment #4 is Due Week 20. Read *Anatomy of the Spirit* and write 1,000 word essay in response to the following: Pick a personal struggle you are having or have had and analyze it using the seven stages. Where are you now with the problem? How could the stages help you to heal?

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SYLLABUS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

Class 14 3 hours	Homework
<p>4 Elements of the Soul Program – Session 2 Weeks 8-14 are devoted to the element of Water and is associated with Emotional clearing.</p> <p>Remember, you can contact me individually anytime throughout the program for personal coaching discussions.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write in Personal Practice Journal 2. Write in Meditation Journal 3. For the next 7 weeks, work with weekly mini <i>Element of Water</i> meditations as often as desired. Practice the level you are comfortable with from the exercises provided each week. 4. Read Chapters 2, 3, 5 & 6 in <i>Divine Embrace</i>. 5. Homework Assignment #3 (<i>Living Your Yoga</i> due Week 16)
Class 15 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Magic I: How I Found My True Inner Peace/Divine Embrace This class will include...Magic & Healing: healing through meditation, breathing,, Ritual, surrender discussion in <i>Divine Embrace</i> and other topics in <i>Divine Embrace</i>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dark Night of the Soul, Shadow... 2. Ascension 3. Levels to Source 4. Core Beliefs 5. Ego & Dark Night 6. Kundalini 7. Success through Symptoms 	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read in the YTT manual about Chakras, Bandhas, Koshas and Mantras 2. Homework Assignment #3 (<i>Living Your Yoga</i> due next week) 3. Write in Personal Practice Journal 4. Write in Meditation Journal
Class 16 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>8 Limbs of Yoga, Yamas and Niyamas, Mantras and Yoga Ethics This class will include a discussion of the 8 Limbs of Yoga, Yamas and Niyamas. Homework assignment #3 is due today. We will have a Yoga Ethics Book discussion of <i>Living Your Yoga</i> by Judith Lasater and students will hand in their Homework written assignment #3. Students should have book and papers with them and be prepared to discuss.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read in manual about Chakras, Mudras, Bandhas and Koshas 2. Write in Personal Practice Journal 3. Write in Meditation Journal
Class 17 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Yoga Psychology II: Chakras, Koshas, Mudras and Bandhas Instructor will lead class through an experiential chakra class. Class will discuss Body Awareness and the Five Koshas of the Body and how this relates to the Chakras. Class will also include a discussion on Bandhas, Mudras and explanation of what they are. Class to practice engaging mudras and “locks.” Class will be led through a meditation to experience your Five Sheaths.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read in manual Sequencing section. 2. Read Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 in <i>Divine Embrace</i>. 3. Write in Personal Practice Journal 4. Write in Meditation Journal
Class 18 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Magic II: How I Found My True Inner Peace/Divine Embrace This class will include Magic & Healing: Reiki, Ho'oponopono, Sungazing, Vogel Healing tutorial, Ritual, Essence and a Divine Embrace Healing Modality Session and offering to others. We will also continue further discussion of Class 15's discussion if we didn't have time to complete it at that time.</p>	<p>All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read in manual Sequencing section. 2. Write in Personal Practice Journal 3. Write in Meditation Journal 4. Homework Assignment #4 is due Week 20 (<i>Anatomy of the Spirit</i>).

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SYLLABUS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

Class 19 2 hours Posture Sequencing This class will include an introduction to posture sequencing. We will discuss the techniques for linking postures together and practice creating yoga sequences.	Homework All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class. 1. Prepare a standing sequence with four postures linked together 2. Complete written/film assignment for 4 linked postures. Write-up or film yourself doing a 4-pose Linked Posture Teach-Back. 3. Write in Personal Practice Journal 4. Write in Meditation Journal 5. Homework Assignment #4 (<i>Anatomy of the Spirit</i> paper due next week.)
Class 20 3.5 hours Teach-Backs for Linked Postures/Anatomy of the Spirit Discussion Select students will have submitted their video teach back of four postures linked together and hand in accompanying written assignment. Video and/or written option. Class will also have a discussion of <i>Anatomy of the Spirit</i> and students will hand in their Homework written assignment #4.	Homework All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class. 1. Read Gentle Warm-Up poses and Savasana sections in YTT Manual 2. Write in Personal Practice Journal 3. Write in Meditation Journal 4. Extending Homework 1-2 more weeks to write up or Film yourself doing a Linked Posture Teach-Back. If you did not get this in for this week, you have one more week to submit your write-up or video.
Class 21 3.5 hours 4 Elements of the Soul Program – Session 3 Weeks 15-21 are devoted to the element of Fire and is associated with the shadow and connecting with your Spiritual self. Remember, you can contact me individually anytime throughout the program for personal coaching discussions.	Homework All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class. 1. Read Warm-Ups and Savasana sections in Manual 2. Write in Personal Practice Journal 3. Write in Meditation Journal 4. Extending Homework one week to write up or Film yourself doing a Linked Posture Teach-Back. If you did not get this in for this week, you have one more week to submit your write-up or video. 5. For the next 7 weeks, work with weekly mini <i>Element of Fire</i> meditations as often as desired. Practice the level you are comfortable with from the exercises provided each week.
Class 22 3.5 hours Linked Posture Teach-Backs/Warm-ups/Savasana Class will have sent in their written or filmed homework of teaching back four linked postures. Students will study and discuss warm-ups, including: head rolls, hip openers, shoulder rolls, wrists, ankles, gentle forward folds, etc. After warm-ups, discussion will turn to guided Savasana and instructions on teaching back a guided Savasana (Yoga Nidra). Additionally, instructions on teaching back a beginner class and for teaching an all-levels flow class will be provided. Finally, we will discuss the next phase: observing and assisting. Students to take note on all aspects. If time permits, class will end with Savasana Practice. We will go over your one-hour Full Class Teach back assignment.	Homework All reading and assignments to be completed for the next class. 1. Work on teaching back one-hour long class. Film yourself teaching a one-hour class and/or turn in your written version your one-hour long class. If filming you have the additional benefit of submitting your video to our secret Facebook group to hear constructive feedback from all students in the program. 2. Write in Personal Practice Journal 3. Write in Meditation Journal
Class 23 3.5 hours February 24, 2018 Yoga of Drumming Guest Speaker: Donald Anderson Instructor will provide handouts and other information related to today's Yoga of Drumming workshop..	Homework Homework through the end of the Maggie's Bliss YTT Program. 1. Work on teaching back one-hour long class. Film yourself teaching a one-hour class and/or turn in your written version your one-hour long class. 2. All students to work on written assignments. 3. Write in Personal Practice Journal 4. Write in Meditation Journal

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SYLLABUS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

Class 24 3 hours	Homework
<p>Full Class Teach-Backs</p> <p>This week we offer any students who are comfortable submitting a public video of the full one-hour class teach-back. If so, I will offer the YouTube link at that time to our students or you may submit it to our secret Facebook group for feedback from Teacher and/or all students. (You may still submit it privately to teacher only.) You may choose to have this week to write or film your one-hour class teach back assignment. You may choose styles from: Beginners, Gentle, or an all-levels Vinyasa flow class assignment.</p> <p>This class we will also discuss further any ideas or questions that have come up throughout the program.</p>	<p>Homework through the end of the Maggie's Bliss YTT Program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work on teaching back one-hour long class (if not complete). Film yourself teaching a one-hour class and/or turn in your written version your one-hour long class. If filming you have the additional benefit of submitting your video to our secret Facebook group to hear constructive feedback from all students in the program. 2. All students to work on written assignments. 3. Write in Personal Practice Journal 4. Write in Meditation Journal
Class 25 2 hours	Homework
<p>Singing Bowls Session Don & Maggie Anderson for Djember Drumming & Singing Bowl Sound Bath</p>	<p>Homework through the end of the Maggie's Bliss YTT Program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work on teaching back one-hour long class (if not complete). Film yourself teaching a one-hour class and/or turn in your written version your one-hour long class. If filming you have the additional benefit of submitting your video to our secret Facebook group to hear constructive feedback from all students in the program. 2. All students to work on written assignments. 3. Write in Personal Practice Journal 4. Write in Meditation Journal
Class 26 3.5 hours	Homework
<p>Restorative Yoga/Yoga for Anxiety & Depression</p> <p>We will discussion the benefits of Yoga for Anxiety and Depression. We will discuss teaching a Restorative Class and, if time permits, teacher will lead you through a restorative yoga class.</p>	<p>Homework through the end of the Maggie's Bliss YTT Program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work on teaching back one-hour long class (if not complete). Film yourself teaching a one-hour class and/or turn in your written version your one-hour long class. If filming you have the additional benefit of submitting your video to our secret Facebook group to hear constructive feedback from all students in the program. 2. Write in Personal Practice Journal 3. Write in Meditation Journal
Class 27 3 hours	Homework
<p>Magic III: Divine Healing/Complete Altar Set up</p> <p>Continuation of the Divine Embrace Sacred Energy Awakening Process, Healing Modality Session Divine Healing with Divine Embrace Sacred Awakening Healing method. Discuss full altar set up, crystal gridding, Feng Shui Altars, etc.</p>	<p>Homework through the end of the Maggie's Bliss YTT Program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work on teaching back one-hour long class (if not complete). Film yourself teaching a one-hour class and/or turn in your written version your one-hour long class. If filming you have the additional benefit of submitting your video to our secret Facebook group to hear constructive feedback from all students in the program. 2. Write in Personal Practice Journal 3. Write in Meditation Journal
Class 28 3.5 hours April 7, 2018	Homework
<p>4 Elements of the Soul Program – Session 4</p> <p>Weeks 22-28 are devoted to the element of Earth and is associated with physical aspects of your life.</p> <p>Remember, you can contact me individually anytime throughout the program for personal coaching discussions.</p>	<p>Homework through the end of the Maggie's Bliss YTT Program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All students to work on handing in any assignments not submitted yet. 2. Write in Personal Practice Journal 3. Write in Meditation Journal 4. For the next 7 weeks, work with weekly mini <i>Element of Earth</i> meditations as often as desired. Practice the level you are comfortable with from the exercises provided each week. 5. Continue to work on teaching back one-hour long class (if not complete). Film yourself teaching a one-hour class and/or turn in your written version your one-hour long class. If filming you have the additional benefit of submitting your video to our secret Facebook group to hear constructive feedback from all students in the program. 6. Also, work on your very own expression of a Magical Altar Set-up. Show off your altar set up by sending a picture, video or as a written description of your altar set up. Share a meditation ritual of your own. Optional: Share online in our secret Facebook group.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING SYLLABUS (continued...)

Classes videos should be watched, at minimum, once a week to achieve the fullest benefit of a deep immersion into Yoga, Magic and Healing.

Class 29 8 hours	Homework
Yoga Business & Tips and Maggie's Bliss YTT Final Business of Yoga information and tips. Discussion of Maggie's Bliss YTT Final. (Journaling assignment.)	Homework through the end of the Maggie's Bliss YTT Program. 1. All students to work on handing in any assignments not submitted yet. 2. Write in Personal Practice Journal 3. Write in Meditation Journal 4. Continue to work on teaching back one-hour long class (if not complete). Film yourself teaching a one-hour class and/or turn in your written version your one-hour long class. If filming you have the additional benefit of submitting your video to our secret Facebook group to hear constructive feedback from all students in the program. 5. Also, work on your very own expression of a Magical Altar Set-up. Show off your altar set up by sending a picture, video or as a written description of your altar set up. Share a meditation ritual of your own. Optional: Share online in our secret Facebook group.
Class 30 8 hours June 9, 2018	Homework
4 Elements of the Soul Program Quest 4 Elements of the Soul Program – Session 5 (Final Timeline exercise and Quest Soul Journey.)	All students assignments must be submitted by the end of one year of starting this YTT program or this will delay your yoga teacher training certificate.

“May You See the Sacred, Hear the Invisible and Know the Divine.”

~ Maggie Anderson

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

Sun Salutation – Written Homework Assignment #1

Practice the traditional Sun Salutation that was reviewed in class.

Be prepared to lead a class in a Sun Salutation at the next class.

Write a paragraph describing how you provide oral instructions guiding a class through a Sun Salutation. As you write the paragraph, be sure to include specific instructions about alignment.

You may choose to take your pretend class, partner or actual class through the Vinyasa on the left or the right side. It is not necessary to write out the sun salutation for both sides.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

The Heart of Yoga – Written Homework Assignment #2

Please read chapters 1-5 of *The Heart of Yoga* by T.K.V. Desikachar and answer the following questions:

1. In the first chapter Desikachar offers several different interpretations of the word "yoga". Which interpretation holds the most meaning for you and why?
2. In the second chapter Desikachar describes four branches of avidya: ashmita, raga, dvesa, abhinivesa. Which of these four branches do you perceive as the greatest obstacle to your achieving vidya? Why?
3. Consider the information presented in chapter 3 and briefly explain the following quotation "...Much more important than outer manifestations (of an asana) is the way we feel the postures and the breath." (pg. 17 Heart of Yoga)
4. Briefly explain the following quotation: "The starting point for the (asana) practice is the condition of our entire being at that present moment." (pg. 25 Heart of Yoga)
5. Why is it not a good idea to begin a practice with backbends and twists?
6. What is the purpose of a counter pose?
7. What is the benefit of practicing a pose dynamically before holding it?
8. Briefly outline the principles of a good yoga practice and the principles of breath.
9. What purpose does rest serve in a yoga practice?
10. Explain the purposes of practicing variations of an asana.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

Living Your Yoga – Written Homework Assignment #3

Read *Living Your Yoga* by Judith Lasater

At the end of each chapter, she provides practice suggestions. Choose any one of those practice suggestions and engage it for at least one week. After following the practice suggestion, write a one page paper reflecting upon your experience doing so.

MAGGIE'S BLISS YOGA TEACHER TRAINING WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

Anatomy of the Spirit – Written Homework Assignment #4

Read *Anatomy of the Spirit* and write a 1,000 word essay in response to the following:

Pick a personal struggle you are having or have had and analyze it using the seven stages. Where are you now with the problem? How could the stages help you to heal?



Introduction



3 Pillars

Magic | Yoga | Healing

In my Yoga teacher training course you will experience learning about yoga postures, Vinyasa sequencing and philosophy. However, this training is so much more. You're going to find the magic and healing benefits of combining the elements and spirit into your practice at a very deep level. I've never seen a Yoga Teacher Training include this type of learning.

It's my intention to awaken you at all levels of your being. So yes, this is a different YTT than what you are used to, but it is the expression I have been magically drawn to and guided to share with all of you. If you are reading this, you just may be one of the many who wants to experience truth at a deeper level than you are right now. Yoga will take you there. Magical practices will take you there. Healing energies will take you there. But when you combine the three, it's a powerful mystical force to be reckoned with.

My Magical practices, 4 Elements of the Soul Program, Healing methods and Yoga expertise are deeply embedded into this program. If you're looking for something unique in deepening your practice within, this is the program for you. Are you being called?

In my YTT you'll learn from my three pillars: Yoga, Magic and Healing. What you'll notice is that Yoga IS Magic and Healing; Magic is embedded in Healing and Yoga; and Healing is found in both Yoga and Magic. They all blend and flow together. You can't have one without the other. As you transcend in your yoga practice you come to this awareness. A common theme among ALL three pillars is meditation. Throughout the program we will practice and talk about the importance of a dedicated meditation practice.

If you look into the deeper practice of yoga, it's not just postures. It's not just breathing/pranayama. It's not just meditation. It encompasses so much more. It's a deeply blissful, mystical experience that brings Magic and Healing to your whole being for the end result of a Divine Marriage (Divine Feminine and Masculine together) to reach Enlightenment.

YOGA

You'll learn yoga philosophy and several yoga postures as well as how to teach them. You'll have the knowledge to teach a Vinyasa Yoga class, Gentle Yoga class and Beginners Yoga class. This YTT forms the foundation for you to jump off from and dive into your own specialty or keep it eclectic. You will learn how to teach back to a class and/or to simply dive deeper into your own personal Yoga practice.

MAGIC

Magic will be embedded throughout the entire Yoga Teacher Training. We immerse into all the elements: Earth, Air, Fire and Water as well as Spirit with my 4 Elements of the Soul Program and mystical knowledge. You'll learn how to smudge, create magical crystal grids with intention, create your own magical altar and dive deep into meditation and soul journeys to connect more deeply with your Soul. Your soul always knows the truth. As we immerse in this training you will learn more about yourself and connect more deeply to the Divine than ever before.

HEALING

To complete the three pillars of learning in this Yoga Teacher Training you will learn how to heal the self as well as others (if you so choose) through meditation, Reiki, Ho'oponopono as well as my own healing modality Divine Embrace. You will have the option to become Reiki I attuned and certified. Option for Online YTT: If you are local, I will also offer Reiki II, Reiki Master IIIa and Reiki Master Teacher IIIb as options for you throughout the YTT if you feel drawn to deepen your healing abilities and open your crown chakra more. (Note: Reiki I is included in your Yoga Teacher Training fee. Reiki II, IIIa and IIIb are offered at an additional cost.)

Get up and Move

Movement, breath and sound are powerful ways that work together in clearing energy blockages and stagnant mental and emotional energy from the mind, body and soul.

Our bodies were made to move! Movement allows our bodies to flow and revitalizes our entire system! The blood and oxygen flows more smoothly. Our joints need to open up and loosen in order for energy to flow through easily. This assists us in our awakenings tremendously. Movement allows our bodies to release that which would have remained stagnant. The energy flows! Be aware of your body and the messages you receive from it. As you move and release what comes up in the moment, it no longer manifests in the body as sickness or dis-ease. As you stretch and move, you release old stored up, pushed down emotions and stagnant energy that is locked away in our body; prior experiences that we may not have fully released or processed. Emotions such as sadness, anxiety, anger, frustration and fear are all locked into the body when we don't allow these to be naturally processed in the present moment. When we move we may notice emotions coming up for final release. It's truly an energetic release as well as a physical one. Pure magic occurs and we realize moving is what is innate within us.

When I originally decided to finally dedicate my life to exercises daily, I hadn't realized that I was also contributing to my spiritual goals. I realize the power of this divine decision now. The Divine took over for me. Gone were those lazy days of overeating and complacency. I worked on shedding pounds and raising my vibrations unaware that the two were integrated. Movement releases tension and karma that is held within you.

There's more. Moving while visualizing is truly very powerful indeed. Be aware of the body as you flow through this sacred process. Move it if you feel the desire to do so. I've found it helpful to be sure my body is stretched out with all the kinks worked through. Move each joint (Neck, shoulders, hips, spine, knees and ankles) in circular motions one at a time. Be aware of the flow of energy. But most importantly just move your body. I feel our divine connection is through our Body, Mind and Soul. And to truly feel that connection we need to move our body, breathe and connect to the Divine through energy and meditation. Knowing that as we allow our body to move and come into a stillness for meditation it's accomplished with more ease than if we had simply just tried to meditate without allowing the energy to be released from the body through movement.

Dancing is a powerful connection to the Source within you. As you dance you are moving your body and feeling a rhythm deep within your soul. You need not worry about perfect choreography for soul dancing. Just move your body however you enjoy. Playing trance dance music or any music that feels uplifting to your soul is strongly recommended. As you do this you are free. When you move your body, you forget the world and you remember yourself. You remember you are graceful, beautiful, and strong. And you always have been! You remember your true divine nature. You remember your connection and therefore feel it in a higher way. You raise your vibrations as you dance! Free your mind. Free your body. Free your soul.

The movement of your choice may be walking, aerobics, yoga, dance, Tai Chi, Qi Gong exercise, bicycling, drumming, strength training, stretch, etc. and a combination of everything! My Husband's drum sessions are a full cardio routine for him! Try to choose something that moves your entire body if you can. Whatever your choice as long as you are moving your body, it is receiving benefits that go beyond physical improvements. Amazing connections are made easier with movement.

There is a myth by many that you need to practice yoga in order to have a Kundalini awakening. You don't need to practice yoga for Divine (Shakti) connections to happen. But, yes, Yoga will assist with this goal along with other practices. Yoga has been found in eastern religions to truly smooth out the Kundalini process. Yoga brings a mind-body connection. Not only this, but the tension release in the muscles assists in clearing karma. I highly recommend experiencing yoga asanas and all forms of yoga in its highest spiritual form. I've heard many stories of those with a raging Kundalini using Yoga to smooth

out the process. These people find yoga beneficial for the physical aspects of Kundalini awakenings as well as the emotional and mental upheavals. As you move and breathe you are brought to a higher place within yourself where you are the Divine and nothing else can touch this place.

I love doing yoga. It feels so good for my mind, body and soul! Yoga means “union” and is a way of releasing the mind to just Be. The goal of yoga is self awareness. Yoga involves breathing, physical body movements and states of awareness that naturally evolve as you progress. I recommend any healthy form of body movement daily. I find this to be an imperative part to connecting with the Divine. As I move and breathe my body remains healthy and my joints and meridians are cleared of blockages. We are all ascending and we are all raising our vibrations to the higher frequencies in conjunction with the Divine Mother Earth. You will be drawn to do different things that keep you in line with your path. Yoga is a beautiful option for moving your body and activating your light body! So, too, are Tai Chi and Qi Gong. The energy is incorporated in with breath and movement. The energy powerfully builds and emanates with these options. These are amazing and beautiful moving meditations. Just allow, be and see what flows your way. We are all unique, so we will all have unique methods that will work for us.

I’ve made some observations of the aerobic workout I practice. The workouts of my choice are Denise Austin’s aerobic workouts and Chalene’s *Turbo Fire*. Denise and Chalene’s workouts are my joy in exercising. Their unique workouts are upbeat with beautiful energy and pure joy. They are infused with multi-dimensional movements for us multi-dimensional beings. They both integrate the right and left brain together with movements that go to the left and the right, up and down. Your body is constantly changing and moving. The workouts are filled with sports moves, dance moves, kickboxing, Tai Chi, Pilates, Yoga and stretching. The breath goes from fast in and out to slow and easy. These bear striking resemblance the yogic Breath of Fire and Long Deep Breathing techniques. Movement and breath are extremely important for our soul and honoring our divine physical bodies. Moving and stretching allows our joints to loosen up so energy can flow through much easier. I now enjoy working out daily after my rituals of energy and meditation. These I do right when I wake up in the morning before the rest of my day begins. I am centered and focused.

Walking is one of the easiest, and most often discussed, as the highest benefit throughout your Kundalini awakening. Not only is walking an excellent grounding technique, it also assists with your physical body in moving parts that are not usually used. Walking requires breathing and you can even do rhythmic breathing while walking for different benefits depending on your goals. (Check out the Pranayama Section in this manual. I share the yogic Breath of Fire exercise that you may want to try while walking.) I remember a few years ago where for at least a 4 months stretch I was doing my usual morning workout, an extra workout at night and walking at least three miles a day, five or more days a week. I realize now how intense that was. I have read other ascension people having walking many more miles every day. There are inner levels of releasing and processing going on just as you simply walk. Walking truly does benefit the mind, body and soul.

Dance! Dancing any way that feels good to our body allows our right brain to integrate into our logical left brain more and release pent up energies, feeling free! Release! Release! Release! Rhythm is inherent in each of us. You know this just by watching a toddler start to move to the beat of a song playing. We are meant to move our bodies free. I have my own Joy dance I like to do every day. Just by taking a few minutes every day I lift my spirits. Sometimes I have to do my joy dance more than once, but it’s worth it to let out all the energy that builds up; especially if the energy that built up brought you to a negative or lower vibration mood. Get up and dance! Lift your arms up, move your legs and be free. You can do this in the bathroom at work too! Don’t forget to smile at yourself in the mirror before you leave the bathroom. And remember it’s impossible to stay in a bad mood when your arms are lifted high in the air and your face is up and smiling! They have done studies to prove this. So give it a shot! It’s happiness you are bringing to you even more. Yay!

There is another way to move that is so simple, it sounds silly. It’s Energy shaking. Kim Engh brought this to me and I LOVE IT! This is a beautiful Qi Gong method that Kim Engh shared during a seminar I attended that removes residue and that ick energy from your body. She said during her

awakening process she was doing this daily or several times a day. And I'm finding that I'm doing this every day this week and it's really helping me a lot. It's removed a lot of blockages and energy needing to be releasing.

Start with Shaking your hand fast and furious. Then your hand and arm and then hand, upper arm and should. Then do the same on the other side. And move to your feet. Start with your left foot shaking vigorously. Then shake your foot, and knee. And then the whole leg. Move to the other side. Then bring your arms and legs and whole body into shaking up and down, slow at first and picking up the pace into almost jumping. Start shaking your head a bit too. Then get really into it and jump up and down, arms up high and shaking. Really let go. The Letting go is the most important part of this too. Let loose! Let it all go! Then stick your tongue way out and say, "Blaaaaaah" to the air around you. Do this three times or however many times you want. Shake it, shake it, shake it! When you feel like you've really released and let go of a lot, stop. Observe your body. Stand straight and strong, arms and legs straight and activated in Mountain pose (feet hip width apart flat on the floor, back elongated, head is pulling up as if an energy is assisting it in reaching the sky). Feel the beautiful numbness and tingling sensations in your body. Feel the hum in your body when you've completed a shaking session. Feel the aliveness that you are. Close your eyes and breathe into this beautiful sensation.

Movement and body language speak. Our physical body position sends messages to our brains. When you hold your body in an upright and powerful position you feel good and send that message to your brain. Likewise, if you are in a weak body position you send that message to your brain.

Try this body exercise. Stand up, feet equally placed on the floor together, hold your hands up high and smile. How do you feel? Now put your hands down, frown, corners at your mouth turned down, slouch your shoulders and rest on one hip. Now how do you feel? Okay, now hands back up, breathing in and smiling. Try to feel down or angry. It's downright impossible isn't it? Put your hands back down, frown, slouch and balance on one hip. Try to feel happy or ecstatic. Pretty hard to do right? Finish this exercise with your hands back up, smiling and breathing. Jump for joy! Stand strong, feeling good, strong, a child of the universe. Our physical body position sends messages to our subconscious. Shifting our body can shift our consciousness. Carry yourself as if you were a sacred vessel, an incredible life force energy flowing through every cell of your body. Because you are!

Find your "Joy" body position. Find your happy body position. Find your love body position. Learn it, use it, modify it and reuse it daily! Use your body to bring you into alignment with the feeling you are to manifest. If you are slouching with your head down it is hard to be in an uplifting joy-filled mood, that you so desire to manifest. Bring your body into alignment by raising your head up high, lifting your arms to the Universe and honoring yourself! By doing this (and there have been studies) you are bringing your body into alignment with higher vibrating emotions and it's impossible to feel down. If you do this daily, you bring yourself and your subconscious into DAILY habits of feeling this emotion to the point where you will consistently attract the positive emotions you are wanting to manifest. "Acting as if" is assisting greatly just by using your body! I jump up and down daily and feel utter complete JOY. Since starting this I have felt happier and more joyful and attract more joy-filled experiences and I know this is one of the many things I have done that assisted this in happening. I brought my vibrations in alignment with bringing this to me now!

No matter where you are, YOU can feel good! You deserve to feel good, no matter what others are feeling, no matter what the conditioning or beliefs are. You are meant to feel good. Do not resist good feelings! No more! What you resist persists. You will attract negative experiences if you stay in negative body positions that enhance negative moods, so change your body position. Be in your loving power! Embrace positive happy emotions. If you feel like smiling, smile! Keep telling yourself daily that your life is blessed now!

It's been proven scientifically that our body's chemistry gets addicted to emotion. So even if we don't like feeling down, we will keep doing things to attract that emotion because we are

addicted. (What the bleep helps explain this.) There are no victims only volunteers. Create receptor sites to get addicted to feeling good! We get used to our comfort zones, so start moving and release those comfort zones and fire up new receptors in our brain to train our subconscious to create experiences to keep that emotion going. Make joy a comfort zone! Again use your body to shift your emotional state.

They've done tests on split personalities. One personality could have an allergic reaction to bees and one would not. One might have diabetes and one would not. As the personality changes the blood work changes in the person. There is power in identity. Some would rather die than not be in alignment with identity. So start to shift your consciousness through meditation, visuals, movement, breath, sound, touch, etc. Bring your consciousness to higher vibrations and move into a new reality of miracles.

Yoga IS

by Maggie Anderson

Yoga is not just my passion, but my life. It's a big part of my calling. Yoga is hard to explain in one word and yet so simple. Most people who know me know that I live yoga as much as I can! I teach yoga four times a week and practice even more than that (not just the physical asana practice but all forms – 8 limbs – of yoga). And even right now I had been guided to begin create my very own 200-hr. Yoga Flow Teacher Training, as well as this ONLINE version!

"Descatura said in ancient texts the word yogi means one whose spine is full of energy."

"It's not out there, it's in you." ~ Shakti Flow with Rod Stryker

I started practicing yoga when I began my weight loss journey over 13 years ago. The more I practiced the more yoga I desired. I couldn't and still can't get enough. :)

Yoga is Namaste. Yoga is sublime. Through my dedicated yoga practice, I am able to handle life with more grace, flow and ease. Through yoga we can heal ourselves physically, but also just as important mentally, emotionally and spiritual. As I practice yoga I get deeper into my true self; ripping away the layers that no longer serve me – obtaining a deeper connection to Source/God.

Yoga's natural side effects are alleviating stress and anxiety while providing unlimited physical benefits to the body including shedding those unwanted pounds. Yoga's goal is to assist you in aligning with the true essence that you are. Along the way you will notice more peace and a calm that comes from within in any situation. You realize you are living yoga every moment of your life.

For many who begin yoga, it starts as a physical attraction to become more limber and feel more calm. The other "side effects" of yoga may slowly creep in on a person and before you know it they are not just obtaining their initial reason for practicing but they are BEING more connected; FEELING more free, kind, loving and loved. Life becomes more manageable. It can come at you in subtle ways or it might take ahold of you the very first time you practice. Yoga to me is magical and so very natural.

Yoga is connection. Connection to the Earth and the Self, as well as the divine connection to the cosmic consciousness. Yoga Asana is the physical practice of yoga; the movement portion of yoga that many of us are well aware of. Asana yoga is the doorway into a deeper connection.

As we flow through life accumulating toxins, Yoga provides the detox our bodies need. Yoga removes these from our bodies naturally. Yoga also removes the toxicity of the mind. Our mind thoughts, if left unchecked, can become a disease. Stress, anxiety, depression and a general sense of unease rests within us

as we allow our mind thoughts to take hold of our very existence. Yoga brings space and freedom back where there seemed to be no room for before.

As I said, many people begin yoga to assist them with physical issues but then as they practice, there is an opening – an awakening. Amazing. This is not just exercise. It is only one limb of the 8 limbs of yoga. You will see if you choose to practice. Doing yoga provides freedom. Space is created in yoga to BE. Magic occurs as you focus, breathe consciously, gaze deeply, go inward, create space and ultimate freedom.

All stress comes from a disconnection from Self; from Source. You may start out doing the physical practice of yoga and even meditation for your health, to relieve stress or shed a few pounds, but it's ultimately a disconnected feeling that draws you to yoga even subconsciously – to reconnect once again to your Soul; your Source and/or God.

Life can feel like such a rollercoaster and practicing yoga can bring you down from always feeling like you are in that whirlwind! Life becomes balanced and manageable. Karendayal's from Bliss Life Yoga has a saying I love, "Life happens. Life in the flow."

We learn over time that nobody can solve our problems, but someone can guide you how to solve the problem. You may receive guidance through a teacher, a guru or even strangers that you run into every day. As we practice yoga we learn that the more we know, the less we truly know. Every day I am reminded how much I truly do not know; a very humbling experience.

Yoga teaches me to be present. To just live for being and enjoying life as it is right NOW. Not ten minutes from now, no five days ago, but right now. We are taught to get out of our heads, to release worries and fears of the past or the future and to only live for this very moment. Presence.

"Lead me from untruth to truth, lead me from darkness to light." ~ Buddha's

Through yoga we are reminded that we do have a dark side as well as a light side. We are not to repress the dark side, but embrace that side of ourSelf. We are the yin and the yang. We ultimately cleanse the dark stuff we hold inside. We shine the light on this. We must make friends with dark side. Both positive and negative balance out the whole. Daily practice refines and improves our inner vision to see ourSelf more clearly. We no longer need to run from fears. Face them and say I'm not running from you anymore. So much is in our heads, so much dark is only in our heads, self-doubt judgment betrayal. Yoga grounds the body so that the light and dark sides of ourselves become clear. So much is truly untrue. But as we diligently practice we are able to find the middle ground and walk our centered balanced line in life. We gain balance in centered lightheartedness. We can have harmony in both light and dark.

"Yoga tells us that the world is actually a projection of our own thoughts and we can modify our inner world to manifest into our outer world." When our inside realm is at peace and in harmony, our outer world shines this projection back at us. ~ David, Jiva Mukti Yoga co-founder

Through yoga we learn observation. We can observe our world and see what part that is in us is begin reflected back to us. We can then see what part of us needs modification or adjustment in order to have our outer reality reflect back to us the peace, happiness and love we so greatly desire and deserve.

Yoga is already inside of you. Happiness is there. Yoga helps you peel away the onion layers to get to the core. To freedom. The deepest Divine connection to the Ultimate Light Source.

Come out of wanting and back into acceptance and Joy. A yogi or yogini can turn any situation into bliss. That is a yogi.

“Yoga is being now. Ultimate yoga is meditation. Just BE. Yoga is love. "Love is the light that dissolves all walls between souls." ~ Paramahansa Yogananda

Through a dedicated practice of all forms of yoga we can participate in the world with a sense of freedom, unaffected from trauma, depression, anger, etc. The freedom is balance in both. Below I wanted to take the opportunity to go deeper and explain all forms of yoga – the 8 Limbs of yoga – which is also an excerpt from my book *Divine Embrace*.

8 Limbs of Yoga

So much activity and anxiety exists in the world. So much can be relieved from practicing all forms of yoga. Yoga is not just the physical asana practice but encompasses many elements for a mind, body and soul connection. In ancient Yoga traditions they were aware of the transformation of the body as inevitable and set up a beautiful complete practice of yoga called the 8 limbs of yoga. I'll explain in brief the 8 limbs of yoga. By following these 8 limbs of yoga you are consciously preparing your body for the Kundalini awakening process that follows. This builds up your physical body, your mental body and spiritual body's with prana and the necessary energy to withstand and go through the inevitable changes that will occur once Kundalini awakens. Yoga provides mental, physical and spiritual benefits. It's an all-around balanced practice (sadhana).

The eight limbs of yoga are described in short as follows:

1. **Yama:** Universal morality or restraint (outside ourselves with others). Both the Yama's and Niyama's have five characteristics, rules or laws that are considered the ten disciplines of yoga. Yama's five characteristics of moral behaviors towards others are as follows:
 - Ahimsa – Compassion for all living things
 - Satya – Commitment to Truthfulness
 - Asteya – Non-stealing
 - Brahmacharya – Sense control
 - Aparigraha – Neutralizing the desire to acquire and hoard wealth
2. **Niyama:** Personal observances or discipline (inside ourselves). Nyama's five inner moral guidelines for oneself are:
 - Sauca – Purity
 - Santosa – Contentment
 - Tapas – Disciplines use of our energy
 - Svadhyaya – Self study
 - Isvarapranidhana – Celebration of the Spiritual
3. **Asanas:** Body postures
4. **Pranayama:** Practice of breathing exercises and control of prana
5. **Pratyahara:** Control of the senses or withdrawal. A non-attachment so that the world is not a distraction to the inner self.
6. **Dharana:** Concentration and cultivating inner perceptual awareness. The ability to focus on something uninterrupted by external or internal distractions.
7. **Dhyana:** Devotion, Meditation on the Divine. Building upon Dharana so that the focus is no longer on one thing but all-encompassing.
8. **Samadhi:** Ecstasy, bliss, Union with the Divine. This builds upon Dhyana to transcendence or enlightenment.

I find it intriguing that what I have included in my books *How I Found My True Inner Peace*, and *Divine Embrace* as guidelines that have worked for me and as my offering to assist you in a smooth transition to awakening to full self-realization, is very much in line and similar with the 8 limbs of yoga.

Of course I frame it in a more modern way with funny quirks of my own self. It is after all my expression that I offer. I am rather happy to have found this out after having written this book series. It is a true testament that we are One with the Divine and connections are happening at deep levels. When you start to connect within yourself, and may have already, you will see and feel the deep connection deep inside. You will receive those synchronicities and signs to help you along.

The 8 limbs of yoga truly are wise. This ancient wisdom offers us the knowledge that may have seemed hidden but has been here all along. The ancient yogi's came to this knowledge. As have I, you too will come to this wisdom from within even if you don't have the guidance of the 8 limbs themselves. Suddenly, it all makes sense and you are there. They help you through and allow you to realize it does balance out and you will naturally evolve as we all will.

"Descatura said in ancient texts the word yogi means one who's spine is full of energy."

"It's not out there, it's in you." ~ Shakti Flow with Rod Stryker

A recent Divine Cosmic Message I channeled is very appropriate to the melding of movement, breathwork, energy and spirit during these ascension times. It's all connected. This is about finding your heart connection through gratitude, movement and allowing. Today four guides come in to heal your energetic heart center: ArchAngel Michael, your Twin Flame, Kwan Yin and my 5D guide, Blue.



We begin in gratitude. As I stare at the sun during its safe hours this morning I am filled up and say thank you many times. My heart overflows in love with each thank you I say with true authenticity. "My cupeth runneth over." I feel Archangel Michael. I feel truth. I thank you for sun. Thank you for the light. Thank you for all. Gratitude and appreciation is a high vibration that allows us to move out of lower frequencies and attract more of what assists us in feeling more gratitude in our lives.

Movement and breathwork: moving out body is so important. Keeping the energy moving allows for deeper release of old stagnant energy. When I come into a kriya taught by my Kundalini yoga teacher magic happens and a crown and heart opening occurs. Today I sit in easy seated pose (crisscross applesauce). I move my arms straight up above my head and take my hands in temple mudra (fingers interlaced, index fingers pressed together pointing up). As you continue to ascend and your Kundalini rises you may find, as I did and do, mudras and Kriyas will just naturally happen in your body. Your body is asking for it for a reason and a release. With this arm position and hand mudra we go into breath of fire (fast equal inhales and exhales from only the nose...focusing more on exhales as the inhale happens naturally) and at the same time a mula bandha (root lock...kind of like a kegel lifting the pelvic floor up...focus on the skin surface between genitals and anus/hara line...squeeze the rectum, sex organs and allow energy rise up)...just hold the root lock rather than pulsing here. Do

this for three minutes. Resting when needing to and come back into it. As I do this I get lost in the energy and see and feel a spiraling blue white light flowing up and out through and above my crown chakra to my soul star chakra.

I come to the heart. We practice a heart kriya: placing hands on shoulders (four fingers in front and thumbs in back with elbows lifted up to just below shoulder height). Immediately I feel more heart opening. Then we move. Breath of fire begins: Inhale as you twist upper body left, exhale as you twist upper body right. Do this for three minutes. Soon four magical guides appear as if my aura and body face north and they represent the four directions and elements. Archangel Michael appears to my right (East/Air and masculine side), my Twin flame behind me (South/Fire), Kwan Yin to my left (West/Water and feminine side), and finally my guide, Blue, in front of me (North/Earth). They each are holding my heart center. The energy is powerful and magical. I see green energy for love and healing here. A Heart center connection. Amazing love.

Our final step is to allow for them to heal us. And I do. It's your choice how deep the healing and heart opening will be for you. Allow them into your heart and soul. Allow for a deeper heart connection and a deeper connection to the galactic heart center.

Only a couple of weeks ago I talked about the galactic heart center connection opening up and allowing us to feel it and embody it more within our entire being. The Lion's gateway and the eclipse energy invited us to rise up to this new reality and deeper heart center connection. We are still assimilating this energy and work is still being done for us but also we must continue the inner work as well. It's time to allow and accept it into our souls. Are you ready?

May you feel, accept and know the love of the Universe.
Namaste,
Maggie

Life is Not Outside of You

By Dashama Gordon (Creator of Pranashama)

"Life is not outside of you. You are life."

~ Sadhguru

Aloha My Love,

What if you knew about the most powerful medicine in the world, that can cure and heal cancer, diabetes, addiction, trauma, grief, depression, obesity and any other illness and disease affecting Humanity on Earth right now?



What if I told you this medicine was available for you, your family and friends? That it doesn't always cure you in one night, but it can and for those who have deeper traumas and samskaras, the healing can occur over time with proper guidance, support and love?

Sounds too good to be true, right?

Maybe you're wondering: if this exists, why doesn't everyone know about it already...?

This medicine does exist!

The main reason it's not as widely spread as it should be is because of a worldwide issue larger than I can get into in this one email. It doesn't serve the profit and greed of the large corporations in the world to let people know that this level of healing is available.

As you may know, big corporations, hospitals and drug companies, for example, make more money by keeping everyone sick. I know this first hand since I was sick so much as a child. I was physically and emotionally sick from sadness and separation from my parents. Growing up in foster care, I cried every night for 5 years. Then I tried self medicating this sickness with alcohol starting very very young.

This lead to ulcers and infections, antibiotics and leaky gut syndrome. It lead me to car accidents and scoliosis, rape and abortion. Later this manifested in eating disorders, thyroid disease, stalkers, failed relationships and other traumas that were revealing to me the depth of my inner pain. The sickness and disconnection was so deep within me that I was not even aware of the core of it for many many years. I just knew I was searching and not finding anything to fill the void or ease the pain within.

Maybe you know someone who is like this?

It's actually so common in our society. And the media is making it worse. The news shows, magazines and TV teach people that we are never good enough. That we need more stuff and to fix the outer appearance. It tells us that we are far from perfect, but that if we buy the next thing that is coming out we will get closer and maybe then we can finally be fulfilled.

That is a trap.

It's an endless cycle that is nothing but ego, selfishness and narcissism.

It keeps people stuck, small and trapped.

We are INFINITE beings!

And there is a way out of this trap.

For me it came first through meditation, spirituality and yoga. To understand that the soul is infinite and that we are the light of the soul started me on my healing path. To see beyond the illusion and that we have a choice to opt out of suffering.

All suffering begins in the mind.

Whether it is conscious, unconscious or sub conscious, this is the root of all suffering. And there is medicine for this.

The magic of yoga and the healing path started for me in the deepest way when I went to my first yoga teacher training 11 years ago. It healed me so much that I felt immediately committed to spreading this medicine to anyone I could. I cried and cried during every class and let go of years of sorrow, sadness and the deepest pain I didn't even fully comprehend existed within me.

It was in those moments I was shedding all the layers of who I am not, to reveal the truth of who I am - beyond the preconditioned societal persona I had built up around myself. Beyond the walls I had built around my heart from fear, pain and disconnection from source.

This light of awareness is available for everyone.

It's available for you and your family and loved ones.

It's here for all whenever there is readiness to receive it.

It comes with love, compassion and support - like a divine loving mother or grandmother who rocks us gently to comfort us in our times of need.

I've been on this path a long time and have learned the ways to expedite the healing. To fast forward years of the process and even clear karma from past lives to create space for more miracles in this life...

I've been living my dream life for the past 6-7 years traveling the world spreading this healing through Pranashama Yoga Institute and our yoga teacher trainings and retreats. I also do this through the video programs and online courses, for those who can't travel to experience firsthand the pure medicine.

I've seen miracle after miracle show up in my life to prove without a shadow of doubt that it works. Like earlier this year when I was invited to speak at the United Nations for International Day of Happiness. That came completely out of the blue in a time that I had surrendered more deeply to the river of this life and let go of some major weights that were holding me down!

Why waste time when you can liberate yourself now?

Many blessings to you and your family.

Love and Namaste,
Dashama

12 Essential Tips for New Vinyasa Yoga Teachers

By Clara Roberts-Oss



Here are a few things to chew on as a new vinyasa yoga teacher:

1. Keep it simple.

Keep everything you do **while you teach** as simple as possible including your sequence, your language, your music. You are learning a new language. Learn the nouns, verbs and such before you jump into conversational yoga. You will appear more confident with your students and they are more likely to trust you.

1a. Speak Slowly.

Speak even slower than you think you should. **New teachers** are excited about sharing what they've

learned and that excitement tends to make them nervous. That nervousness tends to speed up the cueing and the breathing and soon enough people are moving so quickly there's no way they can be breathing with integration. Breathe with your students, speak painfully slow—usually that makes you speak normally, versus very quickly. Schuyler Grant suggest using a metronome at home to practice speaking slowly. Carolyn Budgell recommends recording your voice and listening to it. I recommend tapping your foot quietly or using the beats in the song to give you a sense of timing. The important thing is, be conscious of your speaking speed as it is a large part of what creates the *Bhavana* (mood) of the class.

2. Have patience and compassion towards yourself.

The first few years are hard. You are going to make mistakes and people are going to give you attitude. Try not to be hard on yourself or your students. Learn from your mistakes, trust in the process and know that it gets easier.

3. Get off your mat as soon as possible.

As a new teacher, it's fine to practice the sequence with your students but ween yourself off the mat as soon as possible. You are more useful to your students if you're watching them. This is why I encourage new teachers to have simple sequences, so that they don't need to be doing it with the class in order to remember it. Elaborate sequences may seem cool but does it ultimately serve the students if their teachers are paying more attention to remembering the sequence than watching them?

4. Own the space.

Be loving yet hold your ground. This is your classroom, be confident in the choices you make with lighting, temperature, music. This one was especially hard for me to learn. I started teaching very young. Older women liked to give me a hard time by complaining about the music, the temperature and talking in class. They were some of my greatest teachers. They taught me how to stand my ground, believe in my choices as a teacher or change them if need be. Which leads me to my next point...

5. Your students can be your greatest teachers.

Observe who triggers you in class. They are usually either echoing something about yourself that you don't like or are not proud of. For me, those women were echoing my own feelings of self-worth. Who was I to teach people? What did I have to offer? Observe what arises with those students and silently thank them for the lesson. Try and stay compassionate towards them and yourself while in the room. Then work with the triggers by meditating or talking to a therapist/friend about it.

6. Develop a consistent home practice.

This is going to feed you, especially during times of stagnation in your teaching. Your home practice is not a time when you're developing your class sequences. I like to think of it as my upkeep. I do the poses and pranayama that my body really needs for the day. It doesn't look like a vinyasa practice, it's more therapeutic. It changes daily depending upon what I need and how I'm doing.

7. If you do nothing else in your own time, MEDITATE.

This was a game-changer for me. A few years back, I was initiated into Neelakantha Meditation practice. I pledged to sit 20 minutes every day for a year and it hooked me. This will feed you as a human and a teacher on many levels. You will be able to access compassion, strength and remain grounded in most situations. Please start today! Start by sitting for just 10 minutes daily and begin to increase it when you feel ready.

8. Practice the sequence in your own body prior to teaching it.

You should know how the sequence feels before you share it. If you make it up on the spot, you are more likely to forget it. I tell new teachers to teach the same sequence for a week or two so that they can focus on watching their students instead of remembering the sequence.

9. Practice different styles of yoga.

There is so much to be learned from different lineages of yoga. It's important to experience other ways of moving and to remember what it's like being new at something. I find it helps me understand my students more. Two of my most influential teachers, Shiva Rea and Constantine Darling, incorporate different lineages into their teaching, giving me as the practitioner, a richer experience.

10. Create a Teachers' Practice.

This was another game-changer for me. When I moved to Vancouver eight years ago, I was invited to a teachers' practice. I had never seen that before. We sat around in a circle and co-taught (round-robin style). We picked a peak pose and created the flow together. It was an informal space where we asked each other questions, gave each other feedback on our asanas and execution. I grew as a teacher like I never had prior. It also builds a stronger kula/community amongst teachers which fed our student kula exponentially. Invite any and all teachers, no matter what style or what studio they're from. There is always something to learn.

11. Don't stop being a student.

Take other people's classes. Attend teacher trainings. Continue to learn. We are students first and foremost. I look at teaching as a way of sharing things that excite me. Continue to feed yourself so you can continue to share.

And, my last point for today....

12. Don't take yourself too seriously.

As my father says so beautifully, "We are all bozos on this bus." I try to think of myself as a facilitator. I am here to facilitate my students journey into themselves. I try and create a space that is safe for them to explore their inner landscapes. Teaching is not about me, it's about them. It's an important one to remember. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter how cool your sequence is, whether a ton of people told you how great you are or if your [playlist](#) worked. Instead ask yourself, did people leave feeling more connected to themselves, more quiet, more introspective? To me that's the sign of a good class. And if it didn't happen, so be it. I'll try again next time.

Why Teach Sanskrit Names?

It's a central debate among teachers in the West—should we use the Sanskrit names for poses when we teach? If you're on the fence, you may be surprised to learn just how many reasons there are to do so.

By Marget Braun



During my teaching training, one of the most common debates centered around calling poses by their Sanskrit names. My fellow trainees wanted to know whether they should memorize and use these names, or whether that practice was elitist and would put off certain students. At the time, I didn't realize that using Sanskrit names didn't have to be an impossible task for teachers or for students. I now know that, armed with a basic understanding of the way different students learn, most teachers can incorporate those names into their teaching quite easily and with good results.

The best teaching takes into account that every student has a preferred learning style and offers different cues for different students. This practice—known as experiential learning—includes something for Auditory, Visual, and Kinesthetic learners. When you use Sanskrit in the studio, keep in mind that auditory learners want to hear the word, visual learners want to see the word or visualize the spelling, and kinesthetic learners want to do the pose and say the word, or perhaps write it down. To fulfill the needs of a range of learners, make sure to include different expressions of the word during class.

"It's important to remember that we are not only teaching poses, we are also teaching language," says Diana Damelio, Manager of the Kripalu Yoga Teacher development, which uses an experiential model for teaching. "Every student learns differently, so if there are 30 people in a class I assume there are 30 different classes going on. Don't assume that people learn the way you do. Only 20 percent of people are auditory learners. The rest of us are visual and kinesthetic learners."

"My job is to teach in many different ways," Damelio continues. "Visual learners go bonkers unless it is written down, so we have a story board that keeps information visible."

When you begin to introduce Sanskrit names in the studio, recognize that it will be overwhelming at first. Take small steps. "We tell new students that every pose has the word 'asana' in it so a student can immediately say, 'Oh, that's cool, I know something!'" says Damelio. Kimberley Healey, a French Professor at the University of Rochester and a teacher in the Iyengar tradition, reminds us to be patient. "It takes a long time for someone to learn a foreign language," she says. "If my yoga students don't know the Sanskrit terms after three years it's frustrating, but I don't expect it any sooner. They only see me 1.5 hours a week."

But the gradual introduction of traditional names can teach your students more than you might initially think. Dr. Douglas Brooks, Sanskrit scholar and Professor of Religion at the University of Rochester, believes one of the best reasons to use the Sanskrit terms is to stir up interest and nurture curiosity. The Sanskrit suggests there's more to yoga than athletic activity, Brook says. "If you think yoga is only stretching, don't learn the names," he says. "But if you really want to teach, you need to know where the references come from."

If you—or your students—start using Sanskrit names more regularly, it may inspire you to learn more about the language of the yogic tradition. Sanskrit has been called the mother of all Indo-European languages. It is considered to be one of the oldest languages on Earth; predating—Greek and Latin, arising from the Proto Indo European language spoken 7000-8000 years ago. The word "sanskrit" itself translates to perfected, polished, or refined. And that translation is appropriate, given the healing power the language is thought to have.

According to Jay Kumar, a Sanskrit scholar and yoga teacher who has produced a CD and manual on how to pronounce Sanskrit, each of the 50 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are thought to have a sound frequency with a specific therapeutic benefit. "When you tap into the sound of yoga you really experience Yoga with a capital Y," said Kumar. In Vedic belief, each word is encoded with consciousness. To put this simply, the pose name and the effect of the pose are one. So by simultaneously saying or hearing the Sanskrit name and performing the pose, we can feel the "click" of unity between sound and body.

"The symbolic aspect of the pose is in the name," says Iyengar teacher and Open Sky Yoga director Francois Raoult. "Listen to 'bhastrika' [the Sanskrit name for Breath of Fire]. There is a lot of wind in the sound when you speak it, like breath."

But if there is a power in the sound of the language, does mispronunciation counter it? Michael Carrol, senior member of Kripalu faculty, thinks it might. "We've gotten very sloppy with Sanskrit. In ancient times a mantra was a spiritual invocation. If you didn't pronounce it exactly, nothing would happen."

Michael says he is happy if students can remember the names. But, he adds, "I equate learning the pose with saying the pose correctly."

One way to deal with this challenge is to remember that Sanskrit was an oral language for thousands of years. "We chant Bu-Bu-Bhujangasana and put a melody to it," says Damelio. "The students repeat back, so we also teach by call and response." Through repetition and chanting, your students can come to learn the correct pronunciation over time.

Another approach to learning and teaching the pose names is to remember that yoga is a system with its own lexicon. Think ballet, HTML, cooking, or football.

"Every system has its own vocabulary that outsiders may not get," says Aimee Brooks, Affiliated Anusara teacher. "But after you work with the code for a while it becomes 'parlance.' You can shorten it and intensify its meaning which makes it easier to learn."

Raoult confirms that understanding yogic lexicon can make teaching and learning easier. "When you start to get more mature as a practitioner, there's a lot of cross references between poses that are helpful. You can hear 'create the actions of [वृद्धवृद्ध](#) in Sirsasana' instead of a whole mess of instructions. It makes the teaching clearer. It gives more refinement because you can cross reference and explain one pose in terms of another pose."

And there are other benefits as well. For one thing, Sanskrit breaks down the barriers between people who speak different languages. "The beauty of the Sanskrit terms is that they are a universal reference," says Raoult. "No matter where you are on the planet, you have the Sanskrit terms so you don't have to worry. Whether you say the word "plie" [to reference a ballet movement] in Japan or France, it means the same thing."

This universal language creates a deeper, more spiritual connection. Because Sanskrit names communicate meaning through sound and yoke sound and sensation, they reveal to each individual the universal experience of the pose. Knowing the Sanskrit and connecting it to our practice roots us in tradition and gives us a common vocabulary. This is the first step in seeking that connection that is yoga's promise.

If you're ready to start teaching names, bear in mind one simple rule of thumb. "When you begin to introduce the names, is it in the spirit of an inviting in?" asks yoga teacher Aimee Brooks. "Or is there an 'I know the secret word and maybe if you are around long enough you will too'?" If you keep your teaching in the spirit of an invitation, you will arrive at this truth: The faster you can teach your students what the words mean to you, the faster you can begin to talk to each other and share in your understanding."

Marget Braun is the author of [G HV Vwrulhv](#) and past food columnist for Yoga Journal.

Secrets of Sanskrit

By learning the ins and outs of the Sanskrit language, you can transmit the teachings of yoga on a deeper level.

By Molly M. Ginty



Teresa Thompson was tongue-tied.

"When I started studying Sanskrit last year, I was shocked by how many words in the original language of yoga were ones I'd learned incorrectly from seemingly accomplished teachers," says Thompson, a vinyasa instructor at Barefoot Works in Lexington, Kentucky.

Thompson isn't alone in realizing the Sanskrit she first learned was substandard.

"As they deepen their practice, many yoga instructors discover that the Sanskrit they studied in teacher training just isn't enough," says [Mā| Nxp du](#), the San-Francisco based creator of the instructional CD *The Sacred Language of Yoga*. "More people are coming to understand that there's a deep, rich philosophy behind yoga practice—and that Sanskrit is the language by which that philosophy lives, breathes, and flows."

Teach this rich but relatively simple language to your students, and not only will it help them follow your directions in class but, energetically, it will help them get the most out of every class. Each Sanskrit word is believed to have its own consciousness, and pronouncing that word is said to tap you into that consciousness. "This is especially true for mantras, chants to purify the mind," says Nicolai Bachman, the Santa Fe-based author of [Wkh Odqj x djh ri \ r j d](#). "A mantra's whole effect is based on its sound, and to get the right effect, you have to get the sound right."

If your students want to delve into yoga philosophy as well as hatha practice, Sanskrit can help them understand that philosophy in greater depth. They can have a direct reading of yoga's philosophical sutras or "threads," like the one that prompts us to learn Sanskrit by performing *svadhyaya*, or "self-study." In Sanskrit, your students can also comprehend and express spiritual concepts that are not readily conveyed in English. "No language in the world can as effectively translate the mystical, transcendent, and divine," says Graham Schweig, the Newport News, Virginia-based author of [Wkh Ekdj dydg J lwd=Wkh Eharyhg Orug VhfuwOryh Vrqj](#). "There are dozens of words for love, all with different nuances, from *rati*, or passionate love, to *prema*, pure love with a sweet selflessness to it."

Does your Sanskrit flow as it should? If you're uncertain—or want to improve your use of the language—opportunities to hone your skills abound. By turning to the CDs, books, and other resources listed below, you can better grasp Sanskrit and pass it on to your students, enabling them—and enabling yourself—to have a more authentic experience of yoga.

How much Sanskrit should you use in class? "Seek guidance from your studio managers and teacher trainers, and meet your students where they're at," advises Jo Brill, an American Sanskrit Institute instructor in Peekskill, New York. If you're teaching at a gym, you may want to go light on or even skip Sanskrit. But if you're working at a spiritual center that focuses on the history of yoga—or if you're working with advanced practitioners who have an interest in yoga's spiritual element—a more in-depth analysis will likely be welcomed and helpful.

From the beginning, it's crucial to avoid the Sanskrit mispronunciations that are rampant in the West. Only correct pronunciation will help you and your students tap into the consciousness of Sanskrit—and glean the full benefit of its energetic vibrations. Sanskrit's Devanagari alphabet has 50 letters (nearly double the number in English), and when linguists transliterate it, they place symbols around English letters—abbreviations that, like Sanskrit consonants and vowels, too many English speakers bungle. Despite what you may hear in yoga studios, the *th* in hatha should have a hard *t* as in *tummy* and not a soft *th* as in *thin*. The *ch* in *chakra* should sound like the *ch* in *chat*, not the *sh* in *shine*.

As you explain Sanskrit's basic vocabulary and pronunciation, you may also want to tell your students about its rich history, noting that it predates Greek and Latin and stems from proto-European languages spoken in India 7,000 years ago. Passed down orally for centuries, Sanskrit was first written down around 1,500 B.C. in the form of the oldest-known yoga scripture, the Rig Veda. Around 500 B.C., a scholar named Panini established the rules that define classical Sanskrit, the language we use in yoga today.

To make it accessible for your students, you can point out that many Sanskrit words are the roots of words in English, which borrowed from Sanskrit heavily over the course of its own evolution. *Bandha* (or "lock"), for example, is related to the English word *bound*, while *Navasana* (Boat Pose) is related to "navy."

Despite these similarities, Sanskrit is different from English in one key way: The language of yoga is much easier to learn. While English is a phonemic language, with the same letters sometimes pronounced in different ways (think of the *o* in *love* versus the *o* in *open*), Sanskrit is phonetic, so every letter is always pronounced the same. While English has erratic rules, Sanskrit's grammar is more straightforward and thus simpler for newcomers to grasp.

As you lovingly introduce new Sanskrit words, repeat them often, as it takes seven repetitions of a word for most people to remember it. Build your students' vocabulary by referring back to old words as you continue to introduce new ones. "Break each word into syllables and pronounce it slowly, one syllable at a time," advises Manorama, director of the New York City-based School of Sanskrit Studies. This will help your students improve their comprehension and pronunciation.

"To deepen my students' understanding of yoga, I like to break Sanskrit pose names down and explain how the elements fit together," says Linda Spackman, who studied with Bachman and teaches Iyengar Yoga at YogaSource in Santa Fe. "I tell them that for Utthita Parsvakonasana (Extended Side Angle Pose), *utthita* means 'extended,' *parsva* is 'side,' *kona* is 'angle,' and *asana* is 'posture.' When they understand this, they suddenly get Sanskrit and also get the pose, automatically forming the correct angle between the downward press of the back heel and the outward reach of the side arm. A light goes off, and together, we're all enjoying a deeper experience of yoga."

Sanskrit Study Resources

Books and CDs:

- [43 ; Vdqvnuw Iadvkfduv](#) by Nicolai Bachman
- [Hqj dvk 0Vdqvnuw G lfwlrqdu](#) by Monier Williams
- [Iqwxrgxfwlrq wr Vdqvnuw](#) manual
- [Wkh Odqjxdjh ri \rjd](#) by Nicolai Bachman
- [Ohduq wr Surqrxqfh \rjd Srvhv z lwk P dgrudp d](#)
- [Ohduq wr Fkdqw \rjd Iqyrfdwlrqv z lwk P dgrudp d](#)
- [Q dp r Q dp dk=Iqyrnh Uhyhuhqfh](#) by Manorama
- [Wkh Vdfuhg Odqjxdjh ri \rjd=D Vdqvnuw Jxlgw wr wkh Sklrvrsk |P dqwudv/dqg Yrfdexadu| ri wkh \rjd Wudglwlrq](#) by Jay Kumar
- [Vdqvnuw Dwadv](#) by Vyaas Houston
- [Vdqvnuwe | FG](#) by Vyaas Houston
- [Wkh \rjd Vxwd Z runern](#) by Vyaas Houston

Websites:

- American Sanskrit Institute ([dp hulfdqvdqvnuwifrp](#))
- Learn Sanskrit Online ([le ledr lrj 2vdqvnuw](#))
- School of Sanskrit Studies ([vdqvnuwwxg lhwifrp](#))



Teaching Yoga



Yoga Teaching Tips

1. The breath is the primary tool for being present with what's happening in the body.
2. Transcend the ego. Be okay that not all students will like you or your style of yoga. We must let go of some of that deep-rooted desire to be liked and appreciated. Be yourself, nobody else can do it better.
3. You can get into the lingo of yoga but also become the yoga lingo and then give it your own voice so it's natural from you. Be authentic always. Your students will feel that energy and be energized and inspired from you. Know YOU first and foremost. Only you know your story and only you can share your wisdom. No textbook can teach you what you already know. Share THAT with your students.
4. Don't teach what you haven't felt, lived or feel comfortable with. Again, it's about honoring your journey. From that vulnerable place of authentic truth and integrity you are seen as that wise teacher. We are always the student and sometimes the teacher. Creativity flows when you say what you mean and try not to edit yourself. Be authentic.
5. Teach your students what they don't know as well as the common alignment cues. Given essential instruction, then watch your students closely. Their response will tell you what to say next. Perhaps a specific alignment instruction or an invitation to open to their experience. If their alignment is clear and their energy is settled, you don't need to say a thing. Ride the rhythm of speech and non-speech. Avoid reciting every instruction you know for asana. Instead follow the lead of your students so that your teaching becomes a guiding conversation that points them toward the work of the pose. Make your instructions like crumbs along the path, dropping them one at a time, allowing the students to walk the path on their own.
6. Be okay with hearing criticism from your students too. We love hearing their praise but be open to hearing other feedback as well. We are on a path as teachers as well. Students may tell you to speak up, turn the music down or we held a pose too long or other things. Be open-minded to hear and adjust if this follows your truth. This gives you the opportunity to become more present in your classes as a teacher and a person. But don't let it tear you down or question yourself as a teacher! Just see it as good feedback to consider!
7. Teaching classes can be nerve-wracking especially in the beginning. And even to this day years later I still get initial nerves. I'm an introvert and shy away from people, but when teaching yoga and spirituality I thrive and love it. Fear is a very powerful source of energy



and we can learn to guide it in the direction of excitement and use it as fuel! EXERCISE: Inhale deeply, exhale completely through your mouth. On your exhalation imagine releasing the fear out through your legs, soles of your feet and into the Earth. Literally grounding it. Repeat 3- 10x. Then shake every part of your body vigorously! Remember Energy Shaking! It will free your energy up instantly. Finish off with a few more deep breaths.

8. “Save yourself time and energy trying to “Fit in” to the yoga world or any world. The world, including the yoga community, needs you to stand up, stand in your truth, and help to show the many faces and paths to yoga so others like you can resonate with you, and feel more supported to be themselves too. Some people will love it, some will leave it, but you will be more self- satisfied, happy, free and deeply centered within whatever they choose. Doing you is one of the best ways to lead by example.” ~ Sadie Nardini
9. “Being an amazing yoga teacher is to commit fully to your own practice and inner work. The more integrity you are to your own journey, the more authentic your message will be. If you don’t connect with or believe completely in what you’re saying, neither will your students. The other thing that is necessary is to learn all you can about alignment, proper sequencing and appropriate touch. No one will trust you with their soul if they can’t trust you with their body.” ~ Sean Corne
10. Be a part of the experience with your student. Don’t teach “above your student with hands on hips”. Rather breathe into the experience as well. Instructing becomes smoother as you teach in this way as well. Be in the middle of the experience, breathing and feeling it through your own body in each moment, you’ll release tension, burnout will disappear, and you’ll be wonderfully energized. Much more than anything you say, people will follow and be inspired by how you are. So it’s important to feel good and take care of yourself in this way. This is a life lesson as well!
11. Develop your own ritual prior to class that helps you get present, clear and grounded before you step into the room to teach. Clear the space, etc. Being fully present is the greatest gift you can give you students.



You've most likely experienced Sun Salutations countless times. A Sun Salutation is a Vinyasa by its very nature. In Vinyasa we are linking breath to movement, flowing with intention, focus and connection. In the word Vinyasa, **Vi** means "with intention or in a special way," while **nyasa** means "to place." The full word, Vinyasa, means 'a continuous sequence of movement' or 'step by step in an ordered way.' As you learn to teach others, as well as move through linked poses during your Vinyasa Yoga classes, set an intention to place yourself mindfully and skillfully on the mat. When your practice is done and your mat folded away, see what it takes to place yourself just as mindfully and skillfully, with purposeful intention, as you flow through the rest of your day and life.

3 Elements of Teaching

1. **Verbal Queue's** – How you speak throughout gives the right feel for the class: Confident, positive, never talking at the students but rather “with” them (ie. Let's; Next we'll; our, etc.). Repeat instructions differently twice and for each pose try to give at least one physical, mental/emotional and spiritual element the students are working on.
2. **Mirror Students** – Students do best with mirroring.
3. **Hands-on Adjustments** – Keep this to a minimum per student but see if you can get around to every student once per class.

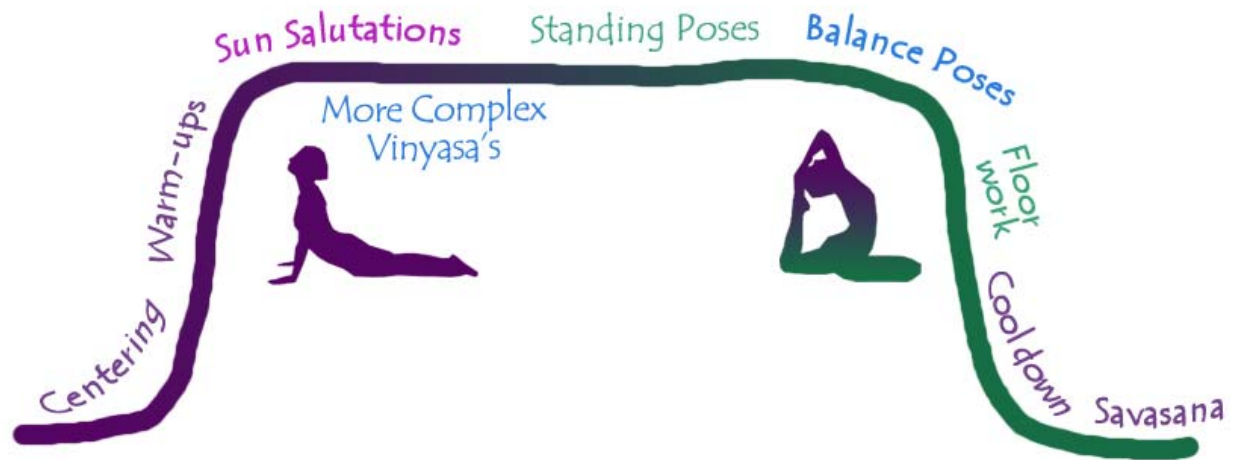
3 Principals of Vinyasa Yoga: Breath, Bandhas, Drishti

1. **Breath** - Every movement should have a breath. Think of the Mala beads. There are 108 beads, in between each bead is a little thread, think of thread as being the breath and bead as being the posture of the asana. So they're really tied together.
2. **Bandhas** - Bandha are energetic locks in the body, keeping it nice and compact, so moving from pose to pose looks like floating rather than choppy, movements are fluid. There are more than two bandhas, but two main ones we like to use are: Udi ana bandha - belly, literally means flying upward. Lifting lower belly. Mula Bandha - Or Root Lock. Pelvic floor lifting. If using the two together, this helps to make body compact and move gracefully and flow easier.
3. **Drishti (Gaze)** - Gaze. Focal point. Every pose has a drishti: Keeps mind occupied and concentrated. Drishti can have an effect on the energy of the pose. Like crow pose, if you kept your gaze down, you're probably going to fall on your face. But if gaze is slightly forward (having the intention of where you are going) then energy of pose is slightly forward and you can hold pose better. Drishti helps you look where the energy of the pose is and it's a focus for neck alignment and to keep mind focused.



All three principals help make your practice as fluid as you can.

Bell Curve for Vinyasa Flow Sequences



"It's either one or a series of breaths. But our attention stays on the inhale and the exhale. and the more attention can follow the length and depth of each breath, the more focused and in alignment we can be. When we're not breathing deeply, it's very easy to get distracted and to think about things around us. It reflects an active mind. But when we breathe deep, it allows the practice to become a meditation in action." ~ Sean Corne

Centering/Prayer:

Sun Salutations

Back bends for energetic heart opening and flexibility

Forward folds for introspection

Feel energized and grounded, not hyper or depleted, savasana is most important for that

Prayer of gratitude.

Notes/Sequence ideas or inspirations:

Example of Vinyasa Flow

Centering, Intention, Prayer: Calm your students bodies. Invite them to go inside their bodies and leave worries behind and invite them to call all of their energy to present time; to be here in the present moment.

Warm-ups

6 movements of spine: Lateral bends, twists, forward fold, back bend – moving cats/cat cow

DYNAMIC SECTION

Sun Salutation & Vinyasa's

Sun Salutes increases respiration, increases circulation, helps the: lymphatic system to 600 nodes in the body, heating up your body to prepare for standing poses. Begin slow and pick up pace to a little faster. Bringing heat to the body. Build heat, elasticity in the tissue, etc. Becoming more dynamic as you flow.

Standing Poses

Perhaps opening up to a Goddess flow and into Warrior II, Triangle, Half Moon and to the other side. In Vinyasa flow it's important to note that this doesn't necessarily have to become the static portion of your class. If you desire you can simply include this into a Vinyasa flow sequence but still allowing the student a longer break to enjoy the poses and rest from all the Chutterunga's.

Standing and Arm Balance Poses

Tree, Dancers, Eagle, Crow, other Arm Balances, etc.

Backbends (flowing down to floor work)

Camel, Locust (*on belly is PRONE*), Bow, etc. Again, note here that you do not necessarily have to remain on the floor once you get there. But sometimes that is exactly the flow you would like to choose.

PASSIVE/STATIC SECTION

Forward Bends

As counter poses to your Backbends

Inversions on the Floor

Shoulderstand, Plow, Bridge, Wheel, etc.

Rest & Closing

Savasana (*on back is SUPINE*) or Legs-Up-the-Wall



Principles of Mountain Pose

- Feet evenly on floor—all 4 corners (2 on ball, 2 on heel) grounding equally.
- Heels slightly wider than big toes
- Inner arches and ankles lifted [centers ankle over foot]
- Front of thigh, knee, and 2nd and 3rd toes in line.
- Inner thighs spin in and back [internal rotation] to internally rotate thighbones [femurs].
- Thighs stay back & wide while "Scooping the tailbone"--engaging the pelvic floor & low abdominals to pull the pubic bone up until it is stacked in line with the low belly. This action tucks the tailbone under and forward, and keeps the pelvis in a stacked upright position, with the hip crests neither tipping forward nor back. Thighs will roll out again to re-center legs.
- Center low ribs down and back towards the spine.
- Lift entire ribcage up from the internal core of center, not from the front ribs only. SIDE BODY LONG.
- Ribs are centered over the pelvis.
- Arm bones integrate into sockets gently...not over-reaching or too plugged in.
- External rotation of the upper arms.
- Internal rotation of the lower arms.
- Wrists are open equally on all sides.
- Shoulders move back into neutral as the heart opens, and collar bones are wide and parallel to the floor.
- Shoulder blades retract normally onto the back using upper back muscles.
- Skull slides back to center over ribcage. Chin stays parallel to floor. Back neck is long, slight lift to the base of the skull.
- Extend from pelvic floor through crown of the head.

Keep in mind...

The Order of Teaching or Doing a Pose

Set

the foundation.

Activate

the core.

Lengthen

into expression!

Build your pose from the ground up.

- From hips to feet--GROUND.
- From hips to crown of the head --LIFT.
- Hips like the horizon in-between. Think SUNSET.

By Sadie Nardini

Sun Salutation A

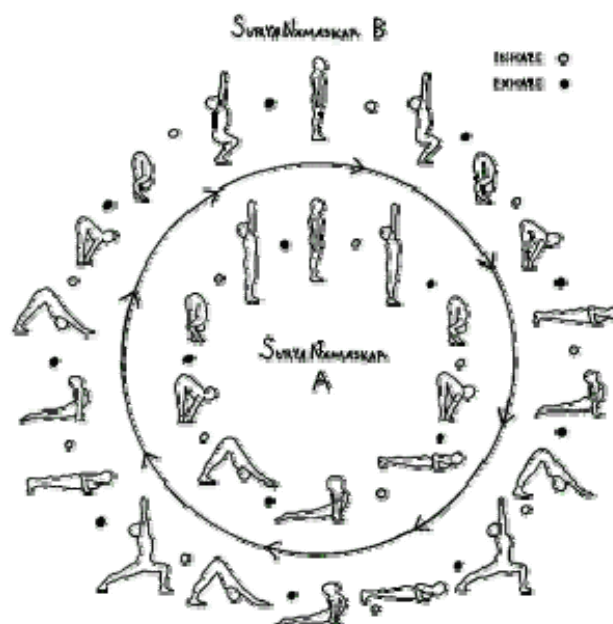
Sanskrit: Surya Namaskar A

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

The traditional **Sun Salutation A** Sequence is the most common and widely used Vinyasa out there today. Literally translated as "bow to the sun." This sequence is great if you have low energy or poor circulation. (Illustration to follow.) As yoga teachers we will build off of this sequence into more dynamic or complex sequences to focus on certain areas of the body for our goals in each individual class. As with all Vinyasa flows, each time you flow through this sequence, synchronize your breath with your movements.

Even the most experienced Yogi and Yogini have difficulty with some of the poses held in the Sun Salutation. You may modify this sequence, for example, by placing the knees down on the mat for Chaturanga and Runners Lunge (low lunge) or skipping Chaturanga completely if you have Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. This sequence is great for warming up the entire body, as well as strengthening and stretching. It is recommended to we practice at least six rounds of the Sun Salutation daily, preferably in the morning when we are more energized.

"One of the means of honoring the sun is through the dynamic asana sequence Surya Namaskar (better known as Sun Salutation). The Sanskrit word namaskar stems from namas, which means "to bow to" or "to adore." (The familiar phrase we use to close our yoga classes, Namaste – te means "you" – also comes from this root.) Each Sun Salutation begins and ends with the joined-hands mudra (gesture) touched to the heart. This placement is no accident; only the heart can know the truth." ~
Yogajournal.com



Directions on how to come into this sequence:

For full text directions read below. Also, receive a deeper look into the individual poses within this manual and/or on my website:

1. To begin, stand in **Tadasana (Mountain Pose)** with Anjali Mudra contemplating the sun or light of awareness in your heart. Distribute your weight evenly over both feet. Establish a slow, steady rhythm for your breath. Find your center.
2. Next, inhale and stretch your arms out to the side and overhead into **Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute)**. Reach your heart and arms to the heavens, sending your greeting to the sun.
3. As you exhale, hollow out your belly and fold into **Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend)**, connecting down into the earth. Keep your legs firmly engaged.
4. Exhale, step right foot back, **Runners Lunge**. Left knee directly over the left ankle, back leg straight, toes curled under. Firm thighs and glutes, extend from rear heel to crown.
5. Exhale and step left foot back behind you into **Plank Pose**. Your wrists should be flat on the floor, shoulder-distance apart, and your feet should be at hip distance. Back is straight like a board, wrists, elbows, shoulders in alignment. Firm glutes and press into the palms, heels and crown. Take a full breath in as you lengthen through your spine.
6. Exhale and lower into **Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose)** (or modified Chaturanga Dandasana by placing knees down first), keeping your legs straight and pushing back into your heels or bringing your knees to the floor. Elbows are in towards the body and sternum is between the thumbs. Build heat in the center of your body as you hold this challenging posture.
7. Inhale and carve your chest forward into **Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog)**, directing that energy out from your heart. Pull your shoulders back and open your collarbones. Engage your legs but relax your gluteal muscles.
8. Exhale and roll over the toes, coming into **Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose)**. Ground down through your hands and feet as you lengthen your spine. Remain here for five breaths.
9. Inhale, right foot runners lunge, **Runners Lunge**. Right knee directly over the right ankle, back leg straight, toes curled under. Firm thighs and glutes, extend from rear heel to crown.
10. Exhale back to **Forward Fold (Uttanasana)**, surrendering into the fold.
11. Inhale, reverse swan dive up, reaching your arms out wide to your sides and coming to stand through a flat back. Feel a renewed sense of energy as you draw your arms overhead into **Upward-Facing Dog (Urdhva Hastasana)**.
12. Exhale and return to **Mountain (Tadasana)**, your home base, hands at your heart in Anjali Mudra. Remain here for a few breaths, feeling the movement of energy through your body, or continue on to your next salute.

When not to do this sequence or to modify/Contraindications:

Contraindications and modifications for each individual pose within the Sun Salutation A sequence can be found on their individual pose pages (as linked above).

SUN SALUTATION SURYA NAMASKAR

1. Standing tall with your feet together, bring your palms together in front of your chest and shift your weight onto the balls of the feet. Press down into the feet, up through the crown of the head, lift in the chest. *Deep Breath In & Out.*

2. *Inhale.* All your fingertips to rise overhead. Press feet, firm glutes, drop tailbone, lift up through chest, crown and fingers.

3. *Exhale.* Hinge forward at the waist, gazing at fingers as you place hands on floor, thumbs next to little toes. Press feet down, tailbone up, forehead to knees.

4. *Inhale.* Step back right foot, lunge. Left knee directly over the left ankle, back leg straight, toes curled under. Firm thighs and glutes, extend from rear heel to crown.

5. *Exhale.* Step back left foot, plank. Back is straight like a board, wrist, elbows, shoulders, in alignment. Firm glutes and press into the palms, heels, crown. *Inhale.*

6. *Exhale.* Drop knees to the floor, extend tailbone up as you lower the chest and chin to the floor. Elbows next to body, sternum between the thumbs.

7. *Inhale.* Sweep your chest forward into upward dog as you lower the pelvis. Knees on the floor, elbows slightly bent, pull elbows in and back. Extend from toes to crown.

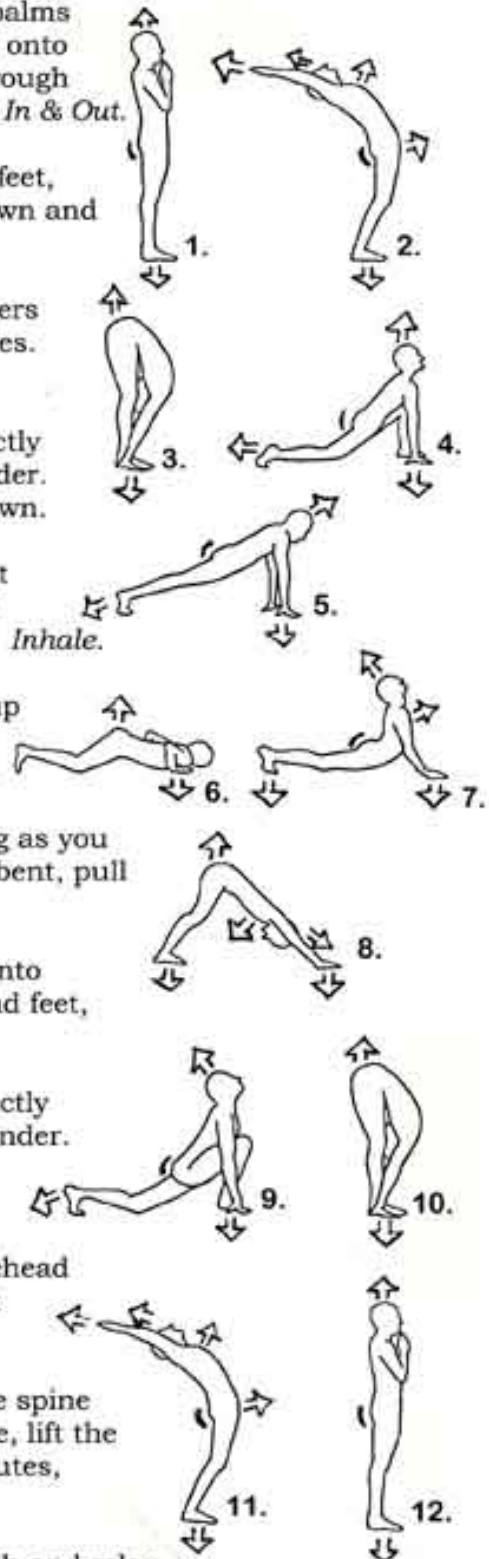
8. *Exhale.* Press the hips back and lift the tailbone into downward facing dog. Press down into the hands and feet, lifting up in the hip-crease.

9. *Inhale.* Right foot forward, lunge. Right knee directly over the right ankle, back leg straight, toes curled under. Firm thighs and glutes, extend from rear heel to crown.

10. *Exhale.* Step forward left foot, feet together. Forehead and chest press towards the legs. Press into the feet and extend up through the tailbone.

11. *Inhale.* Hands together, watch the fingers as the spine straightens, arms extending overhead. Drop tailbone, lift the chest into a slight backbend, press into feet, firm glutes, extend up through spine, crown and fingers.

12. *Exhale.* Close eyes, lower arms to the side, breath and relax.



<http://sunsoulyoga.com/sun-salutation-text-chart/>



Sun Salutation A

○ Inhale • Exhale

© Copyright 2013 Margaret Anderson | www.SpiritualCompassConnection.com

Sun Salutation B

Sanskrit: Surya Namaskar B

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

The **Sun Salutation B** sequence is built off of the traditional Sun Salutation A sequence, the most common and widely used Vinyasa out there today. (Illustration to follow.)

Directions on how to come into this sequence:

1. To begin, stand in **Tadasana (Mountain Pose)** with Anjali Mudra, contemplating the sun or light of awareness in your heart. Distribute your weight evenly over both feet. Establish a slow, steady rhythm for your breath. Find your center.
2. Next, inhale and sweep arms out and up to the side about shoulder height or up by your ears, palms face in, for **Utkatasana (Chair)**.
3. As you exhale, hollow out your belly and fold into **Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend)**, connecting down into the earth. Keep your legs firmly engaged.
4. Inhale and lengthen your spine forward into **Ardha Uttanasana (Half Standing Forward Bend)**. In this pose, the gaze is lifted, the spine is extended, and the fingertips can stay on the floor or rise to the shins.
5. Exhale and step or lightly hop your feet back behind you into **Plank Pose**. Your hands should be flat on the floor, wrists shoulder-distance apart, and your feet should be at hip distance. Straight line of energy from your head all the way down to your heels. Take a full breath in as you lengthen through your spine.
6. Exhale and lower into **Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose)**, keeping your legs straight and pushing back into your heels or bringing your knees to the floor. Build heat in the center of your body as you hold this challenging posture.
7. Inhale and carve your chest forward into **Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog)**, directing that energy out from your heart. Pull your shoulders back and open your collarbones. Engage your legs but relax your gluteal muscles.
8. Exhale and roll over the toes, coming into **Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose)**. Ground down through your hands and feet as you lengthen your spine. Remain here for five breaths.
9. Inhaling and step right foot forward in between your hands, turn your back foot flat at an angle towards the top corner of your mat, rise up into **Virabhadrasana I (Warrior I)**, reaching arms to the sky.
10. Exhale, lower hands to the mat and step both feet back behind you into **Plank Pose**. Your hands should be flat on the floor, wrists shoulder-distance apart, and your feet should be at hip distance. Straight line of energy from your head all the way down to your heels. Take a full breath in as you lengthen through your spine.
11. Exhale and lower into **Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose)**, keeping your legs straight and pushing back into your heels or bringing your knees to the floor. Build heat in the center of your body as you hold this challenging posture.



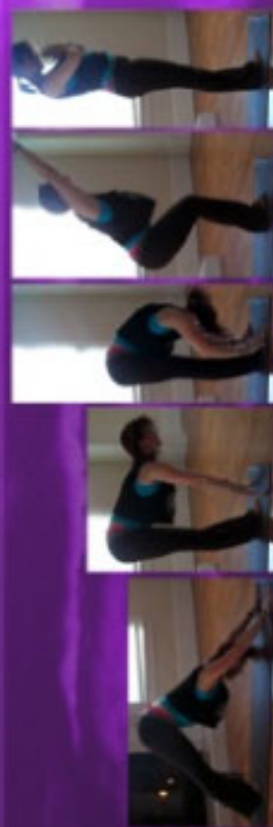
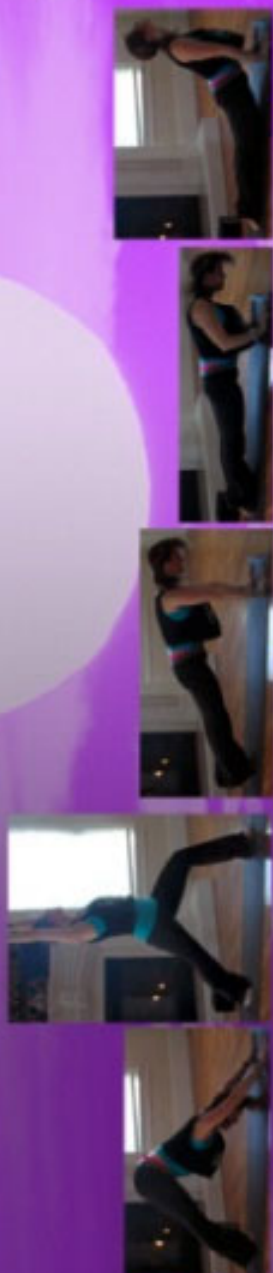
Sun Salutation B (directions continued...)

12. Inhale and carve your chest forward into **Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog)**, directing that energy out from your heart. Pull your shoulders back and open your collarbones. Engage your legs but relax your gluteal muscles.
13. Exhale and roll over the toes, coming into **Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose)**. Ground down through your hands and feet as you lengthen your spine. Remain here for five breaths.
14. Inhaling and step left foot forward in between your hands, turn your back foot flat at an angle towards the top corner of your mat, rise up into **Virabhadrasana I (Warrior I)**, reaching arms to the sky.
15. Exhale, lower hands to the mat and step both feet back behind you into **Plank Pose**. Your hands should be flat on the floor, wrists shoulder-distance apart, and your feet should be at hip distance. Straight line of energy from your head all the way down to your heels. Take a full breath in as you lengthen through your spine.
16. Exhale and lower into **Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose)**, keeping your legs straight and pushing back into your heels or bringing your knees to the floor. Build heat in the center of your body as you hold this challenging posture.
17. Inhale and carve your chest forward into **Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog)**, directing that energy out from your heart. Pull your shoulders back and open your collarbones. Engage your legs but relax your gluteal muscles.
18. Exhale and roll over the toes, coming into **Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose)**. Ground down through your hands and feet as you lengthen your spine. Remain here for five breaths.
19. On an exhale, bend your knees and look between your hands. Then inhale and step or lightly hop your feet between your hands, returning to **Ardha Uttanasana (Half Standing Forward Bend)**.
20. Exhale back to **Uttanasana (Forward Fold)**, surrendering into the fold.
21. Next, inhale and sweep arms out and up to the side about shoulder height or up by your ears, palms face in, for **Utkatasana (Chair)**.
22. Exhale and return to **Tadasana (Mountain)** with Anjali Mudra, your home base. Remain here for a few breaths, feeling the movement of energy through your body, or continue on to your next salute.

When not to do this sequence or to modify/Contraindications:

Contraindications and modifications for each individual pose within the Sun Salutation B sequence can be found on their individual pose pages (as linked above).

Sun Salutation B



○ Inhale ● Exhale

Core Sun Salutation

Sanskrit: Core Surya Namaskar

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

The **Core Sun Salutation**, inspired by and during my Core Strength Vinyasa Yoga Teacher Training with Sadie Nardini, allows us to truly dig deep into our Core, which is our foundation for all movement. It is helpful to keep our core healthy and strong for this very reason. Not to mention the calorie burning capability is heightened tremendously! As you build core strength you are also strengthening your spine. It all works together. Adding core-toning work in the transitions between poses in the classic Sun Salutation amps up the benefits of all the poses. Try to do 3-5 rounds of Core Sun Salutations on each side or more.

"You'll also tone areas that yogis often underuse, like the pelvic floor, abdominals and arms — and release places that can take on too much pressure: the lower back, neck and shoulder. As a happy bonus, you'll experience a higher level of tapas, as you spark the inner fires of transformation. Translation: you'll sweat buckets, and burn more calories than ever before. " ~ Sadie Nardini



Directions on how to come into this sequence:

For full text directions read below. Also, receive a deeper look into the individual poses within this manual and/or on my website:

1. To begin, come to Sukhasana (Easy Seated) pose. Ground, connect and center. Focus on your breath and bring your awareness more fully into the present moment.
2. Next, step back into Phalakasana (Plank) pose.
3. On an exhale, come into Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downdog).
4. Begin Downdog Waves (inhale Plank, exhale to Downdog). Repeat 3-5x. Come to rest in Downdog once again.
5. Inhale, right leg up into Tri Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downdog Splits). Square hips.
6. Exhale, three Core Shakti kicks to the center. Finish third Core Shakti Kick with leg lifted back into Splits.
7. Exhale, step right foot forward in Ardha Hanumanasana (Runners Lunge). You may either: Inhale, stay low in Runners Lunge with back knee lowered to mat raising arms up to sky; or, keeping back knee lifted, inhale, arms up into an Anjaneyasana (Crescent or High Lunge Pose).
8. While in High Lunge begin Fists of Fire (inhale arms up, making fists with your hands, exhale arms down). Repeat 5-10x.
9. Lower hands down to mat and exhale back into Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downdog).
10. Inhale, lower the hips into Phalakasana (Plank) pose.
11. Exhale, Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff pose).
12. Inhale, Bhujangasana (Cobra) or Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Updog).

13. Exhale, Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downdog).
14. Repeat steps 1-13 on other side (Left Leg rises up into Downdog split, etc.).
15. Inhale, step or jump forward coming up half way with a straight spine into Ardha Uttanasana (Half Standing Forward Bend).
16. Exhale, Lower back down Uttanasana (Forward Fold).
17. Reverse Swan Dive arms up, palms together, bringing them back down to your heart into Tadasana (Mountain Pose) with Anjali Mudra.

When not to do this sequence or to modify/Contraindications:

Contraindications and modifications for each individual pose within the Core Sun Salutation sequence can be found on the individual pose pages (as linked above).

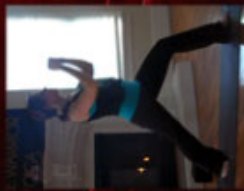
Core Sun Salutation



Repeat Down Dog Wave 3-5x



Repeat
Core
Shakti
Kicks 3x



Repeat
Fists
of
Fire 3x



Repeat sequence
on the other side



o Inhale o Exhale

Moon Salutation

Sanskrit: Chandra Namaskar

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

The **Moon Salutation** invites us to bow to and cultivate lunar energy for each soothing pose. (Click on the image to the right to see larger in a higher resolution.) This is a great sequence for when you are feeling more depleted or in the evening when you are ready to rest and unwind under the Moon. The Moon Salutation complements a yin yoga practice. You may, also, find it a great way to prepare the hips for a yin session targeting the liver.

The sun is yang relative to the moon. But, the moon is yang relative to the earth. Just as there are dozens of variations of Sun Salutations, there are many versions of Moon Salutations. The offering here is based on the *Kripalu tradition as adapted by the Ra-Hoor-Khuit Network*.



"When you can, practice Chandra Namaskar in the evening. Surya Namaskar is traditionally practiced at sunrise as a way to pay homage to the sun and to warm up the body for the coming day. It makes sense, then, to practice Chandra Namaskar in the evening when the moon is out. Not only is it a great way to prepare yourself for sleep, as yoga teacher and Yoga Journal contributing editor Richard Rosen points out, sunrise and sunset have always been considered powerful times for practicing hatha yoga. "During these times, there's a balance between light and dark. It's not day. It's not night. You're at a junction between the two," he says. "This reflects internally in your body: Your hot and cold energies are also in balance. It's a natural time to do the practice." The idea of looking to the moon for rejuvenation is certainly not new. In fact, the Shiva Samhita, a 500-year-old Tantric text, regarded the moon as the source of immortality. Practitioners of Tantra (a form of yoga that preceded hatha yoga) believed that the "sun" was located in the solar plexus; the "moon," in the crown of the head." ~ Yogajournal.com

Directions on how to come into this sequence:

For full text directions read below. Also, receive a deeper look into the individual poses within this manual and/or on my website:

- 1. Anjali Mudra Mountain:** Stand in Tadasana. Root your feet, hug your thighs together, and lift your crown to the moon. Press palms together at elbow level in Anjali Mudra (prayer).
- 2. Half Moon Side Bends:** Lift arms overhead, interlacing fingers, and pointing index fingers upward in temple mudra position. Root left foot and left hip, extending torso and bend to the right. Root right foot and right hip and, extending the torso, come back through center – bending to the left. Root left foot, return to center.
- 3. Goddess:** Step to the right and point toes slightly outward. Soften knees and squat, lowering your sitting bones and your bent elbows downward. Either raise your hands and fingertips upward or flip the palms up toward the ceiling.
- 4. Five-Pointed Star:** Root feet and straighten legs, keeping feet wide apart parallel to each other. Hug thighs to the middle and lift your crown skyward. Extend fingertips and arms at shoulder level. Extend the energy out the five points.

- 5. Triangle:** Turn right toes to right. Extend your arms and torso over the right leg, going as far as you can go—reach, reach, reach. And then begin to cartwheel arms, right arm flow down and left flow upward. Elongate the spine.
- 6. Pyramid:** Lower both hands toward right foot, folding over the right leg. Rest your hands on leg, foot, or on the floor. Root your feet and tighten your thighs, lifting your kneecaps. Spine is straight.
- 7. Lunge:** Bend the forward (right) knee, bringing hands to floor on either side of front foot, and lower your back knee to floor (or optionally, keep the knee raised for more challenge). Root the right foot and top of the left foot into the floor.
- 8. Side Lunge/Wide Leg Squat:** Bring both hands to the inside of the right foot, and lower your tailbone as you pivot the right foot to face forward, rotating the left leg so that toes point upward (more challenging is to point left foot forward). Bring your hands together in Anjali Mudra. If that is too challenging, keep the palms on the floor.
- 9. Squat:** Bring the right leg toward center. Root your feet, lowering your tailbone. If flexibility allows, bring palms together at your heart. If your heels are lifted, don't worry about it; you could try keeping the feet a little wider apart. Keep the knees and feet pointing in the same direction.
- 10. Side Lunge/Wide Leg Squat:** With hands once again on the floor, extend the left leg to the left. Slide your torso toward the left foot. Bring your hands together in Anjali Mudra. If that is too challenging, keep the palms on the floor.
- 11. Lunge:** Pivot to face the left knee, with hands on either side of the left foot, rotating the right leg and bringing the right knee to floor (or optionally, keep the knee raised for more challenge). Root the left foot and top of the right foot into the floor.
- 12. Pyramid:** This time fold over the straightening left leg. Rest your hands on leg, foot, or the floor. Root your feet and tighten your thighs, lifting your kneecaps. Elongate the spine.
- 13. Triangle:** Sweep right arm upward and back, sliding left hand along the left leg toward the ground. Spine straight. If necessary, take your hands up on your shin, thigh or a block in order to maintain a straight spine. Straight line from left to right hands.
- 14. Five-Pointed Star:** Bring both arms to shoulder level, both feet parallel to each other. Root feet and straighten legs, keeping feet wide apart. Hug thighs to the middle and lift your crown skyward. Extend fingertips and arms at shoulder level.
- 15. Goddess:** Turn toes slightly outward. Soften knees and squat, lowering your sitting bones and bend your elbows downward. Either raise your hands and fingertips upward or flip the palms up toward the ceiling.
- 16. Half Moon Side Bends:** Straighten the legs and turn the toes forward. Step the left foot toward the right foot as you lift arms overhead, interlacing fingers and pointing index fingers upward in temple mudra position. Root right foot and right hip, extending torso, and bend to the left. Root left foot and left hip, extending torso, come back through center – bending to the right. Root right foot, returning to center.
- 17. Anjali Mudra Mountain:** Complete the cycle by coming back to Tadasana. Root your feet, hug your thighs together, and lift your crown to the moon. Press palms together at elbow level in Anjali Mudra. Repeat the moon salutation as many times as you feel necessary.

When not to do this sequence or to modify/Contraindications:

Contraindications and modifications for each individual pose within the Moon Salutation sequence can be found on the individual pose pages (as linked above).

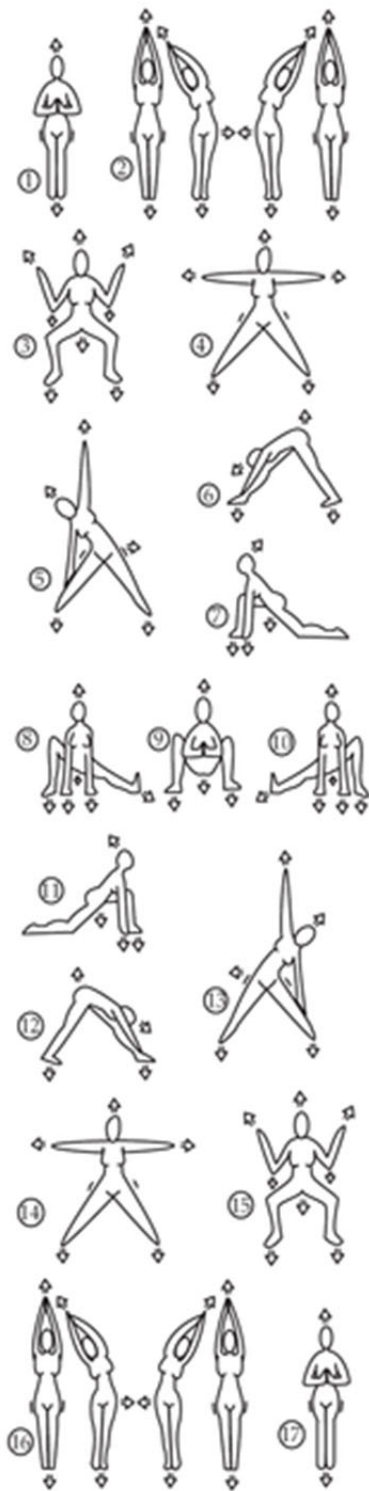
Moon Salutation



○ Inhale
● Exhale

A Moon Salutation

Based on the Kripalu tradition as adapted by the Ra-Hoor-Khuit Network.



1. Anjali Mudra Mountain: Stand in Tadasana. Root your feet, hug your thighs together, and lift your crown to the moon. Press palms together at elbow level in Anjali Mudra (prayer).

2. Half Moon Side Bends: Lift arms overhead, interlacing fingers, and pointing index fingers upward in temple mudra position. Root left foot and left hip, extending torso and bend to the right. Root right foot and right hip and, extending the torso, come back through center - bending to the left. Root left foot, return to center.

3. Goddess: Step to the right and point toes slightly outward. Soften knees and squat, lowering your sitting bones and your bent elbows downward. Either raise your hands and fingertips upward or flip the palms up toward the ceiling.

4. Five-Pointed Star: Root feet and straighten legs, keeping feet wide apart parallel to each other. Hug thighs to the middle and lift your crown skyward. Extend fingertips and arms at shoulder level. Extend the energy out the five points.

5. Triangle: Turn right toes to right. Extend your arms and torso over the right leg, going as far as you can go--reach, reach, reach. And then begin to cartwheel arms, right arm flow down and left flow upward. Elongate the spine.

6. Pyramid: Lower both hands toward right foot, folding over the right leg. Rest your hands on leg, foot, or on the floor. Root your feet and tighten your thighs, lifting your kneecaps. Spine is straight.

7. Lunge: Bend the forward (right) knee, bringing hands to floor on either side of front foot, and lower your back knee to floor (or optionally, keep the knee raised for more challenge). Root the right foot and top of the left foot into the floor.

8. Side Lunge/Wide Leg Squat: Bring both hands to the inside of the right foot, and lower your tailbone as you pivot the right foot to face forward, rotating the left leg so that toes point upward (more challenging is to point left foot forward). Bring your hands together in Anjali Mudra. If that is too challenging, keep the palms on the floor.

9. Squat: Bring the right leg toward center. Root your feet, lowering your tailbone. If flexibility allows, bring palms together at your heart. If your heels are lifted, don't worry about it; you could try keeping the feet a little wider apart. Keep the knees and feet pointing in the same direction.

10. Side Lunge/Wide Leg Squat: With hands once again on the floor, extend the left leg to the left. Slide your torso toward the left foot. Bring your hands together in Anjali Mudra. If that is too challenging, keep the palms on the floor.

11. Lunge: Pivot to face the left knee, with hands on either side of the left foot, rotating the right leg and bringing the right knee to floor (or optionally, keep the knee raised for more challenge). Root the left foot and top of the right foot into the floor.

12. Pyramid: This time fold over the straightening left leg. Rest your hands on leg, foot, or the floor. Root your feet and tighten your thighs, lifting your kneecaps. Elongate the spine.

13. Triangle: Sweep right arm upward and back, sliding left hand along the left leg toward the ground. Spine straight. If necessary, take your hands up on your shin, thigh or a block in order to maintain a straight spine. Straight line from left to right hands.

14. Five-Pointed Star: Bring both arms to shoulder level, both feet parallel to each other. Root feet and straighten legs, keeping feet wide apart. Hug thighs to the middle and lift your crown skyward. Extend fingertips and arms at shoulder level.

15. Goddess: Turn toes slightly outward. Soften knees and squat, lowering your sitting bones and bend your elbows downward. Either raise your hands and fingertips upward or flip the palms up toward the ceiling.

16. Half Moon Side Bends: Straighten the legs and turn the toes forward. Step the left foot toward the right foot as you lift arms overhead, interlacing fingers and pointing index fingers upward in temple mudra position. Root right foot and right hip, extending torso, and bend to the left. Root left foot and left hip, extending torso, come back through center - bending to the right. Root right foot, returning to center.

17. Anjali Mudra Mountain: Complete the cycle by coming back to Tadasana. Root your feet, hug your thighs together, and lift your crown to the moon. Press palms together at elbow level in Anjali Mudra. Repeat the moon salutation as many times as you feel necessary.

Moon Shine

Get your inner glow on with gently flowing Moon Salutations.

By Andrea Ferretti; Sequence by Shiva Rea



As inhabitants of a high-octane, competitive culture, American yogis often gravitate toward practices of fiery, strength-building intensity. In fact, the most ubiquitous sequence in the West is surely the ultimate heat builder, the Sun Salutation. The sequence's Sanskrit name, Surya Namaskar, is literally translated as "bow to the sun." And as you lift your arms and then bow down, as you lengthen forward and jump back, you begin to embody solar energy. You stretch, strengthen, and warm your whole being from the inside out.

But on days when you're feeling depleted, overstimulated, or overheated, it's good to know that Surya Namaskar has a soothing sister sequence known as Chandra Namaskar, or Moon Salutation. As the name suggests, Chandra Namaskar is a quieting sequence that invites you to bow to and cultivate the moon's soothing lunar energy.

"This kind of practice is beneficial for men and women who are under any stress," says Shiva Rea, the creator of Prana Flow Yoga, who offers the sequence on these pages. "It's a great way to balance your energy before you get to the point of exhaustion." Chandra Namaskar is a quieting practice, and the Bihar School of Yoga, where Rea first learned it, teaches the sequence with a meditation at both beginning and end (right) and offers the option of chanting a different mantra related to lunar energy for each pose.

Lunar Power

Perhaps Chandra Namaskar isn't as well-known as Surya Namaskar because it hasn't been around as long. In all likelihood, it's an invention of the late 20th century. The Bihar School, which is a yoga school in India founded in the 1960s, first published the sequence in *asana pPranayama Mudra Bandha* in 1969. (The Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health created a variation of Chandra Namaskar in the 1980s that differs from the sequence that we're presenting here.)

But the idea of looking to the moon for rejuvenation is certainly not new. In fact, the Shiva Samhita, a 500-year-old Tantric text, regarded the moon as the source of immortality. In *The Alchemical Body*, David Gordon White, a professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, describes how practitioners of Tantra (a form of yoga that preceded hatha yoga) believed that the "sun" was located in the solar plexus; the "moon," in the crown of the head. The moon was thought to contain amrita, "the stuff of the macrocosmic moon, the divine nectar of immortality," which "pours itself into the world in the form of vivifying rain." While the fiery sun in the abdomen was important for triggering the yogic process, its heat would, over time, cause aging, decay, and death. To reverse this process, yogis did specific practices, such as inversions or mudras (locks, or seals), to both preserve and produce amrita. The act of turning upside down was believed to draw vital fluids from the lower chakras up to the crown, where they would be transformed into amrita (also referred to as soma).

If you apply this esoteric anatomy to modern hatha yoga practice, you could say that Surya Namaskar triggers the yogic process by heating our bodies and giving us the internal fire and passion to dive deeply into yogic study. And Chandra Namaskar gives us a method for cooling the body, which can help to replenish our vital energy. "The understanding is that we can create soma inside ourselves. It's cultivated through meditation and through lunar sadhana [practice]," Rea says.

Yogic texts have long acknowledged that the body has both heating and cooling energies and that yoga and pranayama (breathwork) can help bring them into a balanced harmony. Doing so is part of preparing the body for self-realization. Rea says that, after many years of an intense "solar" practice, a regular practice of Chandra Namaskar has changed her. "On a personal level, Chandra Namaskar has really helped me become a more full-spectrum yogini," she says. "We all feel this ebb and flow in our energy, and now I totally value both sides. Instead of feeling like having low energy is a bummer, I now see it as having more meditative energy."

Get in the Groove

In Rea's version of Chandra Namaskar, the poses aren't all that different from those of Surya Namaskar. But the intention, the pace, and the quality of movement are completely different. To support your intention of cultivating lunar energy, Rea suggests taking time to consciously set the mood for your practice. If you can, position yourself so that you can see the moon or—when the weather allows—practice outdoors in the evening. If you are indoors, keep the lights low, light a few candles, and create a womb-like atmosphere for yourself. Soothing music can help set the right tone, too. Experiment to find what works for you.

Begin your practice with a short meditation, like the one on page 78, to cultivate your connection with the moon. Draw your attention inward, inviting a sense of receptivity into your practice. To enhance your inward focus, you can repeat a traditional lunar chant, Om somaya namaha, as you move from pose to pose.

Pay special attention to the quality of each movement. Instead of moving quickly, jumping into and out of poses as you would in Sun Salutations, move slowly, as though you were moving through water. You can also add some spontaneous movement within the forms of the poses. For example, instead of pressing immediately into Cobra Pose, which is a heat-building backbend, try circling your shoulders back and swaying side to side until you arrive at your own natural version of Cobra. Rea calls this *sahaja*, which she describes as "the spontaneous movement that comes when we're receptive to our innate inner wisdom."

Energy Saver

When you can, practice Chandra Namaskar in the evening. Surya Namaskar is traditionally practiced at sunrise as a way to pay homage to the sun and to warm up the body for the coming day. It makes sense, then, to practice Chandra Namaskar in the evening when the moon is out. Not only is it a great way to prepare yourself for sleep, as yoga teacher and Yoga Journal contributing editor Richard Rosen points out, sunrise and sunset have always been considered powerful times for practicing hatha yoga. "During these times, there's a balance between light and dark. It's not day. It's not night. You're at a junction between the two," he says. "This reflects internally in your body: Your hot and cold energies are also in balance. It's a natural time to do the practice."

In addition to the time of day, you might also consider the time of the month that you practice. Rea suggests choosing a few days during the new moon, the full moon, and the waning moon (the 14 days after a full moon), since our energy is lower during those times. For women with a menstrual cycle, Chandra Namaskar can be a balm for low-energy days.

Most important, move slowly. This means that you don't have to sync each movement to an inhalation or an exhalation the way you do with Sun Salutations. Savor the practice, just as you would a carefully prepared meal, and allow it to bring you into a more present state. "You're not participating in the whole 'quick fix' when you do this practice," Rea says. "Moving slowly and flowing through asanas without a postural goal has an un--believable ripple effect in terms of one's own rejuvenation and one's ability to really be, even if you have only 20 minutes. It's not about how much you do; it's about the quality of being."

Moonlight Meditation

This meditation, adapted from the Bihar School of Yoga, can be done before or after you take the final resting pose, Savasana (Corpse Pose).

Sit in a comfortable cross-legged position. Slowly become aware of the space between your eyebrows. Within this space, visualize a full moon in a clear night sky, shining brightly on the waves of the ocean. The full reflection of the moon penetrates the deep waters, and the cool shade of moonlight catches the tops of the waves as they dance.

See the image clearly and develop an awareness of the feelings and sensations that are created in your mind and body. Slowly let the visualization fade and again become aware of the whole body.

Flow and Glow

Watch: Practice along with Shiva Rea online at yogajournal.com/livemag.

Anjali Mudra (Salutation Seal), variation

Move into a lunar state: Step your feet hip-width apart, turn your palms up, and join your pinkies together in a mudra of letting go and inward listening.



Standing Anahatasana (Heart-Opening Pose)

Inhale, open the arms wide. Exhale, hands to sacrum. Inhale, draw your heart and belly up. Move between this pose and Lunar Uttanasana 3 times.



Lunar Uttanasana (Lunar Standing Forward Bend)

Fold forward, keeping the knees soft and the neck relaxed. Bring chest to thighs with palms facing the sky. Allow tension to release through your spine.



High Lunge

On an exhalation, step your left foot back into a High Lunge with your front knee over your front ankle and your back heel pressing away.



Somachandrasana I (Nectar of the Moon Flowing Vinyasa I)

Inhale, draw your right arm overhead as you turn both feet clockwise. Your front foot is at a right angle; your back foot is in Side Plank.



Somachandrasana II

Exhale, draw your right hand by your side. Reach toward your back foot with your chest open, shoulders level, and legs activated. Move between Somachandrasana I and II 2 more times.



Transition to Sahaja Ardha Malasana

Exhale as you turn your whole body counterclockwise until you are standing with your feet wide and parallel to one another.



Sahaja Ardha Malasana (Spontaneous Flowing Half Squat)

Inhale, bend your left knee, extend your right leg. Spine stays long. Exhale, gather energy from your inner legs to your pelvic floor. Inhale, shift to the other side with the same awareness. Now flow back and forth twice more, sweeping your arms and torso in a spontaneous flow, like seaweed in the ocean.



High Lunge

Turn toward your left leg to come into a High Lunge, and get ready for a lunar vinyasa.



Plank Pose

Inhale, step back into Plank with your hands under your shoulders, your core activated, and a long line of energy from crown to tailbone to heels.



Anahatasana

Exhale, knees to the floor, lower belly engaged. Walk your hands out in front of you, shoulder-width apart, releasing your heart to the earth. Rest for several breaths, then lower all the way down.



Sahaja Bhujangasana (Spontaneous Flowing Cobra Pose)

Bring your hands under your shoulders and lift your chest, alternately rolling through the shoulders and freeing the neck. Let the spine move fluidly and without constriction or hesitation.



Svananada (Bliss-Filled Downward Dog)

Exhale, flow into Down Dog with a lunar feeling. Pedal the heels, moving freely through the hips and spine. Release your jaw, let your neck move freely, feel the self-generated bliss of a liberated dog.



Three-Legged Downward Dog

Pause in neutral Down Dog. Inhale, extend your right leg to the sky, then exhale and lower it down next to the left foot. Inhale, extend the left leg to the sky. Exhale, bring it forward into a High Lunge.



High Lunge

Inhale in the lunge. Exhale, walk your right foot forward to the top of the mat, swaying your hips slowly from side to side in a slow saunter with relaxed energy.



Lunar Uttanasana

Bow over your legs in a lunar forward bend with your feet together or hip-width apart and your arms hanging heavily toward the earth, palms facing up toward the sky.



Standing Anahatasana

Rise up, hands to sacrum. Root down through your feet; draw up through your legs, heart, and crown. Relax your jaw. Soften your palate as if you were receiving a drop of lunar nectar.



Anjali Mudra, variation

Reflect inwardly before switching sides. Return here after the second side to offer a final mudra, a dedication, a moment of gratitude, and a prayer for peace and rejuvenation for all beings.



Repeat the whole sequence on the second side, this time stepping back with the right leg into a High Lunge.

Watch: Practice along with Shiva Rea online at yogajournal.com/livemag.

Five Tibetan Rites

Other names: Five Tibetans, T5T, The Five Rites of Rejuvenation

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

The **Five Tibetan Rites** is an ancient Tibetan practice known as the Fountain of Youth and is reportedly 2,500 years old. I practice the **Five Tibetans** every morning. It just feels so good! The **Five Rites** emphasize "a continuous sequence of movement" (Sanskrit: Vinyasa). (Illustration to follow.)

"The five Tibetans are a unique sequence of yoga poses reputed to be the key to longevity. According to legend, the sequence was created by Tibetan monks in a Himalayan monastery and then brought into the world by British Army Colonel Bradford. The colonel was amazed by the monks' vitality and superior health. They credited their religious observances, simple diet and the five Tibetans." ~ Naturalnews.com

"The Five Rites speed up the spinning of the chakras, coordinate their spin so they are in complete harmony, distribute pure prana energy to the endocrine system, and in turn to all organs and processes in the body. This is one of the major requirements for vibrant health, rejuvenation and youthfulness. This program is often described as a modified yoga program. Simply put, yoga is a science that unites the body, mind and spirit. Today this is often called Mind/ Body Healing. The author of the book believes that yoga was brought to Tibet from India in the 11th or 12th century and that Tibetan monks over time developed modified these exercises and developed an effective program of exercises that western society now calls the "Five Tibetan Rites". The rugged mountainous conditions these monks live in may well account for their particular emphasis on vigor. Many of the yoga exercises and practices being taught in the western world today are very new. The "Five Tibetan Rites" are exactly what the ancient Tibetans developed over many centuries of time. Therefore it's very important to do the "Five Tibetan Rites" exactly as they are presented without altering the form or sequence to achieve some of the benefits accrued to these "Rites"."

~ Mary Korus, www.mkprojects.com



Directions on how to come into this sequence:

To receive the fullest benefits of the Five Tibetans, it is recommended that we practice **6 days a week and do 3-21 rounds for each of the 5 Rites**. Preferably practiced in the morning prior to breakfast, if not accessible anytime throughout the day will do. Skipping more than one day a week will diminish the benefits. Do only what you feel comfortable doing. That may be only one of each exercise for the first week. Build up to two of each exercise the second week, three of each exercise the third week, etc. or at a faster pace only if your body does not hurt when you do these exercises.

21 is the maximum of each exercise you should ever do. If you want to enhance your program, do the exercises at a faster pace, but do not do more than 21 of each exercise each day. Doing more than 21 repetitions of each exercise in any day will affect your chakras negatively and can create imbalances in your body.

RITE #1 – Spinning

To begin, stand erect with arms outstretched horizontal to the floor, palms facing down. Your arms should be in line with your shoulders. Spin around clockwise until you become slightly dizzy. Gradually increase number of spins from 3 spins to 21 spins. Inhale and exhale deeply as you do the spins.

RITE #2 - Leg Raises

Begin in lying flat on the floor, face up. Fully extend your arms along your sides and place the palms of your hands against the floor, keeping fingers close together. Breathe in, then on your exhale raise your head off the floor tucking your chin into your chest. Neck is relaxed throughout. Simultaneously, feet flexed, lift your legs, knees straight, into a vertical position. Press your lower back into the mat. (If this isn't feeling accessible, take your palms and place them under your hip bones to allow for better lower back alignment.) Press the navel towards the spine. If possible, extend the legs over the body towards your head. Do your best not let the knees bend. Then, inhale, slowly lower the legs and head to the floor, always keeping the knees straight. Allow the muscles to relax a moment, and repeat.

RITE #3 – Camel

Kneel on the floor with knees hip distance apart and the body erect. Hip bones remain over the knees the entire time. Place your hands on your lower back (hands on the back of pelvis, bases of palms on the tops of buttocks, fingers pointing down) or the backs of your thigh muscles. Have your toes curled under pressing into the toes as you come into this pose. Incline the head and neck forward, tucking your chin in against your chest. We begin this pose by inclining/dropping the head and neck forward, tucking your chin in against your chest and then head comes up chin parallel to floor. Next, inhale, allow the head to flow backward as you open the heart more and more open, shoulder blades pressing against your back ribs. Keep pressing hips forward so that hip bones remain over the knees. Allow the neck to elongate and go slightly backward, arching the spine. As you arch, you will brace your arms and hands against the lower back or thighs for support. If your neck feels strained keep it lifted, chin near sternum. After the arching return your body to an erect position and begin the rite all over again.

RITE #4 - Dandasana to Reverse Table or Reverse Plank

Sit down on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you with your legs together or walking distance apart in Dandasana/Staff pose. Ankles flexed, pressing through the heels. Press hands palms down into the mat beside your hips. Elongate the spine tall as you inhale. Then tuck the chin forward towards the chest. Feet are about walking distance apart. Bend your knees, placing your feet flat on the floor. Heels are at least a foot away from your tailbone. Place hands 4-6 inches behind your hips, palms down, fingers pointing towards your feet. Now, pressing into your hands and feet, inhale and lift your hips up as high as they will go for you today, straightening the arms. Allow your head to drop back without compressing the neck. If this is uncomfortable you can keep the head slightly lifted. Press shoulder blades against your back torso to support the lift of your chest. Pause for a moment, tense every muscle in your body. If you've built strength, instead of coming into Reverse Table you can move into Reverse Plank from Dandasana pose. So instead of bending your knees, you will keep your legs straight, point your feet and lift the hips up nice and high, allowing the head to slowly drop back to where it is comfortable. Then allowing the muscles to relax, on an exhale, lower back down into the original Dandasana/Staff pose. Rest before repeating this Rite.

RITE #5 - Updog to Downdog

Lie down with your face down to the floor. You will be supported by the hands palms down against the floor and the toes curled under in the flexed position. Throughout this Rite, the hands and feet should be kept straight. With hands under your shoulders, slide hands back by the lower ribcage. Inhale, press head, neck and chest up to be in Updog position. Arms are perpendicular to the floor, and the spine arched. Elongate the neck with a slight arch upward without compressing the neck. Picture an orange behind the neck so that you don't squeeze the orange, just a slight elongated arch in the neck. Exhale, bend at the hips, lift hips up, bring the body up into an inverted "V", Downdog. At the same time, bring the chin forward, slightly tucked against chest. Remember the orange for the front of the neck here as well. Flow back and forth from Updog to Downdog for the number of rounds you are doing for the Five Tibetans today.

CAUTION: Spinning and stretching through the following exercises can aggravate certain health conditions such as any type of heart problem, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease, severe arthritis of the spine, uncontrolled high blood pressure, a hyperthyroid condition, or vertigo. Problems may also be caused if you are taking drugs that cause dizziness. Please consult your physician prior to beginning these exercises if you have any difficult health issues or if you have any other concerns.



RITE #

1



RITE #

2



RITE #

3



RITE #

4



RITE #

5

To receive the fullest benefits of the Five Tibetans, it is recommended that we Practice 6 days a week and do 3-21 rounds for each of the 5 Rites.

Either stay with
Reverse Table
or progress to
Reverse Plank



Five Tibetan Rites

THE ANCIENT SECRET OF
THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

© Copyright 2013 Margaret Anderson | www.SpiritualCompassConnection.com
Om Ma Ne Padme Hum image courtesy of www.oma.co.kr

The Five Tibetan Rites: Exercises for Healing, Rejuvenation, and Longevity

By Mary Kurus

Copyright Mary Kurus 2001, All Rights Reserved

http://www.mkprojects.com/pf_TibetanRites.htm

Background

In 1985 a book called **The Ancient Secret of the Fountain of Youth** written by **Peter Kelder** was published which for the first time fully described an exercise program for "youthing". This is an exercise program used by Tibetan monks to live long, vibrant and healthy lives. In fact, this book states that many have lived longer than most can imagine by following the program often called the "Five Tibetan Rites". The benefits are described in this book and a subsequent book 2 with an expanded description of the program by the publisher called the **Ancient Secret of the Fountain of Youth - Book 2**, a companion to the original book by Peter Kelder. Many thanks to the publisher Doubleday for such a special an expanded explanation of the Five Rites.

Potential Benefits of the Five Rites

The authors provide many examples of the benefits of the "Five Tibetan Rites" including the following: looking much younger; sleeping soundly; waking up feeling refreshed and energetic; release from serious medical problems including difficulties with spines; relief from problems with joints; release from pain; better memory; arthritis relief; weight loss; improved vision; youthing instead of aging; greatly improved physical strength, endurance and vigor; improved emotional and mental health; enhanced sense of well-being and harmony; and very high overall energy.

How the Five Rites Work

Medical professions explain the benefits based on their personal perspective and I suggest you read the entire two books for a broad overview. However, the majority share the view that the rites represent a system of exercise that affects the body, emotions and mind. The Tibetans claim that these exercises activate and stimulate the seven key chakras that in turn stimulate all the glands of the endocrine system. The endocrine system is responsible for the body's overall functioning and aging process. This means that the Five Rites will affect the functioning of all your organs and systems, including the physical and energetic systems and that includes the aging process. The man who brought these Five Rights out of Tibet stated that "performing the Five Rites stimulates the circulation of essential life energy throughout the body".

Chakras

Chakra is an Indian Sanskrit word that translates to mean "Wheel of Spinning Energy". Chakras are spinning wheels or vortexes of energy of different color that perform many functions connecting our energy fields, bodies and the Cosmic Energy Field. Chakras are powerful electrical and magnetic fields. Chakras govern the endocrine system that in turn regulates all of

the body's functions including the ageing process. Energy flows from the Universal Energy Field through the chakras into the energy systems within our bodies, including the Meridian System.

Our bodies contain seven major chakras or energy centers and 122 minor chakras. The major chakras are located at the base of the spine (Root Chakra), at the navel (Sacral Chakra), in the solar plexus (Solar Plexus Chakra), within your heart (Heart Chakra), within the throat (Throat Chakra), at the center of your forehead (Brow or Third Eye Chakra), and at the top of your head (Crown Chakra). These chakras are linked together with all other energy systems in the body and various layers of the auras.

The Speed of the chakra spin is a key to vibrant health. The other keys to vibrant health that relates to the chakra is ensuring they are clear of negative energy and that they are perfectly shaped and not distorted.

The Five Rites speed up the spinning of the chakras, coordinate their spin so they are in complete harmony, distribute pure prana energy to the endocrine system, and in turn to all organs and processes in the body. This is one of the major requirements for vibrant health, rejuvenation and youthfulness.

The Five Rites Exercise Program

This program is often described as a modified yoga program. Simply put, yoga is a science that unites the body, mind and spirit. Today this is often called Mind/ Body Healing. The author of the book believes that yoga was brought to Tibet from India in the 11th or 12th century and that Tibetan monks over time developed modified these exercises and developed an effective program of exercises that western society now calls the "Five Tibetan Rites". The rugged mountainous conditions these monks live in may well account for their particular emphasis on vigor. Many of the yoga exercises and practices being taught in the western world today are very new. The "Five Tibetan Rites" are exactly what the ancient Tibetans developed over many centuries of time. Therefore it's very important to do the "Five Tibetan Rites" exactly as they are presented without altering the form or sequence to achieve some of the benefits accrued to these "Rites".

Beginning the "Five Rites" Exercise Program

1. For the first week, and only for those that are relatively healthy and fit, do each exercise three times.
2. If you are inactive, overweight, or have health problems begin these exercises doing one of the first three each day, and only if you feel totally comfortable doing this. Later in this article I will describe exercises you can do to help yourself strengthen so you can begin to do the "Five Rites". If you have any concerns whatsoever, please consult with your physician. Individuals on serious medications should consult with their physicians.
3. If you are overweight do not do Rites #4 and #5 until you have developed some strength and endurance. Do the substitutes for #4 and #5 until you yourself feel ready to begin doing #4 and #5 of the "Five Rites".
4. Do only what you feel comfortable doing. That may be only one of each exercise for the first week. Build up to two of each exercise the second week, three of each exercise the third week, etc. or at a faster pace only if your body does not hurt when you do these exercises.

5. 21 is the maximum of each exercise you should ever do. If you want to enhance your program, do the exercises at a faster pace, but do not do more than 21 of each exercise each day. Doing more than 21 repetitions of each exercise in any day will affect your chakras negatively and can create imbalances in your body.
6. The "Five Rites" may stimulate detoxification and often creates many unpleasant physical symptoms. This is why it's recommended to increase the number of each exercise gradually on a weekly basis. I also recommend a vibrational detoxification with Choming Essences. For more information on vibrational detoxification with Choming Essences please visit my website www.mkprojects.com.
7. If you have not exercised for some time, prepare to begin your "Five Rites" exercise program by walking daily, for a half hour each day if possible. Another alternative in preparation for the Five Rites is a stretching program with a gradual increase in the types of stretching exercises and the duration of this program.
8. A sugar free and low fat diet is an important support when integrating the "Five Rites" exercise program into your life. Also check for Digestive Food Sensitivities and eliminate all foods you do not digest easily.
9. Do the Five Rites exercises every day. The maximum you should skip is one day each week. If the exercises are done less than six days each week, the results will be greatly reduced.
10. If on certain days your time is limited, do 3 repetitions of each exercise. This takes less than five minutes.
11. For maximum benefit, do the exercises before breakfast in the morning, if at all possible. If this is not possible do them anytime during the day.

Detoxification

Detoxification is a process that helps to clean out of the physical and energetic body toxins or poisons that have accumulated in your physical cells, organs, systems and in your energetic systems (auras, chakras, meridian system and all electromagnetic, magnetic and electric systems). I strongly recommend that people beginning the "Five Rites" exercise program undertake a Choming Essence detoxification program either before or as they begin these exercises.

If you have never detoxified you will probably have many poisons accumulated in your body and energetic systems. A full detoxification program with Choming Flower Essence, Gem Essences, and Tree Essences will eliminate all toxins. Detoxifying with Choming Essences uses vibrational essences, or what is sometimes called vibrational medicine to clear your systems of toxins and poisons. This includes the elimination of parasites, candida, viruses, and all poisons from pollution, pesticides etc.

This vibrational approach to detoxification is completely complementary to the exercises of the "Five Rites". Detoxification is essential for vibrant and long life. For more information please refer to my article "Detoxification with Choming Essences" and other vibrational health articles on my website at www.mkprojects.com.

Exercises in Preparation for Doing the Five Tibetan Rites

The following group of exercises has been developed as a preparation for doing the Five Rites, or as an alternative when you are unable to do any of the Five Rites. Doing these exercises will help you strengthen and become more flexible to be able to do the Five Rites as they have been

described above. Do these alternative exercises in the sequence from one to five and when possible, substitute the Five Rite exercise into this alternative program until you have fully integrated the Five Rites. As with the Five Rites, begin by doing two or three of each exercise daily, until you are able to do 10 each day. Once you are able to do ten of these alternatives, you should be ready to begin doing the Five Rite exercises themselves.

Alternative (for Rite#1) Exercise #1

Stand with your feet about 12 inches apart. Extend your arms palms down until your arms are level with your shoulders. Swing your arms to the right, letting your right hand slap your left shoulder and your left hand slap against the small of your back. Then swing your arms in the opposite direction, having your left hand slap against your right shoulder and the back of your right hand slap against the small of your back. As you swing back and forth allow your torso and legs to follow the movement. Allow your heels to lift from the floor but do not allow either foot to completely leave the floor. As you swing right turn your head right, and turn your head left as you swing to the left.

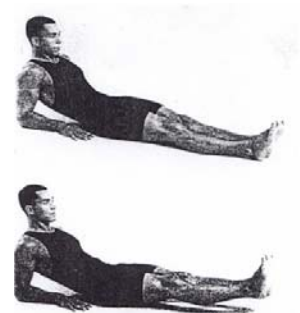
Breathing: Breathe in rhythm to your swinging Movement.



Alternative (for Rite #2) Exercise #2

Lie down on the floor and elevate your head and shoulders propping up on your elbows keeping your forearms flat on the floor, palms facing down. Keeping your legs straight, hold them off the floor For 20 or 30 seconds.

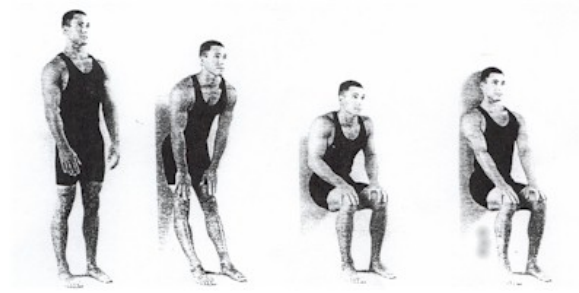
Breathing: Inhale as you raise your legs, breathe in and out normally while holding your legs up, and exhale as you lower your legs.



Alternative (for Rite #3) Exercise #3

Stand with your back to the wall and your feet 12 - 18 inches apart. Without moving your feet bend forward from the hips so that your buttocks rest against the wall. Slide downward, bending your knees as you go. Keep sliding down until your thighs are horizontal, as if you were sitting in a chair. Hold this position for 15 seconds and then slide back up.

Breathing: Begin to exhale as you slide down to the chair position and inhale when slide back up.



Alternative (for Rite #4) Exercise #4

Lie flat on your back, your arms straight, palms down, feet flat, and knees bent. Press your pelvis up a few inches off the floor and hold it for 10 seconds. Release and lower your pelvis to its original position.

Breathing: Inhale as you lift your pelvis and Exhale as you lower your pelvis.



Alternative (for Rite #5) Exercise #5

Begin in the table position. Curl your toes under And bend your hips raising your buttocks so that Your body forms an inverted "V". Your knees will lift up off the floor, your legs will be straight, and your outstretched arms will be in a straight line with your back. Hold this position for 15 seconds.

Breathing: Inhale as you raise your buttocks, breath Slowly and deeply while holding the position, and exhale as you return to the table position.



Warm-up Exercises

The following group of exercises has been developed to open, relax, release tension, to strengthen various parts of the body, and to provide toning to different parts of your body.

If you are overweight, in poor physical condition, or experiencing serious illness, this group of exercises is an excellent to help you begin your journey towards physical fitness. I suggest you do these warm-up exercises prior to the Five Rites if you are overweight or have not exercised in a long time.

Begin this group of exercises by doing 2 of each exercise and then gradually increase the repetition until you are able to do 10 of each warm-up exercise.

Warm-Up Exercise #1

Stand upright, tilt your head sideways towards your left shoulder and hold it for five seconds, then tilt your head towards your chest and hold it 5 seconds. Then tilt your head towards your left Shoulder and hold it five seconds, and lastly tilt your head backward and hold it five seconds. Return your head to a normal position.



Breathing: Exhale as you move your head around, and inhale as you return to the upright position.

Warm-Up Exercise #2

Stand upright, slowly rotate your shoulders in a forward circular motion 5 times, then reverse the movement and rotate your shoulders in a backward circular motion 5 times. **Breathing:** Breathe normally but deeply as you do this exercise.



Warm-Up Exercise #3

Stand upright with your arms help up, your elbows bent, and your hands together in front of your chest, with your fingertips touching and palms apart. Press inward on your fingers until their inside surfaces are almost touching. Your palms should not be touching. Release and press your fingers again.



Breathing: Breathe normally.

Warm-Up Exercise #4

In a relaxed standing position, hold your arms in front of you. Clasp your right hand around your left wrist, with your thumb against the inside of the wrist. Squeeze gently but firmly five times. Repeat the procedure with the left hand Squeezing the right wrist. **Breathing:** Breathe normally.



Warm-Up Exercise #5

Recline on the floor, resting the upper part of your body on your upper arms. Flex your knees and rhythmically bang them up and down against the floor in rapid succession. Your heels should remain on the floor throughout this exercise. Do this exercise for 20 - 30 seconds.



Breathing: Breathe normally through this exercise.

Warm-Up Exercise #6

Get down on the floor on your hands and knees with your hands positioned under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Bring your chin up and rotate your hips so the tailbone moves up, arching your back down. Then tuck your chin into your chest and rotate your back so that your pelvis moves down, arching your back down.



Breathing: Inhale as you move your tailbone up and exhale as you move your tailbone down.

Conclusion: The daily practice of the exercises I have described in this article is an essential element of vibrant health. It's a proven fact that people who lose weight can only maintain their weight loss if they incorporate a daily exercise program into their everyday lives. These exercises will stretch muscles you haven't felt in years so approach this program gently and begin with one or two repetitions each day, increasing each exercise by one repetition every week. After you are able to do ten repetitions of the Alternate Exercise program, you should be able to begin to do the Five Rites. And add a half hour of a brisk walk on a daily basis. Not only will it contribute to your physical health, it will give you the opportunity to enjoy all of nature around you. You will feel younger than you have felt in years. Happy and Joyous Vibrant Health.

With Love and Caring,
Mary Kurus
www.mkprojects.com



Gentle Warm-up Poses

Warm-up examples for the Body

- **Head and Neck** – Head rolls and Head tilts
- **Shoulders** – Shoulder shrugs, shoulder circles, cow face
- **Eyes** – With eyes closed eyes roll around, look left and right, up and down, warm up hands and cup over eyes (remove hands and open to a soft gaze)
- **Face** – Eyes wide open, mouth wide open, tighten face, eyebrow lift, pucker lips, move mouth side to side, jaw stretch
- **Wrists and hands** – Open fingers wide and close, press one hand back and then the other, flex and extend wrists, squeeze one wrist really tight and then the other wrist, roll wrists
- **Feet and ankles** – Flex and extend feet, roll ankles, curl toes under and open wide
- **Knees** – From seated position hinge knee back and forth, butterfly pose
- **Hips** – Butterfly pose, From seated position one foot in front and stretch forward
- **Back** – Cat Stretch, side bends, gentle cross-legged spinal twists, six movements of spine

“According to the ancient Indian system of Ayurvedic medicine, the three humors (tridoshas), control all the bodily functions. The three humors are phlegm (kapha), wind (vata), and bile (pitta). Any imbalance occurring in these physical elements results in disease. Many of the asanas are specifically designed to correct such imbalances. Warm-up exercises are included in a session to expel excess wind from the body, not only in the form of intestinal gasses, but also rheumatic wind that collects in the joints of the body, causing stiffness and pain.” ~ Swami Muktananda

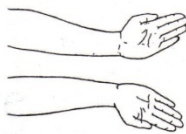
Yoga Therapy Center



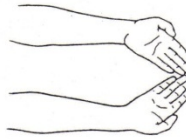
9. INHALE hands
down fingers curled
toward forearms



EXHALE hands
up fingers toward
head & spread



10. INHALE palms
flat & out



EXHALE palms
flat & in



11. INHALE fists out
EXHALE in 3x
then reverse circles



12. INHALE arms
straight, palms up



EXHALE knuckles
to shoulders



13. INHALE elbows
wide apart



EXHALE elbows
together



14. INHALE arms up
palms facing forward



EXHALE arms
down, palms
face backward



15. INHALE arms up
with palms facing in



EXHALE arms
behind back



16. INHALE arch
back, squeeze blades



EXHALE round back
open shoulder blades



17. INHALE erect
EXHALE side bend



18. INHALE sit erect
EXHALE spinal twist



19. INHALE head up



EXHALE head down



20. INHALE sit erect
EXHALE head to side



21. INHALE center head
EXHALE rotate head

3585 – 19th St., Boulder, CO. 80304

(303) 442-7004 yogimukunda@comcast.net www.yogatherapycenter.org

Physical Poses



Belly Breath in Chair



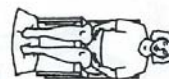
2nd Part
3 Part Breath



3rd Part
3 Part Breath



Alternate Nostril Breath

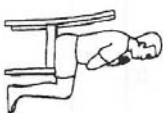


Meditation in Chair



Cross Legged
Meditation

Yin Seated Version



1



2



3



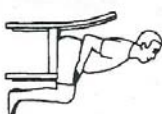
4



5



6



7



8



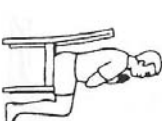
9



10



11

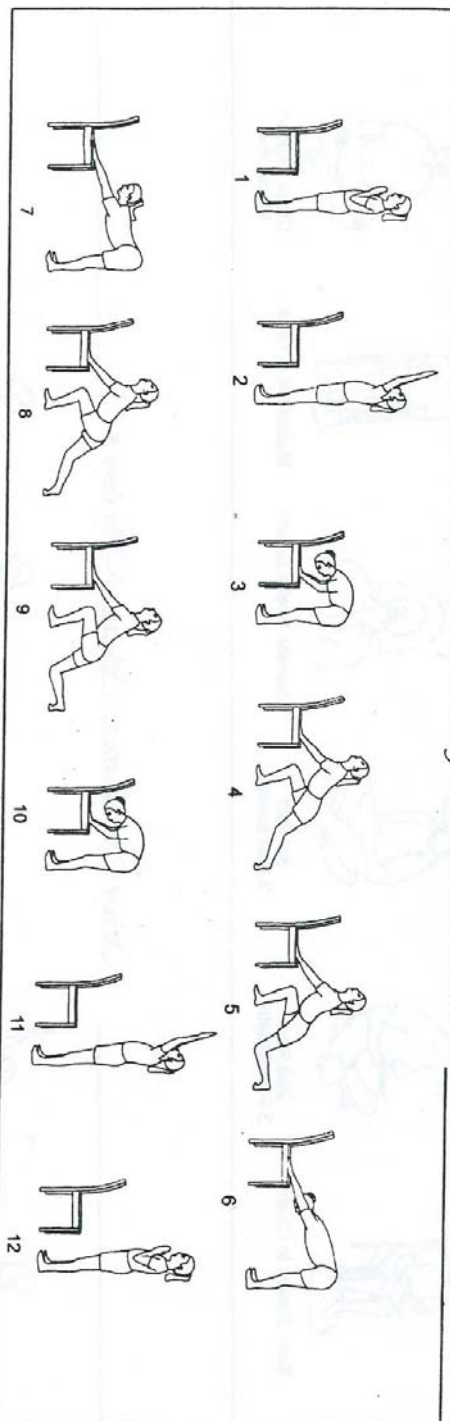


12

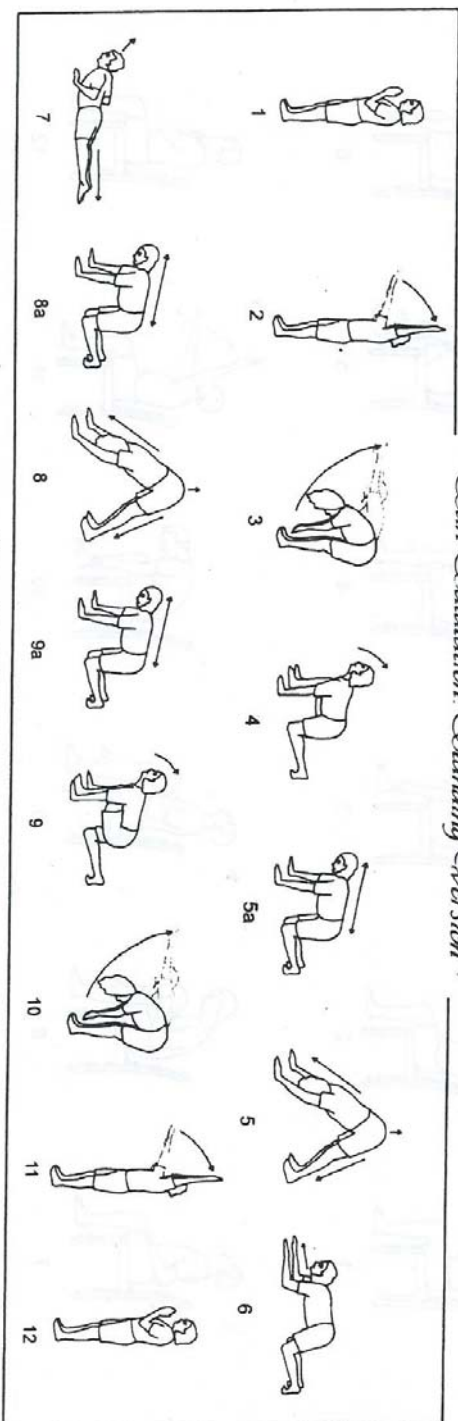
Yogi of the Heart,™ by Nischala Devi

PO Box 346, Fairfax, CA 94930 voice & fax 415-459-5336
email: ND@AbundantWellBeing.com web site: <http://www.AbundantWellBeing.com>

** Sun Salutation: Standing Version with Chair **



** Sun Salutation: Standing Version **



Yogi of the Heart™ by Nischala Devi
 PO Box 346, Fairfax, CA 94930 voice & fax 415-459-5336
 email: ND@AbundantWellBeing.com web site: <http://www.AbundantWellBeing.com>



Individual Poses

Poses to follow include poses within the Sun Salutation A & B, Moon Salutation and Core Sun Salutation Sequences, as well as the Five Tibetans.

Mountain Pose

Sanskrit: Tadasana

First image of courtesy of Yogajournal.com

Second & Third images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

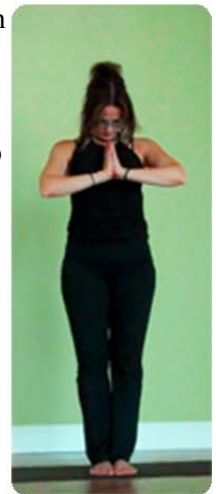
Tadasana is a great pose for grounding and opening up to our Root Chakra (found at the base of our spine) as well as connecting and opening up our Crown Chakra. Our Root or Muladhara Chakra is red in color. This chakra is our Kundalini and Grounding chakra; our sense of safety, survival and security (i.e. financial stability). This is the chakra where our Kundalini rests. The Serpents that are coiled 3 and ½ times around. The Kundalini rises from here through our entire chakra system as we ascend to enlightenment. Our Crown Chakra is found at the Crown of our head (top of the head). Here it is said to have a thousand pedaled lotus to symbolize the flowering or blossoming of our consciousness to enlightenment.



In Tadasana, most commonly known as the Mountain Pose, you are aligning your body with good posture connected as you stand activated and grounding through the feet. We are centering. We are really feeling the aliveness that you are, the energy in your body as you stand in this pose. There is a lot more going on than meets the eye in this asana. It's an amazing pose to do between poses. You really integrate and come back to the present moment. If you are worrying about the past or the future, you are not grounded. Getting back in Mountain pose assists you in getting back to the present moment by breathing and aligning and witnessing. This pose is also great for Sciatica.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Simply come to the top of your mat (you can do this anywhere even standing in line at the grocery store!). Feet walking distance apart to improve your balance or if you prefer keep your feet close together. Stand upright. Really feel all corners of your feet grounding into the mat or floor. You can even take the action of lifting all of your toes up and slowly extend and lower your toes down to the ground. Good posture here. Drawn the navel in towards the spine. Tuck the pelvis, lift the pelvic floor up as you tuck. Elongate up through the side waist and rib cage. Open the lungs. Elongate the neck. Shoulders back and down (not too far forward or back, centered - a neutral centered location for the shoulders). To assist your shoulders you can also have your palms facing front rather than in towards your body. Close your eyes. Gaze can be straight forward or eyes closed. Challenge your balance as well as allow yourself to go inward with eyes closed. Reach your fingers down to the mat. Arms and legs are activated. Lower your tailbone down to the ground and lift up from the crown of your head to the sky. Center and lengthen. Hold and breathe. To lower your shoulders even more so you may open your palms facing forward. You'll feel the difference. You can see the action and the inaction in this pose. Feel this polarity and enjoy the alignment of your body, mind and spirit.



Another variation of this pose is to stand with hands at your heart in Anjali Mudra contemplated the light in your heart.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have a headache, insomnia or low blood pressure it is said this pose may not be the best for you. Wait for these symptoms to subside by resting and doing whatever it is that assists you, then come into this pose when the timing is right.

Upward Solute Pose

Sanskrit: Urdhva Hastasana

*Image of Maggie Anderson @ Moonstone Beach, Matunuck, RI
taken by Donald Anderson IV*

Upward Solute is an amazing pose and an uplifting pose. This pose is commonly done within the Sun Salutation sequence. This is also something the majority of us will do right after waking up after a long sleep. I know I do! It allows us more expansion of the lungs and is a full body stretch. And truly makes us feel good inside out.

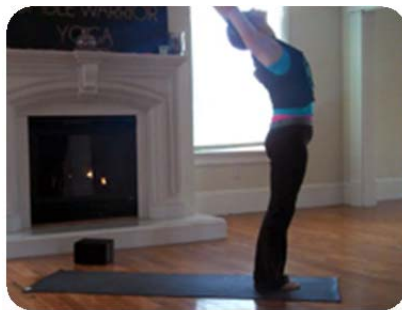
Take a moment whether sitting or standing and slouch forward, lower your head. How do you feel? Now, inhale, elongate the spine, stand up and lift your arms up high gazing up to the heavens. You may even smile consciously or unconsciously.

In this pose you can breathe more easily, and feel more uplifted. The way we move our body and express assists us in feeling a certain way. We can either be seen as how we feel on the inside or use certain poses to assist us to feel the way we **want** to feel. Give this pose a shot and see how it makes you feel! :)

Another variation of this pose is to put palms together and gaze up as well. Feels so good!

Some more benefits are:

- Stretches the belly
- Improves digestion
- Stretches the shoulders and armpits
- Helps relieve mild anxiety



Directions on how to come into the pose:

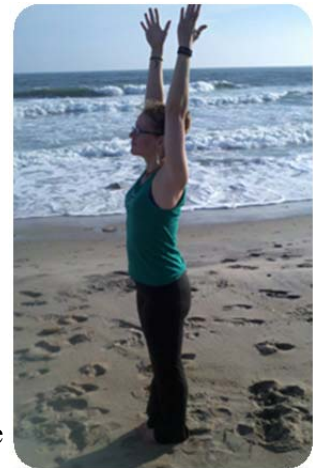
Begin in Mountain Pose. From here turn arms out, palms facing outward. Inhale, arms out and up. Relax the shoulders down and lift through the arms. If you're tighter in the shoulders, stop when your arms are approximately parallel to each other. If possible, without hunching your shoulders forward, press your palms firmly together by, touching the bases of your palms first, then the palms themselves, and finally the fingers. Being sure not to compress the back of your neck, tip your head back slightly and gaze at up towards your hands.

Do your best not to allow your lower front ribs protrude forward. Bring your front ribs down (toward your pelvis) and in (toward your spine), and lengthen your tail bone toward the floor. Then lift your rib cage evenly away from your pelvis to stretch the circumference of your belly. Hold for a few breaths. You may decide to take a gentle back bend from here as show in the second image above. A common practice as a part of the Sun Salutation A/Surya Namaskar A. And then flow to your next pose.

Then to come out, exhale, bring palms together (if they weren't already) and as you exhale palms together slowly come down to your heart for Namaste. Close your eyes. Breathing and going inward.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Avoid raising your arms if you have shoulder or neck injuries.



Standing Forward Fold/Bend

Sanskrit: Uttanasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles
Second image courtesy of yogajournal.com

Forward Fold is one of my favorite starting poses for my yoga practice. We come into this pose, allowing our whole upper body to relax. Letting it all go. Gently rocking from side to side. Releasing all tension, letting it all roll off our backs. Not only is it calming, it's also very beneficial for our hamstrings, the backs of our thighs. Allowing your knees to slightly bend to begin and gently straightening the legs when you are ready. This is a great pose if you have anxiety or just need to breathe and be for a moment. And if you are just too tired, you can do this pose sitting in a chair. Always options and modifications. Just honor the wisdom of your body always.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

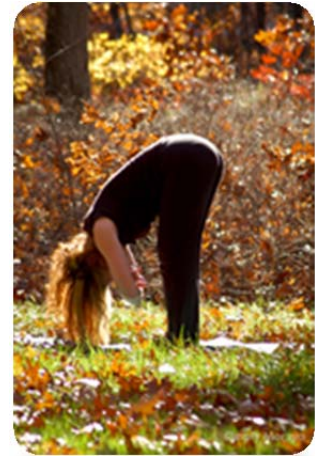
Stand in Tadasana (Mountain) with your feet together or walking distance apart, spine upright, hands in Namaste at your heart. Inhale, arms all the way up, exhale and swan dive down to the ground, knees bent or straight when you are ready. For beginners, keep the knees bent. Take hands to opposite elbows so you can be in a Ragdoll variation of this forward fold pose. Allow your whole upper body to relax down. Breathe and let it all roll off your back. Rock from side to side, nodding your head yes and know or doing figure eight's, like I like to do. Then relax down.

To deepen this pose and increase the stretch in the backs of the legs, lean slightly forward and lift up onto the balls of your feet, pulling your heels a half-inch or so away from the floor. Draw your inner groins deep into the pelvis, and then, from the height of the groins, lengthen your heels back onto the floor.

Hold for a few more breaths or until ready. Then roll up nice and slow, one vertebrae at a time, round your spine as you roll all the way up. Head will come up last. Or reverse swan dive arms out and up as you come up with a straight spine and long front torso.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have a back injury, be sure to modify this pose. Bend your knees or perform with your hands on the wall, legs perpendicular to your torso, and arms parallel to the floor.



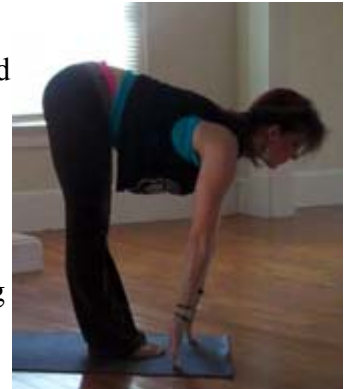
Half Standing Forward Bend

Sanskrit: Ardha Uttanasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Half Standing Forward Bend is most commonly practice in the traditional Sun Salutation sequence. First you will come into a Forward Fold and then come up halfway to prepare, offering your heart. This is a wonderful reminder of posture and a way to expand your lungs taking a nice inhale.

This pose is great for our back torso as well as our belly. In this pose, we are stretching the front torso, strengthening the back and improving our posture, as well as stimulating the belly.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Stand in Standing Forward Bend with your feet together or walking distance apart, inhale and lift your upper body up halfway by pressing your palms or fingertips into the floor (or blocks on the floor) in front of or beside your feet; or modify by placing your hands on your shins. Straightening your elbows and arching your torso away from your thighs, finding as much length between your pubic bone and navel as possible, spine naturally straight. Lift your sternum up away from the floor and forward, offering your heart. You may desire bending your knees to modify and assist in a more aligned straight back. Gaze slightly forward and prepare (never compressing the back of your neck, but rather keeping it long and free).

Hold the position for a few breaths. Then, with an exhale, release your torso into full Forward Fold.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have a neck injury, be sure not to lift the head to look forward in this pose.

Chair Pose

Sanskrit: Utkatasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Chair is a fantastic pose to heat up our internal fire. It works wonders on our rear end and thighs, legs and arms. It also stimulates the digestive system and heart. In its full version the arms are by the ears. I do also love to do the Revolve twisting variation of Chair and loving the hip opener variation too, where one leg crosses over in Standing Pigeon. But I'm getting ahead of myself. :) Let me explain how to come into this pose while you view the visual to the right.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Standing in Tadasana/Mountain pose, feet can be hip distance apart or close together. Better balance may be felt with feet hip distance apart. Inhale arms all the way up by your ears. Be mindful of good posture throughout.

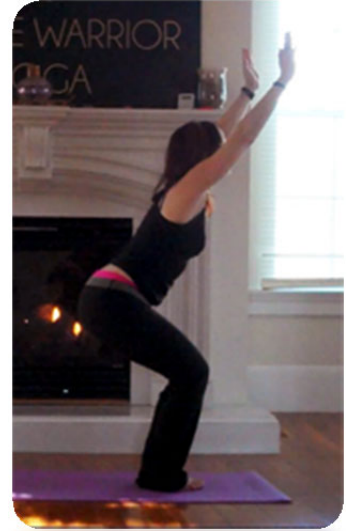
Elongate the spine as you inhale. Exhale and begin to bend your knees pulling your tooshy behind you as if you are about to sit in a chair. Allowing your body to come into a 45 degree angle. Be sure that you can still see your toes. Never dump the weight in the low back. If you feel a tug in the low back, straighten your back as you tuck your pelvic under to alleviate any pressure. From here, your arms can be straight out in front of you or straight up beside your ears. Fingers can be close or wide stretching out strong.

Feel the opening in the heart and the lungs. Here be sure the weight is in the heels not the ball of the feet. This way you aren't falling forward. Here we can lift our toes up off the mat to really feel the weight where it should be.

Hold for 30 seconds to a minute. To come out, inhale as you straighten your knees. Exhale releasing your arms to your sides back into Mountain pose.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have a headache, low blood pressure or insomnia. Also, listen to your body. If your knees are hurting due to injury modify here and don't come as deep into the pose or at all if it's too much. Your body is wise and is always speaking to you. Honor the wisdom of your body.



Runners Lunge (High Lunge with arms on mat)

Sanskrit: *Ardha Hanumanasana*

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

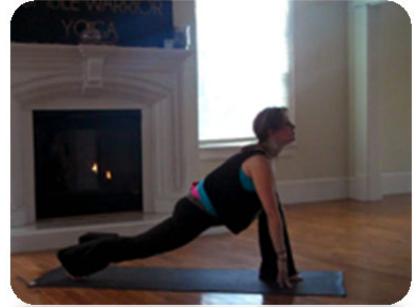
Runners Lunge is a main component of the Sun Salutation Sequence. This pose is fantastic for stretching the hips, hip flexors, groin, inner thigh and calves. You are also strengthening your legs and arms in the process. It's also great for indigestion, constipation and sciatica.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

From Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold), bend your knees and, with an inhale, step your right foot back toward the back edge of your mat, with the bottom of your toes and the ball of your foot on the floor. Be sure your front bent knee is over the ankle forming a right 90 degree angle. Your torso will be right on or hovering above your front thigh and lengthen your torso forward. You may choose to place your hands on blocks on either side of your front foot to lift your torso up and assist you in straightening your back. To soften your right groin, imagine that the thigh is sinking toward the floor under your torso's weight. Look forward (down if you have any neck soreness). To modify, lower the back knee down to the mat. Exhale and step your left foot back beside the right into Plank pose. Repeat the above instructions on the other side. You may also do this from DownDog, stepping one foot back at a time.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have knee injuries you may need to modify, by lowering the back knee down on to the mat, or avoid this pose until you are in better condition to enjoy the benefits of this pose. Also, if you have neck issues be sure to look down at the floor instead of straight ahead.



Table/Tabletop/Straight Table Pose

Sanskrit: Sandhara-asana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Table pose is a great warm-up pose when working your way into a full yoga practice. It's also a wonderful pose to do instead of Downdog or Plank pose, if you have wrist issues or just want to keep it to a more low key flow. There are several movements and flows you can do from this table position; from Moving Cats to spinal movements in all directions, hip circles and more. Enjoy exploring your body and flow.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin on hands and knees with your wrists/hands directly under your shoulders and your knees directly under your hips. Untuck your toes so the tops of your feet are pressing against the floor. Gaze (drishti) down at a point between your hands. Draw your navel in towards your spine without arching your back. Nice straight spine. Stay for 3-5 breaths to start. Then round your spine and flow back into Child's Pose.



When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

It's best to modify or not practice this pose if you have a recent or chronic injury to the knees, back, arms, wrists, or shoulders. If you have knee issues you may choose to fold up your mat or grab a blanket to place under your knees. For wrist issues you may modify by coming down onto your forearms parallel distance apart from each other, elbows under shoulders. Of course, if you have any medical concerns, talk with your doctor before practicing yoga.

Plank Pose

Sanskrit: Phalakasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

plow is another main component of the traditional Sun Salutation Sequence. This pose is great for strengthening the arms, wrists and spine, as well as tones the abdomen. I love to do Downdog to Plank waves. It really releases stagnant and blocked energies from our root chakra all the way up the spine through the belly and through the crown of the head. This is also a great variation for releasing more toxins from our internal organs. Love it! :)

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Downdog pose. Lower the hips down, taking your torso forward enough so that your shoulders are directly over the wrists, torso parallel to the floor. Hands are flat on the floor. Feet are walking distance apart. Elongate the neck. Gaze down maintaining that straight line of energy from your head all the way down to your heels. Hold the navel in towards the spine. Release shoulder blades down the back. Hug the thighs up to the sky and resist dropping your tailbone to the floor. Breathe long and slow. Hold for 30 seconds to a minute or briefly as a part of your Sun Salutation and Vinyasa's.

A modified variation of this pose is to lower your knees to the mat and work more on strengthening the arms, continuing to elongate the spine and neck.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

You may need avoid or modify this pose if you have Carpel tunnel syndrome. If accessible, you may modify by coming onto your forearms in a low plank position.

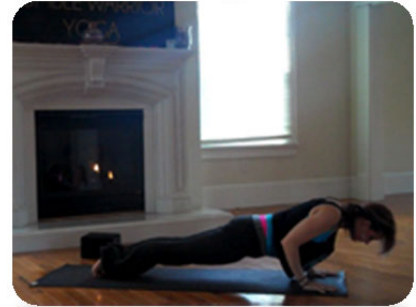


Four-Limbed Staff Pose

Sanskrit: Chaturanga Dandasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

We most commonly utilize **Chaturanga Dandasana** as a main component of the traditional Sun Salutation Sequence. This is a tricep push-up and can be challenging to maintain this pose when you first begin. Even the most experienced Yogi and Yogini have difficulty in this pose. You may modify this pose by placing the knees down on the mat or skipping this pose completely if you have Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. This pose is great for strengthening the arms (triceps and biceps), wrists, as well as tones the abdomen.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Downdog pose and slowly lower hips down into Plank pose. From here, inhale and on your exhale, bend your elbows as you lower your whole body down. Keep the elbows hugging in. Hover your body parallel just above the mat. Try to avoid lowering the back and keeping the hips and tailbone sticking up higher to the sky above as is the tendency in this pose. Keep the tailbone firmly in place and the legs very active and turned slightly inward. Maintaining that straight line of energy from your head to your heels. Draw the pubis toward the navel. Broaden space between shoulder blades. Keep elbows hugging in by the sides of the torso, pushing them back towards the heels. Maintain good alignment by stacking your joints, having your elbows over your wrists.

A modified variation of this pose is to lower your knees to the mat and work more on strengthening the arms, back and legs.

Hover here for 10 to 30 seconds. To release, either lay yourself lightly down onto the floor in a prone position or, as in the tradition Sun Salutation, push forward slowly rolling over the balls of your feet onto the tops of your feet and shift the torso slightly forward and up into Updog.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

You may need avoid or modify this pose if you have Carpel tunnel syndrome or if you are pregnant. You may modify this pose by placing the knees down on the mat or skipping this pose completely if you have Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.

Cobra Pose

Sanskrit: Bhujangasana

Image courtesy of yogajournal.com

You may commonly use **Cobra** pose during the traditional Sun Salutation Sequence. Cobra is a modified Upward Facing Dog pose. And is great to utilize instead of the full Updog when you are wanting a more restful practice. This pose is great for:

- Strengthens the spine
- Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders and abdomen
- Firms the buttocks
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Helps relieve stress and fatigue
- Opens the heart and lungs Soothes sciatica
- Therapeutic for asthma
- Traditional texts say that Cobra increases body heat, destroys disease and awakens kundalini



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Lie prone on your belly. Stretching your legs back and be on the tops of your feet. Bring your hands under your shoulders, hugging the elbows in towards your rib cage. As you press into your feet, thighs and pubis firmly into the floor, inhale and press your hands into the floor beginning to straighten the arms as you lift your head neck and chest away from the mat. Stage one is maintaining here with navel still on the mat. Stage two, when you are ready, straightening arms more coming up further but still keep the knees, thighs and tops of your feet pressing firmly into the mat. Stage three, bringing the arms back further to the lower part of your rib cage and then lifting up for a low updog position.

Actively draw the shoulders down away from the ear so that they are not "turtling" the neck. Firm shoulder blades against the back with side ribs forward. Lift through the top of the sternum, avoiding pushing the front ribs forward. This gentle backbend needs balance in distribution throughout the entire spine. Elongate your neck but try not to look straight up. Imagine the orange on the back of your neck so that you aren't crunching the neck too much. There should be space to elongate and not crush the "orange".

Hold for 15 to 30 seconds utilizing slow deep breaths. And on your exhalation release back to floor.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

You may need avoid or modify this pose if you have back injury, Carpel tunnel syndrome, headache or are pregnant. You may modify here with Sphinx pose, especially if you have wrist issues.

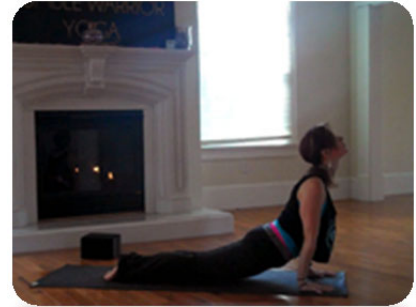
Upward-Facing Dog Pose

Sanskrit: Urdhva Mukha Svanasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

You may commonly use **Upward-Facing Dog** pose during the traditional Sun Salutation Sequence. This pose is great for:

- Improves posture
- Strengthens the spine, arms, wrists
- Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen
- Firms the buttocks
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Helps relieve mild depression, fatigue, and sciatica
- Therapeutic for asthma



I practice the Five Tibetans (an ancient Tibetan practice also known as the Fountain of Youth) every morning and this, in combination with Downward Facing Dog, is one of the five.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Lie prone on your belly. Stretching your legs back and be on the tops of your feet. Slide your hands back by your lower rib cage hugging the elbows in towards your body. As you press into your hands and feet, the torso slightly forward, scoop forward so that your wrists are under your shoulders and simultaneously lift your head, neck, chest and hips up and perhaps also the knees are off the mat (when you're ready). Press your hands into the floor with straight arms as you lift, keeping the arms firm and turned out so the elbow creases face forward. Keep the thighs firm and slightly turned inward.

Actively draw the shoulders down away from the ear so that they are not "turtling" the neck. Firm shoulder blades against the back with side ribs forward. Lift through the top of the sternum, avoiding pushing the front ribs forward. This gentle backbend needs balance in distribution throughout the entire spine. Elongate your neck but try not to look straight up. Imagine the orange on the back of your neck so that you aren't crunching the neck too much. There should be space to elongate and not crush the "orange".

Hold for 15 to 30 seconds utilizing slow deep breaths. And on your exhalation release back to floor.

Another way to transition into this pose: Often we will come into this pose from Chaturanga Dandasana. So from Chaturanga, inhale and scoop or carve your chest forward into Updog, directing that energy out from your heart. Be sure your wrists are under your shoulders and knees off the mat, when you're ready. Pull your shoulders back and open your collarbones. Engage your legs but relax your gluteal muscles.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

You may need avoid or modify this pose if you have back injury, Carpel tunnel syndrome, headache or are pregnant. You may modify here with Corbra or Sphinx pose, especially if you have wrist issues. Another beginner's tip, to especially properly align the shoulders, take your hands onto blocks and practice in this variation.

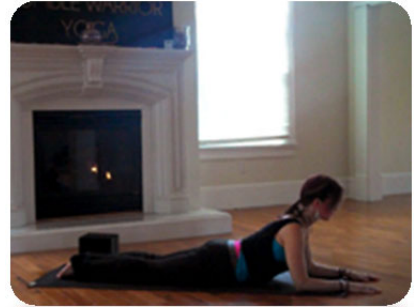
Sphinx Pose

Sanskrit: Salamba Bhujangasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Sphinx is a gentle back bend pose that is a great modified pose and lead-in to Cobra or Updog. You may commonly use this pose during the traditional Sun Salutation Sequence. This is a great lead in to deeper back bends, allowing your students to come into a back bend practice gently.

- Stretches and lengthens the spine
- Stretches the chest, lungs, shoulders and abdomen
- Firms the buttocks
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Helps relieve stress
- Calms the mind
- Traditional texts say that Bhujangasana increases body heat, destroys disease and awakens Kundalini



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Lie prone on your belly with legs stretched out behind you. Place your hands, palms facing down on the floor. Elbows will be under your shoulders. To be sure your arms are shoulder width apart, cross your forearms and you should be able to touch opposite elbows. Shoulders are away from the ears.

While in this pose have the intention of drawing your legs towards one another. Root down through the tops of your feet, ensuring that your ankles don't roll out to the sides. Push down through your tailbone. Keep your legs firm. Keep the back of your neck long; do not crank your head back. Imagine the orange on the back of your neck so that you aren't crunching the neck too much. There should be space to elongate and not crush the "orange". Engage through your belly to support your lower back.

Hold for 30 seconds to 1 minute utilizing slow deep breaths. And on your exhalation release back to floor. To deepen the pose, come into Cobra or Updog.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

You may need avoid or modify this pose if you have back injury, headache or are pregnant.

Downward Facing Dog (Down Dog) Pose

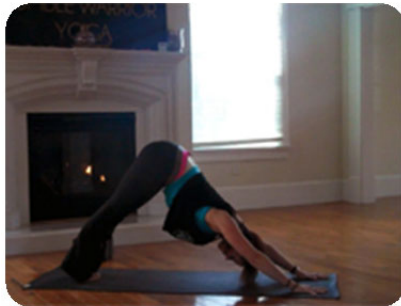
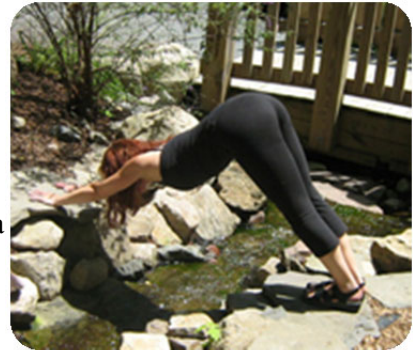
Sanskrit: Adho Mukha Svanasana

1st image of Maggie Anderson taken by Donald Anderson IV

2nd image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

The most common yoga pose around! Nicknamed, Down Dog, this is a perfect inverted "V" in the body. It's great for aligning the spine, elongating the back, legs and arms. This pose can really open up the chest and heart as well. You will do this pose in the traditional Sun Salutation as well.

Okay, so usually you are on a flat surface, not working your way over a little river. :) But I loved doing it and the pose is so awesome! What's nice is this still illustrates the perfect pose for Down Dog. You'll find this pose in most yoga classes and most commonly used in a Sun Salutations and vinyasa sequences.



It's a beautiful transitionary pose as you flow into one pose or out of another. Eventually, this pose becomes your resting pose. When you first start out it may not feel that way. But eventually you will long for a Down Dog as you evolve in your yoga practice. I practice the *Five Tibetans* (an ancient Tibetan practice also known as the **Fountain of Youth**) every morning and this, in combination with Upward Facing Dog, is one of the five. It just feels so good!

You will enjoy more challenging postures and then come into this pose and stretch your **whole** body in the process. Not only that, but Down Dog:

- Calms the brain
- Helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves menstrual discomfort when done with the head supported
- Helps prevent osteoporosis
- Improves digestion
- Relieves headaches, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue
- And it is therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, and sinusitis

It's just all-around excellent for your health. Why would you **not** do this pose during your yoga practice. :) Enjoy!!!

continued on next page...

Downward Facing Dog (Down Dog) Pose (continued...)

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Child's pose (knees on ground, slide hips back to meet heels and rest head on mat). Then slowly rise up, keep hands on mat slightly forward from shoulders and knees under hips. Curl the toes under and begin to lift your knees off the mat, straightening the legs making an inverted V position with your body. Push up up up through the tailbone. Allow your heels to reach for the mat (they do not need to touch but if and when they do, see if you can lift your toes off the mat, but only if heels are touching the mat). No air bubbles in those hands, fingers wide and hands shoulder width apart. Feet are hip distance. Shoulders are wide and back and away from the ears; and in a nice centered location - not too far forward or back. Press the chest down as if reaching for your thighs, open the heart. Though remember to avoid a banana back. Lift high from the tailbone to the sky. Elongate the spine and feel the stretch. Allow your head to hang loose and drink your breath. Breathe deeply. Hold for 3-5 deep cleansing breaths.

To come out, perhaps you can drop your knees down onto the mat and slide your hips back to your heels, coming back into Child's pose. Rest here. This is a pose you can do whenever Down-Dog becomes a bit much. But as you strengthen your body, you will be able to hold Down-Dog longer and enjoy it more fully and deeply. Slide your hands up to your knees sitting up and roll out your wrists. Down Dog works a lot in the wrists, so it's helpful to loosen them up; release the tension.

When not to do this pose or to modify / Contraindications:

You may need avoid or modify this pose if you have Carpel tunnel syndrome or symptom of Diarrhea. And it's not recommended to do this pose if you are in your late-term of pregnancy. If you have high blood pressure or a headache, try to modify this pose by supporting your head on a bolster or block, ears level between the arms.

Three-Legged Dog Pose (DownDog Splits)

Sanskrit: Tri Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana

*Image of Maggie Anderson @ Moonstone Beach, Matunuck, RI
taken by Donald Anderson IV*

I love **Downdog Splits**. It's my favorite pose to do, as well as teach in my classes. We get an awesome hamstring stretch and all along the entire leg. It feels good to open up that hip flexor as well. It's one of my *yummy* poses. You know those poses that make you say "ahhhh". This is one of the many! Just like Downdog, this pose is great for aligning the spine, elongating the back, legs and arms. This pose can really open up the chest and heart as well. More benefits are:

- Calms the brain
- Helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves menstrual discomfort when done with the head supported
- Helps prevent osteoporosis
- Improves digestion
- Relieves headaches, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue
- And it is therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, and sinusitis



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Child's pose (knees on ground, slide hips back to meet heels and rest head on mat). Then slowly rise up, keep hands on mat slightly forward from shoulders and knees under hips. Begin to lift your knees off the mat and straighten the legs making an inverted V position with your body (DownDog). Push up up through the tailbone. Allow your heels to reach for the mat, even if only as the intention of reaching towards the mat. No air bubbles in those hands, fingers wide and hands shoulder width apart. Feet are hip distance. Shoulders are wide and back and away from the ears. Press the chest down as if reaching for your thighs, open the heart. Lift high from the tailbone to the sky. Elongate the spine and feel the stretch. Breathe deeply. Allow your head to hang loose and drink your breath.

Then lift one leg up towards the sky. This can be hip level or higher. If you cannot straighten the leg, that's okay. It's all about your flexibility. In time your leg will get straighter and straighter and higher. Honor the wisdom of your body and go to your level today. Elongate your leg, while maintaining this three-legged dog. Enjoy this stretch. Hold for five deep breaths. To come out, lower the leg. Go to the other side and lift to your level. Each side may react differently to flexibility and level. In time, this may balance out as your practice.

Then to come out, drop the leg down into your DownDog. From there, perhaps you can drop your knees down onto the mat and slide your hips back to your heels, coming back into Child's pose. Rest here. This is a pose you can do whenever Down-Dog becomes a bit much. But as you strengthen your body, you will be able to hold Down-Dog longer and enjoy it more fully and deeply. Slide your hands up to your knees sitting up and roll out your wrists. Down Dog works a lot in the wrists, so it's helpful to loosen them up.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Be leery of practicing this pose if you have carpal tunnel syndrome or symptom of Diarrhea. And it's not recommended to do this pose if you are in your late-term of pregnancy. If you have high blood pressure or a headache, try to modify this pose by supporting your head on a bolster or block, ears level between the arms.

Humble Warrior (Bound Warrior) Pose

Sanskrit: Baddha Virabhadrasana

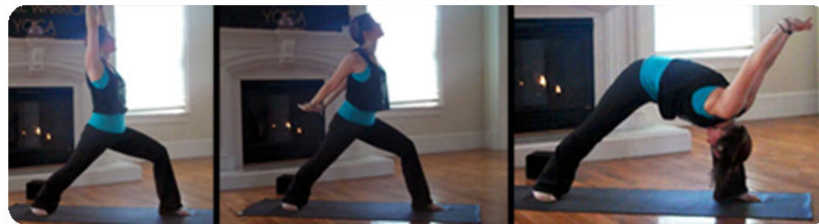
Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Humble Warrior is one of my most favorite poses! I do this pose in most of my Vinyasa Yoga Flow classes. I just love it. As you flow down and bow in reverence, you are bowing to & honoring the Divine within. Go inward. Breathe deeply.

This is a great pose to tap into Ojjayi breathing (Ocean Breath) as you hold this pose for 5 long breaths. I love to visualize my breath as white light energy flowing to that front thigh that is being tapped into for strength and stability. As you tap into the power of your breath, your prana life force energy, it allows you to hold such poses longer and come into and out of poses with more ease and more grace.



Physically, this is an intense stretch for the hips, shoulders and chest. You are strengthening the legs, thigh, quads and glutes as well.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

From Warrior I with arms in the sky, inhale elongate, exhale bring hands behind your back, interlacing fingers or thumbs (visual example of this to the right). Open your heart, shoulder blades in towards the spine, gaze forward or up, gentle backbend here if you choose.

From here, inhale lengthen the spine once again and exhale down, hinge at the hips lowering your entire upper body down, while either keeping hands on your lower back or reaching up and away from your back for a deeper shoulder stretch. Bow to the Divine within. Breathe deeply.

Be mindful here: Try not to grip with the toes, feel all four corners of your feet planted into the Earth. With good foundation and alignment you can more easily express outwardly in every pose. Hold for at least 5 deep cleansing breaths.

To come out: Release arms down as you inhale and lift your upper body up, reaching arms back up to the sky in Warrior I. Bring palms together at your heart for Namaste. Take a Vinyasa flow (Plank pose, Chaturanga, backbend of your choice, Downward facing dog) and go to the other side!

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

High blood pressure, Heart problems, those with shoulder problems should keep their arms on their back while hands are clasped or release the clasp and lower to the mat. Listen to your body. Those with neck problems should keep their head in a neutral position and not bowing down too much.

Warrior I Pose

Sanskrit: Virabhadrasana I

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Feel the energy surging within your body all the way up your spine and out your arms in this pose. We are powerful beings and in holding this pose we can choose to tap into that power and believe. This pose brings out a force within us that isn't always tapped into. Feel the Warrior within!

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Stretching back in Down Dog inhale. Exhale, and bring your left leg forward in between your hands for runners lunge. Keep your knee in a 90 degree angle, ankle over knee. From Down Dog to runners lunge. Ground your back foot down, angle it flat towards the top corner of your mat. Bring your hands to your thighs as you lift your upper body up. Maintain good foundation in the legs. Take hands to hips for a moment. Keep your hips both facing forward, like to headlights shining in front of you.

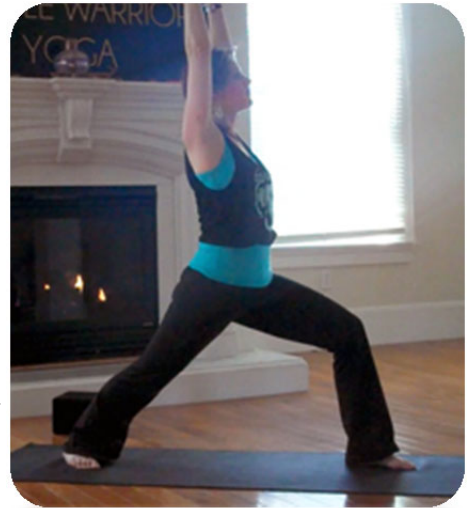
Then raise your hands up high on either side of your ears. Reach tall, pull your ribs away from your waist. Keep that knee over your ankle, no jutting out or in. Open the chest. Open your heart. Bring the energy up from your feet, through your legs, your torso, all the way up your spine and through your arms. Inhale, exhale and lower down a little more. Find your edge in this pose.

If you'd like, and if you are familiar with Warrior I, you may take a gentle arch in your spine for a gentle back bend. Look up towards your hands and if you'd like, take a temple mudra here with your hands. Clasp your hands together, with index fingers straight up and pressing together. Breathe deeply. Five deep breaths here.

To come out: Lower arms down to the mat, press both legs back into a plank pose. Both feet out behind you, hips not too high, then press into your hands and through your tailbone into Down Dog. Stretch and breathe here. Keep shoulders back and away from the ears, open up your heart and press your hands into the mat. Elongate the spine. Do the other side!!!

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

High blood pressure, Heart problems, those with shoulder problems should keep their raised arms parallel (or slightly wider than parallel) to each other and those with neck problems should keep their head in a neutral position and not look up at the hands.



Warrior II Pose

Sanskrit: Virabhadrasana II

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

Warrior II is another great pose for feeling powerful and energized while opening up the hips, thighs, chest and shoulders. I love to feel the Power Within while immersing myself in this beautiful yoga pose. Warrior II has many other benefits, such as:

- Strengthens and stretches the legs and ankles
- Stretches the groins, chest, lungs and shoulders
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Increases stamina
- Relieves backaches, especially through second trimester of pregnancy
- Therapeutic for carpal tunnel syndrome, flat feet, infertility, osteoporosis and sciatica



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Stand in Tadasana (Mountain Pose) and take one giant step back with your right leg, allowing hips to open up. Point your left foot out to the side and turn your right foot slight in. Lower down by bending your left knee so that the knee is over the ankle. Extend your arms shoulder-height out nice and strong, palms down. Gaze or Drishti is over your left middle finger. Think good posture here, growing nice and tall. Torso is centered. Drop the shoulders down away from the ears. We can even flip our palms up here for a moment to assist the shoulders in dropping down. Push through the outside of the back foot. That front bent knee wants to fall inwards. Be mindful of this and keep the leg press back and feel as if you are in between two panes of glass. Tuck the pelvis in a bit to keep good alignment with the spine. Draw the belly in and strengthen your core. Great for relieving lower back pain. Feel your legs in the floor nice and grounded, good foundation. See if you can have your left thigh parallel to the floor. Take five deep breaths here or hold for 30 seconds to 1 minute.

To come out, release the arms down and straighten the left leg. Switch sides! Gotta have balance! □ Then release the arms down once again, straighten legs. Heel toe your way back in to Mountain pose, palms together for Namaste. Close your eyes and breathe deeply.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Diarrhea, High blood pressure, or Neck problems: You do not need to turn your head to look over the front hand; instead continue to look straight ahead with both sides of the neck lengthened evenly.

Reverse Warrior

Sanskrit: Viparita Virabhadrasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Don Anderson IV

Reverse Warrior has amazing benefits. Such as, helps fatigue and lower back pain as well as strengthens the legs, abs and thighs, stretches the inner thighs, hips and groin, increases flexibility of the back and spine, clears the mind, reduces overall body weight and burns excess of calories. (The last two are my fav! teehee.) And it's great for releasing energy all the way up the body through and out the raised arm. Love it!



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Standing in Warrior II (legs wide and apart, hips open, bending left knee so knee is over ankle, think good posture and reach tall). Take the back (right) hand down and slide it down towards the ankle, resting on the back leg. As you take a side bend, reach up and over with left hand making a crescent shape or willow tree action. □ Maintain good foundation in the legs. Gaze forward or up towards sky. You are feeling this in the side waist and not the back per say. But you will receive mooch-o benefits in the spine! □ Hold and breathe. Five deep breaths here.

To come out, release the arms down to shoulder height back into Warrior II. Switch sides! Gotta have balance! □ Then release the arms down, straighten the back and legs. Heel toe your way back in to Mountain pose, palms together for Namaste. Close your eyes and breathe deeply.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Serious injury in spine.

Crescent (High Lunge) Pose

Sanskrit: Anjaneyasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Crescent (High Lunge) Pose is a deep stretch for the hip flexors and quadriceps and a great prep pose for Warrior I. It can also be a little bit of a backbend if you want it to be. This pose works a lot on the ankles, calves, thighs, groins, abdomen, chest, shoulders, armpits, neck and is great for Sciatica issues.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

From Downdog inhale lift your left foot forward in between your hands for runners lunge. Both feet are facing forward. Be sure your knee is over your ankle and both feet are in their own hip sockets and parallel lines of existence. We don't want tight rope action here where one foot is in front of the other. Each foot being in their own parallel line is the proper alignment and will give better balance in this pose.

Then inhale arms all the way up to sky beside your ears, palms facing each other. Spine straight to start. Relax the shoulders down but reach up. Gaze forward. Hips will naturally face forward and shoulders are squared and facing forward as well. Sink down low into this pose finding a new edge each time while being mindful of proper alignment. Be careful not to overarch the lower back. Lengthen your tailbone towards the floor and reach back through your right heel. Be mindful that you are not turning that back foot in. This can assist the shoulder blades deeper into the back and help support your chest. Gaze up toward your thumbs if this feels good for your neck. Be sure not to press the front ribs forward, draw them down and into the torso. Then you may take a gentle backbend from here if you choose. Hold for 30 seconds to a minute breathing deeply.

To modify you can either lower the back knee down to the ground or take legs and feet even wider. You may also improve balance by practicing resting the thigh of the forward leg on a chair seat.

To come out: Lower your hands to the mat on either side of your front foot. Step back into Downdog. Repeat on the other side.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

High blood pressure or Heart problems



Crescent Revolve (Twisted High Lunge) Pose

Sanskrit: Parivṛtta Anjaneyasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson



Crescent Revolve (Twisted High Lunge) Pose is a deep stretch for the hip flexors and quadriceps and as well as a great prep pose for Warrior I. But its potent quality is its amazing twist! Twists are powerful for the healing the spine and back. If you have spine or back issues, try adding more twists into your yoga practice. This pose also works on the ankles, calves, thighs, groins, abdomen, chest, shoulders, armpits, neck and is great for Sciatica issues. I just love this pose! A few benefits of this amazing pose are: It lengthens and stretches the spine, creates flexibility in the rib cage and stimulates the internal abdominal organs and kidneys.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

From Crescent Lunge with right leg in front and left heel pressing back, place palms together at heart center and begin twisting. Take your left elbow and kind of hook it over the right thigh or knee. If you have wrist issues make a fist with your bottom hand and press your top hand into the fist instead. Keep the heart open and gaze out or up towards the sky allowing your head to finish the twist. On the inhale, elongate the spine and on the exhale take the twist slightly deeper. To deepen the pose you may choose to open up the arms: top arm to the sky and bottom arm to the floor just outside your ankle touching the mat or hovering above the mat.

To modify you can either lower the back knee down to the ground or take legs and feet even wider. You may also improve balance by practicing resting the thigh of the forward leg on a chair seat.

To come out: Straighten your spine bringing palms together at heart center. Lower your hands to the mat on either side of your front foot. Step back into Downdog. Repeat on the other side.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

High blood pressure, Heart problems or any spine, back or wrist issues.

Warrior III Pose

Sanskrit: Virabhadrasana III

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

This pose is all about being challenged and facing those challenges in your body as well as in life. Then taking it (the pose) as far as you can within your body. So maybe you don't get totally into that balancing stick pose just yet. Maybe you still have your leg on the mat but you are attempting to lift off while lowering the upper body down in graceful balance.



As long as you are holding your center, remaining balanced and not wavering (in faith) then you are holding the pose just right for you today. Perhaps next time you can take it a little farther. And with this pose as in life, you can face those challenges and know that you receive only that which you are able to handle for right now. You are stronger than you think you are! So bring your awareness to the strongest version of you in this pose and in life!

Warrior III can show us so much about ourselves. How much balance we have in life. How focused we can become. We are called upon to tap into our deepest level of focus and concentration as well as having a little faith that we can hold this pose in its proper form while we await the queue from our instructor to slowly and gracefully come out of the pose. Likewise, we can slowly and gracefully enter into and out of life's challenges if we so choose.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Standing in Mountain Pose inhale as you bring your hands out and up, palms together. Exhale, clasp your hands together and take index finger out and press them together for Temple Mudra. Bring your right foot slightly behind you about six inches. Then inhale. On your exhale, begin to lower your upper body at the same time you are lifting your right straight leg off the mat behind you, so remaining in a straight line from your hands all the way down to your pointed toes. The stopping point is where you reach your edge today. Perhaps only a few inches off the ground or if you are able lift your leg up and upper body down to meet at hip level. Hold wherever your edge is today and breathe. The leg and knee you are balancing on is straight not locked and also not hyper extended. Pull the navel in towards the spine. Keep hips parallel to the mat, so you're not opening the hips and stacking them but rather keeping them side by side. Gaze is down to keep your head in alignment with your spine. You are working your gluts – the buttocks – and hamstrings as well as your core here. You are strengthening your shoulders and muscles of your back while improving posture.

You may try working with Ouija breath here. Breathing deeply while constricting the throat to make a sort of ocean sound in the back of the throat. The focus on the breath keeps you breathing and oxygenating the body, as well as fueling yourself to hold the pose. Remove thoughts here. Only be. Hold for a 30 seconds to a minute or longer if you'd like. Then slowly lower back down and shake the legs, especially the leg you were balancing on. Then do the same on the other side...

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

High blood pressure

Fallen Triangle/Fallen Star Pose

Sanskrit: Panna Trikonasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Fallen Triangle Pose is one of my favorite poses (but aren't they all ;)). Fallen triangle is a combination of Triangle Pose and Plank Pose. It's great for working with and strengthening arm and core strength. Some amazing benefits of this pose include:

- Strengthens the core, arms and glutes
- Stretches your chest, legs, shoulders, and neck
- Opens the hips, chest and shoulders, allowing for deeper breathing

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Start in downward facing dog. Lift your left leg up into a down dog splits. Then tuck your left knee in towards your torso. Reach the knee up towards your right wrist, twisting as you straighten the left leg and place the outer edge of your left foot on the ground outside of your mat. Pivot to the big toe edge of your back foot. Open up your chest. If accessible, elongate your top arm, reaching it up toward the sky. Lift your hips and hold for 5 breaths. Gaze toward your right hand.

To come out: Draw the right leg back in and return to downward facing dog. Follow these steps to do the pose on the left side.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

To modify you can turn the back foot flat at an angle. You may also place your right knee on the floor for a modified plank pose instead. You may also keep both hands on the mat till you've built up arm strength.

This pose is not recommended for people with rotator cuff injuries or wrist injuries; including carpal tunnel syndrome.



Wild Thing Yoga Pose

Sanskrit: Camatkarasana

Image of courtesy of Yogajournal.com

Images of Maggie Anderson by Morayo Sayles

Wild Thing is such a fun pose! It's a great lead in to other deeper backbends as you flow through your practice. We are opening our hearts and allowing for expansion when in this pose. Learn where we can bend and be open to new people and situations, as well as to forgive and to love. Breathe and have fun with it! I love to teach this one. I usually hear a few giggles or outright laughter because it's not always an easy-to-get-into pose to start, but once you get it, you get it and it's there...the opening and the love. Enjoy exploring openness.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

From Down Dog, begin to take a hip opener pose, by lifting your left leg high in Down Dog Splits to the hip opener. Flex your foot, bend your left knee and lift this leg up and over to the right, stack your hips (see below images). Stay here for a moment.



Then flip your dog (as in first Image above). Turning your right hand and back foot at an angle, coming onto the outside of your right foot, press your weight into your right hand. Lift your left arm up and over sweeping above the head and behind you as you arch your back and lift your hips. Curl your head back as you elongate the neck and allow the head to gaze over behind you. Open your heart and express.

You can either continue to play with this pose back and forth and then hold for a few more breaths. Then slowly come back out and into Down Dog. Bend your knees to the mat and slide your hips back to Child's pose. Take five deep cleansing breaths. Then repeat on the other side.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Avoid practicing this pose if you have carpal tunnel syndrome or rotator cuff injuries. Also, be mindful of any back issues and always listen to your body.

Half Moon Side Bend or Upward Solute Half Moon Side Bend

Sanskrit: Urdhva Hastasana Ardha Chandrasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Half Moon Side Bend or Upward Solute Half Moon Side Bend (not to be confused with the standing balance pose also called **Half Moon**) is an amazing side waist stretch and an uplifting pose. This pose is commonly done within the **Moon Salutation** sequence. This is also something the majority of us will do right after waking up after a long sleep. I know I do! Just like **Upward Solute**, it allows us more expansion of the lungs and is a full body stretch, as well as an intense side waist stretch.

Go for a "smile-asana" in this pose! Turn the corners of your mouth up and enjoy. In this pose you can breathe more easily, and feel more uplifted. This pose immediately rejuvenates our energy, giving us the boost we need! The way we move our body and express assists us in feeling a certain way. We can either be seen as how we feel on the inside or use certain poses to assist us to feel the way we **want** to feel. Give this pose a shot and see how it makes you feel! Some more benefits are:

- Stretches both sides of the entire body; including the torso, waist, thighs and shins, as well as the belly
- Great Spinal movement and stretch
- Tones the thighs
- Improves digestion
- Stretches the shoulders and armpits
- Helps relieve mild anxiety
- Therapeutic for asthma and congestion
- Creates space between vertebrae, improving posture

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in **Mountain Pose** standing with feet together or walking distance apart, arms at your sides. Press down evenly feeling all four corners of your feet firmly into the ground. Both feet are grounded the entire time; thighs firmly engaged. Squeeze outer shins towards each other. While drawing the belly in slightly, bring pelvis to its neutral position, keeping hips even with the center line of your body. Widen sits bones by rotating thighs slightly inward; quadriceps activated while drawing tops of thighs up and back. On your next inhale, sweep arms out to the side and then up overhead. Interlace fingers, and point index fingers upward in temple mudra position.

Root left foot and left hip, extending torso, lifting up and out through the length of your spine and arms, bend to the right. Keep the heart open and perhaps gaze slightly upward. Hold for five breaths. Root right foot and right hip and, extending the torso - inhale and come back through center, lifting up and out through the length of your spine and arms - exhale, bending to the left. Keep your chest open. If accessible, gaze upward. Root left foot, return to center. Hold for five breaths.

To come out: Exhale, sweep your arms back down to the sides of the body. You may decide to repeat this sequence up to 10 times.



When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Avoid raising your arms completely overhead if you have shoulder or neck injuries.

Goddess (Fierce Angle) Pose

Sanskrit: Utkata Konasana

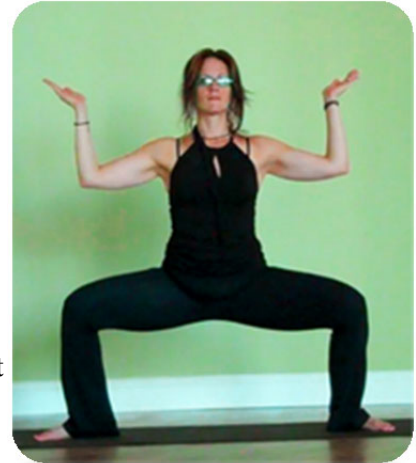
Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Goddess Pose is an empowering pose. Physically, you are opening up the hips, inner thighs, chest and groin. You are building your inner and outer strength here. This is a simple yet powerful pose allowing you to tap into the Goddess within you.

Other physical benefits from this pose are that it stimulates the urogenital, respiratory and cardiovascular systems. So a rockin' awesome pose! And one of my favorites! :)

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Mountain Pose. Take your left leg out behind you so both feet are still on the mat. Open your legs about a legs length apart. In order to figure this out in your body, take your arms out shoulder height and check to be sure your ankles fall directly underneath your wrists. This is about a legs length apart for your body. Turn your feet out at an angle towards to the top corner of your mat or about 45 degrees. Then bend your knees, coming over the ankles, sinking the hips down. Now you are in a nice wide squatting position. When you need to you may straighten your legs or come up a little higher. Listen to your body. Be mindful to press the knees back and hips forward, opening the chest even more.



From here, take your arms up about shoulder height and position them in goal post arms, or bending the elbows sticking arms straight up. Then bend your wrists, turning the palms facing towards the ceiling. Gaze straight ahead with chin parallel to the floor. I am reminded of being a powerful Egyptian Goddess here. :) Love it!

In this position, I am most commonly offering shoulder and heel lifts in class. Inhale, taking one shoulder up, exhale down. Other shoulder up and down. Do this about six times. Then switch to the heels. Inhale, lift one heel up, then exhale heel down. Inhale, other heel up and exhale it down. Six times. Then do both shoulder and heel on same side, switching back and forth 6-8 times. Then pause, hold here. See if you can lower even more, getting a little deeper into the pose. Breathe and hold for 5 deep cleansing breathe.

Then release, by straightening the legs, lowering the arms. Inhale arms all the way up, palms together, exhale them down to your heart for Namaste. Heel, toe your feet back in to each other. Close your eyes and reflect.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you've had recent or chronic injury to the legs, hips or shoulders, modify this pose and only go as far as is comfortable. Always listen to the wisdom of your body. It's always speaking to you.

Five Pointed Star Pose

Sanskrit: Trikonasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Five Pointed Star is a beautiful pose. You'll notice the Sanskrit for Five Pointed Star pose is the same as for Triangle pose. Each pose creates a triangle. :) Physically, you are lengthening and opening up the entire body including the hips, inner thighs, chest and groin. In this pose we are also realigning the spinal column and opening the chest, improving circulation and respiration.

Commonly, you will use this pose in **Moon Salutations** or before and after **Goddess**, **Wide Standing Forward Bend** and **Triangle** poses.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in **Mountain Pose**. Take your left leg out behind you so both feet are still on the mat parallel to each other. Open your legs about a legs length apart. In order to figure this out in your body, take your arms out shoulder height and check to be sure your ankles fall directly underneath your wrists. This is about a legs length apart for your body. Or simply bring your feet about 3 to 3 and 1/2 feet apart.



Inhale and lift both arms out to your sides and parallel to the floor. As you exhale, check your alignment. Keep your spine long and your tailbone down. Let your head float above your shoulders. Gaze straight ahead with chin parallel to the floor. Feel the expansion in your expression here. When you exhale, extend the energy out the five points — feet, hands, and top of the head — for 3 full breaths.

Then release by lowering the arms to your hips. Heel, toe your feet back in to each other. Close your eyes and reflect.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you've had recent or chronic injury to the legs, hips or shoulders, modify this pose and only go as far as is comfortable. As a modification, you may place your hands on your hips.

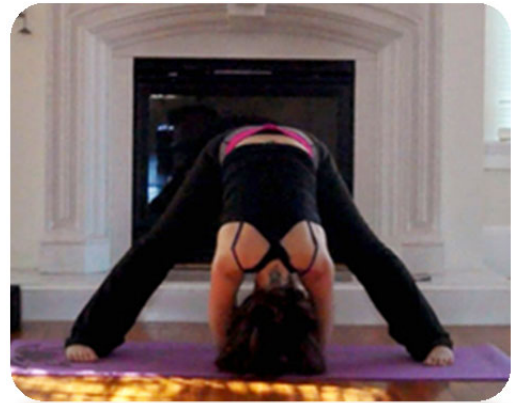
Wide Standing Forward Bend

Sanskrit: Prasarita Padottanasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Wide Standing Forward Bend is one of my favorite poses. I love it! I could stay in the pose for a very long time! Just can't get enough. This is a beautiful inversion that assists us in going deeper inside.

This pose is fantastic for toning and strengthening the groin, hips, hip flexors, calves, thighs, inner and back legs, knees, hamstrings and opening the spine. It increased blood flow to the upper body and head, thus improving blood circulation to the upper body and brain; not to mention tapping into our nervous system to relieve anxiety and stress, as well as calm the mind. Ahhhh.... This pose has been known to calm mild back aches as well. While bending in this blissful pose, you are also, toning up and massaging the abdominal and pelvic organs.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Standing in Tadasana (Mountain pose), step or jump feet out to the sides, about a legs length apart. To get the proper width, take your arms out to your side shoulder height. Check to be sure your ankles are under your wrists. Lower your arms. Both feet are facing forward, almost pigeon-toed. Inhale arms up, exhale arms forward and down, as you hinge from your hips and lower to the ground. At this point, you may choose a block to rest your hands or head on depending upon how tight your hamstrings are. If it's accessible, you may take my favorite variation, hand to opposite elbow and allow your entire upper body to relax forward, even swaying from side to side a few times. If you are extra flexible and feeling like this isn't enough of a stretch you may want to bring your feet closer together. Be mindful of shifting your weight into the balls of the feet. Your heels will still be touching but the weight is simply shifted forward, to allow for the deepest stretch in your body. Breathe deeply into the abdominal area encouraging movement, as well as an internal massage. Close your eyes.

Relax. Breathe. Go inward. Hold here for a few deep cleansing breathes or even for a minute or more. (Other variations are to take your hands and hug your ankles. Or bring your hands next to your ears. Or take your hands under your body and behind you to go deeper into the stretch.)

To come out, press your hands into the floor under your head. Lift your head and upper body coming up to hip level. From here you may either roll up, rounding your spine one vertebrae at a time or hinging at the hips come up with a straight spine. Heel-toe your feet back in towards each other, standing back in Mountain Pose. Inhale arms up, exhale palms together at your heart for Namaste. Close your eyes and breathe.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have a lower back pain or injury be sure avoid the full forward bend, perhaps taking your hands onto two blocks instead to be a little higher and take any possible pull or strain off the back from the injury.

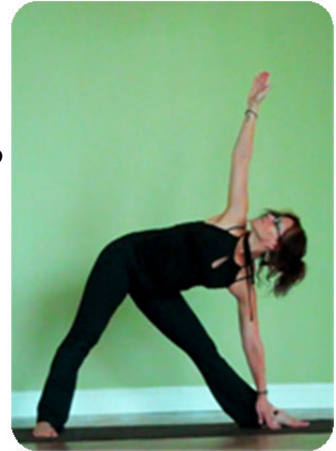
Triangle pose

Sanskrit: Trikonasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

The **Triangle** yoga pose is fantastic for opening up the hips, heart and chest, as well as strengthening the legs, thighs, glute's, spine and our waist! One of my many favorite poses. Finding the freedom in this pose proves easy as our heart and hips are open allowing for release of emotional stagnant blockages. Feel the energy flow outward and upward clearing your body. A great pose to begin with prior to Half Moon pose. This pose also:

- Stretches and strengthens the thighs, knees, and ankles
- Stretches the hips, groins, hamstrings, and calves; shoulders, chest, and spine
- Stimulates the abdominal organs
- Helps relieve stress
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves backache, especially through second trimester of pregnancy
- Therapeutic for anxiety, flat feet, infertility, neck pain, osteoporosis, and sciatica



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Have a block ready in front of the foot we will lean towards. Begin in a wide legged stance, about a legs length apart or 3 1/2 to 4 feet apart. Have arms out shoulder height (in **Five Pointed Star** pose) and check to see that your ankles are under your wrists. This will be about the right legs length apart for you. Feet are facing forward, parallel each other. From here point your right foot out to the side, align the right heel with the left heel, keeping the center of your right knee cap in line with and facing the same direction at your second and third toes.

Take arms up shoulder height, palms facing down. From here begin to extend your arms and torso over the right leg, going as far as you can go--reach, reach, reach. And then begin to cartwheel arms, right arm flow down and left flow upward. Straight line from right to left hands. Allow your right hand to fall where it may here, either on a block, your thigh, shine, ankle or the mat. This will be perfect for you, as you work on flexibility eventually this pose may deepen for you.

Be mindful that you are not collapsing down, but keeping the two side waists equally long and still feeling a straight spine, extending up towards your head. Rotate the torso to the left, keeping hips and heart open here. Find the freedom in this pose. As your left arm is extended up towards the ceiling, your hand is open and fingers stretching up. You may gaze up, forward or down. Whatever feels most comfortable for the neck here. Honor the wisdom of your body always.

Stay in this pose for 30 seconds to a minute or 5 deep breaths here. To come out feel as if someone is pulling your left hand upward with a string and lift your torso all the way up. Practice this pose on the other side for the same length of time, before finishing by walking feet in towards each other, heel-toe-heel-toe in to Mountain pose.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Diarrhea, Headache, Low blood pressure. If you have a heart condition practice this pose against a wall, keep the top arm on the hip. If high blood pressure turn the head to gaze downward in the final pose. For neck issues, don't turn your head to look upward; continue looking straight ahead and keep both sides of the neck evenly long.

Pyramid Pose

Sanskrit: Parsvotthanasana

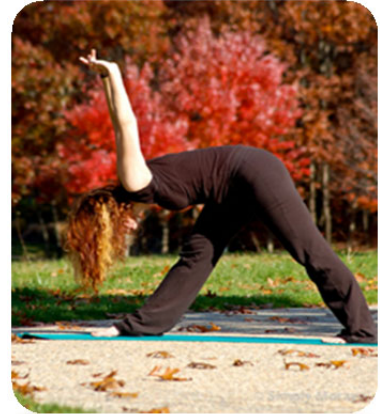
1st Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

2nd Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Pyramid pose is a fantastic variation of a runners stretch. It stretches and strengthens the legs and most especially those hamstrings (back of the legs). It's one of my many favorite poses. What's great is this pose is also great for calming the brain and improving the digestive system, as well as stretching the spine, shoulders and wrists (if in the full pose with hands flat on mat facing behind you). To boot your abs are also being stimulated. It's an all-around great pose. If you're an athlete this is a must-have pose. And even if you're not! :)

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in **Tadasana (Mountain Pose)**. Step your left leg out behind you about 3 1/2 to 4 feet wide. Both feet can face forward with a slight turn out of the back foot. Align the front heel with the back heel. If you feel the back foot needs to be out further for the first few times you do this pose for better balance that's perfectly divine. It's great to warm up to this stretch a few times with a micro-bend in the front knee and eventually you'll be able to straighten it out. Turn your hips forward and the front (right) hip pulling out and back a little so that the right kneecap is center line with the right ankle. Take a breath.



Now inhale, and on the exhale hinge at the hips as you bring your torso forward. It's here you will know your limits in flexibility. You may only go slightly forward in the forward stretch and rest your hands on your upper thigh. Or you may find you can come forward and down a little more. Maintain a straight back, good posture throughout the entire pose. Lower down where your edge is. It's not about going low. It's about going where you feel the stretch deep. **Sweet discomfort. No pain.** If your hands can reach the mat, fantastic. Be mindful of that straight back. Shoulders are not rounding and are back down and away from the ears. The crown of your head may back parallel with the mat here. Breathe. From here, if you'd like to take it one step farther, allow your hands to turn around to face behind you, palms on the mat. Tighten your thighs lifting the kneecaps. Hold and breathe. Nice deep cleansing breaths here....

If you'd like to take it to another level you may take your hands, while maintaining the pose up and behind you to clasp behind your back. You can rest your hands on your back or lift them off the back for an extra stretch in the arms and shoulders. Hold here and take 3-5 deep cleansing breaths.

When you're ready, slow come up, again hinging at the hips, straight back, hands still clasped behind your back (if you took that variation). Maintaining the leg foundation, allow slight arch support in the back and open up the chest, the heart, look up and allow for a mini-backbend here. Then release the hands. Release the legs coming up into Tadasana. Take a breath.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have back injury or high blood pressure you may not want to practice this pose at its fullest length, but rather only come down halfway. Severe back or spinal injury: get permission from your doctor or physical therapist and modify by not going down as far.

Side Lunge/Wide Leg Squat

Sanskrit: Prasarita Lunge

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Side Lunges are perfect for opening up our hips and inner thighs, as well as toning our buttocks and quads. Mostly, my favorite benefit of coming into this pose is the deep inner thigh, hamstring, groin and calf stretch we get.

Switching from side to side is a great way to warm-up the body and get the blood pumping in your lower body. More heat and synovial fluid will be pumping in the hips allowing you to even flow back and forth at a faster pace, if desired. We have the option here to even allow our arms to flow free and let loose.

The Side Lunge is a main component of the **Moon Salutation** Sequence.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

From **Runner Lunge (Ardha Hanumanasana)** begin to take both hands to the inside of the front bent leg. Bring both hands to the inside of the right foot, and lower your tailbone as you pivot the right foot to face forward, rotating the left leg so that toes point upward (more challenging is to point left foot forward). If accessible, bring your hands together in Anjali Mudra. If that is too challenging, keep the palms on the floor. Hold for a few breaths. Then switch flowing to the other side repositioning and aligning the feet and hands for the opposite side lunge.

To release, press your hands into the mat, slowly lifting your hips and bringing feet closer together. Slowly, round your spine, lower your hand and roll up one vertebrae at a time. Feet come all the way back in together, palms to the heart, lower the head, in Mountain with Anjali Mudra.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have lower back or knee injuries you may need to modify or avoid this pose until you are in better condition to enjoy the benefits of this pose. If the low squat in this side lunge is challenging stay up higher, even placing hands on the thigh you are lunging on, spine straight.

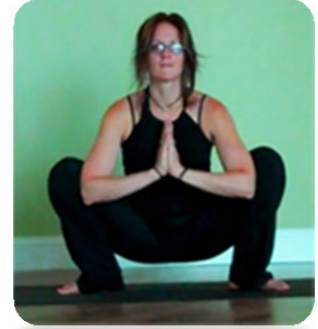


Yogic Squat/Garland Pose

Sanskrit: Malasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Yogic Squat (or Garland) Pose is one of my favorite poses. I love the inner thigh stretch I receive as well as the feelings of releasing some tension. I can just close my eyes and let go here. This pose is great for our thighs, and stretches the ankles, groin and back torso, as well as tones the belly. Not everyone will be as open as I am in the hips and inner thighs. Each pose provides its own unique challenges and release for all of us. Learn what each poses' message is for you as you explore this and every yoga pose.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in **Tadasana (Mountain pose)**. With feet shoulder width apart or as close together as possible, bend down into a squat position. Keep heels on the mat if you can; otherwise, support them on a folder mat. Lean your torso forward and fit it snugly between your thighs. Rooting your feet as you lower your tailbone. Separate your knees wider than your hips. If flexibility allows, bring palms together at your heart. Spine long. Elbow may press into your inner thighs to open the thighs and groin even more and help lengthen the spine and front torso. If your heels are lifted, don't worry about it; you could try keeping the feet a little wider apart. Keep the knees and feet pointing in the same direction. On an exhale, lift the pelvic floor up, engaging your root lock or Mula Bandha. Feel the energy rising up from the Root Chakra all the way up your spine and out your Crown Chakra.

If lowering the tailbone close to the floor is not accessible, modify by lifting up to about hip level and placing your elbows on your thighs, feet hip width apart, hands to heart, spine straight.

For more of a challenge, press your inner thighs against the sides of your torso. Reach your arms forward, then swing them out to the sides and notch your shins into your armpits. Press your finger tips to the floor, or reach around the outside of your ankles and clasp your back heels.

A binding twist is fantastic and fun in this pose as well! You can place one hand down on the floor in front of you, then take the other hand up and internally rotate hand/arm down and behind your back reaching (you can choose to simply reach up and hold the arm to the sky here). Take the hand that was on the floor and bring it down around, internally rotating your upper arm to reach your hand around your leg, perhaps finding the other hand that reached up and over. Explore your potential but listen to the wisdom of your body. Move with intention always.

Hold for 30 seconds to one minute, then inhale, straighten the legs and stand in **Forward Fold (Uttanasana)**.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have lower back or knee injuries you may need to modify or avoid this pose until you are in better condition to enjoy the benefits of this pose. If the low squat is challenging stay up higher.



Seated & Resting Poses

Easy Seated Pose

Sanskrit: Sukhasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

As my children like to call this pose: Criss-Cross Applesauce! :) This is the pose that starts off many yoga classes. And I always finish with this pose with legs crossed, eyes closed and hands on the knees palms facing up. We finish with our Namaste! :) This is a great pose for meditation, grounding and centering. After a long yoga practice your body is ready for relaxation and can hold with stamina for a deep meditation that can bring you peace, tranquility and mooch-o connection benefits.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Simply sitting down with legs crossed. Now, it's helpful to take any extra weight off the hips here so do get a folded blanket or two and slide them right under your hips. You can use a bolster, cushion or a rolled up mat as well! This will assist you to keep your back straight without strain as well as to more easily come into a calm and centered frame of being. Think good posture here. Lowering down from the tailbone and lifting up from the Crown. Drop your shoulders. Relaxed shoulders means a relaxed body. Breathe deeply with presence to the breath. Bring your awareness to your breath and be in the present moment. Come out of the pose when you wish.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Knee issues.



Half Lotus

Sanskrit: Ardha Padmasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Half Lotus is seated yoga pose wonderful for meditation. Half Lotus opens up the hips, strengthens the back and stretches the knees, ankles, hips and thighs. This pose improves circulation and blood flow in the pelvis, which can ease menstrual discomfort for women. Sitting upright with your spine aligned calms the mind, reducing stress, anxiety and mild depression.

This is a great pose to do instead of or leading up to a full Lotus position. The more we practice this pose the easier it will be as our body reaches a deeper level of flexibility. This is not a true beginner pose either. It's, perhaps, stage two, where Easy Seated Pose is stage one and full **Lotus** is an advanced stage three.



Half lotus, Easy Seated pose and full lotus are three common poses that are utilized for deep meditation and pranayama (yogic breathing techniques). Click the links to learn more on breathing techniques and meditation. The soothing effects of this pose can allow for greater awareness of your mind, body, and spirit – which can spill over into your everyday life. You may discover that practicing this pose and meditation, as well as breathing techniques bring you peace, even outside of your yoga class.

Listen to your body. Honor where your body is today and take it in steps. Remember sweet discomfort in yoga, no pain. Never push your body beyond its edge. If you have any pain, back off and ease into it in your time. Many students feel they “should” be able to get into full Lotus Pose, but it’s important not to attempt a pose you’re not ready for. Practicing Half Lotus provides all of the benefits of Lotus Pose with the added benefit of not injuring a body that’s not ready for full Lotus! Allow yourself to be where you are today and practice the art of patience, enjoying the journey as much as the attained goal. Practice Half Lotus regularly, even if it’s only for a minute a day. With patience, dedication and repetition, flexibility will come. It’s as much about getting there as it is about being there.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Easy Seated Pose. Maintaining a straight spine, bring your left foot and knee up towards your chest at first (to assist the leg in the stretch and opening) and then place the left foot down towards your right inner thigh crevice/the hip crease there. This may be challenging on your first few attempts, so modify and place the foot further away or even placed on the mat in front of the right foot. Keeping your right foot under left knee. Listening to your body is key here. Close your eyes and take your gaze inward. Hold for several deep breaths to one minute, working your way up the more you practice.



Only go as far as your body allows you to go. And remember, sweet discomfort in yoga, no pain. Never force this or any pose. Instead, practice a modified version like staying in Easy Seated Pose or take one foot in front of the other until your flexibility increases.

Mudra hands are a wonderful part of your meditation practice in this pose. You may try Namaste hands, palms together at your heart as shown to the left (Anjali Mudra), or as simple as resting your hands on your thighs with your palms facing up or down. Another beautiful mudra is Gyan Mudra, by creating a circle with each index finger and thumb holding comfortably over your knees.

A great pose to do before this pose is Cradle-the-baby pose. This is a great hip opening and a beautiful stretch for the leg allowing for more ease into half lotus.

To come out, release the leg. Go to the other side, holding for the same amount of time. Then extend both legs straight out shaking out any tension created from this pose. Close your eyes and breathe deeply.

When not to do this pose or to modify/ Contraindications:

If you have a recent or chronic injury to the knees, ankles, or hips, avoid practicing this pose. If you are very tight or find these areas painful, it might be difficult to cross your legs. If the knee of your top leg doesn't rest comfortably on the floor you may choose to place a firm blanket under that knee. If you are still unable to get into this pose and have very tight hips, a great modification to practice is sitting in a chair first. Have one foot flat on the floor, cross the opposite ankle into the hip crease of the grounded foot. Hold the pose for up to one minute, and then repeat on the opposite side.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have a recent or chronic injury to the knees, ankles, or hips, avoid practicing this pose. If you are very tight or find these areas painful, it might be difficult to cross your legs. If the knee of your top leg doesn't rest comfortably on the floor you may choose to place a firm blanket under that knee. If you are still unable to get into this pose and have very tight hips, a great modification to practice is sitting in a chair first. Have one foot flat on the floor, cross the opposite ankle into the hip crease of the grounded foot. Hold the pose for up to one minute, and then repeat on the opposite side.

Wide Seated Forward Bend

Sanskrit: Upavistha Konasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Wide-Angle Seated Forward Bend is one of my challenge poses. It's very simple and yet one that works more on me mentally than physically. In the past I have not been able to bend forward very far if at all once my legs are wide. For this I had to work on mental thoughts and the ego instead. I may not ever get to the low bend that the flexible woman to the right is doing. And that's okay. We each have unique anatomy. It's how we're put together. However, I also

know that the more you practice the pose and the more you surrender to where you **are** rather than pushing or giving up, the more your body will simply extend or bend further into the pose. You just simply follow your breath and surrender to wherever you are naturally and allow your body to be where it may. As you breathe you will notice yourself moving further into the pose.



After doing this pose for six years and more diligently once a week for over a year now, I am finally able to place my forearms comfortably in front of me on the mat. My bend is a little further while still maintaining a straight back and surrendering to wherever I fall. It just happened that one day I was diligently flowing into this pose as usual and then it hit me that I could lower down further than I had been before and without much effort. So now I am comfortable resting on my forearms. I know that as I practice this more and more that maybe in another year or two I may be able to come even further into this pose. We'll see! But I am happy to keep the lesson and surrender to where I am at, focus on my breath and be.

This pose is fantastic for the groin, hips, calves, thighs, knees, hamstrings and spine. This is a fantastic grounding pose that also assists you in going inwards during the forward bend portion of the pose.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Come into a seated position. Extend your legs out in front of you. Then open your legs wide to either side (about 90 degree angle or as wide as you can go to make a partial triangle). You might feel like you are falling forward, so take a moment and place your hands behind you and inhaling lengthen your spine. We want good posture here. If you can't sit comfortably on the floor, you may want to roll a blanket or mat to go under your sits bones. From here, be mindful of the knees. Be sure the knee caps are pointing upward toward the ceiling and especially as we bend. Use the thighs to reach outwards to assist with the knee caps. Flex your feet and press through the balls of your feet.

While pressing your thigh bones into the mat and your spine elongated, begin to walk your hands straight forward between your legs. Maintain the length in the arms as you reach. Walk as far forward as you can. Remember we are hinging from the hips here. Good posture in the back and tilt the pelvis to assist with this forward bend. As you inhale, extend the spine and as you exhale surrender further into the pose. Inhale, extend. Exhale, surrender. Inhale, extend. Exhale, surrender. Gaze slightly forward for your head to be in line with your spine. If you are like the woman in the image above and would like to go further in this stretch, take your two peace fingers (index finger and middle finger) and wrap them around the big toe as you lower down even further to the floor, again while maintaining good posture in the spine. Hold and breathe. Hold for about one minute and then slowly come up with a straight back. Bend your knees and slide your legs in for a good counter pose, such as Baddha Konasana (or Butterfly Pose) or rock on your tailbone hugging the knees in towards your belly.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have lower back injury be sure to sit up high on a blanket. It's best not to bend forward too much with lower back injury so keep your torso relatively upright.

Wide-Angle Seated Side Bend Pose

Sanskrit: Parsva Pavritta Upavistha Konasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson



Wide-Angle Seated Side Bends is a beautiful variation of the Wide-Angle Seated pose. This side bend variation increases flexibility, improve breathing and fee. As with many poses as you breathe and have a dedicated practice, you will notice yourself moving further into the pose.

This pose is fantastic for the side waists, arms, groin, hips, calves, thighs, knees, hamstrings and spine. This is a fantastic grounding pose.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Come into a seated position. Extend your legs out in front of you. Then open your legs wide to either side (about 90 angle or as wide as you can go to make a partial triangle). You might feel like you are falling forward, so take a moment and place your hands behind you and inhaling lengthen your spine. We want good posture here. If you can't sit comfortably on the floor, you may want to roll a blanket or mat to go under your sits bones. From here, be mindful of the knees. Be sure the knee caps are pointing upward toward the ceiling and especially as we bend. Use the thighs to reach outwards to assist with the knee caps. Flex your feet and press through the balls of your feet.

As you inhale, extend the spine and as you exhale bring your right hand behind your head bending at the elbow and pointing the elbow up toward the sky. Then reach for the left foot (either inside of the foot or the toes) side bending. Keep the heart open as you deepen the side bend and, if accessible, gaze up towards the sky. If you are extra flexible here, you may take your right arm and arch it over your head reaching for your foot. See where it feels right in your body today. Inhale and exhale surrender further into the pose. Hold and breathe. Hold for about one minute and then slowly come up with a straight back. Inhale and as you exhale move to the other side. Bend your knees and slide your legs in for a good counter pose, such as Baddha Konasana (or Butterfly Pose) or rock on your tailbone hugging the knees in towards your belly.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have lower back injury be sure to sit up high on a blanket. It's best not to side bend too much with lower back injury so keep your torso relatively upright.

Boat Pose

Sanskrit: Paripurna Navasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Boat pose is the perfect pose for warming up the core as well as working on our posture. It can be modified for less strain or if your working towards a strong core or already have one you can power up this pose. There are many variations to help you progress through this pose. So it's all about getting out of your ego. It's not about what someone else is doing. It's about where you are in your body and listening to that. If you can't get into this pose with a long straight spine then you've gone too far into it too fast. Work your way up with balance. Let go and allow your body to generate strength over time. To hold this pose, tapping into our breath is key. Since breath is our prana life force energy at work, it truly energizes you to hold this longer, focus on alignment and come into and out of this pose (and all poses) with grace. Our core is our foundation to all movement, so it's helpful to keep it healthy and strong. Working with Boat pose allows us to do just that.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

I like to start Boat pose first by coming into the Baddha Konasana (Butterfly) as shown on the left. Next month I will dive deeper into this pose. Simply put, you place the soles of your feet together, knees splaying out, spine straight, hands can hold your toes or take your thumbs to the inside on the balls of the feet to open them up a little. This is our resting pose. We will come into this pose throughout the Boat pose variations to rest, re-center and align ourselves.

From this position, let's straighten our legs a little with knees bent and close together. Feet on the floor. Bring hands behind you about 4 inches or so with fingers pointing towards the feet. Then inhale, extending the spine, thinking good posture, exhale and let's lean back with our upper body, keeping our back in good straight alignment. From here, inhale and on your exhale lift the legs up off the floor so they are parallel to the floor, knees still bent. Already you will start to feel the core heating up and working. Be sure your back is not rounding. You'll be sitting centered on what yogajournal.com calls the "tripod" of your two sitting bones and your tailbone.

Begin now and stretch your arms out alongside your legs, parallel to the floor. Breathe deeply. Strong core. If holding arms out is too much yet, you may hold the backs of your thighs or place the hands back down behind you till you grow stronger, and I promise you that if you continue to work with this pose, you **will** grow stronger. Tip the chin down slightly towards the chest, in order to lift the bottom of the skull lightly away from the neck. You have the option to splay out your arms shoulder height, extending both away from your body and each other. This is a bit more challenging.

The extra variation to challenge the legs and core more, is to straighten the legs up to the sky at the angle as shown above (about 45 degrees), again while keeping a nice straight spine.

The next option is holding hands together in front slightly above your legs in temple mudra hands (fingers clasped and index fingers pointing pressed together). When taking this variation, you may also want to pulse with your breathe. You may take an inhale as you extend the legs straight out and leaning further back with your upper body, back still straight, exhale bend your knees and come back in with your upper body. Inhaling as you flow out, and exhaling as you flow in. This is a beautiful practice with the breath.



Another more advanced Boat Pose option you can work towards is to use your two peace fingers and wrap them around the big toes, while you extend the legs straight out and up, keeping your spine straight. If tight in the hamstrings you may bend the knees till your practice gives you better flexibility.

Each of these variations can be worked up to holding for 10-20 seconds at first in hold variations and working your way up from there, with breaks in the Butterfly pose I spoke about at the beginning. Your breaks can be 3 to 5 rounds of breathing. Then go again for three or four different variations to see what you resonate with most. And change it up each day or week that you practice this pose.

To come out completely, slide yourself back into Butterfly pose, breathe, relax and close your eyes.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Some possible reasons to rethink doing this pose may or may not be: Asthma, Diarrhea, Headache, Heart Problems, Insomnia, Low blood pressure, Menstruation, Pregnancy. I say may or may not because for some of these, this pose can probably help a little. Use your own judgment and intuition. If you have a neck injury sit with your back near a wall to perform this pose. As you tilt your torso back rest the back of your head on the wall.

Bound Angle Pose aka Butterfly Pose

Sanskrit: Baddha Konasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Connor O'Hara

Bound Angle Pose (aka Butterfly pose and even known as Cobbler Pose) is a great inner thigh stretch and hip opener. I love it! Not only that, it is a very calming gentle pose that allows you to just breathe and be there. Lowering your head while keep your neck in good alignment with the spine is a great way to go inside for a moment, release and let go. I love to press my elbows into the inner thighs to give them an extra stretch as well. The beautiful benefits of this pose are:



- Stimulates abdominal organs, ovaries and prostate gland, bladder, and kidneys
- Stimulates the heart and improves general circulation
- Stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knees
- Helps relieve mild depression, anxiety, and fatigue
- Soothes menstrual discomfort and sciatica
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Therapeutic for flat feet, high blood pressure, infertility, and asthma
- Consistent practice of this pose until late into pregnancy is said to help ease childbirth
- Traditional texts say that Baddha Konasana destroys disease and gets rid of fatigue

Directions on how to come into the pose:

If your hips or groin are tight, you may sit on a blanket. Place the soles of your feet together, bringing the heels of your feet in towards your groin as much as works for you while splaying the knees out, spine straight, hands can hold your toes or take your thumbs to the inside on the balls of the feet to open them up a little, keeping the outsides of the feet planted into the ground. Try your best not to force the knees to the ground but lead with the action of the pose to open naturally. Hold for a few minutes (1-5 minutes is great for this pose).

This is a great standalone pose, as well as a great resting pose for Boat pose. We can come into this pose throughout the Boat pose variations to rest, re-center and align ourselves.

To come out bring your knees into each other. I like to rock for a moment on my tailbone after this pose and then we can straighten the legs to release.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have groin or knee injury only practice this pose with blanket support under the outer thighs.

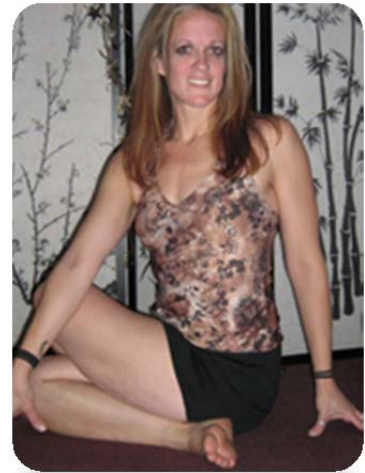
Cow Face & Cow Face Twist

Sanskrit: Gomukhasana

1st image of Maggie Anderson taken by Connor O'Hara

2nd image courtesy of yogajournal.com

Cowface with a Twist is one of my favorite seated poses! This pose is great for circulation in the legs and giving them a great stretch. And adding in the twist variation is perfect for getting nice and deep into the spine (as all twists are great for), as well as cleansing more of the internal organs and releasing more toxins from the body. And it just feels oh so good!!! Cowface even without the twist stretches the ankles, hips and thighs. The other common variation in Cowface is to also stretch the arms behind you by clasping your fingers together or with a strap (as shown in the second illustration below). If you choose this variation you are giving your shoulders, arms, triceps and chest a superb stretch as well! I love both of these variations as once you are situated enjoying the pose, you can then breathe deeply and go inward.



Directions on how to come into the pose:



From a seated position, take your right knee to the center line of your mat being.

Then take your left bent knee and stack it over the right knee. Be mindful to keep feet on either side of your hips. A great way to get those knees to stack over each other is to push into them with your hands, taking one hand to one knee and another to other knee and pressing them inward so that they stack better. This may also help you in being sure your sits bones are on the mat. If getting your sits bones on to stay on the mat is challenging you can take a folded blanket under your sits bones so that you can get them pressing down equally. From here inhale and elongate the spine, good posture. Place arms at your sides and begin to hinge forward at the hips while maintaining a straight back. Give yourself an extra stretch here. Elongate the back of the neck, in alignment with the spine.

First Variation, the Twist: When you are ready, come back straight up and begin to twist. Take your left hand behind you and your right hand/arm over the left leg either resting the fingertips on the mat or slightly lifted from ground. Push into your left ever so slightly to assist in the twist of the spine. Gaze out to the left or over your shoulder behind you, if that feels good on the neck. After five deep breaths or holding for 30 seconds slowly, come back to center. Align the spine once again. Take a deep breath and on your exhale release the legs out and switch sides.

Second Variation, Arm stretch: (This is commonly started with a strap till you get used to the stretch behind the back. So either take a strap and follow instructions while holding the strap with top arm or do this without the strap.) Inhale and stretch your right arm straight out shoulder height palm facing up towards the ceiling. Bend the elbow and place the palm of the hand on your upper back. You can take your left hand on your right elbow for a moment to get the palm just right on your upper back. Then take

your left hand out to the left and palm is facing behind you but shoulder is still in that nice center point, not falling forward or too far back. This movement may roll your left shoulder slightly up and forward, and round your upper back. Sweep the arm behind your torso and tuck the forearm in the hollow of your lower back, parallel to your waist, with the left elbow against the left side of your torso. Roll the shoulder back and down, then work the forearm up your back until it is parallel to your spine. The back of your hand will be between your shoulder blades. Be mindful that your right elbow doesn't slip away from the right side of your torso. Keep it in.

Now hands are reaching towards each other. If possible, hook the right and left fingers. Lift the right elbow toward the ceiling and, from the back armpit, descend the left elbow toward the floor. Firm your shoulder blades against your back ribs and lift your chest. Try to keep the right arm right beside the right side of your head. Stay in this pose about 1 minute. Release the arms, uncross the legs, and repeat with the arms and legs reversed for the same length of time. Commonly, whichever leg is on top, the same-side arm is lower.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Knee issues will make this pose more challenging, so if you are feeling tight or any pain in the knee, take the modification to stretch out the bottom leg nice and long, flex that foot. For the arm variation on Cowface it's best not to practice or to be seriously mindful if you have serious neck or shoulder problems.

Bridge Pose

Sanskrit: Setu Bandha Sarvangasana

Image of courtesy of Yogajournal.com

What a beautiful Back Bend pose this is! I love doing this pose as it's shown and also as a restorative pose with a block *under* the sacrum. If you want a good stretch and to feel open as well as to rest in this yummy pose try it with a block. Feels so good and peaceful! Take the time to go inward during Bridge pose. (The Image to the right shows her with a block between the legs to help with alignment and adds a little inner thigh work.)



Bridge pose is great for anyone needing to work on back issues. Also, you're really working the uterus in this pose as well. The varying benefits of this pose are that it stretches the chest, neck, and spine as well as calms the brain and helps alleviate stress and mild depression. Bridge pose stimulates abdominal organs, lungs, and thyroid, rejuvenates tired legs as well as improves digestion. And it also helps relieve the symptoms of menopause, relieves menstrual discomfort when done supported (block under lower spine!), and reduces anxiety, fatigue, backache, headache, and insomnia. This pose is therapeutic for

asthma, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and sinusitis. Seriously, why wouldn't you do this pose!

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin lying down on your back. During this pose do not move your head or neck. Maintain gaze upward or gazing down towards the belly. If necessary, place a thickly folded blanket under your shoulders to protect your neck. Knees bent, feel flat on the floor. Hands at your sides palms facing down. Allow your heels to come close to your fingertips so you are almost touching your heels. Begin with a few pelvic tilts to loosen up the pelvic and hips area. Slow lift your pelvis up ever so slightly. It's a subtle movement.

When you are ready slowly lift up your pelvis and hips off the ground, pressing into your feet and arms. Then you may keep your hands where they are or clasp them below your pelvis and extend through the arms to help you stay on the tops of your shoulders. Lift your chin away from the sternum and roll the shoulders blades in towards the spine. Keep your head in line with the spine, no turning. Don't forget to breathe! Watch the rise and fall of your breath on your belly.

Stay in the pose for 30 seconds to 1 minute. If you want to take it one step further lift your tailbone a little higher and lift up your heels off the ground. Now that's the stuff. On an exhalation release, slowly rolling through the spine down onto the floor. Bring your knees bent into the chest and give them a big hug. Rock from side to side.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Neck injury: avoid this pose unless you are practicing under the supervision of an experienced teacher.

Wheel Pose

Sanskrit: Chakrasana or Urdhva Dhanurasana

First Image courtesy of Black Swan Yoga

Second Image courtesy of Yogabycandance.com



COMMON MISTAKES IN WHEEL POSE

yogabycandace.com

do this:



not this:



Protect your knees
in Wheel Pose

yogabycandace.com



Pigeon/One-Legged King Pigeon Pose

Sanskrit:

One-Legged King Pigeon Pose:

Eka Pada Rajakapotasana

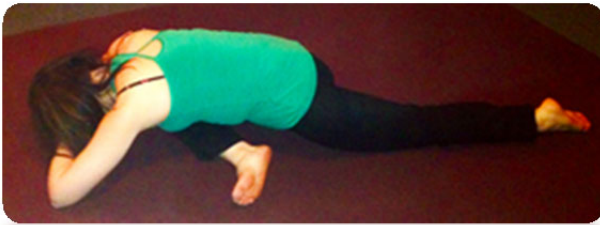
Pigeon I & II: Kapotasana I & II

1st & 2nd Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Connor O'Hara

3rd image courtesy of Yogajournal.com

Pigeon pose is one of my most favorite yoga poses. It's wonderful to open the hips, inner and outer thighs and one of my most requested poses to instruct during yoga classes. As a wonderful hip opener, this is a beautiful pose to release blockages and emotions often repressed or locked in our hips. When in the resting variation of the pose (my favorite, shown below) we can go inward, release and let go of all that no longer serves us.

Full physical benefits of this pose are: Increases external ranges of motion of femur in hip socket; Lengthens hip flexors; Prepares body for backbends and seated postures; Stretches the thighs, groins and psoas, abdomen, chest and shoulders, and neck; Stimulates the abdominal organs and groin areas; Opens the hips, shoulders and chest; helps Urinary disorders.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Downward Facing Dog. Bring your right knee forward to the back of your right wrist; at the same time angle your right shin under your torso and bring your right foot to the front of your left knee. The outside of your right shin will now rest on the floor. Slowly slide your left leg back, straightening the knee and descending the front of the thigh to the floor. Lower the outside of your

right buttock to the floor. Position the right heel just in front of the left hip. The right knee can angle slightly to the right, outside the line of the hip. Look back at your left leg. It should extend straight out of the hip (and not be angled off to the left), and rotated slightly inwardly, so its midline presses against the floor. Exhale and lay your torso down on the inner right thigh for a few breaths. Stretch your arms forward. Then slide your hands back toward the front shin and push your fingertips firmly to the floor. Lift your torso away from the thigh. Lengthen the lower back by pressing your tailbone down and forward; at the same time, and lift your pubis toward the navel. Roll your left hip point toward the right heel, and lengthen the left front groin. If you can maintain the upright position of your pelvis without the support of your hands on the floor, bring your hands to the top rim of your pelvis. Push heavily down. Against this pressure, lift the lower rim of your rib cage. The back ribs should lift a little faster than the front. Without shortening the back of your neck, drop your head back. To lift your chest, push the top of your sternum (at the manubrium) straight up toward the ceiling. Stay in this position for a minute. Then, with your hands back on the floor, carefully slide the left knee forward, then exhale and lift up and back into Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose). Take a few breaths, drop the knees to all-fours on another exhalation, and repeat with the legs reversed for the same length of time.

To come out, release the arms down and straighten the left leg. Switch sides! Gotta have balance! :) Then release the arms down once again, straighten legs. Heel toe your way back in to Mountain pose, palms together for Namaste. Close your eyes and breathe deeply.

When not to do this pose or to modify / Contraindications:

If you have Sacroiliac injury, Ankle injury, Knee injury and/or Tight hips or thighs you will need to modify this pose. The best modification of this pose is to come into Reclining Pigeon pose (aka Eye of the Needle or Dead Pigeon - *Supta Rajakapotasana*), by resting on your back, crossing one ankle over opposite thigh and bringing knees in towards chest. It's often difficult to descend the outside of the front-leg hip all the way to the floor. Place a thickly folded blanket underneath the hip for support.



Advanced Position:

For the full pose, first perform the preliminary leg position described above. Then with your hands braced on the floor in Proud Pigeon, bend the back knee and bring the foot as close to the top of your head as possible (tapping into your Quad/top of thigh stretch). Inhale, stretch the right arm upward; then exhale, bend the elbow, and reach back and grasp the inside of the left foot. After a few breaths, reach back with the left hand and grasp the outside of the foot. Draw the sole of the foot as close as possible to the crown of your head. Hold this position for 30 seconds. Repeat on the second side for the same length of time.

Splits/Monkey Pose

Sanskrit: Hanumanasana

Image of Maggie Anderson & Don Anderson on Djembe taken by Maggie Anderson

Splits pose is also named Monkey Pose, named after figure in Hindu mythology who takes a leap of faith. Take that leap of faith and begin practicing this satisfying pose. Allow your body to be where it is in this pose and over time with a dedicated practice your body will grow more flexible and deepen.

In this pose the legs are split forward and back, mimicking Hanuman's famous leap from the southern tip of India to the island of Sri Lanka. Have blocks or blankets nearby when practice this pose (preferably not on a sticky mat). The blankets can rest under the back knee and front heel. The block or blocks can go under your hip till you are able to float all the way down to the floor.



This pose is great for stretching the hamstrings, opening the hips and also wonderful as a therapeutic application if you are dealing with Sciatica issues.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin by coming into Half Splits with your right foot forward. Lean your torso forward, keep your spine straight, pressing your fingertips to the floor. Slowly scooch your front right foot forward as you gently slide the left knee back, straightening the knee and at the same time descending the right thigh toward the floor. Stop straightening the back knee just before you reach the limit of your stretch.

Now begin to push the right heel away from your torso. As the front leg straightens, resume pressing the left knee back, and carefully descend the front of the left thigh and the back of the right leg (and the base of the pelvis) to the floor. Make sure the center of the right knee points directly up toward the ceiling. Have a block nearby to place under your hips if you've reached your edge and are unable to touch your hips to the floor. Place a blanket under the back knee if you have knee issues.

Check to see that the back leg extends straight out of the hip (and isn't angled out to the side), and that the center of the back kneecap is pressing directly on the floor (or blanket). Keep the front leg active by extending through the heel and lifting the ball of the foot toward the ceiling. Bring the hands into Anjali Mudra (Salutation Seal) or stretch the arms straight up toward the ceiling.

Stay in this pose for 30 seconds to a minute. To come out, press your hands to the floor, turn the front leg out slightly, and slowly return the front heel and the back knee to their starting positions. Come to Child's Pose to rest and then reverse the legs and repeat for the same length of time.

To Deepen the Pose: Raise the arms overhead from the "trigger" of the lower back ribs. Take the back ribs away from the top of the pelvis, and use this lift to reach the arms closer to the ceiling. Lengthen along the backs of the arms, stretching your pinkies a little closer to the ceiling than the index fingers. Then pin the fingertips against the ceiling and release or "hang" the ribs from the arms. Work with the ribs between the arms and the pelvis: relative to the pelvis, the ribs lift, boosting the arms closer to the ceiling; relative to the arms, the ribs drop toward the floor, increasing the stretch in the armpits.

You may also then attempt to fold forward, with a straight spine, perhaps holding onto the toes. Inhaling extending the spine and exhaling folding deeper.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Any groin or hamstring injuries. Students just beginning to learn this pose are often unable to get the legs and pelvis down on the floor, which is usually due to of tightness in the backs of the legs or front groins. While in the starting leg position place a block or thick bolster below the pelvis (with its long axis parallel to your inner legs). As you straighten the legs, slowly release your pelvis down onto the bolster. If the block or bolster isn't thick enough to comfortably support your pelvis, add a thickly folded blanket.

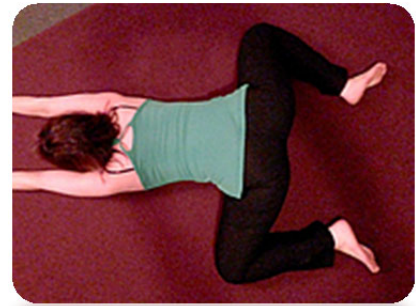
Frog Pose

Sanskrit: Mandukasana or Bhekasana

1st Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Connor O'Hara

2nd Image courtesy of venusrisingmagazine.com

You are literally looking like a frog in this pose. One of my favorites because it opens the hips and works your thighs, throat, chest, abdomen, groin and quads as well! Helpful for rejuvenating knee joints while providing a deep stretch to the quadriceps and psoas muscles. Not only that, but it also strengthens the muscles of the back and improves posture, improves digestion and (my favorite) helps reduce excess fat in the body especially in the thigh, hip and abdominal region. It also assists in the cure of pain in the knees, ankles, and back. I just love yoga. Each pose comes with it so many benefits. This pose is also relaxing for me. I can go inward for a bit. Love it!



Directions on how to come into the pose:

There are many ways to come at this pose. First it's helpful to warm up a bit with a few sun salutations and other yoga vinyasas to be sure your body is ready to get deep into this pose (as deep as it will go for your body that is; our anatomy is unique for each of us). You can start from your belly or from a seated position. I like to begin in a wide standing down dog pose. So just like down dog but legs are very wide. Then walk your hands forward while pointing your feet out and bending your knees. Drop the knees to the mat. Take your knees as wide as they will go. Adjust the position of your hips and

see if you can press back a bit with them. Surrender those knees wide a bit more while opening up those hips. We can have our hands either under our legs with wrists under shoulders or I like to come down onto my forearms and rest here while I play with how wide I can take my knees. The most challenging is to have feet out (as in Image above), rather than in towards each other. To make it easier while still getting an excellent stretch, have feet come in towards the center and each other. Lower the head if that feels good or gaze forward.

Hold till you feel like you've reached your edge in time. To come out press your hands into the mat or floor and bring your knees in slowly and gently. Come into child's pose and rest for a few minutes.

When not to do this pose or to modify / Contraindications:

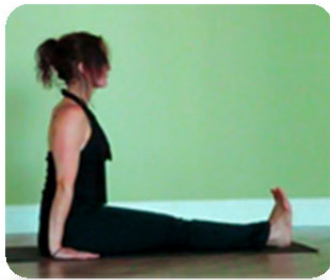
High or low blood pressure; insomnia; migraine; knee, neck, shoulder or lower back injuries.

Staff Pose

Sanskrit: Dandasana

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Staff or Dandasana pose is a simple and powerful pose. Great for strengthening the back muscles, stretching the shoulders and chest, improving posture and has therapeutic applications for sciatica. When in this pose really take a moment to breathe. Even close your eyes. Allow Kundalini Energy to flow through you from your Root Chakra all the way up your spine and out your Crown Chakra. Feel the pulsing waves of this energy flowing up and down your spine for, my favorite, a final release as you move into a Seated Forward Bend pose. Also, nice fact to know is that this pose is part of the Five Tibetan Rites sequence that I practice every day.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Sit on the floor with legs together or walking distance apart. Ankles flexed, pressing through the heels. Remove the fleshing parts of your sits bones out and away. Press hands palms down into the mat beside your hips. Elongate the spine tall as you inhale. (To be sure your spine is naturally straight you can always come into this pose against a wall with a rolled up towel between the wall and the lower back.)

Sit towards the front of the sitting bones. Firm the thighs but keep belly soft, press thighs down against floor, rotating slightly towards each other. Ground down through the sits bones and you lift up from the crown of the head. The spine is the "staff" rooted firmly into the Earth. Hold the pose for one minute or longer. Either come out or you are already prepped to move into Seated Forward Bend.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

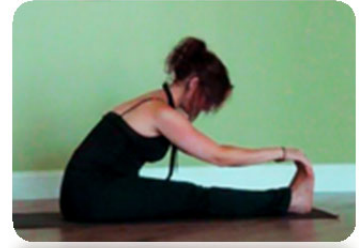
If you have wrist or lower back injuries you may choose to avoid or modify this pose. To modify you may sit on a blanket or a bolster to lift the pelvis. This is helpful if you have tight hamstrings and the torso feels like it's leaning back.

Seated Forward Bend Pose

Sanskrit: Paschimottanasana

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Seated Forward Bend is a fantastic pose to go inward. It looks easy but can be a challenging pose when attempting to work with proper alignment and gaining the highest benefit from this stretch. This is a great pose to feel the benefits of opening all of our 7 main Chakras and a Kundalini sweeping wave of energy from our Root Chakra all the way up our spine and Chakras and out the Crown Chakra. I like to close my eyes and enjoy the release of tension in this pose. This pose is fantastic for:



- Calming the brain and helping relieve stress and mild depression
- Stretching the spine, shoulders, hamstrings
- Stimulating the liver, kidneys, ovaries, and uterus
- Improving digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause and menstrual discomfort
- Soothing headache and anxiety and reduces fatigue
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, infertility, insomnia, and sinusitis
- Traditional texts say that this pose increases appetite, reduces obesity, and cures diseases

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Dandasana (Staff) pose. Turn the top thighs slightly in and press them down into the floor. Draw the inner groin deep into the pelvic. Inhale, keeping the front torso long, lean forward from the hip joints, not the waist. Lengthen the tailbone away from the back of your pelvis. Walk the hands forward as you exhale. Inhale, extend the spine. Exhale, walk the hands out further into this seated forward bend. If possible take the sides of the feet with your hands, thumbs on the soles, elbows fully extended; if this isn't possible, loop a strap around the soles of the feet, and hold the strap firmly. Be sure your elbows are straight, not bent. Always keep the spine straight and shoulders away from the ears. (To modify, you may need to have a slight bend in the knees.)

When it's accessible, begin to lower the lower belly to touch the thighs first, then the upper belly, then the ribs, and the head last. Eventually, lowering the head and closing your eyes.

With each inhale, lift and lengthen the front torso; with each exhalation surrender a little more fully into the forward bend. Eventually you may be able to stretch the arms out beyond the feet on the floor or perhaps taking a block behind the feet to extend further out.

Hold this pose for 1 to 3 minutes. To come out, slowly lift up.

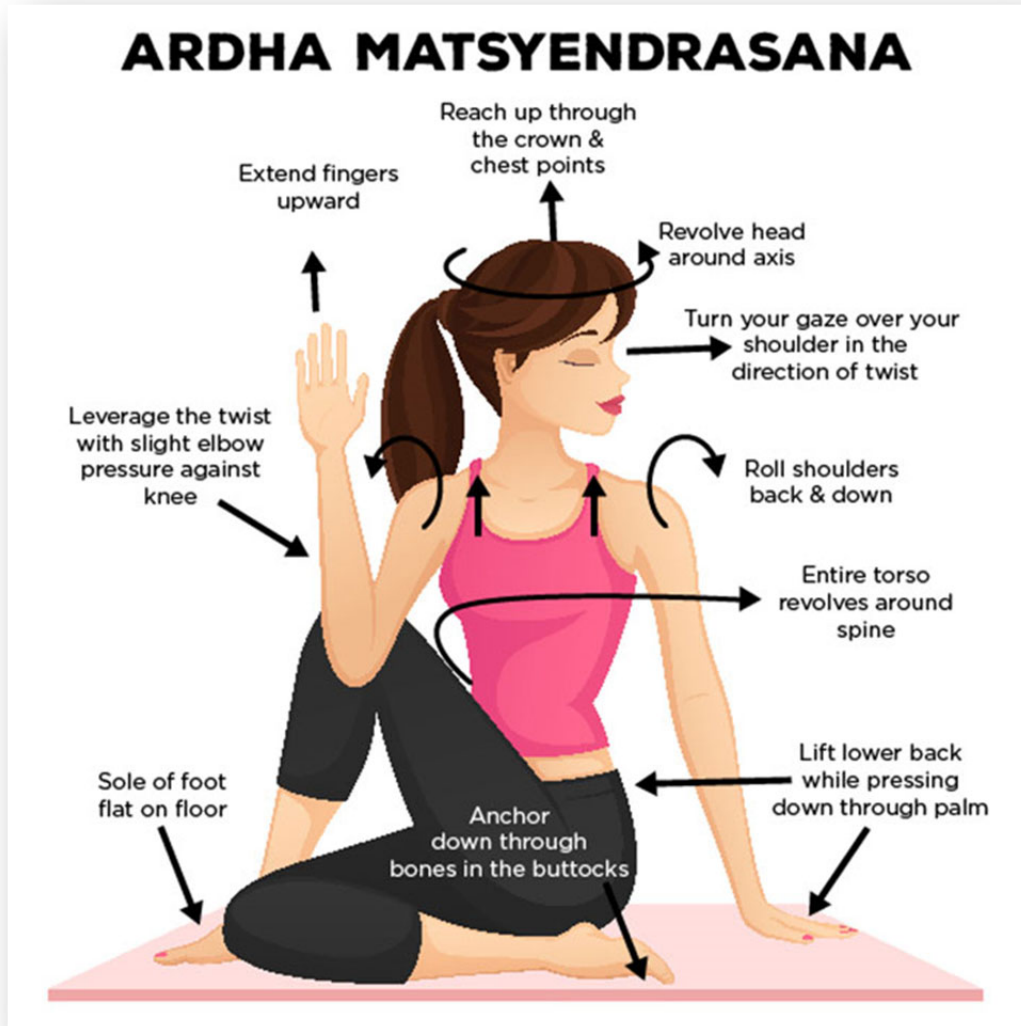
When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

This pose may be more challenging if you have asthma or Diarrhea. Avoid it if you feel any discomfort. If you have a back injury, only perform this pose under the supervision of an experienced teacher.

Spinal Twist

Sanskrit: Matsyendrasana or Ardha Matsyendrasana

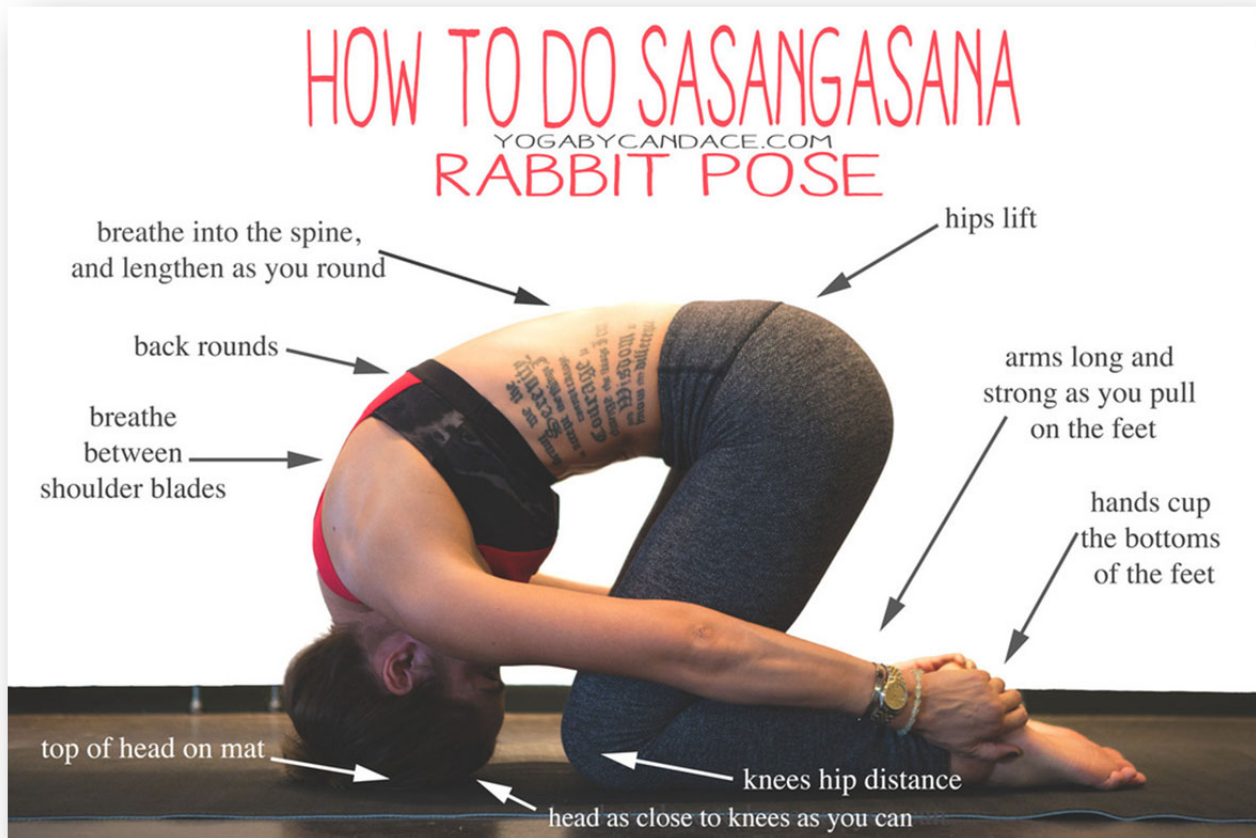
Image courtesy of StyleCraze



Rabbit/Bunny Yoga Pose

Sanskrit: Sasangasana

Image courtesy of Yogabycandace.com



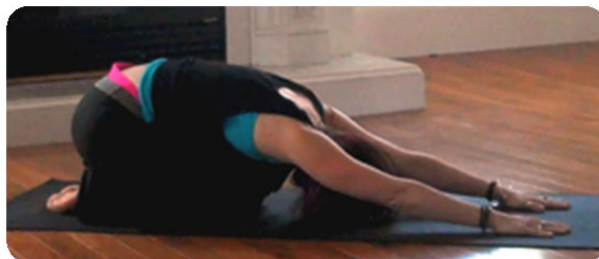
Child's Pose

Sanskrit: Balasana

1st image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

2nd image courtesy of YogaJournal.com

Inversions are especially great for going inward. To assist you in going inward more deeply, I have chosen an inverted yoga pose. There were so many, it was hard to choose. I was going to go with a Forward Fold or Downward facing dog, but am really in a relaxing mood right now and decided to go with Child's pose, Balasana. This is a fantastic pose for going inward. It releases the low back and relaxes the shoulders and entire body while quieting the mind to open up to peace and truth. This is a nice yin pose to help relax you after an active yang yoga practice or to simply practice all on its own. During a yoga class your teacher will guide you to utilize this pose whenever you feel the need for rest or do not want to participate in the current pose.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

From Table pose allow your hips to fall back to your heels, resting on the tops of your feet. Lower your head to the mat, resting your forehead on the mat. Extend your arms out for an active cat stretch. Or you can either stack your hands on top of each other and rest your head on your hands or bring your hands to your sides, palms up while resting your forehead on your mat. If you find it's a bit hard to breathe here take your knees wide to open the lungs. Take a

deep breath. Fill your lungs with breath. Feel the awareness of your breath expanding your back in and out as you breathe. Then just relax and let go. Hold this pose for as long as feels comfortable and then come up slowly and gently. From here you can sit up or lay down for a nice longer meditation.

When not to do this pose or to modify / Contraindications:

Knee injuries or pregnancy. If pregnant you can take this pose as a frog pose instead, where you spread your bent legs wide allowing space for the growing baby in your belly. As always, listen to the wisdom of your body.

Supine (Reclining) Twist Pose

Sanskrit: Supta Matsyendrasana

Image courtesy of Yogajournal.com

Twists are one of my most favorite poses. Not that I can really choose. However, these tend to be more relaxing or if one can allow for relaxation and release to occur within the twist a profound feeling of connection or awareness ensues. Twists are great for wringing out the body and organs of toxins, assists in better digestion and are great for rejuvenation. They assist us with our balance, create space for improved breathing and are great for toning as well. Twists symbolically hold the past and the future while maintaining center/middle ground for presence in the very moment. In twists you are facing forward, while looking behind you. All while maintaining a grounded center. So if we can take the advice the twist gives and hold what serves us best from our past and work towards an uplifting future while maintaining presence in the very moment that truly is our only reality then we have fulfilled one of many aspects this pose can hold for us.



“Reclining Twist offers an opportunity to feel the power of wringing out the body from its core. It can improve breathing, ease back and neck tension, and soothe frazzled nerves. Its reclined position lets us linger in the posture’s curves and spirals, inviting the twist to penetrate deep into the spine.”

~ Claudia Cummin, YogaJournal.com

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Lie down flat on your back. Bring your body to a neutral position. Soften the lower back, but don’t flatten. Legs full extended out. Bend your right knee and bring it in towards your chest. Give it a little hug with your arms. Then take your left hand over your right knee and guide it over your body to left towards the floor. Allow your right arm to come straight out at shoulder height behind you. Keep both shoulders on the mat. If you are unable to maintain both shoulders on the mat, you can place a block under your right knee to give it a little lift while enabling you to relax into this pose. You may turn your head to the right looking over your right shoulder if that feels good in your neck. If not, allow your head to look where it is comfortable. Release the tension from your muscles. Relax into this pose. To bring yourself out, gently roll onto your back while your right knee comes back up to center and allow it to stretch out flat on the mat. Switch sides.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have back or neck injury or pain. Do not turn your head if you have a neck injury. Modify this position for knee or back injuries. If you have any knee pain use a block or two blocks to raise the knee up to a position that feels comfortable. If you have a back injury that is aggravating you in this pose be sure to modify and come out if you feel any pain.

Leg's-Up-the-Wall Pose

Sanskrit: Viparita Karani

Image of courtesy of Yogajournal.com

Legs-Up-the-Wall is a great pose to practice after a shaking exercise. This pose is a restorative pose that is very relaxing for the mind and body. While your legs are inverted they are receiving benefits of reversing gravity. This changing the blood flow direction and increases circulation in the legs. Your legs receive great healthy benefits. And this pose also relieves mild backache, arthritis and sooo much more. The mental benefits are a reductions in stress and anxiety. This pose is a great one for relieving stress and any worries that may come up. A friend of mine said she did this pose once a day for eight years and during those eight years didn't even get a cold! You can do this pose anytime anywhere. It doesn't have to be a part of a long yoga practice. Just relax and let it all go.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Now, let's come into Leg-up-the-wall pose or Viparita Karani. We will be utilizing the wall for this pose. And grab a couple blankets in case these are something you may want to utilize. If using a blanket place it up against the wall. Whether using the blanket or not, come up against the wall with your left hip up against the wall, either on the blanket or on the floor. Skooch your hip as close to the wall as possible, touching the wall. If you feel you are very tight in the legs you can still receive great benefits practicing this pose a few extra inches away from the wall. Do what feels right for you. Now, support yourself with your hands placing them behind you as you swing your legs up onto the wall and with care allowing your upper body, back, shoulders and head, to rest onto the floor, blanket or mat. Your hips should be nice and even against the wall or slightly away from the wall if that is your preference, but still parallel. Rest your arms out to the sides of your body, palms up. Close your eyes and relax. Allow your breathing to be natural and smooth. This is very calming pose that is great for reducing depression and anxiety. By coming into this inversion you are reversing gravity in the legs assisting in better circulation. Stay in this restorative pose for 5 to 15 minutes. To come out, slide your legs down or bend them down. Then roll over to one side and stay here for a few moments. Then come up to a seated position very slowly.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Any eye, neck or back injury may be aggravated while doing this pose. For back and neck issues, take care and see if you can modify the pose in order to feel good. If you feel any stress or pain modify the position or come out of it completely. Always listen to the wisdom of your body.

Corpse Pose

Sanskrit: Savasana

Image of courtesy of Yogajournal.com

Savasana, also known as the corpse pose is not pretending to be dead. Rather it is the pose at the very end of most yoga asana classes. It is the relaxed position of every part of your body and the time and space allowed for you to take some time for yourself as well as to integrate all of the poses you have worked on during your yoga class. During this time you may fall into a very deep meditation or you may receive much needed guidance on some things that you finally let go of during a vigorous or gentle yoga practice. Your body is finally relaxing and rejuvenating.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Lie down flat on your back. Bring your body to a neutral position. Soften the lower back, but don't flatten. Legs full extended out. Your feet slaying to the outside. Your arms are straight and slightly away from the body, palms up. Rock your body slightly from side to side and broaden the back ribs and shoulder blades away from the spine. Eyes closed. Be sure your chin is not jutting upwards too far or hugging too closely to the neck. It is prudent you also quiet the mind as best you can in this pose. Allow yourself to listen to the instructor's direction for as long as they last and then simply let go. Relax and go deeper into the pose. Allow your whole body to melt into the mat. Feel yourself releasing and letting go deeper and deeper. Soon your full consciousness may be felt or you will be in so deep that when you come back to the room you will not remember a thing. Each savasana holds something unique to ponder.

To come out of this pose, wiggle your fingers and toes. Allow yourself to come back fully aware of the room and its energy. Bring your knees to your chest and give them a hug. Then gently roll over to one side and hold it hear for a moment. Next, slowly lift yourself up and come to easy seated pose (legs crossed and back straight) with eyes closed. Listen to final words from your instructor and do any final OM's. Open your eyes and feel the refreshed rejuvenation from a beautiful practice. Feel the space and connection you allowed your body, mind and soul to experience during this time. Ahhhh. :)

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have back injury or pain, do this pose with a bolster under your knees. If the pain still exists do not do this pose. Also, if you are pregnant be sure you are raising your head and chest up on a bolster or even a pillow.



Balance Poses

Tree Pose

Sanskrit: Vrksasana

1st Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Donald Anderson IV

2nd Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

Last Image courtesy of YogaJournal.com

Tree pose is one of the most common poses folks have already seen whether they've practiced yoga or not. It's a perfect pose for working with concentration, balance and going inward. Keep challenging yourself with this pose. This pose is great to come into after you've done a few good hip opener warm-ups, like Warrior II. I love this pose for the meditation I receive. It's great to close your eyes to mess with your balance. You know it's all in the mind. Tree pose's physical benefits are that it's great for strengthening the thighs, calves, ankles, and spine. It's also great for stretching the groins and inner thighs, as well as the chest and shoulders. Not only that this pose relieves sciatica and reduces flat feet.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

From Tadasana, while getting very grounded, begin by shifting your weight to your balancing leg, we'll start with your left leg. So balancing on your left foot and leg, keeping all four corners of your feet firmly into the Earth, then come onto your right toes and balance your right heel on your left ankle, splaying out the right bent knee. This is a beginning pose for tree. If that is not challenging enough for you, you can then raise your right foot and place the bottom of your right foot on the left inner calf. Never balance on the knee directly, this could cause injury. To take this up a notch, grab your right ankle and bring the sole of your right foot to press firmly into the left inner thigh (as shown in the image). If possibly, try to get the right heel close up to the groin and toes will point towards the floor. Think good posture here.



Then take your hands to your heart for Namaste or Anjali Mudra. Or you can raise your hands up to the sky in Temple Mudra (hands clasped with index fingers pointing pressed together) or lastly you can take your arms up straight and out to the sky for branches.

It's helpful to focus or gaze on a point that is not moving slightly in front of you. Hold this pose for 30 seconds to a minute. Slowly come out. Shake it out and come back to Tadasana, center and lengthen. Take this to the other side.

To challenge yourself more in this pose, close your eyes and find your balance and center again. Another way to challenge yourself in this pose is to take your balancing foot onto a block. If your entire foot is too big for the block, have your toes hang off the block so that you can keep the ball of the foot and the heel balancing on the block.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Headache, Insomnia, Low blood pressure and for High blood pressure just don't raise your arms overhead.

Balance Table/Spinal Balance Pose

Sanskrit: Santaluna Sandhara-asana

1st Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Donald Anderson IV

2nd Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

Last Image courtesy of YogaJournal.com

Balancing Table Pose helps warm, stretch and strengthen the body. This pose builds abdominal and lower back strength. It warms the body and brings flexibility to the spine, shoulders, and hips, while gently stretching the torso. This pose heats up your internal fire. Because of the balancing challenge, this pose also helps to improve focus, coordination, and overall physical equilibrium. When you coordinate your movement with your breath, the pose also helps to relieve stress, fatigue and tension. Repeat on both sides to help balance each side of your body.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin on hands and knees in Table Pose with your wrists/hands directly under your shoulders and your knees directly under your hips. Untuck your toes so the tops of your feet are pressing against the floor. Gaze (drishti) down at a point between your hands. Draw your belly button toward your spine without arching your back. Then, extend your left leg behind you. Tuck your toes and keep them resting on the mat. Press back through the ball of your foot to lengthen your leg. Keep your spine neutral. With your abdominal muscles engaged, navel in towards the spine, extend your right arm forward to shoulder-height, and reach through your fingertips. At the same time, lift your leg off the floor, a few inches or all the way to hip-level. Only lift leg to shoulder height. You may choose to push more energy through your lifted leg by flexing your foot and still pushing that energy through ball of the foot with toes open. Hold for a 3-5 full breaths. Keep shoulder blades broad. Shoulders drawn away from ears. Keep your collar bones broad, as well. This helps to protect your neck, while also increasing flexibility and strength in your shoulders and chest. Best gaze is down, but if you choose to look forward it may cause a bit more tension in the neck, so always listen to your body. Exhale and release back to Table Pose, on both hands and knees. Repeat on the other side, extending your right leg and left arm. Hold for the same amount of time, then release back to Table Pose. This is one round. You may choose to hold each side for a certain amount of breaths. Or take a movement flow, inhale lift from Table to Balancing Table, Exhale to Table, Inhale extend, exhale lower, etc. Complete 5-10 rounds, then round your spine and flow back into Child's Pose.



When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

It's best to modify or not practice this pose if you have a recent or chronic injury to the knees, back, arms, wrists, or shoulders. If you have knee issues you may choose to fold up your mat or grab a blanket to place under your knees. For wrist issues you may modify by coming down onto your forearms parallel distance apart from each other, elbows under shoulders and choose only to raise the legs

for the balance portion of this pose. Of course, if you have any medical concerns, talk with your doctor before practicing yoga.

Leg Raises / Leg Lifts (Double & Single)

Sanskrit: Utanpadasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Leg Lifts are great to include in a core-based yoga sequence. We are building our ab strength while practicing these lifts. It's particularly important to do this with good alignment so as not to tweak or twinge anything in the lower back or neck. This pose is great to practice for strong abdominal strength and back muscles as well. We need this for poses such as Headstand and Shoulder Stand. We're really warming up the body and heating up our internal fire flowing into and out of this pose. I practice this sequence of Double Leg Raises daily as a part of the Five Tibetan Rites Sequence. Physical and Therapeutic benefits of this pose are:



- Tones and strengthens leg muscles
- Stretches the hamstrings
- Strengthens the lower back
- Tones stomach muscles
- Reduces belly fat
- Massages the organs of the abdomen
- Improves digestion, absorption of nutrients, and elimination of toxins from the body
- Helps in weight loss
- Improves the alignment of the spine
- May help balance out sugar levels and treat diabetes



Leg Raises / Leg Lifts (Double & Single) (continued...)

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in lying flat on the floor, face up. Fully extend your arms along your sides and place the palms of your hands against the floor, keeping fingers close together.

For **Double Leg Raises**: Breathe in, then on your exhale raise your head off the floor tucking your chin into your chest. Neck is relaxed throughout. Simultaneously, feet flexed, lift your legs, knees straight, into a vertical position. Press your lower back into the mat, preventing injury to the lower back and spine. (If this isn't feeling accessible, take your palms and place them under your hip bones to allow for better lower back alignment.) Press the navel towards the spine. If possible, extend the legs over the body towards your head. Do your best not let the knees bend.

Then, inhale, slowly lower the legs and head to the floor, always keeping the knees straight. Allow the muscles to relax a moment, and repeat 5-10x or more as you gain strength, for both sides. Rest back in Savasana when complete.

For **Single Leg Raises**: To modify, only lower one leg at a time. The opposite leg can either be extended straight out on the mat or knee bent, foot flat on the floor for extra support. Here you may take your hands and wrap it around your thigh or calf for an extra stretch, then release and repeat. Do this for both sides. Rest back in Savasana when complete.

Single Leg Raises are great to take one at a time and hold for a longer extended stretch. You may lower the head for this variation. Hands can either hold the thigh, calf or we can take our two peace fingers and wrap them around the big toe pulling down and up towards our head for an extra stretch. To modify, you can take a strap and wrap it around at the middle of your foot pulling down on the strap. Do both sides and then rest back in Savasana when complete.

As a beginner, you can push down with your palms to help lift your leg off the floor. This also prevents the back from arching.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

You may need to modify even more by allowing a slight bend in one or both knees as you lift and lower, but as you practice and get stronger, this will get easier. If you have exceptionally weak stomach muscles, interlock your fingers and place them over your abdomen. These then work as an extra set of 'stomach muscles.' As you raise your legs, press your fingers down for an extra burst of strength. Also, avoid leg raises if you have neck or back problems. Skip the head lift portion of this pose if you have neck injuries.

Camel Pose

Sanskrit: Ustrasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Camel pose is not always a favorite in a yoga class. This pose is a great back bend. We are opening up our heart as well as our throat chakras. If we have issues here, which many of us do, it is a challenging pose to allow for this opening. But that just means we really need to work on it. It's a fantastic pose and a pose that I do every day as a part of the **Five Tibetan Rites** Sequence. For such a seemingly simple pose the Physical and Therapeutic benefits are many:

- Respiratory ailments
- Mild backache
- Fatigue
- Anxiety
- Menstrual discomfort
- Stretches the entire front of the body, the ankles, thighs and groins,
- Abdomen and chest, and throat
- Stretches the deep hip flexors (psoas)
- Strengthens back muscles
- Improves posture
- Stimulates the organs of the abdomen and neck



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Kneel on the floor with knees hip distance apart and the body erect. (If you have knee issues, you can take a folded blanket or fold up the mat under your knees for more cushion.) Firm your buttocks. Hip bones remain over the knees the entire time. Place your hands on your lower back (hands on the back of pelvis, bases of palms on the tops of buttocks, fingers pointing down) or the backs of your thigh muscles. Chin parallel to floor. For stage one of this pose, have your toes curled under pressing into the toes as you come into this pose. For stage two, come to the tops of your feet and press into your shins and the tops of your feet as you come into this pose.

Next, inhale, allow the head to flow backward as you open the heart more and more open, shoulder blades pressing against your back ribs. Keep pressing hips forward so that hip bones remain over the knees or else you'll feel this all on the tops of your thighs, your quads and take away from this beautiful backbend. Allow the neck to elongate and go slightly backward, arching the spine. As you arch, you will brace your arms and hands against the lower back or thighs for support. If your neck feels strained keep it lifted, chin near sternum.

For a deeper backbend, you may take your hands down to your heels or the bottoms of your feet (as long as you are pressing on the tops of your feet) opening your heart more, deepening the backbend and allowing your head to drop further back, if accessible. If you're not able to touch your feet without compressing your lower back, turn your toes under and elevate your heels.

Stay in those from 30 seconds to one minute. Exhale, and return your body to an erect position, if your head is back lead with your heart to come up. Rest in Child's Pose. Begin the rite all over again.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

When to avoid or modify this pose is if you have high or low blood pressure, a migraine, insomnia and/or serious low back or neck injury.

Reverse Table / Half Upward Plank Pose

Sanskrit: Ardha Purvottanasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Reverse Table Pose is wonderful opening for the heart, belly and shoulders. This pose is a great modification to Reverse Plank. This pose is part of Rite #4 in the Five Tibetan Rites. This pose is great for strengthening the arms, wrists and legs, as well as stretching the shoulders, chest, and front ankles. It's also therapeutically great in fighting against fatigue. yay!

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Dandasana (Staff) pose, legs extended in front of your and arms at your sides. Feet are about walking distance apart. Bend your knees, placing your feet flat on the floor. Heels are at least a foot away from your tailbone. Place hands 4-6 inches behind your hips, palms down, fingers pointing towards your feet. Now, pressing into your hands and feet, inhale and lift your hips up as high as they will go for you today, straightening your arms. Allow your head to drop back without compressing the neck. If this is uncomfortable you can keep the head slightly lifted. Press shoulder blades against your back torso to support the lift of your chest. Hold for 30 seconds and then, on an exhale, slowly lower back down coming back into Dandasana.



When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

You may need avoid or modify this pose if you have Carpel tunnel syndrome, or have a shoulder, neck or wrist injury. If you have a neck injury, you can support the head on a wall or chair.

Reverse Plank/Upward Plank Pose

Sanskrit: Purvottanasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Reverse Plank Pose is wonderful opening for the heart, belly and shoulders. This pose can be modified by simply coming into Reverse Table pose. This pose is part of Rite #4 in the Five Tibetan Rites and is great for strengthening the arms, wrists and legs, as well as stretching the shoulders, chest, and front ankles. It's also therapeutically great in fighting against fatigue. yay!

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Dandasana (Staff) pose, legs extended in front of your and arms at your sides. Feet are about walking distance apart. Place hands 4-6 inches behind your hips, palms down, fingers pointing towards your feet. Now, pointing your feet, press into your hands and heels of the feet, inhale and lift your hips up as high as they will go for you today, straightening your arms. Legs are extending straight out and diagonal to the floor. Allow your head to drop back without compressing the neck. Feeling this pose along the whole backside of the body. If this is uncomfortable you can keep the head slightly lifted. Press shoulder blades against your back torso to support the lift of your chest. Hold for 30 seconds and then, on an exhale, slowly lower back down coming back into Dandasana.



When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

You may need avoid or modify this pose if you have Carpel tunnel syndrome, or have a shoulder, neck or wrist injury. If you have a neck injury, you can support the head on a wall or chair.

A regular tabletop position just includes extending your legs straight but keeping them diagonal.

Lord of the Dance Pose aka Dancer's Pose

Sanskrit: Natarajasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Donald Anderson IV

Dancers Pose is an amazing balance pose with a nice back bend. To warm up to this pose, it's helpful to practice a few back bends, such as Half Bow and counter poses, such as Eagle Pose. As you flow remember to hold your focus and connect with your breath. Practicing this awesome yoga pose stretches the shoulders, chest, thighs, groins and abdomen. It also strengthens the legs and ankles, as well as improves balance.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Standing in Tadasana (Mountain Pose), inhale, shift your weight into your left foot. Bend your right knee, lifting your right heel behind you. Pull the left knee cap up to keep the standing leg straight and strong.



There are two variations you might try here with your arms and hands. In either case, try to keep your torso relatively upright. The first is to reach back with your right hand and grab the outside or inside of your right foot or ankle. To avoid compression in your lower back, actively lift your pubis toward your navel, and at the same time, press your tailbone toward the floor. Push your hips forward.

Begin to lift your right foot up, away from the floor, and back, away from your torso. Extend the right thigh behind you and parallel to the floor. Stretch your left arm forward, in front of your torso, parallel to the floor. I like to take mudra hnds; index finger to thumb for this pose. As you lower your upper body, you lift your leg back. There is a push pull action here - hand into foot, foot into hand. Feel the polarity here. Focus on something that not moving. Breathe deeply. If you feel any cramping here, try to keep your raised foot flexed until your body, feet, thighs and legs get used to you practicing this position.

The second, more challenging, option with the hands is to sweep your right hand around behind your back and catch hold of the inner left foot. Then sweep the left hand back and grab the outside of the left foot. This variation will challenge your balance even more. Then raise the thigh as described above. This second variation will increase the lift of your chest and the stretch of your shoulders.

To take this to the next, most challenging, variation of this pose: Turn your left arm actively outward (so the palm faces away from the side of the torso), bend the elbow, and grip the outside of the left foot. (You can also grab the big toe with the first two fingers and the thumb.) The fingers will cross the top of the foot, the thumb will press against the sole. Inhale, lift the right leg up, and bring the thigh parallel to the floor. As you do this, rotate the right shoulder in such a way that the bent elbow swings around and up, so that it points toward the ceiling. It requires extreme flexibility to externally rotate and flex the shoulder joint in this way. Reach the left arm straight forward, in front of the torso and parallel to the floor. This variation should only be practice when you feel confident and more at ease in the other two variations.

Stay in the pose for 20 to 30 seconds. Then release the grasp on the foot, place the right foot back onto the floor, and repeat for the same length of time on the other side. Come back into Tadasana and then flow forward into a forward fold.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

A possible contraindication here is low blood pressure. Listen to your body and modify wherever and whenever you need to.

Side Plank Pose

Sanskrit: Garudasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Donald Anderson IV taken in the beautiful WWI Park in Plainville, MA

Eagle pose is great for opening up the back, working with the shoulders and really strengthening the legs, knees and ankles. This pose can relieve cramps of the legs. Many benefits are held in this balance pose. As you hold this pose you feel your strength. Find peace and quiet the mind. Everything is inside. Your power is expanded upon while you maintain this pose.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Stand in the powerful Mountain Pose. Feet walking distance apart. Straight, activated arms and legs, good posture. From here begin to bend your left knee and bring your right thigh over right left knee. From here you can keep it modified as you sit back and place your foot on the floor or you can bind your right foot around the lower left calf as you see here in the image to the right. Balancing on the left foot. Then while sitting back in this position, you can wrap your right arm under the left arm and bind your wrists so palms are touching. If binding is a challenge and for those with wrist issues you may simple allow your forearms to come together with palms facing each other. Now from here take your bound arms and allow the elbows to stretch out away from your body and lift up. Shoulders are over your hips here. Hold here and breathe. Challenge yourself by sitting lower. Challenge yourself even more by coming into a bound forward fold, nice and slow and gracefully rising back up in this position. Another challenge is to simply close eyes and maintain good balance. Come out and switch sides after a few breaths. Do this a few times on each side. The more you practice this you will be able to maintain good balance in this pose for a good few minutes or longer.



When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Those with knee issues may find this pose challenging. To start use the modification I've offered above. The more you practice this and other yoga poses you will strengthen your knees again and be able to eventually come into this full pose. Don't rush yourself. Just honor the wisdom of your body always.

Side Plank Pose

Sanskrit: Vasisthasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Donald Anderson IV

Side Plank is one of my favorite core poses! It can be a challenging pose to start but once you practice this with dedication you will find its benefits amazing. Not only does it work your core, it focuses greatly on your love handles and your oblique's. :) Other benefits are strengthening of the arms, belly and legs, as well as stretches and strengthens the wrists, stretches the backs of the legs and improves sense of balance.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

From plank pose (hips low/straight line of energy from your head to your heels), turn your heels to the right, shifting onto the outside edge of your right foot, as you begin to bring your body over to the right (shoulder over wrist but hand not quite under shoulder so there is a bit of an angle from the floor). Support your weight on your right hand and right foot. Your left hand can rest on your hip and eventually extend up to the sky. Be mindful if you feel like your hips are starting to fall or sag a bit, lift your hips back and keep that straight line of energy for as long as works for you today. Your feet can stay here, one in front of the other, or stack your feet. You may choose to take it up a notch and challenge yourself by lifting the top leg up away from the body.



As a modification, you may lower your bottom knee down to the mat until you build up your strength. Always, honor the wisdom of your body. Surrender to where you are in the pose and challenge yourself when your body allows. :)

Come back to plank after a few moments (or 15 to 30 seconds) and go to the other side. Returning back to plank, lower knees down and come into child's pose. Breathe and relax. Take in what you have accomplished.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Avoid practicing this pose if you have serious wrist, elbow or shoulder injuries. For severe arthritis you can modify this pose by taking it down to your forearm, so the weight is shifted from your wrist to your forearm and elbow.

Crow/Crane Pose

Sanskrit: Bakasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

Crow (or Crane) is a great pose for strengthening the arms and the core. This pose challenges your balance and you want to be sure you head into the pose in just the right way and in the right time for you. You might not get right into this pose on your first shot. I know I didn't. It took a few years of practicing till I could have the abs and arm strength as well as the determined focus on my mind and body awareness for the supreme balance that comes with working in Crow Pose. I love that I can do it now and know that doing this pose shows off my hard work. But coming into this pose now, I enjoy more of the mind-body connection and ultimate meditation that occurs. I can really feel myself going deep. I feel my mind release if only for a moment and utter peace can be felt. :)



Directions on how to come into the pose:

This pose is sometimes easier to watch someone flowing into the pose first and for first timers it's best to have a teacher nearby to be sure you are not flowing into this pose improperly and therefore possibly cause an injury. That being said, first being in Tadasana (Mountain pose). With feet only a few inches apart, bend down into a squat position. Separate your knees wider than your hips. Hands pressed firmly down on the mat in front of you about shoulder distance apart, elbows slightly bend. Position your shins just behind your upper arms and knees almost nestled into your armpits and/or beginning to rest on your upper arm. As you lift up onto the balls of your feet, slide the upper arms down as low onto the shins as possible, leaning forward even more. Hips will lift up to approximately shoulder height (no higher). Hug in the core. Feel the thighs begin to work as well. Weight shifts to the upper arms even more. Rounding of the back may occur to assist you in positioning yourself here and then a lengthening of the spine thereafter. Continue to shift the weight forward and see if you can begin to lift one foot off the floor and then maybe both. Keep head in a neutral position looking down or gazing slightly up. If this isn't challenging enough, see if you can straighten your arms even more.

Hold for 20 seconds to one minute. Slowly lower to come out and back into squat position. Roll out your wrists here to release the tension. Lot's of pressure on the wrist in Crow pose.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome or any wrist issues, Pregnancy

Side Crow/Side Crane Pose

Sanskrit: Parsva Bakasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Donald Anderson IV

Side Crow (or more advanced is called the Side Crane) is a great pose for strengthening the arms and the core. This pose challenges your balance and you want to be sure you gaze in the direction you are going (to the side). You might not get right into this pose on your first shot. I know I didn't. It took a few years of practicing till I could have the abs and arm strength as well as the determined focus on my mind and body awareness for the supreme balance that comes with working in Side Crow Pose. It took hearing a different way of coming into this pose in order for my arms to really be in the right position for my body and then amazingly, my perspective changed and I came into this pose with more grace and ease. It's still a challenging pose for me but one I look forward to practicing more often in my dedicated practice. It's all about changing your perspective sometimes. Yet another life lesson. This pose is fantastic for strengthening the arms and wrists, toning the belly and spine as well as improving balance.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

With feet and knees together, bend down. Take your hands to the outside of your right thigh. Here you begin a twisting action in your torso to aim to the right where you will be flowing; softening the belly. Try to maintain a straight spine. First focus on your elbows. Take one elbow to the outside of your right knee and the other elbow to the outside of your hip. Even press them into your knee and hip so you are secure with position. Then leaning over, while maintaining elbow contact, press hands into the floor, fingers wide and strong. Try not to change hand positions and elbows into knee and hips throughout the pose. Hands will be shoulder distance apart. Take your gaze/Drishti to the right where you will be going. Most of the weight is still in the feet.

Begin weight transference. Spine is straight and elongated. Shift your weight forward a little or a lot. Slow on your first attempts. Get used to the weight and strength in your shoulders; still keeping your feet touching the ground at this point. Then when you feel ready as you shift forward, gazing forward, neck long begin to lift one or both feet off the ground. Aiming to bring the middle of your abdomen above and between your hands. It's balance, geometry, strengthening the arms and wrists a lot.

Advanced: Your left arm may remain slightly bent, but a more advanced version for **Side Crane** is to straighten it as much as you can without allowing your legs to slide down. Straighten your right arm completely. As you lift your right shoulder, twist your spine further. Lift your chest and head, and look forward. Breathe evenly and naturally.

Hold the pose for 20 seconds or longer, then lower your feet back to the floor with an exhale. Repeat it on the other side for the same length of time.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, any wrist issues or back injuries will require modification in those pose. Coming into this with proper alignment and slowing and if there is any pain do not attempt this pose. Instead work on Chaturanga and Crow as alternate poses.

Modified Tripod Pose

Sanskrit: Sirsasana II

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Connor O'Hara

This pose is a preparatory pose for Headstand. Although I don't mind if I end up staying in this pose and never reaching headstand. It's that surrender I'm sure that will eventually allow me to reach the Headstand pose someday. We must always be where we are and not where we think we *should* be. Honor the wisdom of the body always. This pose is oh so filled with alertness. Blood rushing to the head but so good. A great inversion. And great if you just haven't gotten there for a headstand, you can still feel the benefits within this modified version.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Come to child's pose. Allow your hips to come back to your heels, forehead resting on the mat. Arms stretched out in front of you. Then bring your hands under your shoulders, elbows bent close to your sides. Roll onto the top of your head, your crown. Using only full pressure on your arms, lift your buttocks up in the air and with knees bent left them over your elbows. Hold here. Never press down on the head and never hold the weight in your neck. Rather use your arms and hold in the belly for extra balance. Listen to the stillness within this inversion. Come out when ready. You can also do this pose up against a wall as a great modification.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have back or neck injury or pain. I highly recommend only doing this pose in the guidance of a yoga teacher. They are able to best see that you are in the position properly and safely. They will assist you and allow you to go further as you progress in your own perfect divine timing.

Standing (or Reclining) Big Toe Pose

Sanskrit: Utthita (or Supta) Hasta Padangusthasana

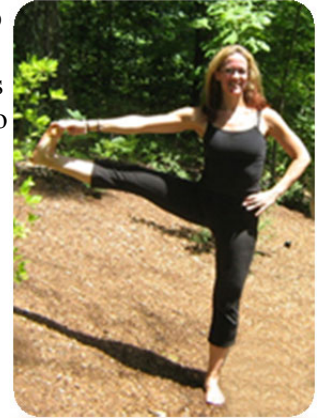
First Image courtesy of Donald Anderson IV

Second Image courtesy of yogajournal.com

Big Toe Pose, whether reclining or standing, is a fantastic pose to help open up our hips and inner thighs. You'll also really strengthen your core, abdominals, legs and ankles. It's a beautiful stretch for the legs! This balance pose as well as others will really allow you to get deep into your mind. Take this opportunity to remove those mind thoughts and just breathe. As you are totally in focus of



what you are doing, as well as your breath, nothing else can enter. You can just be and enjoy. Give this one a shot and the more dedicated you are with this pose the better your balance will get and the less you will think those mind thoughts. They just get in the way anyway! :)



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Stand in Tadasana (Mountain) with your feet together, spine upright, open across your chest and relax your shoulders and lift out of the hips. Deepen your breath and focus your gaze on a still point ahead of you, this helps you to balance. Bring your right knee towards your chest and with your two peace fingers (index finger and middle finger) take hold of your right big toe or foot. You may also choose to, instead, use a strap and wrap around your foot. Your choice.boat

Elongate your posture, roll your shoulders back and open your chest. Pull the navel in towards the spine. Holding your left hand on your hip to start, extend your right leg out in front of you. This will really engage your core abdominal muscles. Utilize your core and your balancing leg to hold this pose. Straighten your left knee without locking it and stabilize your joints and posture. Ground into the earth with your balancing leg and reach tall, lifting to the sky.

Next, you may begin to open your right arm and foot out to your right side. Another option to challenge you in this pose is to stretch your left arm out shoulder height. Breathe. Stability, concentration and balance.

Focus on your breath. Use the power of your prana life force energy to maintain your center. Lift up in the posture, open your heart center. Hold for 3-7 deep breaths. Slowly release out and repeat on your left side. Come back to Mountain pose.

The modification for this pose is to do this with your back against a wall to start. And you can also take this pose to the floor and do a Reclining Big Toe pose as illustrated above. Enjoy!

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Avoid this pose if you suffer from a lower back, knee or ankle injury. Always listen to your body.

Half Moon

Sanskrit: Ardha Chandrasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

The **Half Moon** balance pose is fantastic for opening up the hips, heart and chest, as well as strengthening the legs, thighs, glute's, spine and our core! This is one of my favorite poses where I feel like I am getting an all-around practice in one pose. By strengthening, while balancing and breathing fully and deeply to go inward for that oh-so-special connection that all yoga poses can potentially bring. :) A great pose to work up to this pose is Triangle pose. This pose also:



- Stretches the groins, hamstrings and calves, shoulders, chest, and spine
- Improves coordination and sense of balance
- Helps relieve stress
- Improves digestion

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Have a block ready in front of the leg you are balancing on about 6-12 inches. We will balance on our right leg first. Beginning in Chair pose, hands in Namaste/Prayer pose at your heart. Inhale. On your exhale begin to move your right hand to your block or the mat in front of you and left hand to left hip. As you press your right hand down begin to lift the left leg back and up, starting to open the hips as you extend the left leg back. Lift your left hip up, lifting the left side of your torso, and allow the right hip to stay and have the action of pressing right hip forward, so hips stack. Open your heart as well. The goal is to eventually have your left leg back and straight to about hip level (or parallel and slightly higher than parallel to the floor) and your balancing leg as straight as possible without locking the knee. Be sure your right knee is facing forward and not turning inward. Most of the weight is on your balancing leg; pressing firmly into all of your right foot including the heel. Your right hand is just there for balance.

You may take your left hand off of left hip when you feel good and balanced. Your gaze or drishti can be up, forward or down. Hold for 5 deep breaths or 30 seconds to one minute.

To come out bend your right balancing knee and gracefully lower your left hand, squaring your hips and allowing the left leg to come back down, bending both knees back into Chair pose. Practice this pose on the other side before finishing in Chair and straightening the legs, standing in Mountain pose.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Headache, migraine, low blood pressure, diarrhea, insomnia. If you have any head or neck issue, keep your head looking straight forward or down rather than up. Keep the strain off the neck and always listen to your body.

Shoulder Stand Pose

Sanskrit: Salamba Sarvangasana

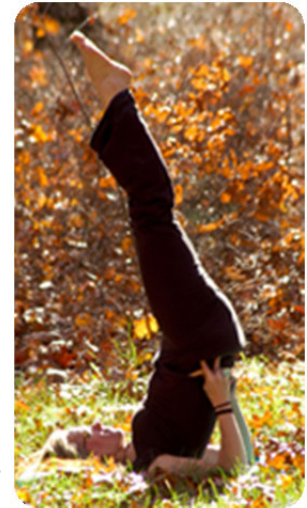
First image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

Second image of courtesy of Yogajournal.com

Shoulder Stand is one of my favorite poses. It's a pose great for shifting the gravity within your body and circulating the blood flow in a new that our body doesn't always receive. This allows for many health benefits. To name a few:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stimulates the thyroid and prostate glands and abdominal organs
- Stretches the shoulders and neck
- Tones the legs and buttocks
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Reduces fatigue and alleviates insomnia
- Therapeutic for asthma, infertility, and sinusitis

I find an inner peace while in this pose. The excellent counterpose, Fish Pose, is also my favorite. I think this is a great pose for around Thanksgiving as it triggers your Thyroid into action that will therefore then work on your metabolism and digestion (especially if you move into Plow pose from this pose). Play with works best for you and your body and never go further than what works for your body today. You do not want to injure you neck so please take care and listen to the directions below. Honor the wisdom of your body always.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

(This can also be started against a wall for beginners, such as working with Legs-Up-The-Wall pose.) Set yourself up with a blanket thick enough to allow for your neck to have no pressure. So your head and neck are aligned and the top of your shoulders are at the very edge of the blanket. Fold a firm blanket into rectangles measuring about 1 foot by 2 feet, and stack them. You may need more than one. If you do not have a blanket, use your mat and even place a mat over the blanket. This will help your elbows from slipping while in the pose. From here, lay down on the blanket so that shoulders are parallel to each other on the blanket and/or mat with your head on the floor.

Bend your knees and begin to raise your legs up in the air. As you do this you will begin to curl your body, pelvis first and raise them legs up in the air. All while fully supporting your body with your hands on your lower back. The weight is in the shoulders and arms, not the neck or head. If you notice the weight in the neck or head, come out of the pose and readjust yourself. As you raise up, straighten your legs as much as possible and notice if your legs are angled or straight up. The goal is to get them straight up. Bring your shoulder blades in towards the center of the back. Allow the weight to fall into the hands only.

As you progress you can move the sternum closer to chin. Eventually your upper back will be in alignment with the torso and legs. Go slow. Take your time getting into this pose. Listen to your body always. Hold this pose for 30 seconds to even up to five minutes.

Then slowly begin to lower down bending your knees and then rounding your back, one vertebrae at a time roll on out flat on the floor. Nice and easy. Immediately go into a counter pose such as the Fish pose.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Keep in mind this pose is considered an intermediate pose. So please take it slow and go one step at a time. Try Plow pose first to see how that feels on your body. Other things to consider to not practice this pose is if you have Diarrhea, a Headache, High blood pressure, Menstruation (a controversial idea, so use your intuition and listen to your body during menstruation), Neck injury, Pregnancy (If you are experienced with this pose, you can continue to practice it late into pregnancy. However, it's not recommended you start this for the first time after you become pregnant. Your body is not ready or prepared.)

Plow Pose

Sanskrit: Halasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Morayo Sayles

Plow pose is sometimes followed by the Shoulderstand pose. This is a wonderful calming pose that also stimulates the thyroid gland & abs. Your shoulders and spine are getting an excellent stretch. And if you're a woman it's wonderful for relieving symptoms of menopause. Other wonderful benefits are a reduction in stress and fatigue, as well as therapeutic for backache, headache, infertility, insomnia and sinusitis.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Set yourself up with a blanket thick enough to allow for your neck to have no pressure so your head and neck are aligned and the top of your shoulders are at the very edge of the blanket. Fold a firm blanket into rectangles measuring about 1 foot by 2 feet, and stack them. You may need more than one. If you do not have a blanket, use your mat and even place a mat over the blanket. This will help your elbows from slipping while in the pose. From here, lay down on the blanket so that shoulders are parallel to each other on the blanket and/or mat with your head on the floor.

Bend your knees and begin to raise your legs up in the air. As you do this you will begin to curl your body, pelvis first and raise them legs up in the air. All while fully supporting your body with your hands on your lower back. The weight is in the shoulders and arms, not the neck or head. If you notice the weight in the neck or head, come out of the pose and readjust yourself. As you raise up, straighten your legs and allow them to come over your upper body and head. See how far you can gently guide your legs further above your head and possibly reaching the floor above your head about a foot or so away. The feet flexed may eventually touch the floor. This is considered a more intermediate variation of the pose. So it is helpful to have instructor guidance. If your feet do not touch the floor do not remove your hands from the lower back. Maintain good posture and never move your head in an uncomfortable unsafe manner. If your feet do touch the ground, you have the option to remove your hands from your lower back and straighten the arms out, even clasping the hands together. Hold for 1-5 minutes. Then slowly roll out.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

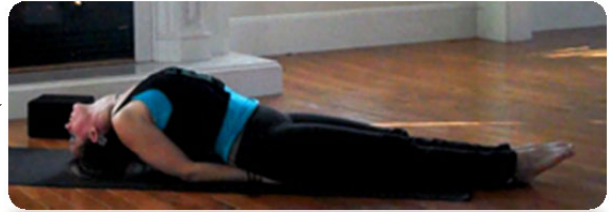
When not practice this pose is if you have Diarrhea, a Headache, High blood pressure, Menstruation (a controversial idea, so use your intuition and listen to your body during menstruation), Neck injury, Pregnancy (If you are experienced with this pose, you can continue to practice it late into pregnancy. However, it's not recommended you start this for the first time after you become pregnant. Your body is not ready or prepared.)

Fish Pose

Sanskrit: Matsyasana

Image of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Fish pose is commonly followed by the Shoulder Stand pose. It's a great counterpose. This is an amazing pose that seems to tap into your entire chakra system. A great heart opener and backbend. And a funny synchronicity occurred when I was describing this pose. I went to yahoo for a moment and right there was a Image of a fish and its story about really not being extinct (as they thought for 70 years!) So do this pose, it's a great pose and don't allow *it* to become extinct in your practice. It holds such tremendous value physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

To come into Fish pose, lay flat on your back on the mat. Bring your hands under your buttocks palms facing the mat. Rest your buttocks on the back of your hands and do your best not to lift your rear end off the hands or mat during this pose. Legs are straight and activated. Feet pointed. From here the weight will fall into your elbows and forearms. You will be arching and lifting your back up while allowing your head to fall back and the crown of your head rests lightly on the mat. There is no weight in the head, only the forearms. Drop your shoulders back and down. If tilting your head back is uncomfortable take it where it is comfortable for your neck. Modify where you need to and always honor the wisdom of your body. Tilt your pelvis to assist the back into its arch and if you like take a gentle lift and hold in the pelvis. Remember to breathe. Hold for a minute or two and come out fully refreshed. Bring your knees into your chest and give them a nice hug.

You may try working with Ouija breath here. Breathing deeply while constricting the throat to make a sort of ocean sound in the back of the throat. The focus on the breath keeps you breathing and oxygenating the body, as well as fueling yourself to hold the pose. Remove thoughts here. Only be. Hold for a 30 seconds to a minute or longer if you'd like. Then slowly lower back down and shake the legs, especially the leg you were balancing on. Then do the same on the other side...

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Any neck, head or back issues. This is also not a great pose if you have a migraine or insomnia. Listen to your body and it will tell you if it's able. If you feel strain or pain, come out. Sweet discomfort is all we look for in most poses. And for this particular pose even that is a bit much because this is more of a stretch and hold allowing for an opening in the chest and neck.



Mini-Vinyasa's

Add dimension to your Vinyasa classes. The Mini-Vinyasa's, to follow, allow the yoga practitioner to connect with their breath in motion. These align with the Core Sun Salutation and serve as inspiration for creating your own unique Vinyasa Yoga classes. This small list is but a few of the many variations of flows and breath work and can serve as inspiration for you to creatively craft Vinyasa Yoga classes.

Cat and Cow Pose/Moving Cat

Sanskrit:

Cow Pose: Bitilasana (top image)

chair: Marjaryasana (bottom image)

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Cat and Cow Pose are commonly done together in what I like to call **Moving Cats** for a gentle Vinyasa flow. Both of these poses stretch the front and back torso and neck. And also provide a gentle massage to the spine and belly organs, including the uterus. It's also a great stress reliever. I'm fond of doing these two poses together at the beginning of a yoga sequence.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Start on your hands and knees in a Table position. Make sure your knees are set directly below your hips and your wrists, elbows and shoulders are in line and perpendicular to the floor. Center your head in a neutral position, eyes looking at the floor, keeping your head neck and spine in one straight line of energy. As you inhale, come into Cow pose by lifting your sits bones and chest toward the ceiling, allowing your rib cage to flow down toward the floor. Lift your head to look straight forward.

Exhale, coming back to neutral/Table pose. Then move into Cat pose, mimicking a Halloween cat for a gentle, flowing Vinyasa. As you exhale, round your spine toward the ceiling, making sure to keep your shoulders and knees in position. Release your head toward the floor, but don't force your chin to your chest. Tuck your tailbone. Inhale back into Cow and exhale Cat. Inhale, Cow. Exhale Cat. Flow back and forth at your own pace and hold where you'd like to hold for longer than a half breath. Do this for several gentle rounds, then round your spine floating back into Child's pose.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

With a neck injury, keep the head in line with the torso. Protect your neck by broadening across your shoulder blades and drawing your shoulders down, away from your ears. If you have difficulty rounding the very top of the upper back, you may have a partner place a hand just above and between the shoulder blades to help you activate this area.



Crescent (High Lunge) Pose – Fists of Fire

Sanskrit: Anjaneyasana – Ratni Agni

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Crescent (High Lunge)

Pose is a deep stretch for the hip flexors and quadriceps. It can also be a little bit of a backbend if you want it to be. This pose works a lot on the ankles, calves, thighs, groins,

abdomen, chest, shoulders, armpits, neck and is great for Sciatica issues. When you add in the Fists of Fire element to the Crescent pose you add in a new element of breath work and shoulder action. This is one of my favorites to practice and teach in yoga classes. If you go fast, you can tie in the Breath of Fire (fast equal inhales and exhales) to heat up your internal fire. This Vinyasa variation is also a part of the Core Sun Salutation sequence.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

From Downdog inhale lift your left foot forward in between your hands for runners lunge. Both feet are facing forward. Be sure your knee is over your ankle and both feet are in their own hip sockets and parallel lines of existence. We don't want tight rope action here where one foot is in front of the other. Each foot being in their own parallel line is the proper alignment and will give better balance in this pose.

Then inhale arms all the way up to sky beside your ears, palms facing each other. Spine straight to start. Relax the shoulders down but reach up. Gaze forward. Hips will naturally face forward and shoulders are squared and facing forward as well. Sink down low into this pose finding a new edge each time while being mindful of proper alignment. Be careful not to overarch the lower back. Lengthen your tailbone towards the floor and reach back through your right heel. Be mindful that you are not turning that back foot in. This can assist the shoulder blades deeper into the back and help support your chest. Gaze up toward your thumbs if this feels good for your neck. Be sure not to press the front ribs forward, draw them down and into the torso.

From here begin **Fist of Fire**. Make fists with your hands as you inhale. Exhale, bending at the elbows, bring hands down and fists by your waist. Inhale, maintaining fists, reach up. Exhale lower. Inhale, up and exhale lower. You may go slow or fast. Your pace. If going fast you may choose to incorporate Breathe of Fire. Having matching lengths in your inhales and your exhales. Tap into your internal fire and enjoy becoming present with only your breath and movement. Do this for 5-10 repetitions.

To modify your Crescent pose, you can either lower the back knee down to the ground or take legs and feet even wider. You may also improve balance by practicing resting the thigh of the forward leg on a chair seat.

To come out: Lower your hands to the mat on either side of your front foot. Step back into Downdog. Repeat on the other side.

Other variations of Fists of Fire is to practice *Fists of Fire* while in Warrior I, Chair or Boat pose. The effects and benefits are amazing.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

High blood pressure, shoulder issues or Heart problems

Downward Facing Dog to Plank Waves

Sanskrit: Adho Mukha Svanasana prati Phalakasana UttaraGgate

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson



Downward Facing Dog is a perfect inverted "V" in the body. It's great for aligning the spine, elongating the back, legs and arms. This pose can really open up the chest and heart as well. Downdog has many other benefits you can read on the **Downdog** pose page. **Plank** pose is great for strengthening the arms, wrists and spine, as well as toning the abdomen. I love to do **Downdog to Plank waves**. It really releases stagnant and blocked energies from our root chakra all the way up the spine through the belly and through the crown of the head. This is also a great variation for releasing more toxins from our internal organs. Love it! :) This Vinyasa variation is also a part of the **Core Sun Salutation** sequence.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in **Child's pose** (knees on ground, slide hips back to meet heels and rest head on mat). Then slowly rise up, keep hands on mat slightly forward from shoulders and knees under hips. Curl the toes under and begin to lift your knees off the mat, straightening the legs making an inverted V position with your body. Push up up up through the tailbone. Allow your heels to reach for the mat (they do not need to touch but if and when they do, see if you can lift your toes off the mat, but only if heels are touching the mat). No air bubbles in those hands, fingers wide and hands shoulder width apart. Feet are hip distance. Shoulders are wide and back and away from the ears; and in a nice centered location - not too far forward or back. Press the chest down as if reaching for your thighs, open the heart. Though remember to avoid a banana back. Lift high from the tailbone to the sky. Elongate the spine and feel the stretch. Allow your head to hang loose and drink your breath. Breathe deeply.

Begin **Downdog to Plank Waves**. On an inhale come into plank pose with a wave motion. Roll your spine from the your Root Chakra at your tailbone all the way up your spine through your Crown Chakra, lowering your hips down as you go so that you end up in a Plank position with a straight line of energy from your head all the way down to your heels. Wrists are under shoulders in Plank pose, neck elongated. Being mindful of good alignment as you flow. Exhale, bending your knees back almost in a hovering child's pose, then straighten legs in Downdog and begin the wave back up again. Inhale Plank, exhale to Downdog. Repeat 3-5x. Come to rest in Downdog once again.

To come out, you may drop your knees down onto the mat and slide your hips back to your heels, coming back into Child's pose. Rest here. Slide your hands up to your knees sitting up and roll out your wrists. Down Dog works a lot in the wrists, so it's helpful to loosen them up; release the tension.

When not to do this pose or to modify / Contraindications:

You may need avoid or modify this pose if you have Carpel tunnel syndrome or symptom of Diarrhea. If accessible, you may modify by coming onto your forearms in a low Downdog (Dolphin variation) and low plank position. The wave will be more subtle but possible. It's, also, not recommended to do this pose if you are in your late-term of pregnancy. If you have high blood pressure or a headache modify where possible and always listen to your body.

DownDog Splits with Core Shakti Kicks

Sanskrit: Tri Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana

sahita Antaraka oGkArA Padaksepa

Images of Maggie Anderson taken by Maggie Anderson

Downdog Splits with Core Shakti Kicks is another of my favorite poses to practice, as well as teach in my classes. In **Downdog Splits** we get an awesome hamstring stretch and all along the entire leg. It feels

good to open up that hip flexor as well. It's one of my *yummy* poses. You know those poses that make you say "ahhhh". This is one of the many! ☺ Downdog splits pose is great for aligning the spine, elongating the back, legs and arms, as well as relieve stress, calm the brain, improve digestion and more. This pose can really open up the chest and heart as well.



Practicing Core Shakti Kicks from here is another amazing flow that allows you to tap into your breath awareness, as well as work on your core. Our core is our foundation for all movement, so it's helpful to keep it healthy and keep it strong. Core Shakti Kicks strengthens and tones your abdominals, waist and oblique's (most especially when you take your knee over to either elbow rather than the center line). This Vinyasa variation is also a part of the **Core Sun Salutation** sequence.

Directions on how to come into the pose:

Begin in Child's pose (knees on ground, slide hips back to meet heels and rest head on mat). Then slowly rise up, keep hands on mat slightly forward from shoulders and knees under hips. Begin to lift your knees off the mat and straighten the legs making an inverted V position with your body (DownDog). Push up through the tailbone. Allow your heels to reach for the mat, even if only as the intention of reaching towards the mat. No air bubbles in those hands, fingers wide and hands shoulder width apart. Feet are hip distance. Shoulders are wide and back and away from the ears. Press the chest down as if reaching for your thighs, open the heart. Lift high from the tailbone to the sky. Elongate the spine and feel the stretch. Breathe deeply. Allow your head to hang loose and drink your breath.

Then lift the right leg up towards the sky. This can be hip level or higher. If you cannot straighten the leg, that's okay. It's all about your flexibility. In time your leg will get straighter and straighter and higher. Honor the wisdom of your body and go to your level today. Elongate your leg, while maintaining this three-legged dog. Enjoy this stretch.

Next, inhale while in splits. Exhale, three **Core Shakti kicks** to the center. Bend right knee in towards your belly, as you round up your spine, perhaps lifting the knee further into your belly and having the intention of the navel coming in towards the spine. As you do this simultaneously you may further come up onto the ball of your left foot and more weight shifts into the toes. Inhale right leg back up into splits, exhale knee in. Finishing 3-5 Core Shakti Kicks with leg lifted back into Splits. The second *Core Shakti Kick* option is to take your right knee in, then under your body and over towards the left elbow for a twist. 3-5 repetitions and meeting back up into splits. The third *Core Shakti Kick* option is to bring your knee over towards the outside right elbow, engaging more deeply the waist and oblique's. 3-5 repetitions.

continued on next page...

DownDog Splits with Core Shakti Kicks (continued...)

Lower the leg back into Downdog. Go to the other side and lift into Downdog splits to your level. Each side may react differently to flexibility and level. In time, this may balance out as you practice.

Then to come out, drop the leg down into your DownDog. From there, perhaps you can drop your knees down onto the mat and slide your hips back to your heels, coming back into Child's pose. Rest here. Slide your hands up to your knees sitting up and roll out your wrists. This variation works a lot in the wrists, so it's helpful to loosen them up and release the tension.

Another modification variation of this pose is to do your *Core Shakti Kicks* from Table pose. Table pose is simply, lowering your knees to the mat from Downdog, aligning wrists under shoulders and knees under hips to begin. Spine is nice and elongated. Or you may choose to modify one step further and take your forearms down to that mat (particularly if you have wrist issues). Always options and progress at your own pace. :) From here you can flow into your Core Shakti Kicks as described above.

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

Be leery of practicing this pose if you have wrist issues or carpal tunnel syndrome or symptom of Diarrhea. And it's not recommended to do this pose if you are in your late-term of pregnancy. If you have high blood pressure or a headache, try to modify this pose by supporting your head on a bolster or block, ears level between the arms.



Sanskrit Names of Yoga Poses & Their Benefits

By Clarissa Adkins, eHow Contributor

http://www.ehow.com/about_5439690_sanskrit-names-yoga-poses-benefits.html

Not all yoga classes use the Sanskrit names of poses. Most yoga poses in Sanskrit will end with the suffix "asana," which means pose, or literally, "to be established in a particular position." The term yoga is Sanskrit for "union" or "yoke." Performed correctly, yoga poses should lead a student to a balancing, or union, of the body and mind. The work of asanas includes balancing, strengthening, stretching, twisting and enduring. A full practice of yoga includes pranayama (breathing exercises) and meditation.

History

Sanskrit is often compared to Latin because it is a classical, root language for many other languages. The base of Sanskrit, Vedic Sanskrit, emerged around 1,500 B.C. in India. In 500 B.C., the scholar Panini perfected it. Many students of Sanskrit consider it a sacred language, because the syllables were created to resonate with the divine during meditation and chanting.

Significance

The use of Sanskrit in yoga classes literally makes the practice of yoga accessible internationally. The thought is that an instructor can travel to any country and use the sacred sounds of yoga poses in their Sanskrit form to reach students without the need to speak their home language. Yoga instructors who use Sanskrit during class also eliminate some of the confusion surrounding the random naming of yoga poses from one culture to another, or even from one teacher to another.

Types

These are some of the most widely used yoga poses, in English, then Sanskrit. Sun Salutations A & B (Surya Namaskar A & B), Mountain (Tadasana), Forward Fold (Uttanasana), Half Standing Forward Bend/Half Way (Ardha Uttanasana), Four Limbed Staff Pose (Chaturanga Dandasana), Upward-Facing Dog (Urdhva Mukha Svanasana), Downward Facing Dog (Ardha Mukha Svanasana), Child's Pose (Balasana), Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana), Cow Pose (Bitilasana), Cat Pose (Marjaryasana), Lotus Pose (Padmasana), Boat Pose (Paripurna Navasana), Cow Face Pose (Gomukhasana), Plow Pose (Halasana), Shoulder Stand (Salamba Sarvangasana), Head Stand (Salamba Sirsasana), Chair (Utkatasana), Warriors I to III (Virabhadrasana Eka, Dvi and Tri), Seated Forward Fold (Paschimottanasana), Tree (Vrksasana), Triangle (Utthita Trikonasana) and Relaxation or Corpse Pose (Savasana).

Benefits

The benefits of yoga are numerous. The sequence of poses that make up Surya Namaskar A & B work to warm up the body and get the student focused on the present. Poses that invert the body, like Uttanasana, Halasana, Salamba Sarvangasana and Salamba Sirsasana refresh the circulatory system, relieve menopausal symptoms, lengthen the spine and work the core muscles. Many yoga poses, such as Ardha Mukha Svanasana, Chaturanga Dandasana, Virabhadrasana Eka, Dvi and Tri; and Paripurna Navasana build endurance and strengthen muscles. Some yoga poses are more about stretching and restoration of the body like Bitilasana, Marjaryasana and Savasana.

Expert Insight

Scholars consider Sanskrit a root language for Indo-European languages, particularly in relation to Indo-Iranian and Indo Aryan ones. A yoga student might hear the sounds of Sanskrit in English words like three or "dvi", binds or "bandhas;" and the "tri" in "Trikonasana, for Triangle Pose.

English/Sanskrit Asana (Posture) Names

SEATED POSES

Boat: Navasana
Butterfly: Baddha Konasana
Cat Stretch: Bidhalasana
Child's: Balasana
Cow Face: Gomukhasana
Easy Seat: Sukhasana
Seated Forward Bend: Paschimottanasana
Half Lotus: Ardha Padmasana
Head to Knee: Janu Sirsasana
Hero: Virasana
Lotus: Padmasana
Pigeon: Eka Pada Rajakapotasana
Sideways Wide Angle Forward Bend: Parsva
Upavistha Konasana
Spinal Twist: Marichyasana
Staff: Dandasana
Two-Legged Pigeon (Firelog): Dwi Pada
Rajakapotasana
Wide Angle Forward Bend: Upavistha Konasana

ARM BALANCES

Crow or Crane Pose: Bakasana
Eight-Angel Pose: Astavakrasana
Firefly: Tittibhasana
Peacock: Mayurasana
Scale: Tolasana
Shoulder-Pressing: Bhujapidasana
Side Arm Balance: Vasisthasana
Side Crane Pose: Parsva Bakasana
Split-Leg Arm Balance:
Eka Pada Koundinyasana 2

STANDING POSES

Chair pose: Utkatasana
Crescent (High Lunge): Anjaneyasana
Dancers: Natranjasana
Eagle: Garudasana
Extended Side Angle: Parsva Konasana
Five-Pointed Star: Utthita Tadasana
Four-Limbed Staff: Chaturanga Dandasana
Goddess (Fierce Angle): Utkata Konasana
Half Moon: Ardha Chandrasana
Intense Side Stretch (Pyramid): Parsvottanasana
Mountain: Tadasana
Side-Bending Mountain: Parsva Tadasana
Upward Salute: Urdhva Hastasana
Plank: Phalakasana

STANDING POSES continued...

Revolved Side Angle (Crescent Revolve):
Parivrtta Parsva Konasana Side Angle Pose: Parsva
Konasana
Standing Forward Bend: Uttanasana
Tree Pose: Vrkasana
Triangle: Trikonasana
Warrior I, II, III: Virabhadrasana I, II, III

SUPINE POSES

Bridge: Sedu Bandhasana
Camel: Ustrasana
Corpse: Savasana
Fish: Matseyasana
Inclined Plane (Reverse Plank): Purvottanasana
One-Leg Bridge: Eka Pada Setu Bandhasana
One-Leg Wheel: Eka Pada Dhanurasana
Reclined Big Toe: Supta Padangusthasana
Side-Relining Leg Lift: Anantasana
Wheel Pose (Upward-Facing Bow):
Urdhva Mukha Dhanurasana

TWIST POSES

Bharadvaja's Twist: Bharadvajasana I
Easy Seat Twist: Sukhasana vakra
Revolve Half Moon: Parivrtta Ardha Chandrasana
Revolved Abdomen Pose: Jathara Parivartnanasana
Spinal Twist: Marchyasana
Thread the Needle (Kneeling Twist): Sucirandhrasana

PRONE POSES

Bow Pose: Dhanurasana
Cobra: Bhujangasana
Frog: Bhekasana
Half Bow: Ardha Dhanurasana
Locust: Salabhasana
Tortoise: Kurmasana
Upward-Facing Dog: Urdhva Mukha Savanasana

INVERTED POSES

Downward Facing Dog: Adho Mukha Savanasana
Dolphin: Ardha Pincha Mayurasana
Handstand: Adho Mukha Vrkasana
Headstand: Sirsasana
Plow: Halasana
Shoulderstand: Sarvangasana
Rabbit: Sasankasana
Wide Angle Forward Bend: Prasrita Padottanasana



Sequencing

Sequencing

To sequence a yoga class, first decide what style you would like to teach. Then set up your class from there. I love to set up my classes, whether it's a gentle style class or Vinyasa, as a logical set of poses that work on 2-3 specific areas of the body. We know that most yoga classes will go over every single body part, but to have a flow geared towards specific areas gives the class a unique feel to it each time to you and helps students feel they really worked on those areas. Then when they come back for the next unique class set up, they work on something else in their body; each time gaining something new.

For a Vinyasa style class the tempo of the class should follow that bell curve I spoke about in your previous class. It will begin slowly with centering and warm-up poses, building on tempo to the apex of the class at the standing series and then slowly descending from there and ending with Savasana or Legs-up-the-Wall.

TIMING SAMPLE

In a class that lasts 1 hour and 15 minutes a sample break-down of the class can be as follows:

1. Centering and Warm-ups: 15 minutes (9-9:15a.m.)
2. Sun Salutations: 10-15 minutes (9:15-9:30a.m.)
3. Standing Series: 20-25 minutes (9:30-9:50a.m.)
4. Floor Work: 10 minutes (9:50-10a.m.)
5. Savasana or Legs-Up-The-Wall and conclusion (10-15 minutes) (10-10:15a.m.)

VISUALIZE

As I mentioned, I love to first write down the class I'm going to teach. Then I visualize myself teaching the class what I've written down, so that I have it mostly memorized. I'll still have my notes by my mat if I need it, but often no longer need to refer back to my notes. Just by writing it down, it's a way to remember. Then visualizing it helps you remember it and also to modify poses you had planned as new poses come to you in the visualization process. This helps you to really embody what you are about to teach. This is a technique that Olympians use to achieve their goals.

MUSIC

Choose if you'd like to have music in your class. Some people prefer little to no music or complete silence. Some love it loud and proud. And there's the in-between. I love to play music to assist with the tone of the soothing gentle class. It truly helps students get down into that gentle mood. For Vinyasa use the same Bell technique for music. Begin soothing, then have it be more active (but if using music with words make them positive, uplifting or neutral and soothing), then when coming back down have it be gentle and soothing one again to get students into their meditation mood for their final resting pose.

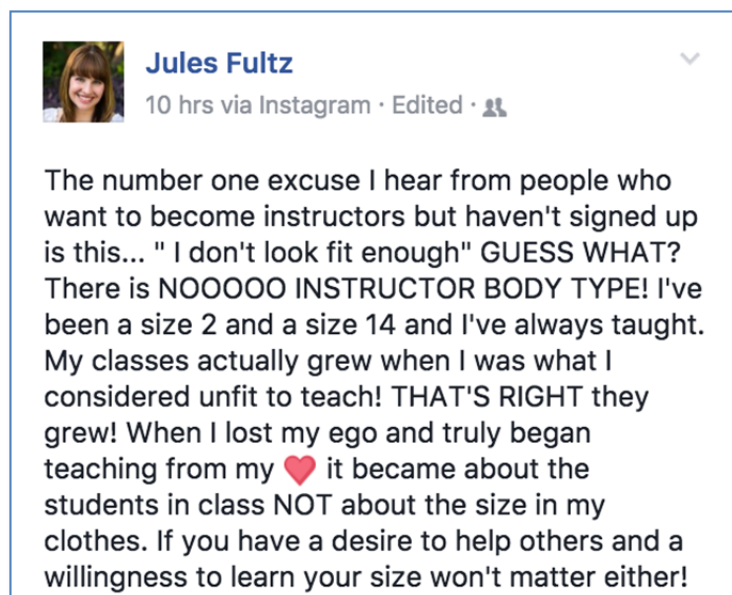
BEST INTENTIONS

From time to time, despite best efforts and planning you will find yourself either long or short on time. The best way to avoid that scenario is to keep a careful eye on the clock and modify as you go. Map out your class and give an ending time for each portion approximately. You can even write yourself a brief note and tuck it under the corner of your mat. Of course you can switch around the times, take time from one section to give to another if you went over. If your Sun Salutation section was faster than expected, you might add in another vinyasa flow or hold your standing poses longer for even deeper introspection. This makes for a beautiful unique flow as well.

Each class will be different. It's best to release attachments to the perfect class. When you do that all of a sudden, it's the best class you've ever taught!

WE MUST GET OUT OF OUR EGO

As an instructor, we are to practice what we preach. We are to practice it to a deeper level and be held at that higher standard and bathed in a different light so that we can facilitate others to rise up to that energy within themselves.



Namaste,
Maggie

Dr. Sage Rountree: Sequencing Yoga Classes

Sequencing Yoga Classes: A Flipbook Approach by Dr. Sage Rountree



Remember the flipbooks we had as kids, where you could dress up a figure in various tops and bottoms combined into interesting outfits, or create a novel monster with the head of a dinosaur, the torso of an eagle, the legs of a goat, and the feet of a lion? This model works well not just for entertaining children (and adults), but also for structuring a balanced sequence for a yoga class. Think of the entire class as a full outfit or monster. Envision what you want that outfit or monster to look like, play with interesting combinations of options, then present that entire creation to your students. You'll be engaged, they'll be engaged, and you'll be helping them not only with that one sequence but also by teaching them structural rules so they can keep themselves balanced in home practice. Let's investigate.

For our purposes here, we can think of a four-section flipbook, comprised of the opening of class (the head), the standing portion of class (the torso), the low-to-the-mat portion of class (the legs), and the closing of class (the feet). While staying true to the function of each portion of class, you can mix and match sequences to create a complete whole that suits your vision.

Opening

As you consider this approach, think through the opening sequences you usually practice and teach. Do you begin standing, sitting, or reclining? Do you include breath exercises? What warmup exercises do you lead? Take students through a routine that moves the spine in all directions: forward and back, side to side, and around in both directions. That can look like this:

Seated Warmup

Seated cat/cow

Seated side bend

Seated twist

Prone Warmup from Table

Cat/cow

Child's pose with side stretch

Threading-the-needle twist

Supine Warmup

Hugging knees

Bridge pose

Knees-down twist

Side bend ("banana" pose)

Combined with a welcome and centering exercises, any of these three sequences would constitute the head of the class. For another example see the first segment of the Yoga for Cyclists video here: <http://www.prana.com/life/2013/07/18/sage-roundtree-yoga-for-cyclists/>. This video demonstrates another prone spinal warmup:



Prone Warmup from the Belly

Sphinx

Tree leg with side bend

Threading the needle twist

Child's pose

Standing

Moving on to the torso of the class, you'd then take students through a standing pose routine. Depending on the students' needs, this could be gentle or vigorous. A gentler standing sequence might include static holds of appropriately modified versions of triangle, side angle, and warrior poses. A vigorous sequence could be based on sun salutations or some other dynamic flow. To ensure a well-rounded approach, include poses facing forward, like lunges and warrior I-based poses, as well as those that face sideways with the legs in external rotation. Standing balance poses belong here, too.

Matwork

Moving to the mat, choose sequences that target the core and hips. Core poses will group into stabilization exercises, like planks and boats, and articulation exercises, like rolling down to the back from staff, or lifting and lowering into and out of bridge. Include some of each to balance the body. Poses for the hips should target the front, back, inner, and outer lines of the legs and pelvis. For the front, lunges and backbends will stretch the front while strengthening the back. Release the back line in forward folds. Wide-legged poses will stretch the inner thighs, while poses based on pigeon and cow-face legs will stretch the outer hips. A well-balanced floor sequence hits all these areas.

For an example, see the second segment of the Yoga for Cyclists video:

<http://www.prana.com/life/2013/07/18/sage-routtree-yoga-for-cyclists/>. This features a shift from low lunge (which releases the front of the back hip) to runner's lunge/half splits (which releases the back of the front leg), combined with a twist toward the front leg (to stretch its outer line) and a lizard lunge inside the front-leg knee (to release the inner thighs).

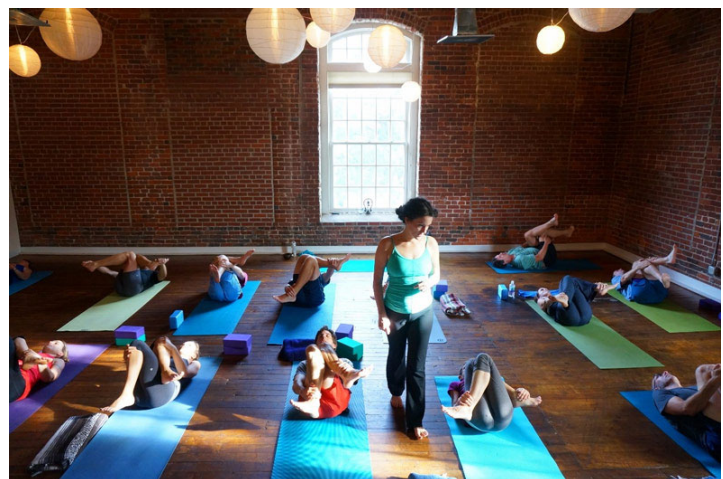
Finishing

Finally, move through a finishing sequence. This could include passive or active backbends, inversions, a final twist, and relaxation, as well as meditation and the formal close of class. You may use the same or a similar finishing segment in most classes, like wearing a favorite pair of shoes almost every day—this is comforting and familiar for students, and the routine helps them prepare for deep rest. Or try new approaches, choosing exactly the right shoes to balance the outfit you've presented.



Play with Different Combinations

This four-part structure yields a balanced practice that will suit most populations. To dial down the intensity, lead a spine-focused class with several different warmup sequences, or a hip-focused class with more than one mat sequence. To build heat, combine several standing sequences in a row. And to make a short, standalone practice, choose just one segment to focus on: warmup only for early in the morning; standing poses as a short strengthening practice; mat poses to unwind after work or a workout; finishing poses as preparation for bed.



As you develop these sequences, collate them into a notebook, spreadsheet, or notes application. These notes will help you develop a yoga sequence flipbook of your own, to help with your personal practice as well as class preparation.

To get a visual of this approach, as well as concrete suggestions to slot into each portion of class, please see my book *The Athlete's Pocket Guide to Yoga* (<http://www.amazon.com/Sage-Rountree/e/B001JOTWIC/>), or check out my online course, *Sequencing Yoga Classes from Welcome to Namaste*, available soon at sagerountree.com.

~Dr. Sage Rountree PhD, E-RYT, prAna Ambassador

Learn more about Sage at <http://www.prana.com/life/ambassadors>

“When was my epiphany?”

My class was starting 10 minutes late—again—because of the time it took to manually check in students. I started using MINDBODY software shortly after. I’ve never looked back.”

—Karen, yoga studio owner



ATTEND OUR FREE WEBINAR **Thursday, May 6**

“Analyze Your Bottom Line and Create a Viable Business”
* WWW.MINDBODYONLINE.COM/WEBINARS

MINDBODY
UNIVERSAL BUSINESS
MANAGEMENT
888.205.3977
WWW.MINDBODYONLINE.COM

twist to fly

Have fun as you prepare for a challenging arm balance.



to finish

Cool Down Stabilize your nervous system and your back with a long-held Prasarita Padottanasana (Wide-Legged Standing Forward Bend) with the hands on the floor. A finishing sequence of Paschimottasana (Seated Forward Bend), Halasana (Flow Pose), and Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand) or Viparita Karani (Legs-up-the-Wall Pose) will guide you quietly toward Savasana (Corpse Pose).

to begin

Warm Up Practice a combination of Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutations) A and B, or try variations that include shoulder openers and twists. Another great prep pose is Jathara Parivartanasana (Revolved Abdomen Pose). With the same twisting action as Parvata Bakasana, it warms up the core and loosens the back.

By all appearances, Parvata Bakasana (Side Crane Pose) seems to require serious upper-body strength. But Prana Flow Yoga teacher Simon Park says that brute strength isn't the key. Instead, mastering the physics of the pose will help you unlock Side Crane. You need enough twist to place your elbow on the outside of the opposite leg and get both arms on the floor in the shape of Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose).

Here, Park shares a thorough twisting practice that will lead you into this challenging arm balance. Approach it with a childlike sense of wonder and playfulness instead of focusing on the physical achievement. After all, the therapeutic benefits of twists themselves are powerful. In Parvata Bakasana, sensation and movement are created in the lower spine and deep soft-tissue structures (including the digestive and reproductive systems) of that region. Many of the body's major organs and the nerves that manage these significant structures are located here. The twisting and strengthening action of the pose increases the digestive fire and keeps the reproductive system healthy.

Before you begin, Park suggests you keep these tips in mind. First, since twists require that you compress the abdomen, try to practice them on a relatively empty stomach. Second, keep your hips even in all the poses to avoid tweaking your lower back. Third, don't force your breath in twists; instead, relax and allow the breath to find its way into your body. If the last few poses are out of your reach, enjoy poses 1 through 4 for a while. After some practice, the final poses will present themselves to you on a silver platter, Park says. —DIANE ANDERSON

MAY 2010

YOGAJOURNAL.COM 67

home practice | with Simon Park



1 Utkatasana Twist (Chair Pose), variation

Begin in Tadasana (Mountain Pose) with your feet together and your hands at your heart in Anjali Mudra (Salutation Seal). Center yourself. Exhale and bend your knees. Bring your hands down, palms facing back. Inhale and raise your arms skyward, palms facing each other alongside your head. Extend your spine and lengthen from your hips to your fingertips. Exhale as you slowly sweep both arms to the outside of the right knee. Place your left elbow outside your right knee and reach your right arm skyward to the Utkatasana Twist. Stay for 3 to 5 breaths. Inhale back to Utkatasana. Repeat on both sides up to 3 times.

2 Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend)

Exhale as you touch the floor and straighten your legs, folding into Uttanasana. Release your head and exhale. Inhale and extend your torso forward into Ardha Uttanasana (Half Standing Forward Bend), fingertips on the floor or shins. Exhale and fold again into Uttanasana. Explore the rebound effect of energy running up and down your legs. Enjoy this inversion for 5 to 8 breaths.

3 Parsvottanasana (Intense Side Stretch)

Step into Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose). Enjoy a vinyasa of Plank Pose, Chaturanga Dandasana, and Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog Pose). From Down Dog, step your right foot between your hands and slide your left foot forward about a foot, angling it out about 45 degrees. Straighten your right leg and pull your outer right hip back toward the centerline. Spin your left thigh slightly forward to square your hips. Press your fingertips into the floor to extend your spine forward, then fold your torso over your right leg. Walk your hands toward the back foot to stretch your upper back and let your shoulders and neck release. Enjoy for 5 to 8 breaths.

4 Parivrtta Trikonasana (Revolved Triangle Pose)

From Parsvottanasana, inhale to standing. With your right leg forward, stretch your left arm up to extend the entire left side of the body. Reach your left arm forward, and place the left hand outside of the right foot. Rotate and twist

toward the right and up, reaching the right arm skyward. Adjust your feet so that your hips are comfortably square. Feel the extension and spiral action of the spine through the crown of the head. Lift and open your heart to the sky for 5 to 8 breaths. Then simply release your torso forward into Parivrttasana. In this variation, both arms reach forward on either side of the foot, and your fingertips or palms touch the floor.

5 Parivrtta Ardha Chandrasana (Revolved Half Moon Pose)

Bend your right leg and use the ball of your back foot to propel yourself forward and stand on your right leg. Lift your left leg, internally rotate it, and level your hips. Place your fingertips on the floor and extend your heart forward. Move your left hand and fingertips onto a block about a foot in front of the outer edge of your right foot. Rotate and spiral the trunk away from the hips, opening your chest and extending your right arm. Keep your hips level and your back leg extending for 5 to 8 breaths. Then, lower your left foot softly to the earth and bend your right knee into a lunge. Step your right foot back to Down Dog, and move through a vinyasa. Repeat poses 3, 4, and 5 on the left side.

6 Parivrtta Parsvakonasana (Revolved Side Angle Pose)

Stand in a lunge, with your right leg forward. Stretch the entire left side of your body as you extend your left arm up. Bring the left side of your body over toward the right and hook your left elbow deep inside your right knee. Place your left fingertips on the floor for balance, then extend your right arm alongside the ear. Slowly rotate your torso skyward to the right while anchoring the pose

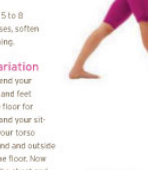


7 Pasasana (Noose Pose), variation

From Tadasana with your feet together, bend your knees into a deep squat, keep your knees and feet together, and place your fingertips on the floor for balance. Your hips are below your knees, and your sitting bones are close to your heels. Twist your torso to the right and hook your left elbow behind and outside the right knee. Extend your left hand to the floor. Now raise your right arm skyward, expanding the chest and twisting the trunk. Stay for 5 to 8 breaths. To keep the hips level, slowly press your right hip crease forward. Repeat on the other side.

8 Parvata Bakasana (Side Crane Pose)

From a deep squat, with feet and knees together, turn your torso to the right and hook your left elbow to the outside of your right knee. Place both palms on the floor outside the right thigh. Create Chaturanga Dandasana arms. Shift your weight into your hands until your feet float off the floor. Press into your hands and lift your hips up. Keep your knees bent or straighten the legs together. Beginners may rest the right hip on the right elbow, but eventually there will be no need to rest the hip on the arm. The chest moves forward away from the hips. Enjoy for as long as you can keep the balance. Repeat on the left side.



68 YOGAJOURNAL.COM

MAY 2010

MAY 2010

YOGAJOURNAL.COM 69

SAMPLE GODDESS VINYASA YOGA FLOW

by Maggie Anderson

WARM-UPS

(including grounding and centering, can do seated or standing in Mountain Pose)

Stretch one arm up and over to the left, hold and switch sides.

Lower head to the left for a neck stretch, lift left hand over right ear for an extra gentle sensation.

Hold and switch sides.

Slow gentle head rolls.

SUN BREATHS

Inhale arms out and up and exhale down while hinging at the hips, straight back, hands to mat or shins. Lower the head and relax in forward fold. Lift halfway up to third position, back straight, hands on mat or shins while gazing a few feet in front of you. Lower down, forward fold. Reverse swan dive arms out and up, inhaling and exhale arms down. Do this three times.

SUN SALUTATIONS

In a longer class I would do at least 2 or 3 before moving into Vinyasa flow.



VINYASA'S

(see certain pose visuals and proper alignment in sun salutation photo attached for clarification) (Twist left and right sides both ways)

1. From Mountain: Inhale arms up and exhale swan dive down, forward fold, half back (if desired) and lower back to forward fold. Bring left leg back into runners lunge. Hold. Then place your left hand flat on the mat and twisting/revolving your ribs and chest over to the right, lift your right arm out and up for a twist. Look up towards your right hand if that feels comfortable. Hold and breathe.

Then lower your right hand down. You may either flatten your right hand on the outside of the right leg here or for an extra balancing challenge bring your right hand to the inside of the right leg next to your right foot. You may also lift the floor up with a block under your right hand. Begin to twist in the opposite direction to the left, lifting your left arm out and up towards the ceiling. Look up towards the raised hand if this feels good on the neck. Breathe. Maintain your foundation here. Five deep breaths is a good count for holding most poses. Then gently and slowly lower your left arm down.

Bring your hands to either side of your right foot now and pressing into the mat bring your right leg back for plank pose. Hold straight here, never dipping your hips down or hiking too high in the sky. A straight line of energy from the head to the feet. Then lift your left leg up straight behind you. Do some ankle rolls in one direction. Then switch directions. Lower that leg down. Be mindful of your hips and back in plank pose. Then lift your right leg straight up. Ankle rolls. Switch directions. Lower down.

Lower your knees to the floor, slide your hips back to your heels for child's pose for a moment. Stretch your arms out. Lower the head to the mat. Breathe.

Then scooch your chin forward to come between your hands, come through chin first, then chest and hips last. Then come up for cobra, hands and arms close to the ribs here, leaving naval on the mat, lift up with elbows bent and look up. Lower down and lift the hips up for downward dog. Press hands into mat. Straight legs. Press the ribs down towards the mat. Relax the head.

Then bring your left leg forward for runners lunge. Twisting on the other side. (*Cutting and pasting here*) Hold. Then place your right hand flat on the mat and twisting/revolving your ribs and chest over to the left, lift your left arm out and up for a twist. Look up if that feels comfortable. Hold and breathe.

Then lower your left hand down. You may either flatten your left hand on the outside of the right leg here or for an extra balancing challenge bring your left hand to the inside of the left leg next to your right foot. You may also lift the floor up with a block under your left hand. Begin to twist in the opposite direction to the right, lifting your right arm out and up towards the ceiling. Look up. Breathe. Maintain your foundation here. Five deep breaths is a good count for holding most poses. Then gently and slowly lower your right arm down.

Lift your right leg up to meet your left leg. Forward fold.

2. (Hip Opener, Warrior I, Humble Warrior) Reverse swan dive arms out and up, inhaling and exhale arms back down for forward fold. Now bring both legs back for plank pose. Hold and breathe. Then lower down Chaturanga or knees/chest/chin down and up for Cobra or upward dog. Press hands into mat as you lower down and lift up for Downward dog. Breathe. Then lift up the left leg straight to the ceiling for splits, without losing the squared hips. Then flex the left foot,

bend the knee and press up as if stamping the ceiling and then bring your left leg across the body to the right, stacking the hips on top of each other. Maintain the squared shoulders, parallel to the floor. This allows you to feel the twist where you are supposed to in the spine.

Then come back to center, straighten the leg, and bend the knee once more sliding your left leg knee bent in towards the hands for runners lunge. Maintain knee over ankle. Flatten your back right foot down and pivot that foot so that it is aimed at the top corner of your mat. Then lift your upper body up and hands to left thigh. Now, straighten your arms up to the sky palms facing each other, lifting your spine up for **Warrior I**. Look forward. Hold the power and strength in this pose. Hips are squared forward, as if two headlights are shining forward.

Now slightly angle your upper body forward with a straight back, arms straight and strong. Then inhale, exhale arms straight out and down, behind your hips and inhale arms back up, exhale down, inhale up slow and controlled and exhale down, inhale up one more time, then exhale arms down and clasp the hands behind the back. Roll the shoulders behind you, pull the shoulder blades to towards each other on the back.

From here hinging at the hips, straight back, lower head down to the inside of the left leg, hands may rise up as you go down or they may rest on the lower back, the crown of your head can lower down towards the mat. This is **Humble Warrior**. Hold and breathe.

Slowly lower the arms down to the back and rise up gently. Bring arms out in front of you and straight up to the ceiling, palms together for Warrior I. Then lower arms down to the mat, runners lunge. Bring your left leg back out behind you for plank. Lower down Chatterunga or Knees/Chest/Chin to Cobra or Updog. Drop the shoulders down, arms close to your sides. Look up. A nice back bend here. Lower back down and lift your hips up for Downdog. Hold and breathe.

Then lift your right leg up and repeat sequence (*Cutting and pasting here*): Then lift up the right leg straight to the ceiling for splits, without losing the squared hips. Then flex the right foot, bend the knee and press up as if stamping the ceiling and then bring your right leg across the body to the left, stacking the hips on top of each other. Maintain the squared shoulders, parallel to the floor. This allows you to feel the twist where you are supposed to in the spine.

Then come back to center, straighten the leg, and bend the knee once more sliding your right leg knee bent in towards the hands for runners lunge. Maintain knee over ankle. Flatten your back left foot down and pivot that foot so that it is aimed at the top corner of your mat. Then lift your upper body up and hands to right thigh. Now, straighten your arms up to the sky palms facing each other, lifting your spine up for **Warrior I**. Look forward. Hold the power and strength in this pose. Hips are squared forward, as if two headlights are shining forward.

Now slightly angle your upper body forward with a straight back, arms straight and strong. Then inhale, exhale arms straight out and down, behind your hips and inhale arms back up, exhale down, inhale up slow and controlled and exhale down, inhale up one more time, then exhale arms down and clasp the hands behind the back. Roll the shoulders behind you, pull the shoulder blades to towards each other on the back.

From here hinging at the hips, straight back, lower head down to the inside of the right leg, hands may rise up as you go down or they may rest on the lower back, the crown of your head can lower down towards the mat. This is **Humble Warrior**. Hold and breathe.

Slowly lower the arms down to the back and rise up gently. Bring arms out in front of you and straight up to the ceiling, palms together for Warrior I. Then lower arms down to the mat,

runners lunge. Bring your right leg back out behind you for plank. Lower down Chutterunga or Knees/Chest/Chin to Cobra or Updog. Drop the shoulders down, arms close to your sides. Look up. A nice back bend here. Lower back down and lift your hips up for Downdog. Hold and breathe. Count five breaths.

Then lift your heels up to the sky. Do this a few times. Then keep them lifted, bend your knees. You may either jump or step forward for forward fold. Then with a straight back, hinging at the hips reverse swan dive your arms out and up and exhale down, mountain pose.

STANDING SEQUENCE

Short version: **Goddess, shoulder and heel lifts, then straight legs/wide standing forward fold, arms clasped, then lunge to the left hands down low, back to center and lunge to the right, then Wide-Legged twist, then lower down, hinge at the hips, straight back and come up.**

Long version: From Mountain pose, take your Left leg out behind you into a wide stance facing the blue tapestry. Be sure your ankles are under your arms as a guide to tell you how wide you should be. Place your feet out pointing to the corners of your mat or slightly wider. We're going to come into Goddess Pose. From here bend your knees and dip your hips down never allowing your knees to go beyond your ankles. We want to keep our knees safe. Drop your tailbone down and tuck the pelvis. Be sure that you are not dumping all the weight into your back by arching the low back forward. Think Tadasana (mountain) spine. Keeping your spine straight up and down as if in Mountain pose. Feel the energy pull your head straight up and your tailbone down. Then take your arms into goal post arms and then bending your wrists, flip your palms up towards the ceiling. Breathe. From here we will do some tiny movements. Lift your left shoulder up as if in a half shrug. Then drop it back down. Lift your right shoulder up...hold and then back down. Left up and down....and...right...up and down. Now, take your left heel and while maintaining your pose and posture lift your left heel up and bring it back down. Lift your right heel up and bring it back down, slowly and gracefully. You'll feel this in your inner thighs and calf. Now back to our left heel, lift up....hold it...and drop it back down. Now, right heel...up...hold and down. Now, let's do this with both our heels and shoulders, one side at a time. Lift the left heel up while lifting your left shoulder up....hold and drop them back down. Other side. Let's do this a few more times at your own pace. Inhale up and exhale down. Inhale up and exhale down. You might find it more challenging to maintain Goddess arms. Just come to the awareness of your arms and be conscious of your foundation. Come back to the pose if you find it is dropping down. Now, once you've completed both sides come back to stillness and release your legs, straighten them out. Drop your arms. Ahhhh.

Now, take your arms and bring them around behind your back and interlace the fingers. Open your heart center and give yourself a little stretch here. From here, hinging at the hips come into a wide standing forward fold. Lower down and allow your arms to open as they will. Never hurting only stretching. Release any tension in the neck and head. Relax. Remember listen to your body. We are looking for sweet discomfort. Never pain. Honor the wisdom of your body. And hold this position. Breathe. Your weight should be even in the feet. You may feel only a slight forward motion and that is okay. But try to keep the weight even. Breathe.

From here, lower your arms down to the mat. Now angle your right foot out to the corner of your mat and bend your right knee. Walk your hands over to the right side leaning into this stretch by bending at the knee and lowering down. You'll feel a nice inner thigh stretch here. Now, if you'd like to take this pose a little further you can drop your right shoulder down and slide it *under* your right knee, taking your right hand and wrapping it around and over top of

your right foot and your left hand can rest on your right hand. From here you can drop your head down if that feels good and hold. Breathe. You may find this pose more tolerable if you tap into your Ouija breath. Quiet the mind.

Now, release your hands and shoulder and come back to center straightening your right leg and bringing your foot straight forward again. Now, walk your hands over to the left leg as you bend your knee and angle your foot slightly out towards the corner of your mat. Ease into this stretch. You know what's coming now. So if you'd like to take it a step further you may drop your left shoulder down and bring it *under* your left knee and wrap your left hand around and over top of your left foot. And wrap your right hand over top of your left hand. Drop your head if that feels comfortable. Breathe. You'll feel it in your arms, your legs, your quads and gluts and even your hamstrings a bit here. You are increasing the circulation in your legs all while working out your lower chakras. Beautiful release here.

Now, release your hands and shoulder. Walk your hands back to center, straightening your left leg and bring your toes to face forward once again. Now press your hands into the mat and drop your upper body down further towards the mat for a nice wide standing forward fold once again. The crown of your head will face the mat. Release your neck and head. Looking straight behind you if your eyes are open. You can walk your hands further behind you for a deeper stretch or keep them right where they are. You may also take hand to opposite elbow and hold here. Breathe...Relax.

Now release your arms down if holding them. Press your hands into the mat and come half way up with a straight back. With your arms nice and straight, take your left arm more to the center line and lift your right arm straight out and up into a nice spinal twist. Look up if that feel comfortable. Remember to keep your hips parallel to the floor. This allows you to feel the twist where it belongs right in the spine. As with all twists you are cleansing your inner system out. Like taking a wet cloth and wringing it out. Breathe...

Now, bring your right arm down to the mat and switch sides. Lift your left arm up to the sky looking up if that feels comfortable on your neck. Feel the nice line of energy you are creating in this pose. You can even see about rotating your rib cab out and up towards the ceiling for added assistance in this twist. Doesn't that feel great!

Now, release your left arm back down and take both of your hands to your hips. Hinging at the hips with a straight back begin to come back up slowly and gracefully. Now you can heel, toe yourself back to center.

Let's come back to the top of our mats into Mountain pose. Closer your eyes, center and lengthen. Inhale your arms out and up into Prayer/Namaste. Bring down to your heart center.

BALANCE POSE

A nice one would be Standing Pigeon (Chair with pigeon legs). Take one bent leg over the other above the knee and sit back as if in chair, arms straight out in front of you or angled up by the ears. Be sure you can see your toes. Here you can hold and breathe, or for an added challenge, lift the heels. Switch sides.

COOL DOWN

Stand in Mountain pose. Close your eyes and breathe. Scan the body. Now, inhale arms out and up and swan dive arms down exhaling into forward fold. Hold like a ragdoll. Hands to opposite elbow for a great back release. Relax the neck. Then release hands to floor and bring legs back as in down dog, then bend knees and lower down for child's pose. Hold for at least five long slow deep breaths. Really feel the breath massaging your back.

Lift up, hands to knees. Come into Hero pose right leg stacked over left leg, feet are out to each side, sits bones on the mat. Extend arms out to the sides and with a straight back hinge forward only as far as feels good for you. Honor the wisdom of the body. Come back up. Twist. Place left hand above right knee and twist over to the right, bottom- up, head comes last. Gaze out behind you. Inhale, extend the back, exhale you may feel your body surrendering more deeply into the twist. Hold for five breaths. Release. Switch the stacking of the feet, left on top this time. Extend arms out to the sides and with a straight back hinge forward only as far as feels good for you. Honor the wisdom of the body. Come back up. Twist. Place right hand above left knee and twist over to the left, bottom- up, head comes last. Gaze out behind you. Inhale, extend the back, exhale you may feel your body surrendering more deeply into the twist. Release.

Dandasana/Staff pose. Extend legs straight out in front of you. Flex your feet. Pull the fleshy parts out from the sits bones to really feel the bones on the mat. Extend and lengthen the spine straight. Extend the arms all the way up on an inhale, lift the rib cage up, and with a straight back, hinging at the hips lean forward bringing your hands down where it feels right for you, so either your shins, your tippy toes, the sides of your feet or the mat next to your legs. Hold and breathe. Inhale, extend the back, exhale surrender more deeply into the pose. Lower the head. Five breaths here.

Release come back up. Bend your knees, feet flat on the floor, roll yourself down onto the mat one vertebrae at a time. Then lift your knees to your chest and give them a nice hug. Begin to rock from side to side. Extend your right leg straight out on the mat. Lift your left leg straight up away from the body. Hold your hands behind the thigh or the calf. Flex your left foot. Begin do ankle rolls in one direction and then switch to the opposite side. Release the left leg down on the mat. Lift your right leg straight up towards the ceiling; clasp your hands behind the thigh or calf. Flex your right foot, begin ankle rolls in both directions. Release the leg back down.

Bend your left knee and bring your left foot up and place it over the right knee. Take your right hand over the left knee and guide it across the body to the right and relax it down to the mat. Extend your left arm out behind you in T position. You can look out behind you if that feels comfortable. Holds, relax and release the tension here. Breathe. Switch sides.

FINAL RESTING POSE/MEDITATION

Then come into Savasana, corpse pose. Legs splaying straight out and away from the body on the mat. Arms are at your sides, palms facing up. Eyes closed. Deep breaths and coming into a natural rhythm of breathe. Allow the muscles to just melt into the mat.

When you're ready bring knees to chest and roll over to one side, hold and then gently come up to seated position.



Anatomy, Back & Core

Back Facts

1. **More than 80% of North Americans will have back pain at some point in their lives.** Yet physicians will not be able to diagnose the source of 85% of those problems.
2. **Virtually all back pain begins with problems in the muscles.** Tight, tense, weak and out-of-balance muscles can be "the straw that broke the camel's back."
3. **Back pain is made worse by stress or tension in the mind.** The back cannot heal when muscles are tense (like a tension headache only in your back.)
4. **Thousands of muscles support the back and connect to almost every major muscle group.** The spine is like the central terminal to the entire body. The muscles determine the health of your spine. They need to be -strong-flexible and balanced.
5. **The bulk of pain receptors in your back are in the muscles.** These receptors are supersensitive to threats and muscles spasms are the body's way of protecting the spinal cord. Muscle spasms in the back are 10-20 times more painful than any other muscle spasm in the body.
6. **Tight hamstrings** pull on the pelvic bone and flatten the lumbar curve causing compression in the spine.
7. **Abdominals** support the lower back and the psoas muscle stabilizes the spine. Focus on the intricacies of your pelvis and SI joints to develop the fine balance of strength and stability necessary to stabilize these structures properly. Pelvic stability is essential to good biomechanics for the rest of your body and helpful if you experience low back or hip pain without any injury.
Great sample flow: <https://www.yogaglo.com/preview/class/2255>
8. **The mind** transmits 600-800 thoughts per minute (or over 1 minute a day). These thoughts transmitted by electrical impulse through the muscles can make them tighten and cause pain.

"For every thought supported by feeling, there is a muscle change.
Your body is a record of your emotional thinking." ~ Mabel Ellsworth Todd

The Six Principles of a Healthy Back during Yoga and always

1. Don't force or strain
2. Don't ignore or push through pain
3. Pay attention to your breathing.
4. Listen to your body if something does not feel right for your back don't do it.
5. Rest whenever you need to. Resting is smart, resting is healthy.
6. Deep relaxation for body and mind allows tiny blood vessels in muscles that were compressed to open up. This improves blood flow and decongests the tissues (removing toxins). When both mind and body are relaxed, stress is released and healing occurs. That is why deep relaxation is such a powerful mind-body technique for the back.

References

Healing Back Pain Naturally, Art Brownstein, MD; Back Care Basics, Mary Pullig-Schatz, MD; Back Pain Remedies, for Dummies, Michael Sniel, MA and William Deardoff, Ph D.; Job's Body, Deane Juhan; The Back Pain Book, Mike Hage

Core Yoga Foundations

The “core” is so much more than just the abdominal muscles.

Our core is our foundation for ALL movement. So it's helpful to keep it healthy and strong.

There are a set of physical and energetic alignment principles, Core postures and Core philosophies that any teacher or student can use to boost the benefits of their style. In Sadie Nardini's Core Strength Vinyasa Yoga Training I learned valuable tools to bring in core-consciousness, on all level, to yoga asana practice.

In any yoga posture, we're not only working the body. There are multiple areas to be aware of:

PHYSICAL: Body, breath, muscles, bones, drishti, etc.

ENERGETIC: Aligning for optimal energy flow of the central nervous system and energetic body as you see it to be.

EMOTIONAL: Putting your heart into the poses, dedicating, offering, learning how to deal with reactions and using the asanas to clear and open your heart.

MENTAL: Focusing within your mental chatter to hear your inner teacher, turning thoughts to constructive, not destructive, releasing mental negativity.

SPIRITUAL: Your intention, your spiritual philosophy embodied.

OVERALL PERSONAL LESSONS: How to translate the lessons you've learned on the mat into your real-life

The 3 Elements of the Core: Abdominal, Spinal/Pelvic and Energetic

ENERGETIC CORE

Within the physical Abdominal Core, resides an Energetic Core, in the pit of the belly just below the navel. This area is also known as the 'Hara' or “golden orb”, and it is the source energy INTO which, and FROM which all muscles, bones, attention and prana are drawn. Also located at the base of the spine is said to reside the Kundalini energy, or latent life force. Together, the Kundalini and Hara show us how much immense power we hold in the abdominal core.

Here in our core area is our Sacral (at the naval) and Solar plexus (diaphragm) chakras. Our Sacral chakra is our sensuality, creative and manifesting chakra. Our solar plexus aka Power Chakra is the seat of our power. Fill your energy up complete with breath and intention as you flow through your practice. Our strength is from our divine expression in creativity and sensuality and vulnerability of the Sacral Chakra, as well as the Power we fill ourselves up with and do our best not to give away or try to take from others in our Solar plexus chakras.

THE SPINAL & PELVIC CORE

Spinal Core:

In ANY yoga pose, after the foundation is properly set, the first priority is to keep the spine in its natural alignment, and not compress it, twist it or pressurize it in any unhealthy way. **The spine is the source of our life energy**—the spinal cord—and it is the central stabilizer for the entire body, along with the pelvis. The limbs serve the spine, and we do not move deeper into stretches or poses that compromise the spinal integrity. The entire spinal column, from its base at the pelvic floor to the crown of the head, and supporting muscles are one of the main “Cores” of each asana.

When teaching make sure this area is aligned, stable and supple, as a first priority. In anatomy, the core refers, in its most general of definitions, to the body minus the legs and arms. Functional movements are highly dependent on the core, and lack of core development can result in a predisposition to injury. The major muscles of the core reside in the area of the belly and the mid and lower back (not the shoulders), and peripherally include the hips, the shoulders and the neck. The core determines to a large part a person's posture.

Pelvic Floor:

The pelvic floor activation is one of the most pivotal in yoga poses. Yet, it is often one of the most underused and misunderstood. Lifting the pelvic floor muscles supports the internal organs, helps maintain continence for life and improves sexual sensation. Importantly for our poses, it is the foundation for deep breathing, and all the body and mind benefits proper breathing brings. It also activates the lower abdominals, providing even more stability for the sacrum, and the lower spine in the practice.

THE ABDOMINAL CORE

Within the larger Spinal Core area of the inner pose, we specify a central area, including the abdominal muscles, pelvic floor, low back, low waist and pelvic bowl as a focal point of root energy that must be sparked, lit, and stoked throughout the practice in order to maintain optimal alignment and energy flow.

We do this muscularly and energetically by first setting the foundation of each pose, working through the first two bandhas, to generate each pose through the Abdominal/Energetic Core, then up the Spinal Core.

3 Bandhas: Mula, Uddiyana, Jalandhara

3 BANDHAS

by Sadie Nardini

In class, after the foundation is set, we focus on stimulating the Abdominal Core and Energetic Core, then AS WE MOVE INTO OR REMAIN IN EACH POSE, we use the bandhas as muscular “energy herders” to move prana up through the Spinal Core from root to crown.

We do this by generating each transition and asana **FIRST** from the pelvic floor activation = **MULA BANDHA**, then upwards to the navel, and then the lower ribcage = **UDDIYANA BANDHA**, then into the heart, then to the head = **A SLIGHT JALANDHARA BANDHA** and outwards to the limbs as an expression of that core connection.

All bandhas should be activated to about 25% of your total capacity. An active, yet gentle lift.

MULA BANDHA: “Pelvic floor lifts as if you need to go to the loo but have to hold it”. This bandha contains energy from the root, supports the breath and helps with lower back and sacrum protection. *MUSCLES ACTIVATED:* The levator ani, the coccygeus, the perineum, and pyramidalis, a muscle in the lowest front abdominals by the pubic bone.

UDDIYANA BANDHA: “Draw your navel in and up as if to touch the underside of your heart, and take the low front ribpoints in, and slightly closer.” This bandha keeps the lower ribs from jutting forward, allows softening and freedom in lower and mid back. Contains energy into the inner body. *MUSCLES ACTIVATED:* transversus abdominis and rectus abdominis.

JALANDHARA BANDHA: “Slide your soft plate back, and up, keeping your front and back throat open, neck in its natural curve.” This bandha opens energy from heart to head, stops jutting forward at the jaw. *MUSCLES ACTIVATED:* Sternocleidomastoid and Rhomboids.

The head should remain in alignment over the pelvic bowl in most poses, unless you are passively stretching it [side angle dropping head]. The back of the neck is never constricted. If there was an orange resting there, you would never make orange juice!

Often, students drop the head back [Camel, Up Dog] or jut it forward [Seated Forward Bend, chaturanga] instead of **using the head as an extension of the spine**. To slide the head back into neutral if it’s jutting forward, OR to slide it back into alignment during backbends, apply a slight Jalandhara Bandha, sliding the soft palate back and up, keeping the front and back of your neck open equally, and the jaw and skull will follow.

Foundation, Core, Expression

The order of teaching ANY pose in CSV Yoga is done in 3 parts, and always in this order, for the most effective outcome. Once you've moved through these 3 parts, you'll circle back again to the beginning, and refine their alignment further in each part, again, in order.

ORDER OF DOING A POSE

1 Foundation | 2 Core | 3 Expression

Maintaining Foundation and Core Connection Even As One Expresses.

Energy Moves Into and From Abdominal & Energetic Core
Spinal Integrity/Energy Movement Core Transitions/Waves

TEACHING FROM THE GROUND UP

1. **Foundation:** Align whatever is on the earth, and draw energy up from the ground through hands, feet, limbs into the core.
2. **Core:** Align and activate the abdominal and spinal cores, and bandhas, to keep the energy flowing upwards.
3. **Expression:** We hold the FOUNDATION/CORE connections firmly even as we move into lengthening the ribs, limbs, head. We do not try to rush into poses, to straighten arms and legs or move into more advanced variations to the point that they override the core alignments or inner movement of energy. We play the edge between self-centering and self-expression so that we remain connected to our stability and inner strength even as we move towards growth and transformation.

We move slowly through transitions, often in wavelike, undulating movements to pull energy from the ground [foundation] to the pelvis [core], and up the spine [expression] before moving fully into the next posture.

THE PARTS OF A TRANSITIONAL WAVE

Excerpt by Sadie Nardini

- Ground and set into foundation
- Draw energy up from earth, through limbs into core.
- Lengthen through the tailbone
- Pull up through the pelvic floor
- pull in the navel
- Integrate the low ribs...often rounding the back at first as you pull the bandhas in, but being sensitive not to strain the low back curve.
- Containing the abdominal core, curve naturally into the lower back and sacrum to open and lengthen the side waist and heart
- Align and lengthen through the head
- Reach and express the limbs longer until resistance is met, and/or the foundation or core connection begins to dissolve—Then circle back to the foundation and begin the cycle again.

Wavelike transitions have the effect of **aligning the physical body quickly and properly**, strengthening and stretching all the right places, while **releasing over-compression and weight-bearing from areas like the lower back, the neck and shoulders, and the joints, which often bear the brunt of a disconnected pose.**

5 ways to forgo the benefits of yoga poses (release valves part 1)

<http://sequencewiz.org/2014/12/10/5-ways-forgo-benefits-yoga-poses/>

During my very first (weekend-long) yoga teacher training we were taught to “swan dive” – bend forward from the hips. I have a lot of mobility in my lower back, so I ended up exaggerating my lower back curve a lot; and since nobody had corrected me, carried this pattern into many other poses. Then, all of the sudden, my back started hurting. What was that about? I went to see another, more experienced yoga teacher who immediately identified my dysfunctional movement pattern. I had to retrain myself in many different poses and as a result, got rid of the back pain and acquired a much stronger core.



This problem is very common in yoga, and is an example of what we call a “release valve.” Release valve is an unfavorable pattern of movement that your body adopts to avoid working certain areas. It also means that you will miss out on all the benefits of the pose and reinforce existing movement patterns, even if they are not serving you. Release valves can show up for a number of reasons:

- Stiffness and limited range of motion that prevents you from doing the full form of the pose
- Excessive mobility that causes you to “collapse” into the posture
- Lack of clarity about what the pose is supposed to accomplish
- Improper training (stemming from the teacher’s misunderstanding or neglect)

Today we will discuss some of the most common release valves and what we can do to correct them.

1. Exaggerating the lumbar curve



This is common for practitioners who have a lot of mobility in their pelvis. It concerns the relationship between the pelvis and the lumbar spine (and is called *pelvic-lumbar relationship*). Having a healthy pelvic-lumbar relationship is essential to the health of your lower back and the strength of your core. It protects and stabilizes you in virtually every pose; without it your top half becomes disconnected from the bottom half. If you have not developed a habit of progressively contracting your abdomen on the exhalation (we call it a “*zip up*”) while practicing, your pelvis is likely to tip forward in backbends, forward bends and even side bends. Potential consequences include lower back pain, a weak core, lack of overall stability.

SOLUTION: Zip it up! ([Learn more about zip up reasons and technique](#))

2. “Hanging” on the joints



Every yoga pose requires a delicate balance between strength and flexibility. If a practitioner has loose joints, her flexibility/stability scale is usually tipped toward flexibility. This means that instead of engaging the muscles to work the pose, she can instead rely on her joints and just “hang” there, bypassing the work. Consider the image above. The first practitioner in her effort to keep the hand on the floor is dipping too far in her right hip. Once your thigh moves down past parallel to the ground, it’s harder to engage the leg muscles, so you end up relying on your joints instead. One of the goals of this pose is to strengthen the muscles supporting the hip joint; if you practice the pose the way she does, you destabilize the hip instead. ([Read more about stability vs mobility in the hips](#)).

SOLUTION: Engage the muscles (by pressing the foot down) and lift out of the “dip” (so that the thigh is about parallel to the ground). Put the hand on the knee or a block instead.

3. Sticking the chin up



Some of us are in a habit of lifting the chin up all the time. It usually happens because of habits, chronic tension or because we're trying to keep an eye on what's going on around us. If you do it consistently, you will create tension in your neck, instead of relieving it. Is that why we come to a yoga class? I don't think so. (More info – [6 reasons your yoga practice can become a pain in the neck](#)).

SOLUTION: As a general rule, we want to keep the cervical spine and the head in a neutral position, unless we are working with the neck specifically.

4. Shrugging the shoulders toward the ears



This is probably the phrase that I say in my yoga classes most often: “Relax your shoulders”. In fact, some students tell me that they hear it in their sleep. Shoulders climbing up toward the ears is a common response to stress, lack of movement and computer work (read “modern lifestyle”). It is not surprising that we carry this pattern into our yoga classes. One of my students calls her shoulders “my handy little helpers” because whatever we do, her shoulders are always eager to “help”. Yoga class is a perfect place to deal with this pattern and try to overcome it.

SOLUTION: Relax your shoulders! First step is, of course, noticing that you are tensing them. Once you gain this awareness you can begin to work on consciously relaxing the shoulders when the pose doesn’t call for their participation, and engaging them without tensing when they are involved.

5. Collapsing the chest over the belly



Over the course of the practice we usually take the spine through the full range of motion: bending forward, back, sideways, twisting and lengthening. If your spine or supporting musculature does not allow for a deep side bend, for example, the compensation pattern would be to collapse the chest to turn it into more of a forward bend. This also happens if the student has kyphosis (exaggerated thoracic curve), for example, or just an overall tendency to slouch. If you fall into this pattern, you will be missing out on all the benefits of the postures that you are attempting, while at the same time compromising your spine and your sacrum.

SOLUTION: Lengthen up! Imagine lengthening your spine and moving the chest away from the navel. Oftentimes you will need to limit how far you go into the pose or use a prop, which is perfectly fine and will be more beneficial for you then forcing your way into the pose with a collapsed chest. Strengthening your upper back muscles is also very useful.

These are some easy changes that you can implement and avoid the risks associated with these release valves. There are, of course, many other ways your body can avoid doing what you ask of it. That's why we need to stay present and alert when we practice. And having a knowledgeable teacher to keep an eye on you is super important, too!

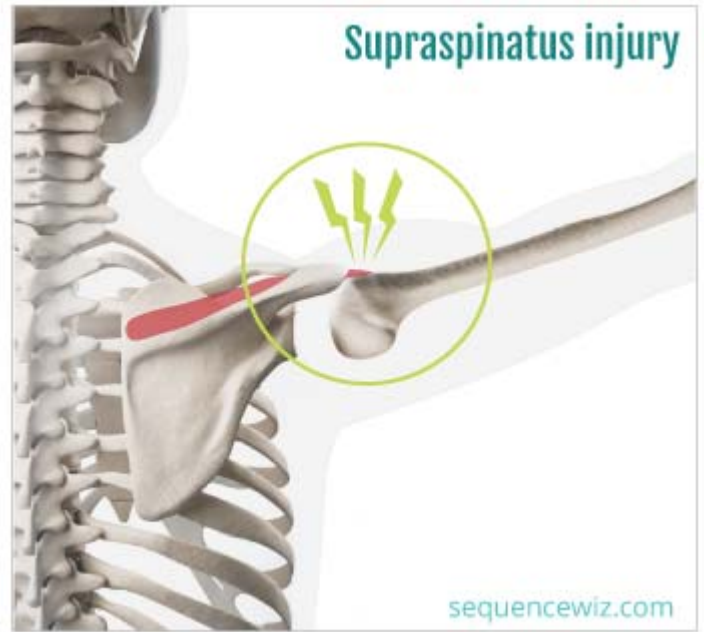
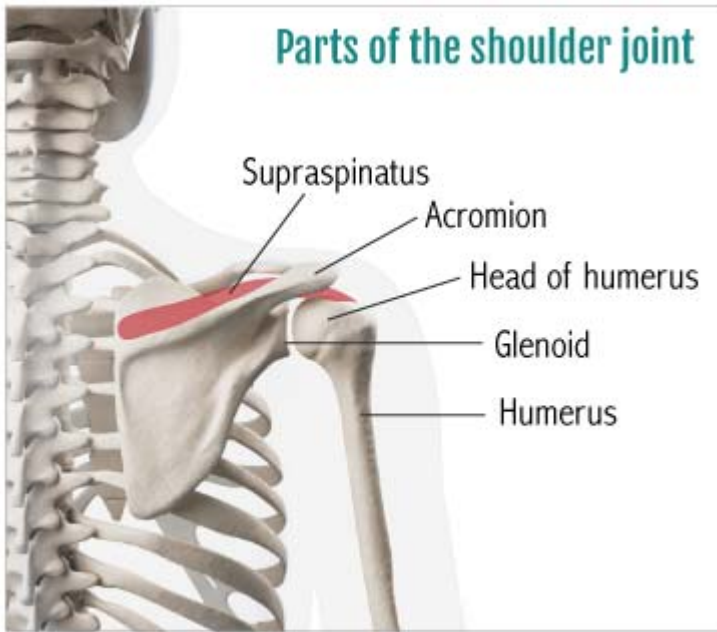
(release valves part 2)

Few weeks ago I wrote a [post](#) about the so-called “release valves” in yoga – unfortunate movement or holding patterns that our bodies fall into out of habit or to avoid working certain areas. I was amazed by all the positive response that I got, and the question that came up most often was – “Is that a comprehensive list?” It wasn’t, and today we will discuss five other release valves that are quite common and can prevent you from getting the full benefits of yoga poses. Here they are.

1. Funky arm rotation in overhead position.



If you bring your arm overhead in any yoga pose (it is especially common in side bends and Downward Dog) and your armpit is sticking out, it means that you are potentially jamming your shoulder joint. Look at this picture:



If you keep your arms facing down when you move them past the shoulder height, you are risking the two bones running into each other and pinching the supraspinatus muscle between them. This is one of the sources of rotator cuff injury ([read more about it here](#)).

SOLUTION. Turn your arm(s) in, so that your elbow creases are facing your head and your shoulder blade(s) move away from the center.



www.sequencewiz.com

And please remember – you cannot judge the position of your shoulder by the position of your hand. You can easily turn your forearm without rotating your shoulder, but it is the shoulder rotation that we are after.

2. Droopy knee.



Your knee is a hinge joint, which means that it can only move one way, just like a hinge, no rotation or side movement allowed. To ensure that, you have ligaments on both sides of the knee (inner and outer) that stabilize it. It means that any time you bend your knee during the yoga practice, it shouldn't droop in or out in relation to your ankle, otherwise you can strain those ligaments. You know how the athletes can "blow the knee out"? It usually means that the knee was hit from the side, and it buckled sideways injuring those ligaments. Nobody is hitting your knee in a yoga class, of course, but if you consistently droop it in or out (usually in), you are doing the same sort of damage. This often happens if your hip is not ready for a pose (like Warrior 1) and refuses to rotate – the knee will try to pick up the slack.

SOLUTION. Keep an eye on where the knee is going. Prepare your hips better before attempting the poses that can be compromising for the knee. Use props (examples below).



Put the block between the thighs to avoid collapsing the knees in.



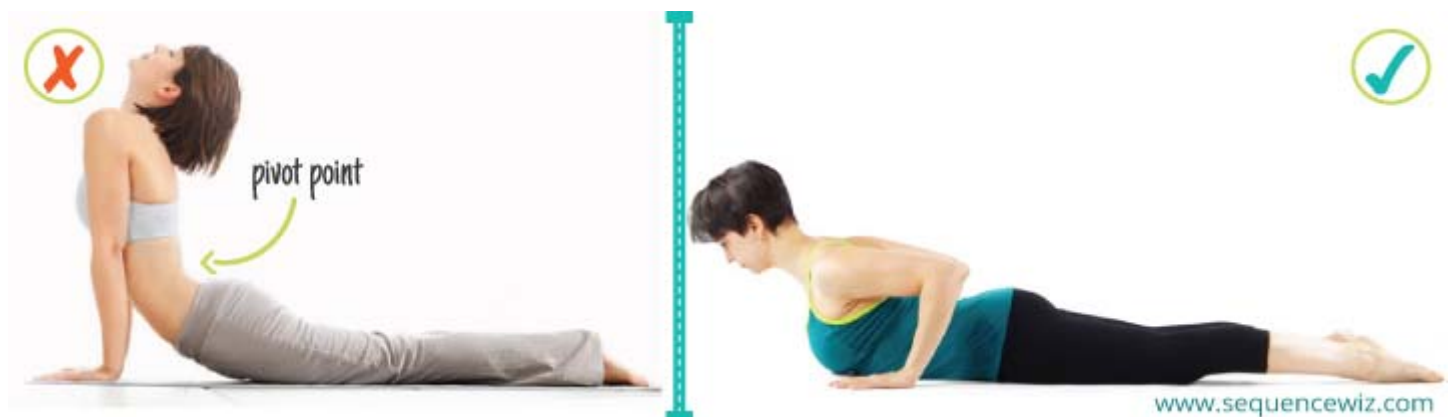
Put the block between the thighs to avoid collapsing the knees out.

3. Leveraging yourself with arms in poses.



This often happens in twists and back bends, like Cobra pose. When you use the strength of your upper body to push yourself into the pose, you are both missing out on the effect of the pose and can injure your shoulders or your back, and create neck/shoulder tension. For example, in a supine twist (above), if you insist on pulling the shoulder down toward the ground, you can strain the front of the shoulder.

In Cobra pose, pushing with your arms stresses your lower back at the pivot point; instead of distributing the curve throughout your back and strengthening it, you are creating a vulnerable spot and weakening your back (the shoulders and neck will be suffering also).



SOLUTION. Use appropriate muscles for the appropriate task. In back bends, distribute the curve throughout the entire back to strengthen it. In twists, initiate the movement with progressive abdominal contraction so that the twist begins in the center of the body. Which brings me to the next point.

4. Spending too much time on the limbs and forgetting about the spine.



The ultimate purpose of any yoga pose is integration – teaching different body parts how to work together. That is why any yoga pose needs to begin at the center. Since the spine is the structural center of the body, we need to first concern ourselves with what the spine is doing. Is it supposed to bend forward or sideways in this pose? Is it supposed to twist? When you have clarity on what your spine is doing, many other small details fall into place. The actions of the periphery (limbs) always support and enhance what you do with your spine.

SOLUTION. Make sure that you are clear on what your spine is supposed to do in any yoga pose. Ask your teacher, educate yourself. If you know that you are bending forward in a pose, you will know **HOW** to do it, because all forward bends are done in the same way for similar reasons. Over the next few months we will spend a lot of time discussing forward bends, back bends, lateral bends and twists to give you an idea of how to do them safely and what kind of benefits we can expect from them. Subscribe to this blog if you are interested!

5. Forgetting to breathe.



Well, technically, you cannot forget to breathe, your body will take care of that for you (thank goodness; can you imagine if we had to think about every single breath we take?!). But often we become so focused on arranging our bodies in space and then hold on for dear life as we maintain the pose, that breathing is the last thing on our minds. Bad idea. If you cannot breathe deeply while holding a pose (any pose), you should get out of that pose immediately. Breathing is what brings the pose to life, it oxygenates your blood that helps carry the waste out of your muscles (if you are into [the western way](#) of looking at things); it is the pump that moves the energy into every nook and cranny of your system (if you are into [the eastern way](#) of looking at things). The bottom line is – you are not doing yoga if you are not breathing deeply in poses.

SOLUTION. It is simple, yet it is hard – breathe! Begin your practice by deepening your breath and carry that pattern throughout.

We have to be on the lookout for those release valves all the time, but it also helps you stay focused on your practice instead of thinking about other things.

Yoga for Back Care

by Elise Browning Miller

Up to 85% of American adults experience back pain at some point in their lives (Andersson 1999). No doubt some of your clients are among them. Why is the back so prone to injury? As we age, ligaments and tendons shorten and joint range of motion (ROM) decreases. Disks lose their ability to absorb shock, muscles weaken, and bones lose mass. To add to these inherent biological weaknesses, we spend too much time sitting—in cars, at desks and in front of televisions or computers—and our back muscles weaken. Bad posture makes matters worse. The low back, which bears much of the burden, is particularly prone to disk problems.

Whole-Body Back Care

Your clients don't have to accept back deterioration lying down. In fact, doctors recommend just the opposite! "I'd say that more than half of back injuries can be prevented," says Michael Hisey, MD, a spine surgeon at the Texas Back Institute in Plano, Texas. "A back maintenance exercise program is key to keeping people out of trouble."

Abdominal strengthening, conventionally emphasized for back health, is important, but on its own is not enough to protect the back from injury. Nor is low-back strengthening. Back problems involve the whole body. Many factors can contribute, including tight or weak muscles, poor posture, obesity, emotional stress, and limited range of movement in the peripheral joints (shoulders and hips). In other words, no back problem can be isolated from the functioning of the rest of the body.

Unlike traditional back exercises, which isolate the parts of the body to be stretched or strengthened, yoga postures are designed to integrate and benefit the whole body. By lengthening connective tissue, expanding ROM and improving posture, yoga can protect against back injury.

Basic Back-Care Principles

Whether you are teaching a back-care class or doing your own personal practice, keep these anatomical and movement principles in mind:

Breathe as You Do the Poses. When we hold our breath, we hold onto tension. Quiet, introspective breathing alters the sympathetic/parasympathetic nerve signal balance to the arteries and veins, allowing increased circulation to tissues whose vessels are constricted during times of stress.

Create Movement of the Spine With Flexion and Extension. The spine needs movement to lubricate the joints and provide nutrition to the spongy disks between the vertebrae. During movement, the disks—through a process called imbibition—soak up nutrients. To feed and lubricate the disks properly, it's necessary to reverse the curvatures for brief periods of time, which yoga postures do gently and wonderfully. Cow Cat (pelvic tilts on your hands and knees) and Sun Salutations are excellent ways to create movement of the spine.

Balance Flexibility and Strength. Strength is vital, but so is flexibility. Developing strong yet flexible muscles is perhaps the most crucial principle in back care. Remember that a tight muscle is not necessarily a strong one. In yoga sessions, it is important to lengthen contracted muscles before working on strength. For the back this means stretching the back muscles to lengthen the spine and create more space for the vertebrae and disks.

When lengthening the spine, its natural curves should be maintained, keeping the low back in its concave curve. The back's curves are designed to absorb shock and facilitate full ROM throughout the spinal column.

Start by Stretching . . . When we live sedentary lives, certain muscles in our body tend to be tight and others weak. To relieve or prevent low-back pain, we need to pay special attention to several muscle groups.

The *hamstrings* can cause back pain because they insert in the buttocks and, if tight, can pull the pelvis out of

alignment. The *piriformis*, a hip rotator located deep in the buttocks, is a crucial muscle to stretch for releasing sciatica. Supta Padangusthasana (Reclining Big-Toe Pose) is a good pose to open the sequence because the back is on the floor, making it is easier to maintain the natural curves of the spine while stretching the hamstrings, adductors and piriformis. This can be followed by a leg-lowering pose by that gently strengthens the *abdominal muscles* while lengthening the legs.

Tight hip flexors—iliopsoas and quadriceps—in the front of the thighs can cause low-back pain, since the iliopsoas attaches to the lumbar vertebrae. Lunges and Virabhadrasana 1 (Warrior 1) are good poses to stretch the hip flexors.

It is also important to release tightness from the *quadratus lumborum* in the low back and from the *paraspinal muscles* along the spine. One of the best poses to stretch both the back and hamstrings is Downward-Facing Dog.

... And Then Work on Strength. After muscles have released their tightness, the focus can shift to strengthening weak muscles. Strengthening the back muscles is crucial for balancing ROM and developing better posture. One-Legged Locust Pose is a good back strengthener to begin with, particularly if there are imbalances such as scoliosis.

Strengthening the leg muscles—particularly the quadriceps, hamstrings and abductor muscles—is necessary as well. When the legs are strong, the back muscles do not have to function as the body's main support, so tightness in the back can decrease. Virabhadrasana 2 (Warrior 2), a pose that strengthens and stretches the body simultaneously, is excellent for strengthening the legs.

The Importance of Sequencing

Sequencing the poses from basic to more advanced is very important. More advanced backbends can be contraindicated if the back has not been strengthened and the thoracic spine has not gained flexibility. I do not teach Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose) because it can compress the low back. Twists must also be taught with the low back in its natural curve, so in the beginning I avoid seated twists on the floor. Chair Twist or Standing Chair Twist is a better choice to start with.

Sweet Simplicity

Remind your students that it's never too late to start doing yoga. They don't have to do advanced poses to benefit. Actually the simplest poses are sometimes the most effective for back care. A consistent practice is the key to maintaining a healthy back and preventing future back pain.

Reference

Andersson, G. 1999. Epidemiological features of chronic low-back pain. *Lancet*, 354, 581-85.

I
Namaste,
Robyn Parets
Breathe Joy Yoga
Enhancing Your Life from the Inside/Out
781-784-4848
www.breathejoyyoga.com
breathejoyyoga@aol.com

Back Exercises
Adapted for Yoga Students from the book
Oh, My Aching Back, By Dr. Root

Exercise 1: Knee to Chest Raise

Step A. From the *standard starting position* (lying on the floor, on your back, with both knees bent, feet on floor) exhale and draw your left knee to your chest as far as it will go without causing you pain. Hold for a slow count of five, then return your leg to the starting position. Remember to breathe deeply throughout the exercises.

Step B. Repeat the same maneuver with your right leg.

Step C: On an exhale, bring both knees up toward your chest, allowing them to separate slightly so that they point toward your shoulders. When knees are as close to the chest as you can get them, hold for a count of five, then slowly return legs to starting position. Breathe deeply throughout.

Perform this exercise five times to begin with, doing all three parts each time. Once you can do the entire exercise five times without difficulty, gradually increase repetitions to ten. Use your breath and abdominal muscles to draw your knee in not your arms or hands. Do the exercise slowly and deliberately, and always be in control of those parts of your body you are moving from one position to another.

The purpose of this exercise is to stretch out the stiff and tightened muscles, ligaments and joints of your lower back. You will find after awhile that it is very useful in relieving the constant feeling of strain and fatigue you have there.

Exercise 2: Pelvic Tilt

In this exercise you simply contract your buttock muscles while lying in the standard starting position. Hold your buttocks clenched for a count of five, then relax them. Keep breathing throughout and keep the lower spine flattened against the floor.

Do this exercise five times to begin with, contracting the buttocks as slowly and as tightly as you can. Hold them firmly clenched for a count of five each time, with a brief rest between each repetition. Gradually work up to 10 repetitions. Remember don't hold your breathe, just your buttocks muscles!

The purpose of this exercise is to strengthen your gluteus maximus muscles, which when in good condition, prevent excessive lumbar curve and reduces fatigue when you stand for long periods of time.

Exercise 3: Lateral Trunk Stretch

Step A. Start in the standard starting position and place your hands behind your head with your elbows flat on the floor.

Step B. Cross your right leg over your left, just above your left knee.

Step C. Exhale and use the weight of your right leg to slowly drop both knees to the right as far as possible. Your intention is to have your left knee touch the floor, but don't worry if it doesn't. Breathe slowly and evenly as you hold your knees to the right for a count of five, then return to the starting position and uncross your legs.

Step D. Now reverse the process to the other side, crossing your left leg over the right and slowly dropping both knees to the left. Hold for a count of five and return to the starting position and uncross your legs.

Alternate each leg five times to begin with and work gradually up to ten repetitions for each side. Again, do this exercise slowly and deliberately, using the breath. Remember to take your knees only as far as you can without causing pain in your lower back. Work at the edge, do not go beyond it. Keep the upper back flat on the floor, using your elbows to achieve balance. This exercise is designed to stretch out the tightened muscles on either side of your spine.

Exercise 4: Single Straight-Leg Raise

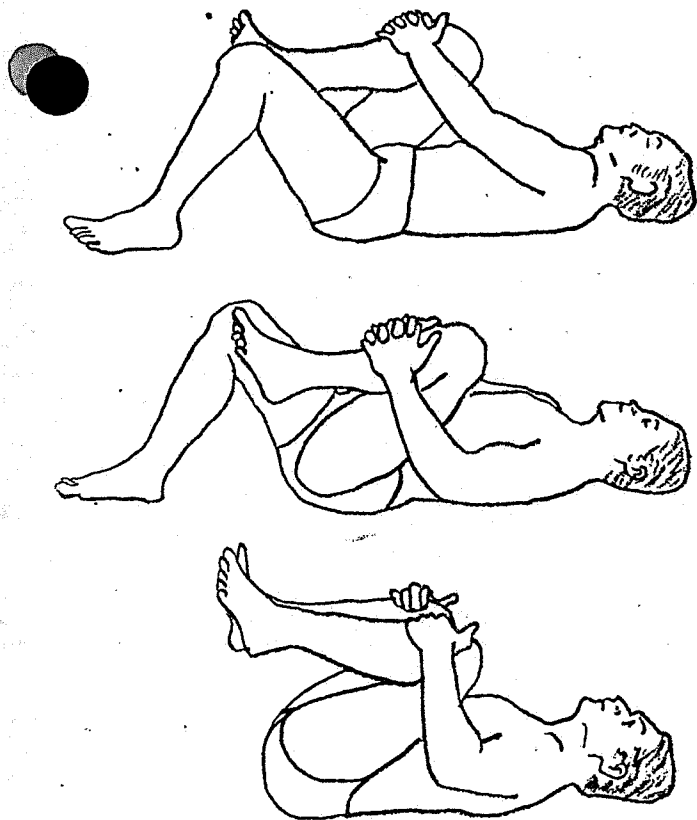
Step A. As in the previous exercise, from the standard starting position place your hands behind your head with your elbows flat on the floor. Slide your left leg out and rest it on the floor with the left foot flexed, toes pointing up toward the ceiling. Take a breathe in and as you exhale, slowly raise the straightened left leg as high as you can. When you begin to feel pain or excessive tightness in the hamstrings, STOP. Breathe evenly and hold for a count of five. Lower slowly back to the floor, keeping your leg straight. Relax for a moment and repeat for a total of five consecutive repetitions.

Step B. Return to the standard starting position and repeat Step A with the right leg, for a total of five consecutive repetitions. Keep the breath moving throughout.

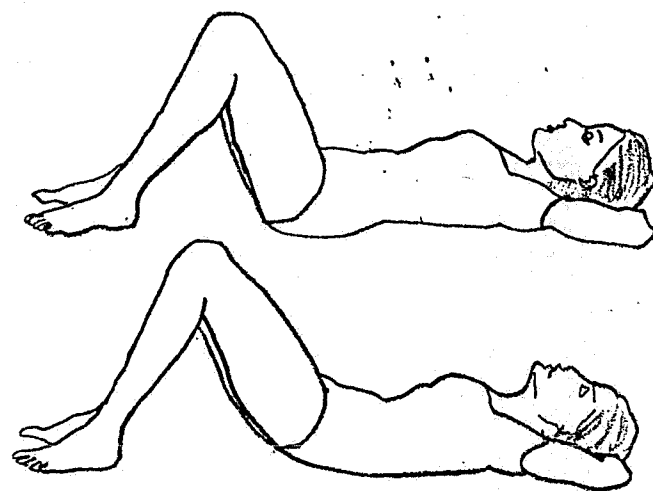
When doing this exercise never swing your leg up and do not use your hands to help you push. Keep your lower back flat on the floor as you raise each straightened leg, and constantly strive to raise each leg as high as you can. Work gradually to increase the consecutive repetitions from 5 to 10 for each leg.

AFTER YOU HAVE MASTERED THE FIRST FOUR EXERCISES AND CAN DO EACH OF THEM 10 TIMES, COMFORTABLY, YOU ARE READY TO GO ON OT THE SECOND SET OF FOUR.

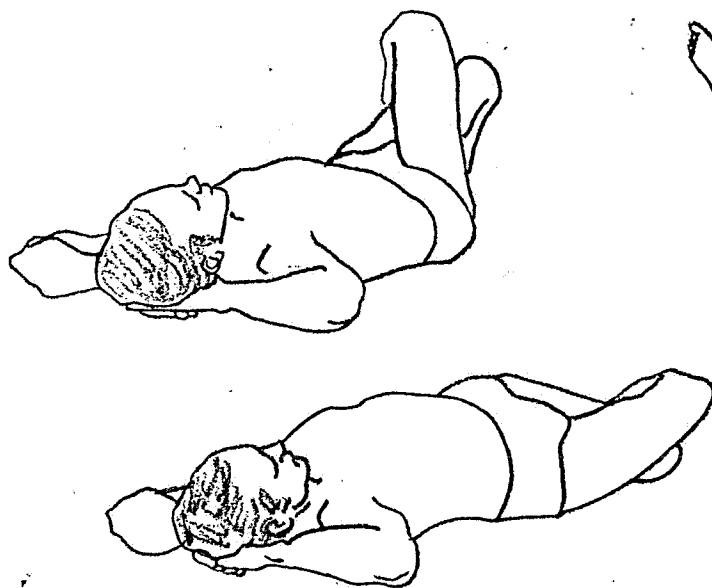
WHEREAS THE FIRST FOUR ARE DESIGNED MAINLY TO STRETCH OUT THE SUPPORTING STRUCTURES OF YOUR BACK, THE SECOND FOUR ARE DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN THE IMPORTANT MUSCLES THAT KEEP YOUR SPINE IN PROPER BALANCE AND CONFIGURATION.



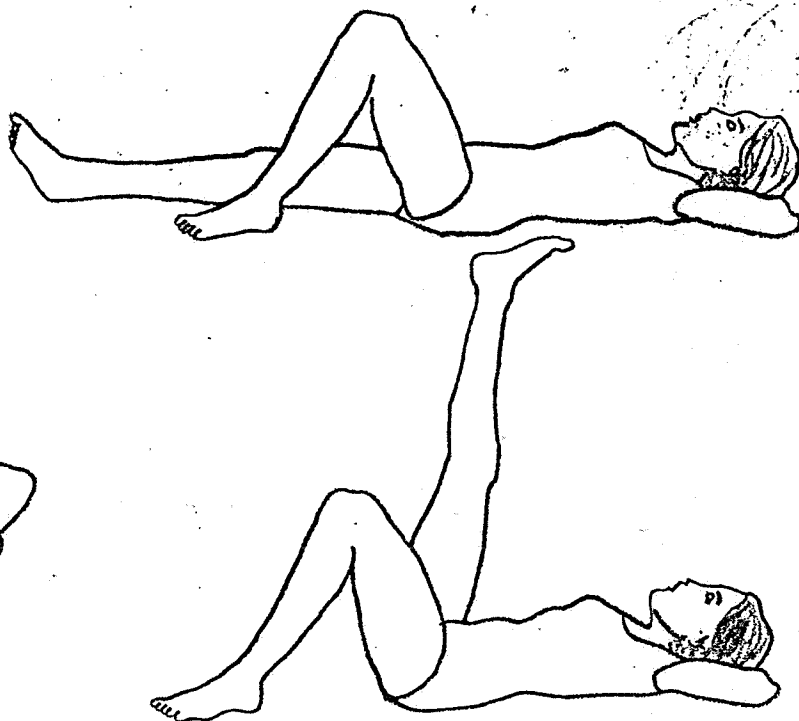
Exercise 1



Exercise 2



Exercise 3



Exercise 4

Exercise 5: Half Sit-Ups

Step A. From the standard starting position, inhale and as you exhale slowly lift your head and neck tucking your chin towards your chest.

Step B. Keep breathing but maintain this position and without raising your mid or lower back off the floor, reach both hands forward towards the knees and place them on the tops of your knees if possible. Hold this position for a count of five. Keep the breath moving.

Step C. Slowly lower yourself back to the floor. Relax for a moment and then repeat for a total of five repetitions.

Gradually increase to ten repetitions. This exercise strengthens the abdominal and lower back muscles. It should be done without any strain to the lower back. Remember to keep breathing throughout, do not hold the breath! As with all the exercises in this program, it should be done slowly, deliberately, with concentration and attention to the breath.

Exercise 6: Nose-to-Knee Touch

Step A. From the standard starting position, inhale and as you exhale bring your left knee slowly in towards your chest. Clasp your hands around the shin or behind the thigh. Keep breathing and slowly slide your right leg out so it is flat on the floor.

Step B. Keeping your lower back flat on the floor, exhale and raise your head toward your left knee, as you inhale release. Do this five times.

Step C. Come back to your starting position and repeat Step A & B on the right side.

This exercise strengthens your abdominal muscles and at the same time stretches the opposite hip flexors.

Exercise 7: Scissor Kicks

Step A. From the standard starting position place your hands behind your head with your elbows flat on the floor. Exhale and bring both knees to your chest. Hold there for a moment, breathing and concentrating on keeping your back flat on the floor.

Step B. On an exhalation, straighten both legs toward the ceiling.

Step C. Keep breathing and with your legs as straight as possible, slowly scissor (or walk) them back and forth ten times. Open the scissors as wide as you can each time. Don't hold the breath.

Step D. Bend your knees and lower your feet and take a brief rest. Then exhale and straighten the legs again. Keep breathing and slowly scissor the legs side-to-side, alternately crossing one in front of the other, ten times. Once again, bend your knees and lower your feet back to the floor.

Relax for a few moments and repeat Steps A-D again. This exercise will further stretch out the hamstrings and lower-back muscles as it strengthens the abdominal muscles.

Exercise 8: Hip Hyperextension

Step A. Turn over onto your stomach and lie flat on the floor with your arms comfortably folded above your head and your forehead resting on the floor. Remember to keep your head in line with the body and do not turn your head to one side.

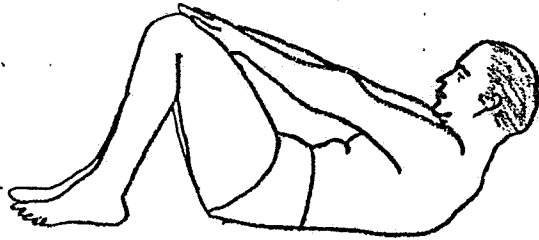
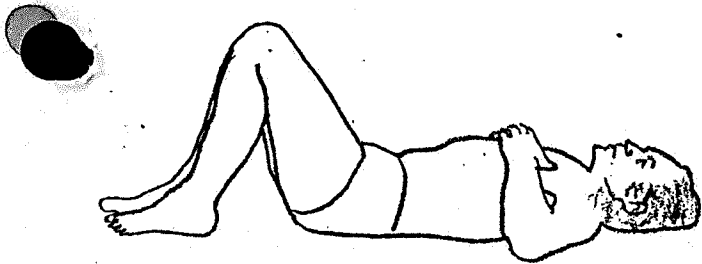
Step B. Lengthen both legs out behind you and gently press your pubic bone towards the floor. On an inhalation slowly raise your left leg off the floor about 10 to 15 degrees. Keep your leg straight and your hips level and on the floor. Do not lift your hip or rotate your pelvis in order to get your leg off the floor. As you exhale lower your leg back to the floor. Repeat five consecutive times on the left leg.

Step C. Relax for a moment at the starting position and repeat Step B with the right leg.

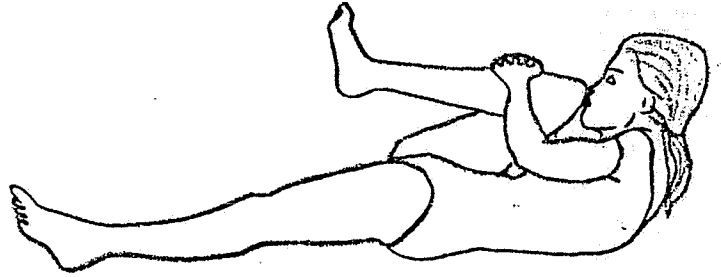
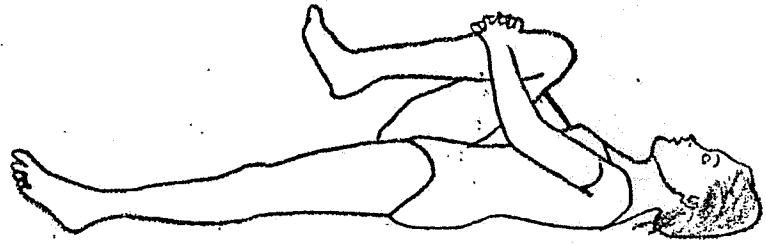
Initially you may find it very difficult to lift the legs off the floor at all. Do not despair! Do not cheat, it will come if you work at it. Remember to keep your tailbone moving towards your feet, which will lengthen your lower back, by pressing the pubic bone forward throughout the lift. Start with five repetitions with each leg and work up to ten. This exercise stretches and further strengthens your buttocks and lower back muscles.

IN ADDING EXERCISES 5-8 TO THE FIRST FOUR, YOU SHOULD START WITH EXERCISE FIVE FOR A FEW DAYS UNTIL IT BECOME COMFORTABLE AND THEN ADD EXERCISE SIX FOR A FEW DAYS AND SO ON. IT SHOULD TAKE YOU BETWEEN 2-3 WEEKS BEFORE YOU ARE DOING ALL EIGHT EXERCISES. STICK WITH THEM, TWICE-A-DAY FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES FOR YOUR BACK PAIN TO SUBSIDE. THEN MAINTAIN A ONCE-A-DAY SCHEDULE.

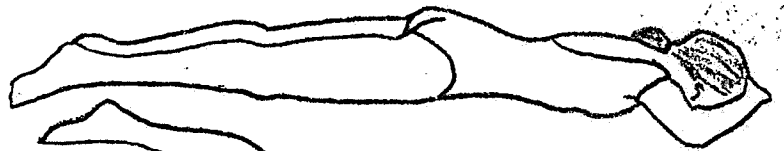
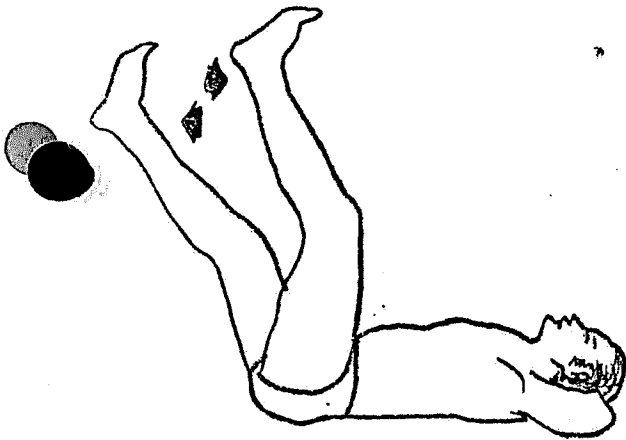
KEEP TO THE SCHEDULE OF ONCE A DAY FAITHFULLY!!!



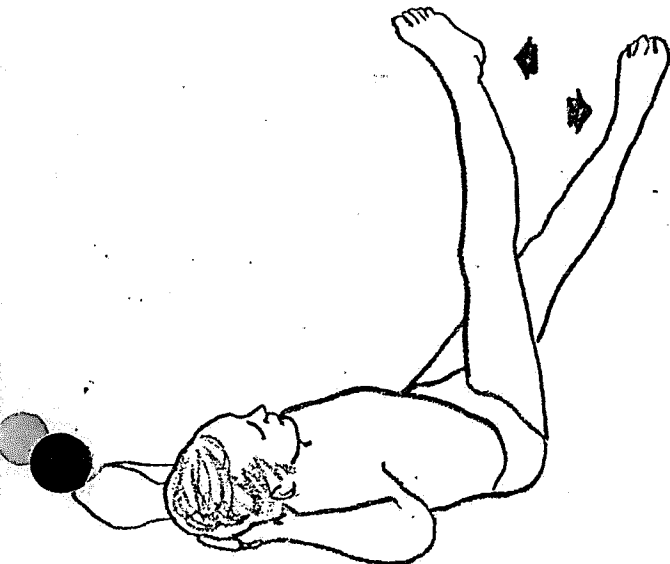
Exercise 5



Exercise 6



Exercise 8



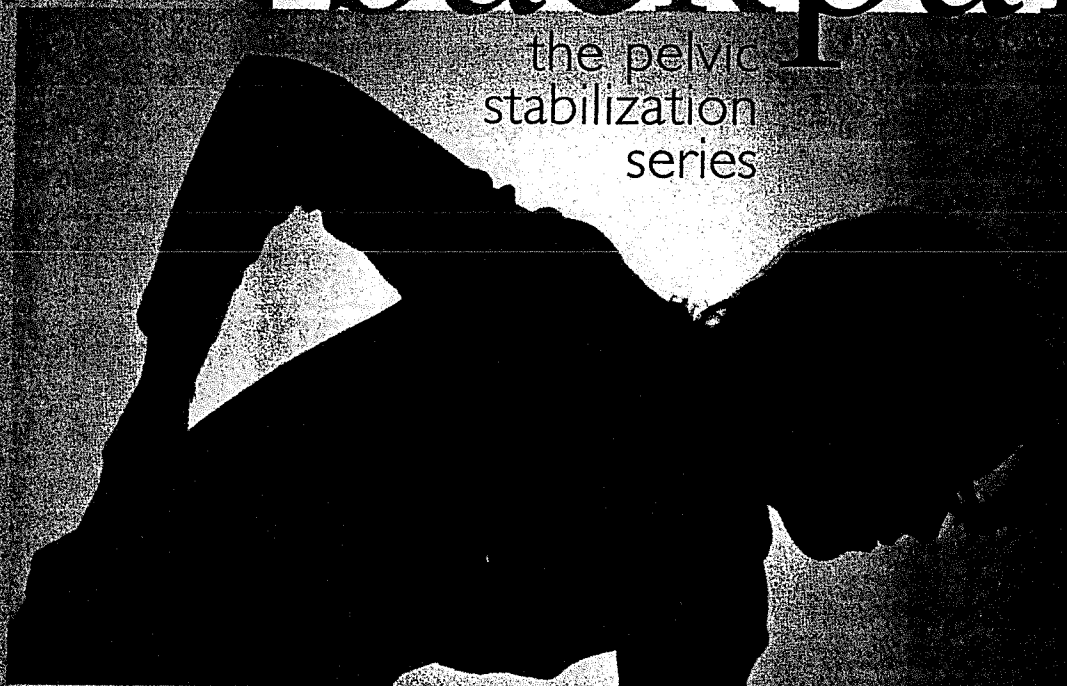
Exercise 7

yoga therapy

banish backpain

the pelvic
stabilization
series

RFIELD KOZAK



Next to the old-fashioned head cold, back pain is the most common ailment around. It runs the gamut from a lingering sensation of discomfort to eye-watering spasms that stop us in our tracks. Whether mild or acute, back pain strikes almost everyone at one time or another. In fact, many of us have day-to-day discomfort without recognizing it as a form of back trouble. The people I see in my yoga workshops and back-care programs often say they don't really have a back problem, "It's just that my back is hurting right now." But when I start asking questions (Do you experience back discomfort once a month? More than once a month? How long does it last? How often is your back really comfortable?), they realize their back hurts often and begin to see they have learned how to ignore much of their discomfort. Or they discover that because the pain is intermittent, they forget about it once it goes. Or they try to ignore it because they think they can't change it.

But it can be changed. I say this with conviction because I had chronic back pain for a long time. As an experienced yoga teacher, I sought help from a variety of senior teachers and investigated the problem on my own for many years. All to no avail. I had thought the pain was the result of an old injury, but eventually I discovered

yoga therapy

it was the result of a muscular imbalance and I realized I had to stabilize my pelvis. I did that by combining my yoga training, my years of back investigation, and the information I gleaned from physical therapists and physicians. After a few weeks of work, my back was pain-free for the first time in years. It was glorious. And the remedy was so simple. I named it the Pelvic Stabilization Series and began sharing it with others. It worked—and in a surprisingly short time. The rehab physicians and nurses attending my back-care workshops were so taken with their own immediate results that they began prescribing it to their patients, with great success.

Imbalance and fire

There are several major muscle groups that need to work together to hold the pelvis stable: the abdominal muscles, the lower back muscles (front, sides, and back), the adductors (inner thighs), and the quadriceps and hamstrings (front and back of the thighs). Each of these muscle groups needs to be flexible, but at the same time each needs to be strong enough to hold the pelvis secure and stable.

For example, weak abdominal muscles can permit a lordotic condition (excessive curvature in the lower spine), which can lead to discomfort or chronic pain. When you strengthen the abdominal muscles, you are also strengthening all the muscles in the front and sides of the spine, which is why abdominal strengthening is a key to maintaining a healthy back. But strong

abdominals are not enough.

There also needs to be a balance between strength and flexibility within and among muscles groups. For example, when the hamstrings are extremely flexible but their strength has not been maintained, they lose some of their ability to stabilize the pelvis.

The Pelvic Stabilization Series creates strength and balance in and among the muscles that brace and stabilize the lower back. As you will see, these exercises are simple and easy. If you practice them regularly, you will notice a marked (and possibly dramatic) improvement in anywhere from two days to two weeks. There is a catch, however: you must stop doing whatever it is you do to create or perpetuate the pain. In other words, you have to eliminate or at least reduce the discomfort or pain in your back. I call this "putting out the fire."

A number of factors may be causing or contributing to your back pain. The possibilities include sleeping on a worn-out mattress, sitting for long periods without proper back support, and putting your back in a rounded forward (or flexed) position. Strangely enough, frequent and often unconscious maneuvering to find a pain-free position also adds fuel to the fire. While these frequent mini-stretches may feel better for a moment or two, they are actually contributing to the inflammation. To heal your back, you need to rid yourself of these conditions and habits.

If you practice yoga asana, it is a good idea to stop doing for-

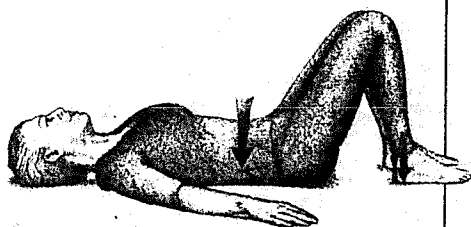
ward bends until your back is pain-free. Why? Because rounded-back forward bends aggravate most back conditions, and you may not know whether or not you are rounding your back when you bend forward. Many students are certain they are doing their forward bends with a straight back when in fact they are not, which is why I suggest eliminating all forward bending until the fire is out.

One last word about fire: take care not to create any more as you work with this Pelvic Stabilization Series. If at any time you come to the point of discomfort (or worse, pain), back off immediately. Make the movement smaller and more stable and try again.

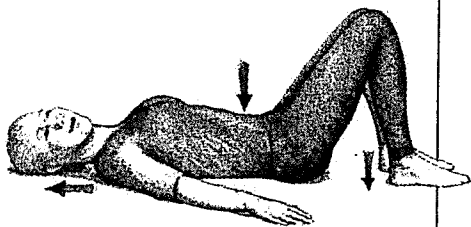
And remember, yoga is about internal reference and self-discovery. Try on this series as you would a new shirt. You put the shirt on, see how it looks, feels, and fits before deciding whether or not to buy it. Do the same thing with this practice. Try it on your own body until you can see it clearly—which will take approximately two to four weeks. Then judge for yourself whether or not to make it part of your daily routine.

The pelvic stabilization series

This series has three parts: finding neutral, increasing blood flow, and stabilizing the pelvis. Finding neutral establishes a safe and stable position for your pelvis; increasing blood flow facilitates healing; and the pelvic stabilizers create muscular strength and balance. >>>



Keep the abdomen moving down and the feet grounded.



Keep the lower back in neutral, the neck long, and the movement small.

finding neutral • A neutral lower back is neither flexed nor extended—it is a lengthened position of the natural lumbar curve in the body. In neutral, all the vertebrae are stacked and balanced, and there is no disk compression. The following exercise for finding neutral is designed to put out the fire and keep it out. Neutral is a good position in which to hold your injured back all the time—standing, sitting, walking, and resting.

In neutral. Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor near the buttocks. The feet are parallel and the shinbones are perpendicular to the floor. This is the foundation position for most of the exercises in this series. Relax and become aware of the weight of gravity in the abdomen. Feel heaviness in the abdominal organs, bones, and muscles. Allow this heaviness to relax the entire abdomen and lower back toward the floor. With each inhalation, relax and do nothing. With each exhalation, feel the weight of gravity in the belly and the spine lengthening until it touches the floor lightly at the waist. The feet are strongly connected to the floor.

Create an easy motion with the breath. Exhale—let the spine lengthen organically toward the floor. Inhale—release and relax the back completely. This is similar to a pelvic tilt, except that this movement is slow and conscious and you focus on lengthening the coccyx toward the heels. I like to describe it in terms of the lower back lightly “kissing” the floor—lengthening down gently and releasing naturally to the force of gravity.

Do this movement 20 times. Relax completely for a minute. Then do it 20 more (20 x 2).

the blood flow series • To help the body begin to heal itself, you need to enhance the blood flow around and through the injured area. This nourishes the muscles and tissues and carries away toxins. The three blood flow movements given here cover the entire back, from the first cervical vertebrae to the last sacral vertebrae. It is important to do them every two hours for the first two weeks. If you are experiencing chronic pain, continue until the pain is gone.

1. head turns. Holding your back in neutral with the lower back kissing the floor, move the head gently from side to side. It is important to keep this movement small—four to six inches to each side is plenty. Move slowly. This simple movement soothes the upper spine and increases the flow of blood to the area. Do it 25 times; rest for a minute and repeat (25 x 2).

2. knee turns. Holding a neutral spine, bring the legs together so the knees and feet are touching. Keeping the knees together, move them approximately six inches to the right, back to center, then six inches to the left. If you feel any pain, reduce the range of motion until it vanishes. Keep the motion slow and smooth, and repeat it 25 times to each side; rest a minute and do 25 more (25 x 2).

3. shoulder rolls. Standing up straight, roll the shoulders backward in a circle: up, back, and down. After 25 repetitions, rest one minute and repeat (25 x 2). If at any time you feel discomfort or pain in the back or neck, back off and reduce the movement until you are stopping short of the point where the pain begins.

We are focusing on this backward movement to open the chest and lengthen the diaphragm. Often our shoulders are rounded forward by the shape of our chairs, sofas, and car seats; these backward shoulder rolls help restore balance.

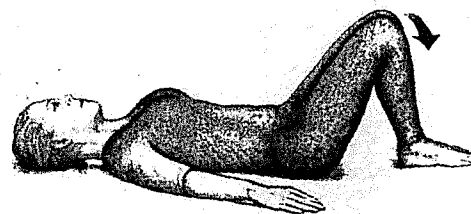
If performed every two hours, these three easy movements—head and knee turns and shoulder rolls—can make significant changes to your body. In the past few years I have come to appreciate the great benefit of small movements; there's often more yoga to be found in them than in the more dramatic asanas.

pelvic stabilizers • After you have found neutral, have learned to hold it steady, and have increased the healing flow of blood, you can begin to strengthen the major muscles that will safely support and brace your back. These movements allow your back to heal and will ward off future injury. This series will be effective if practiced once a day—every day—in the beginning. After your discomfort has disappeared and life is good, then you will want to practice three or more times a week.

These six movements are learned most easily in the order given. However, after your body has memorized them (it will take at least several days) you may want to change the order. Feel free to do so, but be sure to do a full round of one movement before going on to the next.

And remember: if you touch the pain, back off. Make sure your back is actually holding neutral, and your position is correct, and then reduce the size of the movement, always staying just this side of discomfort.

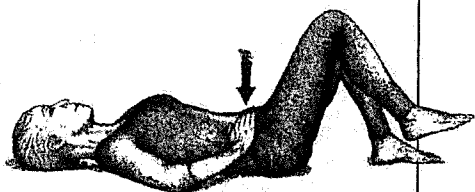
Lie down again, put your back in neutral, and let's begin. >>>



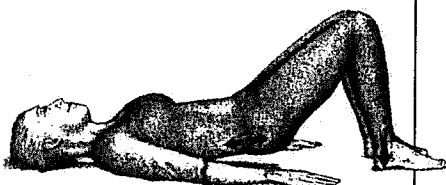
Keep the lower back in neutral and the hips firmly on the floor.



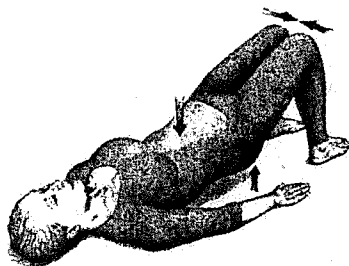
Stand with the back in neutral and let the arms hang loose as you roll the shoulders.



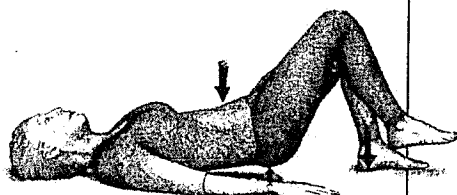
Maintain a neutral spine and hold the pelvis absolutely still as you lift each foot.



Take care not to round the back as you raise and lower the hips.



Keep the tailbone up and the spine in neutral as you squeeze with your knees.



When you have stabilized the hips in neutral, try placing the hands on the hips to help eliminate movement in the pelvis.

1. marching down. Your one-pointed concentration (*dharana*) is on holding your neutral pelvis perfectly still as you very slowly lift your right foot two inches off the floor. Under no circumstances should you let your pelvis move—not even a millimeter. Slowly lower the right foot to touch the floor. Then lift your left foot two inches off the floor and place it down again, slowly and carefully. To help you determine if your hips are moving, place your hands on your front hipbones.

Do 10 repetitions, rest, and do 10 more (10 x 2). (Don't cheat—one repetition involves both feet.) Over time, when you're ready, increase to 20 repetitions each round.

2. up/down half-bridge. Your entire allegiance is to holding the lower back in neutral all the time. With your arms at your sides, palms down, lift the hips straight up off the floor into half-bridge. (We're not moving into complete bridge because we don't want to involve the upper back.) Take care not to roll and unroll the spine—you do not want to round your back but rather lift your neutral spine straight up and bring it straight down.

Keep your breath strongly connected to the movement—exhaling as you lift and inhaling as you lower. The feet are solidly connected to the floor and the knees always remain directly over the feet. After 20 times, rest one minute and repeat (20 x 2).

3. knee press. Hold neutral as you lift your spine again into half-bridge and hold it. Your knees are over your heels. Now as you exhale, squeeze your knees together. Imagine there is a pencil between them and squeeze it for a second or two. Release the knees back to their original position (over the heels—no wider). Keep your breath strongly connected to the movement, exhaling as you squeeze the knees and inhaling as you open them. Be sure to hold the tailbone up, letting the belly sink into the pelvis. Squeeze and release 20 times. Rest a minute and repeat once more (20 x 2).

4. marching up. Now return to the marching movement but with your hips up in neutral half-bridge position. Your tailbone is up and your focus is on keeping the hips absolutely still. March as before, lifting one foot two inches off the floor and carefully placing it down again before repeating the movement on the other side.

Do 10 repetitions (or as many as you can manage without moving the hips). Rest and do 10 more (10 x 2).

This movement requires strength and practice. In all the years I've been teaching the Pelvic Stabilization Series, I have encountered only one person who could do this without moving the hips on the first try, although many believed they could. Many students can't do this movement at all in

the beginning. If this is the case for you, don't strain to do it: keep doing the other exercises in the series, and this one will eventually come to you.

5. two abdominal strengtheners. There are a number of exercises for strengthening the abdominal muscles. These two are the best for achieving the results we want because they work the abdominals without working other large muscle groups. Both are done with the back in neutral and with your hands interlocked behind your head, keeping the elbows wide open.

1. As you exhale, bring the head, arms, and shoulders straight up toward the ceiling by lifting from behind the shoulders. Focus on the quality of the movement, not on how high you can go. Rather than rounding the back and pulling the chin to the chest, try lifting straight up, initiating movement under the shoulders. Inhale as you return the head, neck, shoulders, and arms to the floor. Repeat 25 times to complete one round.

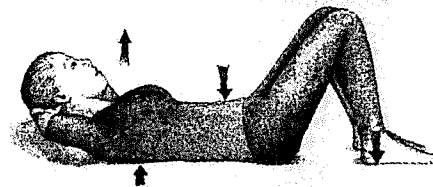
2. Next we are going to lift alternate shoulders. Imagine that your right upper arm and elbow are glued to the floor. Lifting from behind the left scapula and keeping the left arm wide open, move the left shoulder up in the direction of the right hip. Bring yourself back to the floor. Glue the left elbow now and lift from the right shoulder up and to the left. Both sides constitute one repetition; 25 repetitions make a round.

Alternate between these two abdominal strengtheners until you have completed 8 rounds of each (200 repetitions) or until you are completely wasted. Keep in mind that strength is your objective here. So push your limits and do as much as you can, remembering to stop short of creating injury.

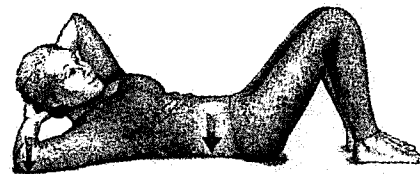
A seasoned teacher can be helpful in this or any practice, giving you feedback on your alignment and assessing your body's muscular balance. When there is discomfort or worse, it is definitely time for a private lesson to address specific needs. Find the best teacher you can: someone who knows bodies and therapy, someone in whom you have confidence and with whom you resonate well. See them privately at least once or twice a year. The student-teacher connection is invaluable for keeping us on the right track.

You can do this Pelvic Stabilization Series simply as exercises and you will get a good result. Or you can do it as a yoga practice, being mindful of the breath, mind, and body. The practice of yoga can be found in anything we do. It's all in the approach we use and our fineness of focus. ●

With 27 years in yoga, Sandra Summerfield Kozak, M.S., is currently the Director of International Yoga Studies and Vice President of the World Yoga Union. She trains teachers internationally and teaches one-on-one in Albany, N.Y. For information or an appointment, email iysusa@nycap.rr.com.



The lift comes from behind the shoulders. Lift straight up—avoid rounding the back and pulling the chin to the chest.



Keep the armpit open and the back in neutral. The lift comes from the shoulder blade. The opposite arm is glued to the floor.

OSTEOPOROSIS:

PROGRESSIVE DISEASE THAT CAUSES BONES TO BECOME THIN AND POROUS, INCREASING RISK FOR FRACTURES (ESPECIALLY VERTEBRAL AND HIP).

HELPFUL POSTURES:

STANDING POSES, STRENGTH BUILDING POSES AND WEIGHT BEARING POSES (MOUNTAIN POSE, TRIANGLE POSE, DOWNWARD DOG, BRIDGE POSE).

BALANCE POSES (TREE), GENTLE TWISTS, SEATED OR RECLINING. SEATING OR STANDING POSES THAT EMPHASIZE STRAIGHT SPINE AND EVEN ALIGNMENT (CAT/COW).

POSTURES THAT SHOULD NOT BE USED:

EXTREME BACKBENDS. ALSO, USE CAUTION MOVING INTO AND OUT OF POSES AS SUDDEN MOVEMENTS CAN CAUSE INJURY.

CARIOVASCULAR ISSUES:

INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO HEART ATTACK, ANGINA, STROKE, BLOCKED ARTERIES.

HELPFUL POSTURES:

PRANAYAMA, BECOMING AWARE OF DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING TO IMPROVE CIRCULATION AND REDUCE STRESS.

POSES THAT STRENGTHEN AND LENGTHEN MUSCLES (TADASANA, DOWNWARD DOG, SEATED FORWARD BENDS, TRIANGLE, MODIFIED WARRIOR POSE, TWISTS, SEATED AND RECLINING).

RELAXATION POSES (RESTORATIVE POSES, SAVASANA).

POSTURES THAT SHOULD NOT BE USED:

PEOPLE WITH CARDIOVASCULAR ISSUES WILL LIKELY HAVE WEAKENED CIRCULATORY ABILITY. BE VERY CAREFUL WITH ANY INVERSIONS THAT MAY LEAD TO SHORTNESS OF BREATH OR DIZZINESS.

BREATHING/PULMONARY ISSUES:

AS WE GET OLDER, WE LOSE LUNG CAPACITY AND ELASTICITY IN THE SPINE AND RIB CAGE (THE MECHANICAL/STRUCTURAL SUPPORT FOR THE BREATHING APPARATUS); THIS IMPACTS OUR ABILITY TO BREATHE. EXAMPLE OF BREATHING ISSUES ARE CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (COPD) AND EMPHYSEMA.

POSTURES THAT ARE HELPFUL:

POSES THAT BRING AWARENESS TO BREATH AND BREATHING DEEPLY, IMPROVING POSTURE AND FLEXIBILITY IN THE SPINE.

SEATED OR STANDING TADASANA, TWISTING, CAT/COW, PRANAYAMA (ABDOMINAL BREATHING, UJAYI BREATH).

POSTURES THAT SHOULD NOT BE USED:

RETAINING THE BREATH FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME IS CONTRA-INDICATED, ESPECIALLY WITH HEART OR LUNG DISEASE SUFFERERS.

FORWARD BENDS/INVERSIONS, CAN INHIBIT BREATHING, NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PEOPLE WITH COPD.

HIP REPLACEMENT:

A SURGICAL PROCEDURE IN WHICH THE DISEASED PARTS OF THE HIP JOINT ARE REMOVED AND REPLACED WITH ARTIFICIAL PARTS.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICING YOGA AFTER HIP REPLACEMENT

- PARTIAL HIP REPLACEMENTS ARE LESS PRONE TO DISLOCATION THAN TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENTS. REGARDLESS OF THE TYPE OF SURGERY, AVOID EXTREME HIP ACTIONS IN ANY DIRECTION.
- MANY YOGA POSES PLACE THE HIP IN EXTREME POSITIONS, BUT THEY CAN BE MODIFIED TO BE SAFE FOR THE STUDENT (EX. IN WARRIOR POSE KEEP THE FEET CLOSER TOGETHER AND DON'T BEND THE KNEE AS MUCH).
- TO REDUCE RISK OF DISLOCATION, STABILIZE THE HIP JOINT BY STRENGTHENING THE MUSCLES THAT CROSS IT. ALMOST ALL STANDING POSES ARE GOOD FOR THIS, BUT THEY SHOULD BE PRACTICED ONLY PART WAY TO AVOID EXTREME ACTIONS AND OVERSTRETCHING.

POSTERIOR HIP IMPLANT:

ACTIONS MOST LIKELY TO CAUSE DISLOCATION ARE ADDUCTION (CROSSING YOUR LEGS AT THE KNEE), FLEXION (BENDING FORWARD AT THE HIPS) AND INTERNAL ROTATION (TURNING THE THIGHS IN).

AVOID:

STANDING FORWARD BENDS, EAGLE POSE, COW FACE POSE, CROSS LEGGED TWISTS, CHILD'S POSE, KNEE CIRCLES, COUNTER ROTATED TWISTS, RESTORATIVE POSES

RECOMMENDED:

POSTURES THAT STRENGTHEN MUSCLES IN THE HAMSTRINGS, BUTTOCK AND SIDE HIP. BRIDGE POSE, TREE POSE.

ANTEROLATERAL HIP REPLACEMENT:

THE ACTIONS MOST LIKELY TO CAUSE DISLOCATION ARE ABDUCTION, HYPEREXTENSION (BACK BENDING FROM THE HIPS), AND EXTERNAL ROTATION (TURNING THIGHS OUT)

AVOID:

TRIANGLE POSE, WARRIOR I & II, BOUND ANGLE/COBBLER'S POSE, EYE OF THE NEEDLE POSE, PRONE HIP OPENERS, CAMEL, COUNTER ROTATED TWISTS, RESTORATIVE POSES.

RECOMMENDED:

POSTURES THAT STRENGTHEN HIP FLEXORS, ADDUCTORS, (HALF BOAT POSE)

DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE:

DESCRIBES THE NORMAL CHANGES THAT OCCUR IN THE SPINAL DISCS WITH AGING. CAN TAKE PLACE THROUGHOUT THE SPINE BUT MOST OFTEN OCCURS IN THE LOWER BACK (LUMBAR REGION) AND LOWER PART OF THE NECK (CERVICAL REGION).

CHANGES IN THE DISCS CAN RESULT IN:

OSTEOARTHRITIS: BREAKDOWN OF THE TISSUE (CARTILAGE) THAT PROTECTS AND CUSHIONS JOINTS;

HERNIATED DISC: ABNORMAL BULGE OR BREAKING OPEN OF A SPINAL DISC;

SPINAL STENOSIS: THE NARROWING OF THE SPINAL CANAL, THE OPEN SPACE IN THE SPINE THAT HOLDS THE SPINAL CHORD.

POSTURES THAT ARE HELPFUL:

IN STANDING POSTURES, CORRECT ALIGNMENT AND A STRONG FOUNDATION ARE IMPORTANT. EMPHASIZE THE BELLY IN, PELVIS TUCKED UNDER, RIBCAGE AND THIGHS ENGAGED.

PRANAYAMA: AWARENESS OF MIND-BODY-BREATH CONNECTION CAN HELP RELIEVE STRESS AND GIVE STUDENTS TOOLS TO MANAGE PAIN.

POSTURES THAT SHOULD NOT BE USED:

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HAVE A MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS AND ADVICE

BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH ANY EXERCISE WHERE BACK PAIN IS PRESENT. EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON POSTURES THAT STRENGTHEN THE ABDOMINAL AND LOW BACK MUSCLES, STRETCH AND RELEASE BACK AND NECK TENSION, IMPROVE POSTURE AND SPINAL FLEXIBILITY. AVOID ANYTHING THAT CAUSES OR EXACERBATES PAIN.

VISION ISSUES:

AS A PERSON AGES, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE VARIOUS CONDITIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR SENSES. AS A YOGA TEACHER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE SENSITIVE TO AND AWARE OF THE PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE STUDENTS.

COMMON VISION ISSUES FOR SENIORS:

PRESBYOPIA: THE LOSS OF THE ABILITY TO CLEARLY SEE CLOSE OBJECTS OR SMALL PRINT;

FLOATERS: TINY SPOTS THAT FLOAT ACROSS THE FIELD OF VISION;

CATARACTS: CLOUDY AREAS THAT COVER PART OF OR THE ENTIRE LENS. LIGHT CANNOT GET THROUGH THE LENS EASILY SO VISION IS IMPAIRED;

GLAUCOMA: DEVELOPS WHEN THERE IS TOO MUCH FLUID PRESSURE INSIDE THE EYE. IF NOT TREATED EARLY, CAN RESULT IN PERMANENT VISION LOSS;

RETINAL DISORDERS: RETINA COLLECTS VISUAL IMAGES AND TRANSFERS THEM TO THE BRAIN, A DISORDER HERE INTERRUPTS THE TRANSFER OF IMAGES.

CORNEAL DISEASE: CORNEA IS CLEAR, DOME-SHAPED "WINDOW" AT THE FRONT OF THE EYE. IT HELPS FOCUS LIGHT THAT ENTERS THE EYE. DISEASE CAN CAUSE REDNESS, WATERY EYES, PAIN, REDUCED VISION, OR A HALO EFFECT.

****** ANYONE SUFFERING FROM GLAUCOMA OR DETACHED RETINA, OR RECOVERING FROM RECENT EYE, FACIAL, OR DENTAL SURGERY, SHOULD NOT PRACTICE ANY POSE THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED AN INVERSION (HEAD SHOULD NOT COME BELOW THE HEART).**

The Wrist and Hand:

Joints

Radiocarpal
Intercarpal
Midcarpal
Carpo-metacarpal
Metacarpal-phalangeal
Inter-phalangeal

Motions:

Wrist: Flexion/extension, radial/ulnar deviation
Hand/Finger: flexion/extension, ab/adduction, opposition, circumduction

Muscles:

Names define function

The carpal tunnel: small space created by carpal and flexor retinaculum where wrist flexor tendons and median nerve travel

*****In pairs: Come up with 2 poses for assigned motions and teach to group**

Shoulder extension with internal rotation

Wrist flexion with elbow extension

Shoulder flexion with external rotation

The Hip and Knee

Joints

Acetabulum to femur: the true hip
Femur to tibia
Patello-femoral
Tib-fib

Motions:

Hip: flexion/extension, ab/adduction, Internal/external rotation
Knee: flexion/extension, medial/lateral rotation

Muscles:

Deep hip rotators that externally rotate hip: Piriformis, obturator internus & externus, gemellus superior & inferior, quadratus femoris

Gluteals:

medius abducts hip
minimus abducts with some flexion and IR
maximus hip extension, ER

Sartorius: hip flexion, abduction, ER with knee flexion (tailor muscle)

Adductors: longus, brevis, magnus, pectiniis, gracilis

Hamstrings: semimembranosis, semitendinosus, biceps femoris; hip ext/knee flexion

Quadriceps: Vastus laeialis, medialis, intermedialis, rectus femoris; extend knee

Psoas, iliacus, and rectus femoris: hip flexion; rectus knee extension

Iliotibial band and tensor fascia latae: abduction, flex, IR of hip

Ankle/Foot

Joints

Major Muscles of the Spine

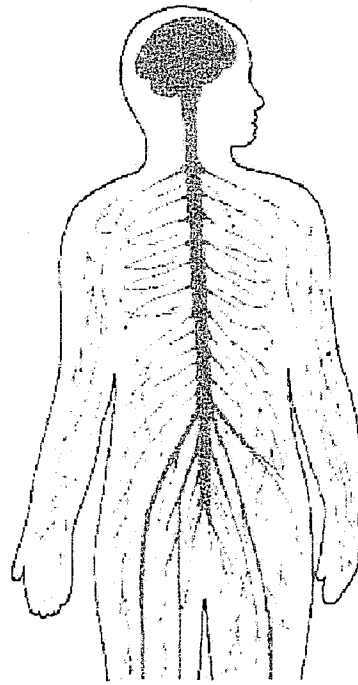
- Psoas major:
- Quadratus lumborum:
- Deep Lumbar:
- Erector Spinae:
- Latissimus:
- Trapezius:
- Rhomboids:
- SCM:
- Levator scapula:
- Scalenes:
- Transverse abdominus:
- Rectus abdominus:
- Intrenal/extrenal obliques:
- Pelvic floor: stabilize/support organs, bladder, spine
- Exercise: which muscle is stretched/strengthened in this pose

Musculoskeletal System

- Overview
 - Bones
 - Joints: where two or more bones meet
 - Cartilage
 - Articular: covers surface of bone/joints
 - Fibrocartilage: shock absorption (discs, menisci)
 - Joint Capsule: tissue surrounding joint
 - Synovial Fluid: Lubricates joints
 - Muscles: contraction allows joint motion
 - Stretch=lengthen, contract=shorten
 - Ligaments: connect bone to bone
 - Tendons: connect bone to muscle
 - Fascia: layer of tissue surrounding muscles (and organs)

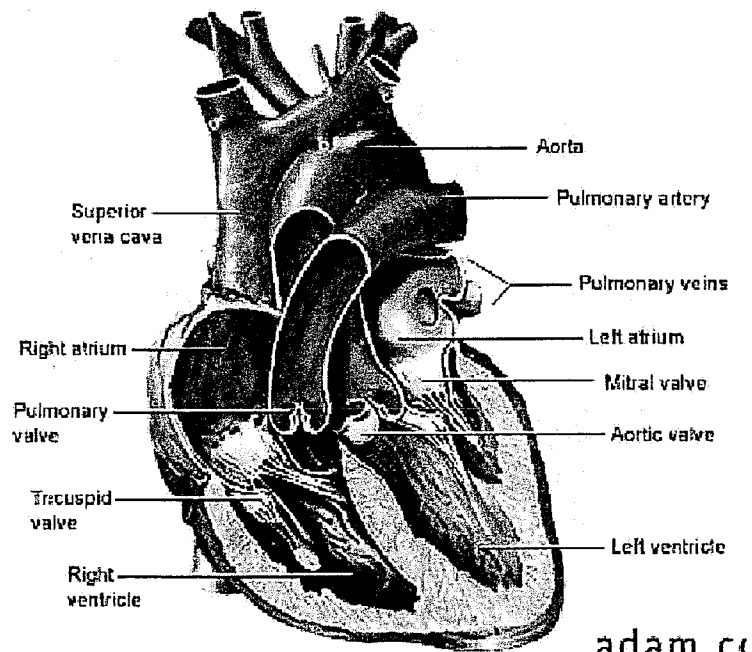
The Nervous System

- Central Nervous System
 - Brain
 - Spinal Cord
- Peripheral Nervous System
- Function
 - source of all communication to and from the body
 - signals pain
 - directs and coordinates movement



The Cardiovascular System

- Heart
- Vessels
 - Arteries
 - Veins
- Flow of Blood
 - De-O₂ blood enters vena cava>Rt atrium>Rt ventricle>pulm artery>lungs to get O₂
 - O₂ blood travels via pulm veins to Lt atrium to Lt ventricle>aorta to send O₂ blood to body
- Function
 - Provide O₂/remove CO₂ to/from body

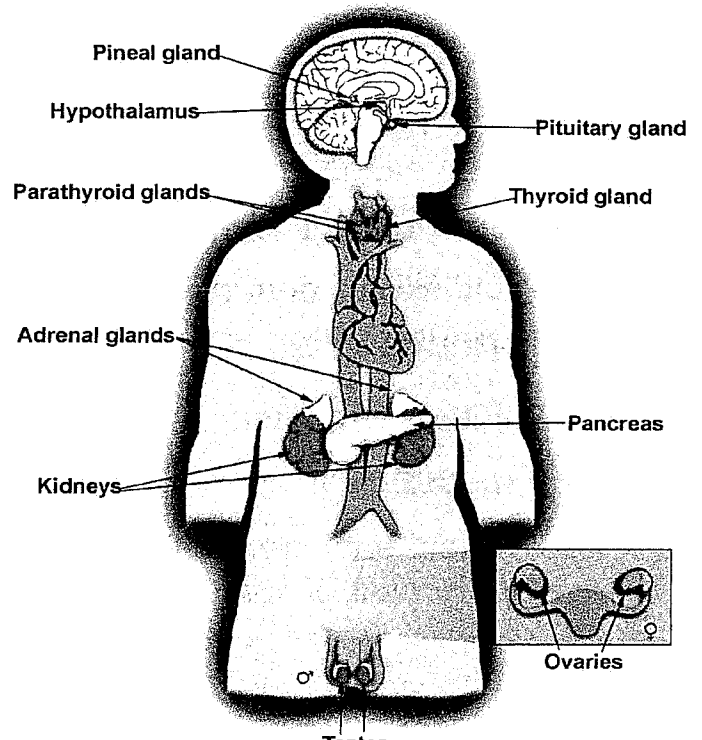


The Endocrine System

- Pineal
- Hypothalamus
 - link b/w nervous system and endocrine
 - Controls pituitary
- Pituitary: "master gland"
 - Controls thyroid, adrenals, growth, milk production
- Thyroid
 - Bone growth and metabolism
- Parathyroid
 - Regulates calcium levels in blood
- Adrenal
 - regulate salt/H₂O balance, stress response, metabolism, immune system, sexual development and function
 - increases BP/HR when stress
- Pancreas
- Testes/Ovaries

Function: Regulate mood, growth, tissue function, metabolism, sexual function, reproduction

The Endocrine System



The Reproductive System

- Female

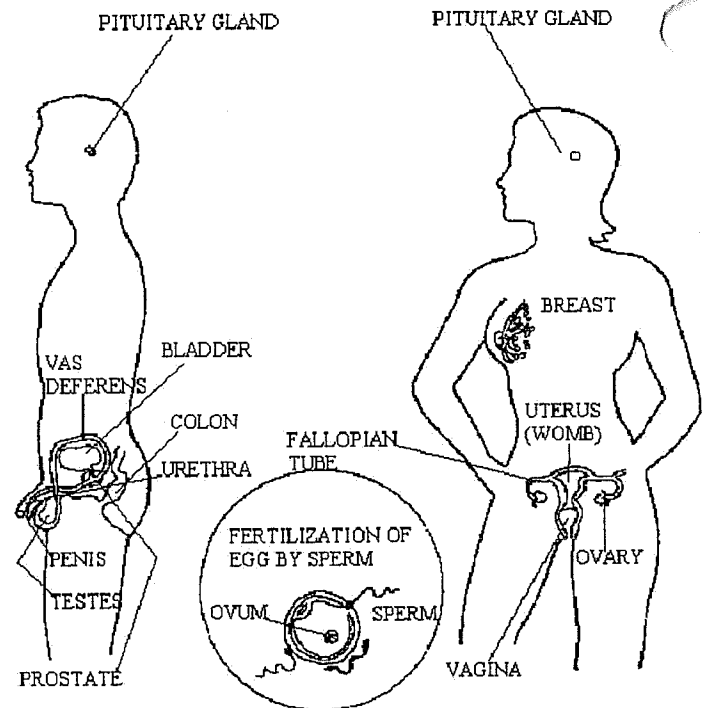
- Ovaries produce eggs
- Fallopian tubes: where fertilization occurs; tube between ovaries/uterus
- Uterus where embryo implants
- No fertilization>uterine lining sheds

- Male

- Vas deferens transports mature sperm to urethra
- Prostate helps nourish sperm, adds fluid
- Testicles make sperm and testosterone

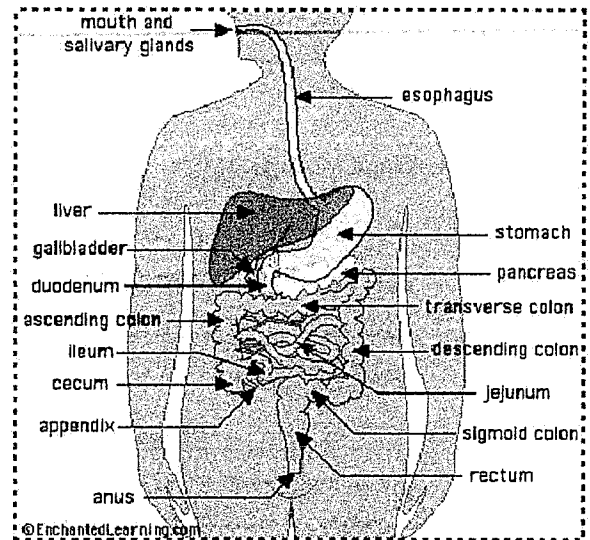
- Function

- Creation of egg and sperm for fertilization/reproduction



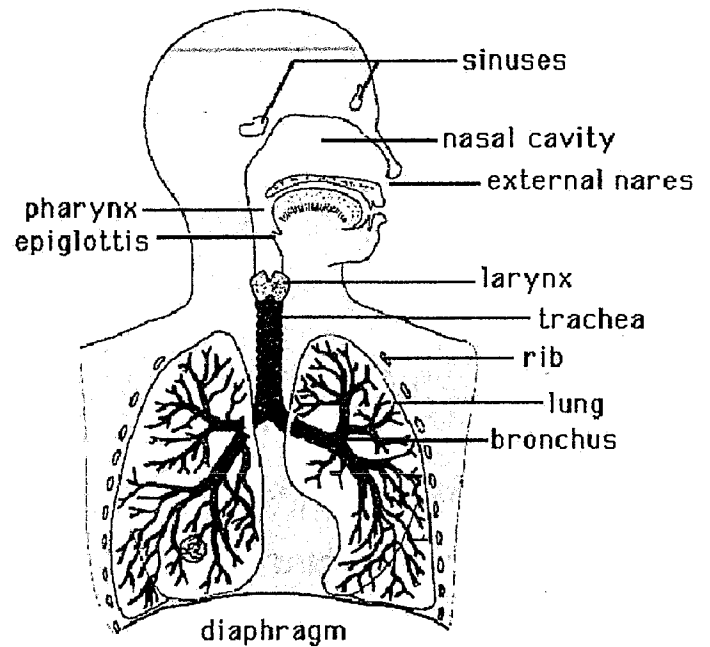
The Digestive System

- Mouth>Esophagus>Stomach (digests proteins)>Small Intestine (completes digestion and absorbs nutrients into blood)
- Colon: absorbs H₂O and salt and remaining solids exit body via rectum
- Liver: releases bile for fat digestion in sm. intestine
- Pancreas: enzymes for fat and carb digestion, completes protein digestion
- Gallbladder: store bile from liver
- Appendix:??
- Function
 - Retrieve nutrients from food and remove waste from body



The Respiratory System

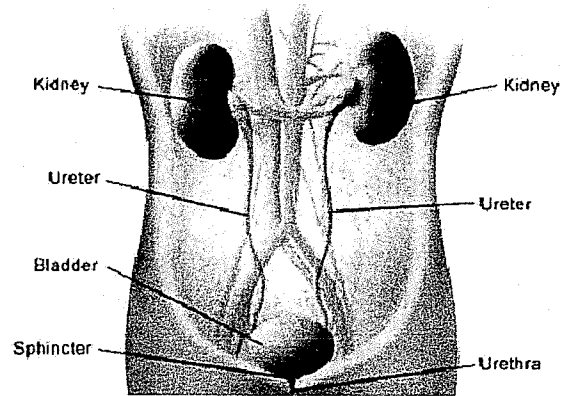
- Trachea
- Lungs
- Alveoli
- Diaphragm
 - with inhalation, diaphragm moves downward, ribs move up and out
 - with exhalation, diaphragm moves upward, ribs move down and in
- Function
 - Taking in O₂ from air breathed in
 - exchanging CO₂ for O₂ in blood



The Urinary System

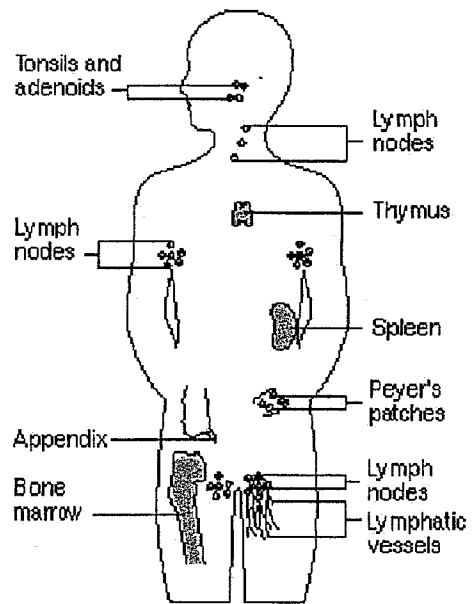
- Kidneys
 - Filter out urea from blood
 - Form urine from H₂O and waste
- Ureter
 - Urine travels through these tubes from kidney to bladder
- Bladder
 - “balloon” that holds urine
 - Sphincters keep closed/open
 - Nerves send signal when to empty
- Function
 - Regulates fluid volume in body, electrolytes, blood pH,

Front View of Urinary Tract



The Immune System

- Bone Marrow
 - All immune cells originate here
 - Produces RBCs and platelets
- Thymus
 - Produces T cells
- Spleen
 - Filters foreign substances from blood
 - Antibodies produced
 - Old RBCs destroyed
- Lymph Nodes
 - Filter lymph fluid
- Function
 - Protect body from infections and growth of tumors



Planes of Motion

- Anatomical Neutral
- Flexion: decreased angle of the bones at a joint
- Extension: increased angle of the bones at a joint
- Abduction: moving away from midline
- Adduction: moving towards midline
- Rotation
 - Spine, Hips, Shoulders
- Lateral Flexion
- Other
 - Pronation/ supination
 - Ulnar/radial deviation
 - Opposition
 - Inversion/eversion
 - Circumduction

The Spine

- Cervical (7)
- Thoracic (12+ribs+sternum)
- Lumbar (5)
- Sacrum(5 fused)
- Coccyx (3-4 fused)
- Ilium
- Ischium
- Pubic Symphysis
- Natural Curves
- Discs
- Ligaments
- Motions of the spine
- **Exercise:** pairs come up with 2 yoga poses for region and direction assigned



Cervical Spine (lordosis)

Thoracic Spine (kyphosis)

Lumbar Spine (lordosis)

Sacral Spine (kyphosis)

Dysfunction of the Spine

- “slipped disc”, herniated disc, disc bulge
- Sciatica
- Chronic low back pain
- Sacroiliac instability or pain
- Stress fractures
- Osteoporosis
- Scoliosis
- Whiplash
- Others

Anatomy 2: The Extremities

The Shoulder:

Joints

Gleno-humeral
Acromioclavicular
Sternoclavicular

Motions:

Scapula: Elevation/depression, pro/retraction, up/downward rotation
Shoulder: flexion/extension, ab/adduction, Internal/external rotation, horizontal ab/adduction
Relation to thoracic spine

Muscles:

****Neck/scapula ms covered during spine class**

Serratus Anterior: Ribs 1-9 to medial scapula; assists abduction, rotation

Rotator Cuff: 4 muscles that keep humerus situated within glenoid fossa

1. Subscapularis: reinforces GH joint, shldr IR, adduction
2. Supraspinatus: initiates abduction
3. Infraspinatus: ER
4. Teres Minor: ER

Coracobrachialis: flexion, adduction

Bicep: shoulder flexion, elbow flexion, supination

Tricep: shldr extension, elbow extension

Pec Major: adduction, IR

Pec Minor: anterior tilt of scapula

Latissimus: IR, adduction, extension

Teres Major: NOT part of cuff; same action as latissimus

Deltoid

Anterior: flexion, IR

Middle: abduction

Posterior: extension, ER

Structure/Function: Lots of mobility, high instability especially anterior-inferior where no reinforcement of rotator cuff

The Elbow:

Joints

Humero-ulnar
Radio-ulnar: proximal and distal

Motions:

Elbow flexion/extension of elbow
Forearm pronation/supination (by radius/ulna not humerus)

Muscles:

Brachialis: elbow flexion
Brachioradialis: elbow flexion when in partial pronation
Biceps: elbow flexion, supination
Triceps: elbow extensor
Pronator teres: pronation, elbow flexion
Pronator quadratus: pronation
Supinator: supination

proximal and distal tibiofibular joint
talocrural joint (talus with tibfib)
subtalar joint (talus with calcaneus)
tarsal joints
metatarsal joints
phalanges

Motions:

Dorsiflexion/plantarflexion (at talocrural and tarsometatarsal)
Inversion/eversion (at subtalar and transverse tarsal)
Flexion/extension of toes

Muscles:

Tibialis anterior: dorsiflexion, inversion
Peroneus longus and brevis: plantarflexion, eversion
Tibialis posterior: plantarflexion, inversion
Gastracnemius: ankle plantarflexion, knee flexion and medial rotation
Soleus: ankle PF
Intrinsics: move toes

*****In pairs: Come up with 2 poses for assigned motions or muscles and teach to group**

Hip extension with knee extension
Hip external rotation with knee flexion
Ankle dorsiflexion with knee extension

****What muscle is stretched or strengthened in this pose?**

Boat
Warrior 3
Warrior 2
Triangle
Camel
Seated forward bend
Tree



Healing

Divine Embrace, Energy Healing, Reiki, Ho'oponopono and Sungazing

Energy Awareness

You Are Energy

Thought truly **is** thing. Your thoughts create your reality. It's a spiraling effect that gets better and better or worse, depending on how you view your life. I don't know about you, but I'd prefer a spiral of happiness rather than the opposite.



I was reading an article just recently that described life in the Astral (or rather on the Other Side). The comparison was made to that of who or rather how we are in our physical body rather than how we are in our Astral body. Since our Astral/Spirit selves are within our physical body, when we die, we are just shedding our physical body. Most of our true inner selves are contained within our physical bodies, those thoughts, feelings, fears, emotions and ideals. We do not necessarily or always show this truest part of ourselves while living. Although we aspire to. However, once we shed our physical bodies it's pretty much impossible **not** to show our truest inner selves. Our every thought, feeling and emotion shines through us. It

IS who we are and this shows on the outside of ourselves. And as described, when we die physically, we are in essence turning ourselves inside out. This is a strong visual to keep in mind for this workshop.

The goal is to not only turn ourselves inside out (for the most part) in our lives now, but to also become aware of our thoughts, feelings, fears and emotions; change any that consist of negative connotations and truly be a positive beacon of light for ourselves and others. In doing this we attract that which we are; like attracts like. Let's attract wonder, amazement, joy, peace and love into our lives by truly being that Now.

Here's what I have come to know. The Universe is in us ALL. We are the Universe and the Universe is US. The Universe is in every object, plant, person, place, thing, etc. We are all made up of our thoughts. Our experiences happened in the past from a simple thought, fear, etc. If you can think it, it will happen. This is true. So it's easy to say, think positive! Be positive and that positive wave will come back to you! The Universe seems to react in waves. You do something negative, it comes back eventually to even the score, so to speak. What you do will come back to you. You do something positive, this will come back to you. And all of this comes down to the energy **we** put out there to the Universe and the Universe's interpretation of our energies. It's interpretation can be very literal.

*What you think
And what you Feel
And What Manifests
is Always a Match
No Exceptions.*
~ **Abraham-Hicks.com**

You can have what you truly desire, (i.e. psychic abilities, that perfect love, job). In fact, you are supposed to find what you truly desire and make it happen! Keep that thought, manifest it in your mind and it WILL happen. I've been testing this energy/manifesting theory out a lot lately and it works. It's true. The

Universe hears our thoughts and feelings and even our fears and produces our thoughts. Thought REALLY IS thing. An example, I wanted a friend to call, I put out energy (could almost even feel the energy put out there) and said in my head for my friend to call finally! And seconds later my friend did.

Start Now.

Take Notice. See your surroundings. Feel your emotions. Know what you are thinking at every moment of every day. You will start to see a pattern of what you put out there and what comes back to you.

Then change. Put out positive waves of energy. Think positively about YOURSELF, as well as those around you. See what you've been missing and start living and make the Universe work for you! You get what you give. What are you giving?

Energy Healing – Healing is Natural

Energy healing is tapping into the Universal (Energy) Life Force to heal a person, animal, event, etc. There are many different forms, including Reiki (which is the laying of hands to heal). But for the sake of the basic meaning we will call all forms of Healing: Energy Healing.



I am an Energy Worker as well as a Spiritual Teacher. When you are healing someone or thinking you are healing someone you are in ego. If you are thinking that you yourself are healing another, then that is the ego in its fullest form.

I am an energy worker that regards myself as simply the channel by which the Divine flows through to the person coming for a session. Those, like me, that not only hold the space for the energy transference to take place, but also feel this energy flows through them to the person. I also know that the person must be there in a receptive and open state in order to receive and “heal”, therefore also contributing to the “healing” themselves. (By saying healing I mean raising their own vibration to open up to the true 100% perfectly healthy person they are within and always have been.)

I feel that when I raise my energy (connecting to the energies I connect to), I am in a beautiful blissful state and ego-less. I am able to also then feel the client as their 100% perfect whole and complete self and truly feel with my whole being the light form they are and therefore then connect with them as the light form I am and in that space we are one, we are raising vibrations and come into the more full form we truly are: light beings/consciousness. (This is also the meaning of Namaste.) Amazing transformations happen!

Is Energy Healing right for you?

You may or may not know if certain types of energy healing is the direction or you. (i.e. Reiki) You will know and feel it if it is. For me, I received my Reiki I attunement and then waited 2 years before my Reiki II attunement. I wasn't sure I resonated with Reiki I, but there were lessons I needed to go through as well after having taken my Reiki I. Once I received my Reiki II Attunement I quickly accelerated in my attunement process, as I felt I was ready. Love it! In Reiki there are hand positions for when you send healing to someone. For me, I felt that I didn't necessarily need to have *exact* hand placement position to send healing energy. I go with how I am guided and what feels comfortable and right with my hands if doing local healing. You will do Reiki or any Energy Healing as you feel it through your soul. Your intuition guides you.

First a little about Reiki

Reiki is (hands on) energy healing. What I feel occurs is, we as the Reiki practitioner align with the Universal Life Force energy and act as a conduit for this energy to pass through to the person(s) we are healing. This energy enters the recipient and goes to where the recipient needs it most for their highest and best, good either physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually. A lovely example of how reiki works is: With your Reiki I attunement it is like the power of a 50 watt bulb opening up and going through your Crown Chakra. Reiki II is like a 500 watt bulb. And Reiki III/Master is like a 5000 watt bulb in intensity through your Crown Chakra. And with each there seems to be a level of lessons (you progress into) for the majority who get attuned. For Reiki I it seems to be lessons in the physical realm that will be brought up in intensity to be released. (i.e. car issues, etc.) What I've also noticed is that this may even start just BEFORE your actual attunement. Like in preparation. For Reiki II the lessons seem to be focused more in the emotional/mental realm. Issues will be brought up that you have buried or have not dealt with yet. You will see them more clearly and release them once and for all before moving on to the next level. Reiki III/Master brings up Karmic-type lessons and any left over excess that has not been worked on in previous attempts.

The quicker you realize these lessons, wake up to them, work on them and release them, the quicker you can move on to wonderful new horizons. But remember a couple things. One, don't go too fast. If you move too quickly you will be bombarded with confusion and chaos. This may hinder your growth rather than taking it one step at a time. Also, most importantly just enjoy the ride. That's what we're here for. More on what Reiki is to me can be read [here](#).

All types

There are other types of reiki (i.e. Karuna, Rainbow, etc.) and those are valid as well. I am a Usui & Karuna Reiki Master/Teacher. I also have attunements in Akamai, Color Spectrum & ArchAngels, etc. What each attunement in any source of healing that you resonate with does is brings you closer to knowing yourself and source. You raise your vibrations every time. I have also received an array of healings in other modalities, such as Sound healing. Sound (vibrational) healing is a most wonderful way to give or receive a healing. This gets to the core of your vibration in a most assuredly strong and vital way. Sound healing is done in a variety of ways as well. By using your voice in different tones, Tom Kenyon is an excellent example! Another excellent source is Jonathan Goldman has a wonderful site with

articles, information and more in the Sound arena that may peek your curiosity. There is Sound healing through instruments, such as Drums (the Heart of the Drum is so Powerful!), Tuning forks, meditative music and music of ALL kinds. What about healing through movements, such as yoga and dance. Moving your body is so healing and freeing. I'm a big fan of Trance Dance Yoga. A lot of fun too! You find the way that works best for you. Although I am attached to a few ways that resonate most with me, I find that a mixture of ALL of these ways are what raise us to new vibrations!!

For many, we first receive attunements or knowledge-base in new Healing Ways to help heal ourselves. First and foremost that is what we all need to do anyway! We can only help the world by first helping and loving ourselves. Some will follow a path of healing in the mainstream and even turn it into their main source of income. Others may never touch the healing abilities learned ever again. However, IT has touched THEM. They are forever changed in a positive directly just for reaching out and receiving the attunements, or new ways or working with others. This is one stepping stone to raising your vibration, open up your psychic channels even more and just have a great awareness for the All that is. There can be a subtle shift in vibration and awareness or a strong one depending on the individual and what they planned for themselves prior to incarnating. But you may not even notice the strong changes in your being until years later and then as you put the pieces to the puzzle together, look at yourself now compared to back then and realize something amazing took place.

The many modalities like: Sound Healing, Ho'oponopono, Switchwords, The Law of Attraction & Allowing, The Sedona Method, Power of Positive thinking, etc., are all types of working with the Universe and your energies. We are energy beings and what we put out there comes back to us 1000%! We attract everything that comes into our lives. Ho'oponopono offers a simple yet powerful way of releasing/healing. Please see my Ho'oponopono article for a more in-depth peek. Switchwords also offers a unique yet simple way. Kind of like affirmations. I've, also, experienced wonderful results just by utilizing the magic if Switchwords. A wonderful yahoo group for this is found here. Here you will receive a free ebook about Switchwords to get you started. Enjoy! And with everything there is the underlying current of the Law of Attraction and Allowing. We truly attract everything into our lives, good or bad. So focus on what you would like for good and ALLOW it into your life. You DESERVE it!

Now some have asked what's the sense of using Intentions and Vision Boards for manifesting your desires when there are Ways like Ho'oponopono. Is there a know-all-end-all method? We each follow our path uniquely. So for some just following Ho'oponopono strictly is enough. For others it's a start and they integrate it with other ideas & methods. Maybe those people will eventually only work with Ho'oponopono and maybe they won't. I also feel there are stepping stones. Some will start with learning about the Law of Attraction. It's all new and we all need to start somewhere to come into our own unique 'Knowing'. Creating Vision Boards, using Intentions, etc. are ways of putting your energy out there for a want or a goal. These people are needing to learn through this way first. Then they progress to feel that healing and forgiveness are next. They may go into Reiki to learn of healing or any number of other healing modalities. In Forgiveness some may take up Therapy or realize there is a higher level that needs to be explored and fall into the wonderful realm of Ho'oponopono that heals, forgives and transmutes to pure light. Some stop there and raise their vibrations all the while Ho'oponopono'ing happily. Some may integrate their Ho'oponopono, Law of Attraction, Healing ways into something more advanced that works for them. It doesn't matter, as long as you are being true to yourself and having a blast doing it!

You must follow your path as it feels right. It all comes down to LOVE. The Power of LOVE energy is the actual vibration that heals us and lifts us up. Since we ARE that Love force, we are becoming more and more aware of our true selves. The flowering of consciousness, as Eckhart Tolle says. All of these modalities have the benefit of reaching the ultimate state of Love. Be open to Love and the possibilities are endless! We are all connected by Love. Whatever it is that excites you and brings you joy is what you are meant to do. In following your passion you share your LOVE with the world. This is where the doors fly open for you as an individual. Divine inspiration will come and all you have to do is follow! You are each unique with unique talents and gifts that you must share with the world in your way. If you want it, then there is a need for it, and what you want wants you! So start those tiny or huge steps in that direction and see the magic flow in your life.

Remember, there are many ways and all lead to the same. Enjoy the Way. For your enjoyment, here is a wonderful movie on drumming your heart out!

How Do I Survive Being an Empath?

We are all Empaths on some level...

We are all Empaths on some level; some more than others. Empathy is so common these days and especially for those folks “waking” up from an unconscious life. An Empath is someone who feels intuition at a deeper level – taking intuition to a whole new level. Intuition is being sensitive to your surroundings and your gut instincts. Empathy is actually picking up on what another person is feeling, whether it’s physically, mentally or emotionally.



The challenge is this natural ability is that you don’t always know you are picking up on someone ELSE’s stuff! Once you know, you can more easily protect yourself from receiving unwanted energies and/or remove it from your energy (for the most part). At the very least you will be able to better monitor the coming’s and going’s of yours and others’ energies. Keep in mind that what you focus upon expands. When you’ve receive someone else’s “stuff”, you may be able to attempt a transmutation of energy (more on this in a minute).

My older sister is an Empath and has had a hard go of it most of her life. When we are conscious of it we can better work with the energies. It helps so much that you know it’s not “yours” but it’s someone else’s. I remember one time being in a restaurant and hungry. I love

food! But suddenly, I felt icky and bulimic!? I am definitely not bulimic. So this shocked me. I went so far as to go to the bathroom and see if there was anything I could do about this. When I removed myself from the restaurant area and, therefore, the person’s energy (who had walked by my table), this feeling started to pass. I realized I had picked up on someone else’s energy. What an epiphany and thank goodness it was fast! Sometimes I pick up on my step-son’s energy and at times this is his huge rage emotions. He is autistic and can’t always control the rages. One evening right after he left, I felt the extremely strong rage to the point of effecting my night in a major way. I couldn’t get a handle on it. Then the light bulb finally went off. It wasn’t mine. I even said it out loud. Immediately it went away. It was gone. And that was my confirmation that it truly was not mine. Although it was helpful to know how strong this can be for him.

We are all connected on this planet. No matter what’s happening in our lives we are never alone, always connected. And the closer you are to someone the easier you pick up on their stuff. The more you open yourself up to someone the more their energy can work its way in to your energy. This is natural. It happens with our kids and loved ones all the time. Sometimes it’s good energy and sometimes it’s not-so-good energy. We have aura’s, an energy field around our bodies. These aura’s expand depending upon our energy of the moment. You will feel the energy of the room even just by entering the room. Have you ever noticed the energy vibe. Sometimes it feels like a fight had just occurred and you feel that ooze out of the room and other times it’s light and airy, feeling good. Or when someone comes in and they just light up the room. It’s their aura we are feeling. Usually these energies come and go naturally and in good time. Other times we take it in.

Empath's take in others energies a bit more than your average person. It's in their nature. These folks tend to be (but not as a rule!) caretakers, co-dependent in nature, and turn out to be nurse's, healers, doctors and caretakers of loved ones. When you take on a role like this it's hard to put on the "off switch". But it's possible! And with practice and diligence in conscious awareness life can flow more easily. Sometimes we take on other people's stuff because it's a lesson we need to face ourselves. So this is important to keep in mind.

Helpful Methods on how to flow with being an Empath:

1. First, it's important to **keep your aura and chakras clean**, cleansed and to do the inner work for yourself. You must always do your best to work on any issues that are in your life, from the physical to the mental, psychological and spiritual aspects. Facing these issues in the right amount of time rather than ignoring them. As you practice good spiritual hygiene you more naturally attract the higher vibrations in situations and experiences as well as the higher vibrational people to you. This will feel better. Like always attracts like. Even as an Empath what you attract and/or take in to your energy field is something to consider as a lesson for you and/or something you can help another go through.
2. Then you will want to also protect your energy (which again is simply a raising of vibrations). You can call on the Angels and God to surround you with extra protection at all times and especially when you feel you are going through a negative territory or place or are facing a negative person. You can recite that "It's not mine! It's yours." To the person and/or God. We can also practice the **Golden Egg Shield of protection**. This comes from my book, **Divine Embrace**. In my book, I talk a lot about this and other energy subjects regarding awakening.
3. Lastly, and especially for those healers out there, we can transmute the energy that has come in to the White Light of the Divine/God. We can ask that it be removed from our bodies and auras, as we are conscious of its existence and lessons, and allow it to be transmuted up to God. **Calling on St. Germaine's Violet Flame** is a great way to remove the energy for transmutation. Visualize the purple flame engulfing your body, cleansing and removing all that does not belong. Then fill your body and aura with Divine White Light. Breathe in deeply beautiful white light energy.
4. Another fantastic way to remove the energy from your body and transmute it is to **ground it down into the Earth**. You can either do this in Nature or simply visualize the energy. See your hands touching the Earth (I usually visualize my hands pressing down into green grass). Then visualize all of the energy going into the Earth for transmutation. Even intend that you give Gaia (Earth) everything. Let it all go. Then visualize beautiful white light energy flowing into your crown chakra, down through your body and out your hands into the Earth; sending Divine Light into the Earth to assist with the clearing process.

Golden Egg Shield

Years ago when I was psychically opening up for the first time I would experiment with different methods of protecting myself from energy vampires and from receiving any type of energy transference that I didn't want. Although I now know more fully that these methods are aligning our vibrations higher and that is overall what keeps us from harms way or rather from unwanted lower vibrational energies. The best methods I have found thus far are three methods; two of which I have already mentioned: the White Light Bubble and Cord Cutting with ArchAngel Michael. The third is pretty potent and depending

upon your intention can block out even those things you didn't want blocked. So be careful of your intention when calling this one in.

Here's why. My friend, Dave shared with me a nifty protector shield that was shared with him. I was excited to use it the next day when I showed up at work. At the time I was an administrative assistant for an environmental business. I had a group of people to support. In the morning I decided to place this shield up and see how it went.

What you do is visualize golden liquid light coming down from the heavens meeting your crown Chakra or just above it and surrounding your entire aura and body with this warm beautiful golden liquid light. Gold is powerful and I use it as a visualization often. Once you are completely surrounded you will then feel the golden liquid light harden. I did this so well that I could hear the crackle of the golden liquid hardening like a dry golden egg all around me. It was that powerful to me.

So then I went on with the rest of my day doing a few odds and ends from the prior day's workload. At around 4p.m. I started to realize I hadn't heard from a soul all day long! No assignments from my managers, no one stopping by to say hello, no emails and no phone calls. I was flabbergasted. Then it hit me. The golden egg! Oh no! I promptly said thank you to the golden egg and let it go. I felt it melt back into liquid and dissolve into the Earth.

Amazing! What's more amazing is right after I did this – I'm talking mere minutes here – I received two or three phone calls and some rush jobs from at least two managers, as well as a few emails from people I had thought of during the day. I realized that not only was nothing getting in, but nothing was getting out too. My thoughts, feelings and energies stayed in the egg till I released it. My mistake was making the intention too strong and not allowing it to be more free flowing and malleable for loving energy to still flow through me. So now if I use the golden egg shield my intention is that this surrounds me with protection and still allows only love and light to flow to me and from me.

Have a blessed filled day sharing love and light!

Namaste,
~ Maggie

What Is Reiki?

by Maggie Anderson



**Just for today, I will not worry.
Just for today, I will not be angry.
Just for today, I honor my parents, teachers, and elders.
Just for today, I will earn my work honestly.
Just for today, I show gratitude to everything.**

"For achieving my teachings, training and improving physically and spiritually and walking in a right path as a human being, first we have to heal our spirit. Secondly we have to keep our body healthy. If our spirit is healthy and conformed to the truth, body will get healthy naturally. Usui Reiki Ryoho's missions are to lead peaceful and happy life, heal others and improve happiness of others and ourselves." ~ Dr. Mikao Usui

Reiki (pronounced ray-key) is a Japanese word meaning **"Universal Life-Force-Energy"**. The word "Rei" mean universal. The word "Ki" is the same word as Chi or Qi in Chinese, Prana in Sanskrit and Ti or Ki in Hawaiian. Ki is life energy. Reiki is a system for channeling that energy to someone for the purpose of healing. It was discovered by Dr. Usui in the late 1800's, a teacher in Japan. To reiterate Reiki is not of any religious or belief system. It is a natural way of sending energy healing. You do not have to believe in Reiki to receive the healing treatment, just be open to it.

Energy Healing involves direct application of Chi for the purpose of strengthening the clients energy system (chakra's, meridians and aura—see below). Chi is the term used by the Chinese mystics and martial artists for the underlying force the Universe.

Reiki is very easily learned, very simple to use, and beneficial for all. It is one of many forms of healing through the use of the natural forces.

Reiki healing is very simply performed. The practitioner places his or her hands upon the person to be healed with the intent for healing to occur, and the energy begins flowing. The Reiki energy is smart. The energy knows where to go, and what to do once it gets there. The energy manages its own flow to and within the recipient. It draws through the healer, from the Universal Life Force, exactly that amount of energy which the recipient needs. All this happens without direct conscious intervention by the healer. The healers job is to get out of the way, to keep the healing space open, and to watch/listen/feel for signs of what to do next. Reiki will heal for the persons' Highest and Best, Good either Physically, Mentally, Emotionally and/or Spiritually.

WHAT IS REIKI TO ME?

Reiki is energy healing. What I feel occurs is, we as the reiki practitioner align with the Universal Life Force energy and act as a conduit for this energy to pass through to the person(s) we are healing. This energy enters the recipient and goes to where the recipient needs it most for their highest and best, good. If there is a physical ailment, it's more than possible that the immediate need for reiki is on the emotional,

mental or spiritual plane. The reiki will go here first in order to heal the situation that first caused the physical pain, since all physical pains are first manifested from our minds, thoughts, emotions and soul. If we do not first heal on these levels, a physical ailment will usually manifest to get your attention. If we can start to be aware of our bodies and minds, thoughts and desires in the NOW then we can heal much quicker these issues before a physical manifestation occurs.

When being attuned to Reiki you are raising your vibrations to a higher rate. As you raise your vibrations, lower more negative energies will naturally and sometimes forcefully fall away. Situations will present themselves to you in the form of lessons that you can either take action from or ignore. If you choose to ignore, it will become more insistent and more intense in its lesson for you. Taking action once you are aware of the issue, is recommended for you to progress at a nice pace. You will start to notice your attitude, thoughts and habits naturally progressing to a more positive way of living.

Examples of what Reiki can assist with:

- stress reduction, stress-related ailments, anxiety
- emotional balancing, self-esteem, mental clarity
- shedding weight
- maintaining general wellness
- making or handling changes in your life
- relationships (singles, couples, families), past trauma
- fatigue, problems sleeping
- pre and post surgery (relaxation before surgery, reduce recovery time, and help with pain management)
- help to reduce side affects of medications or treatments (including individuals with cancer)
- living with chronic conditions
- mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual healing
- improving immunity
- individuals in hospice comfort care
- Animals benefit tremendously from Reiki and Energy Session as well

Come join us and receive your attunement and learn this beautiful healing method. Check my calendar for upcoming dates or request one be put on the schedule!

REIKI TIPS

“Reiki is a healing method that can help people cope with uncertainty and anxiety. It can also help people make healthy change and deal with issues that arise during the transition. In fact, Reiki energy contains the consciousness of the coming new era and not only is it’s use helping to create the planetary shift in consciousness, but it is also able to help minimize the suffering people might experience as we move through the transition. This is one important reason that Reiki is becoming more popular now – to smooth out the transition period and reduce suffering so we can more easily and quickly enter into the coming period of peace and well-being.” ~ William Lee Rand, www.spiritualone.com

“Here are some ways to use Reiki to help facilitate the planetary shift in consciousness.

1. Make sure to give yourself Reiki every day. A complete session is recommended if you have the time, but shorter periods are also effective. Giving yourself several 5 minute sessions a day will work wonders to release stress, lift your spirits, improve creativity and help you manifest the best results. As you heal and improve your own level of consciousness, your presence in the lives of others will help them as well.
2. Use Reiki to achieve your goals. Each morning write the priorities of the day on a piece of paper and give them Reiki. Then Reiki your goals at least one additional time during the day. Do this with your long range goals as well. You'll be happily surprised as amazingly helpful coincidences take place to help you achieve your goals.
3. Offer Reiki to family members, friends and co-workers. This will reduce their stress and help create a positive supportive atmosphere. Make sure you get Reiki sessions from others too.
4. Send Reiki to local, regional and world crisis situations and to the world in general. This will raise the vibration of those events making solutions more easily achieved and helping to smooth the transition to world peace.
5. Use the World Peace Crystal Grid photos to charge the grids at the North and South Poles and in Jerusalem with Reiki. This is a powerful way to promote world peace and planetary healing. Doing this will bring peace into your personal world as well.
6. Teach Reiki to others. This can be done through informal classes for family and friends or through professionally organized classes for the general public.
7. Encourage others to use their Reiki on a regular basis. Set up a Reiki share group or attend one that's already operating and invite very one you know to attend.

This is an exciting time to be alive. Values are changing and the opportunity for personal and planetary evolution is greater than ever. Reiki is a gift that has been given to us to help create the positive changes we need. As you use Reiki to help the world, may your life be blessed by the planetary transformation you help create." ~ William Lee Rand, www.spiritualone.com

Ho'oponopono

Ancient Hawaiian Healing Method

It's your peace when you are sad, it's your Joy when you are happy, it's your calm in the storm, it's everything and nothing/zero all at once!
~ Maggie Anderson

Ho'oponopono is an amazing way to heal what is within us and free us from suffering. Suffering is a choice. Ho'oponopono is a cleansing method that gets you to the Zero State.

This method is repeating 4 simple phrases over and over again till the issue has been cleared within. Ho'oponopono states that we are 100% responsibility for all that is in our reality. We created it. Whether is while in this life or prior to incarnating and deciding what we will and/or must experience in this life. That means while we don't want nor would we ever wish for trauma or horrible challenges as the good humans we are; in truth our higher selves with the Divine agreed to go through certain things as a part of our soul's blueprint for life to grow and evolve. We knew coming to Earth in this Lower density energy would bring challenges: ups and downs/ Yin and yang.

These things we see that are in our awareness are opportunities to send healing and cleansing. Using this method is truly a powerful way to do this. We say:

**I'm sorry
Please forgive me
I love you
Thank you**

Ho'oponopono is taking into account the totality of **ALL lives**; what you did in past lives thousands of years ago might be done to you now, or not. But come to it clean anyway. Your goal is not how the other person acts or reacts or if they apologize, that is ego. Your goal is to clean the energetic part you may have contributed to this experience and leave clean. Know that you do not know. The more we are on this path the more that is clear that we do not know much!

Can you sit in the muck for a bit? This is the work. Just like in yoga, can you sit in a pose you hate or think you hate and be present with it? Feel what you need to feel and see what you need to see without judgment. Go through the shit and as you agree to this method of Ho'oponopono you will get opportunities to use it. Just say thank you for being my teacher.

Saying I'm sorry too much can interrupt your sovereignty. Only say you're sorry when the apology is called for. I am sorry, keeps it more intentional. (Say it in front of kids too. They learn from watching you in action.)



Reconcile: It's a constant cleaning process. **If you don't try to reconcile and keep it clean, it can sticky and tricky.** Clean relationships between people is our goal. Come forward and ask to work with anyone, **whether they are alive or dead to reconcile issues.**

EXERCISE TIP: When in meditation you can ask to reconcile issues and repair and/or replace DNA with activated 12-strand DNA.

Don't go into it ever thinking you'll get back what you give. JUST CLEAN YOURSELF. Do it daily, every morning towards any imprints that you've done to others. Since we are imprinting on others all the time. We don't always know it consciously but something could be cleaned. Clean that karma. (Karma = Thought, Action and Deeds)

Leave their work to them. We don't know what we did in this life or the many other lives that need clearing and cleansing.

SHAMANIC PRINCIPAL QUOTE: One of your goals in life, in my opinion, is that you should try not to create unnecessary infringements on other sentient beings. Walk softly on this Earth. We are not here to cause pain/negative infringements, seen or unseen, to other sentient creatures. If I do that, in any way, even as a reaction to their cruelty, I am responsible for that imprint and there will be consequences for that. We are not excused for our **actions** no matter what. We can do this consciously or subconsciously, this lifetime or other lifetimes. Upside: Every improvement in you improves others! Hermetic Law! Hermetic principals, as within so without, as above so below. For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Every act you take to improve yourself, improves the lives of everyone around you. You are reducing your own level of piece if you act negative infringements on self or others. (The rune is URUSE.) What we do impacts everything else. The part in the whole. When you constantly relive something. Where they can't let go. Keep reliving a moment over and over again. Divorced for 10 years and keep talking about whatever happened. When people can't let go, what they don't realize it, that every time they keep reenacting that imprint they are activating all of that energy in that experience again in their own energy field. That's how disease happens. Live with a light footprint. Where can you find compassion so you can heal and let go.

How much of other people's perceptions of you are you responsible for? It's a projection from them instead. Same as our very own filters. We have to work on OUR filters and perceptions of others. We never know ALL and ask yourself instead, how would this look like through a filter of compassion instead. Perhaps you can hold a little space for just love and divine healing and light, forgiveness, appreciation for being a teacher, etc. It's easy to react. But grace will come. We're being called to grace. We're being called to remove the negative filters so they don't keep repeating or expanding the energy field of negativity into more. **THIS IS THE WORK.**

We talk about Samsara in yoga. Samsara (Sanskrit) is the idea of accountability about your imprinting. Come to Forgiveness within the self!

For example: My teacher gave me an example about this negative infringement on others. When parents see that 5 year old still in their old challenge that they have outgrown! They constantly talk about it and how it impacted that child and the parent. They are constantly reopening that door and may prevent that child/adult from moving beyond that challenge was and/or keeps their relationship in challenge mode. That is a negative infringement on a sentient being. That is not allowing that adult to be free now. She could be free of it but the Mom is doing this act of negative infringement either way and is incurring karma on herself to be worked on.

See if Ho'oponopono resonates as truth within you and give this method a try. Please read more in-depth about it below.

Ho'oponopono was updated by Kahuna Lapa`au, Mornah Nalamaku Simeona and modernized by Ihaleakala Hew Len, Ph.D., (Dr. Len) Foundation of I, Inc. Freedom of the Cosmos and the modernized version is called Self Identity through Ho'oponopono (SITH). (www.hooponopono.org)

Ho'oponopono

Self-Identity through Ho'oponopono (SITH) is an updated version of an ancient Hawaiian problem solving process of repentance, forgiveness and transmutation . It is so easy and simple, it still amazes me!

“Ho'oponopono involves the full participation of each of the four members of Self Identity: Divine Intelligence, Super Conscious Mind, Conscious Mind and Subconscious Mind – working together as a unit of one. Each member has its unique part and function in problem solving memories replaying in the Subconscious Mind.” ~ Dr. Len The Foundation of I, Inc. Freedom of the Cosmos presents Self Identity through Ho'oponopono classes throughout the world. There are more articles from Dr. Len at his website about Ho'oponopono (SITH).

Ho'oponopono was first introduced to me by Joe Vitale in an article he wrote a couple years ago about a Dr. Len in Hawaii that healed an entire ward of the Criminally Insane in the 3 or 4 year he worked there, and get this: without ever seeing a patient! Just by reading their files, seeing their pictures and using the Ho'oponopono method discussed in this article.

Ho'oponopono is a cleansing method that gets you to the Zero State. **In Hawaiian: Hoo means cause and ponopono means perfection.** Ho'oponopono is the ancient Hawaiian healing method that heals and transmutes/cleans all energies with current and past situations and people, all the way down the ancestry lines, yours and others throughout the *entire* Universe. All you need to do is say the four key phrases. At first you might not feel a thing. It matters not, the work is still being done. Eventually, you really *will* feel a difference in yourself and in others around you. You will have cleansed your life, continuing to cleanse, and brought yourself into a better frame of mind, body *and* soul!

It's about taking full 100% responsibility for your actions, as well as those in your experience. You are only cleaning YOURSELF (as we are all one) and your reactions to anything and everything you come in contact with (especially those things that cause you an emotional charge)! Might be hard to wrap your head around this, but.... Whatever you experience in your life, right down the newspaper ad you just read, you've attracted to yourself. The Law of Attraction is in perfect and divine order in everyone's life! If something is in your life that you are still somehow emotionally charged about, you attracted it and can transmute this energy by cleaning. (See below.) This is where you take full responsibility and clean on transmuting/healing this program/memory. Clean Clean Clean. As you clean on this issues, you are cleaning yourself of this memory that transmutes and cleans throughout the entire Universe. It's your peace when you are sad, it's your Joy when you are happy, it's your calm in the storm, it's everything and nothing/zero all at once!

Initially and consistently thereafter you say 4 key phrases: I'm sorry , please forgive me , I love you and Thank you. Some people have added “God Bless You”. I like this addition and add it when I am so

inclined. When you see a problem present itself you say the four phrases. When you think on a person, you say the four phrases. When you are so negatively emotionally charged about something, you say the four phrases. When you are worried, unhappy, depressed, angry, full of rage, etc., etc., you say the four phrases. You bring yourself back to your center, you breath, you say the four phrases over and over again. When you are happy, you guessed it: You say the four phrases. Be in gratitude! This is called Cleaning. Clean Clean Clean!

The four phrases: I'm Sorry to yourself/the Universe for whatever it is in you that attracted this situation; Please forgive me to the yourself/the Universe for attracting this; I love you to yourself/the Universe sending love to YOU and ALL is transforming and transmuting with the high vibrational feeling/energy; and Thank You to you/the Universe for transmuting this problem/memory/situation and feeling that grateful energy that is of the highest vibrational frequency in-line with Love. Say them in any order, in your head or out loud. Say one phrase several times and move into another, whatever your intuition is guiding you to do. Whatever feels right to you in every moment. As Aimee so beautifully writes on her site, this is: " ... making an appeal to God through the spark of divinity within each of our souls, that which makes us an extension of God. " As you request it, it is done! So relax, breath, clean and let go. It's all in divine perfect order.

"Ho'oponopono impacts the AKASHIC Record on the collective SOUL LEVEL of all thoughts feelings and actions humans have ever made since the first moment of creation," ~ Joe Vitale

Here is a Kahuna Liturgy cleaning/forgiveness prayer. This is the prayer Mornah Simeona (the creator of the original process) said to help heal hundreds if not thousands of people. It's simple but powerful:

“Divine creator, father, mother, son as one ...
If I, my family, relatives and ancestors have offended
you, your family, relatives and ancestors in thoughts,
words, deeds and actions from the beginning of our
creation to the present, we ask your forgiveness ...
Let this cleanse, purify, release, cut all the negative
memories, blocks, energies and vibrations and transmute
these unwanted energies to pure light ... And it is done.”

Below are some of the cleaning tools mentioned by Dr. Len and Dr. Joe Vitale, as well as a few other ideas I've come to learn.

Cleaning tools:

1. **I'm sorry, please forgive me, I love you, Thank you** – The core of 4 phrases you say to bring you in the moment of Ho'oponopono or the modernized version Dr. Len calls Self-Identity through Ho'oponopono (SITH).
2. **Eraser** – Use a pencil with an eraser on the end and tap whatever you would like to Ho'oponopono. You can do this to sticky notes with names, phrases or situations on them. You can tap objects you'd like to clean. You can just use a nifty eraser you found and resonate with as well. Every time you think of it or pass this sticky or object in your travels, just tap it, say the phrases, infuse the eraser with the phrases. See the magic happen!
3. **Blue Solar Water** – Place tap water in a blue glass bottle in the sun for an hour (or an incandescent lamp). Your water is then pure, whole and healing. Blue solar water voids memories replaying problems in the Subconscious Mind. Drink it, clean with it, cook with it, rinse after a bath or shower, even add a drop to other water and it is entirely cleansed.
4. **Strawberries & Blueberries** – Dr. Len says that these two fruits have a cleansing effect on our memories. They void memories. Eat fresh or dried. Not only healthy for us to eat, but also good for the soul!
5. **Picture of younger self** – Have a picture of yourself as a little boy or girl. Tap it with the eraser tool idea, say the 4 phrases to your younger self and see what epiphanies come.
6. **ICE Blue** – Saying the phrase “ICE BLUE” is one phrase in Ho'oponopono that you can say and it is immediately healing and cleansing.
7. **Mirror** – Look at yourself, see who you really are, Love yourself again. A deep profound love comes from this. You see yourself as you really are, you see the world. You reach zero.
8. **Seeing blue** – whenever you see anything blue, remember Ho'oponopono and say the phrases, be in that moment. When my friend, France, came up with this idea I was very grateful! It works! I went to Stop & Shop and looked at the gum. Wrigley's came out with a new gum that has a black package and a striking blue. The name: “Cobalt”! Just the same cobalt that many discuss as the blue color of choice for their blue solar water glass. Synchronicity abounds. Thanks France!
9. **Ha Breathing** – Dr. Len also states in a recording that just the “Ha” breathing can cure depression. Breath in while counting to 10 (1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10), but just as fast as you normally count, no need

to go slow unless you want to. Then hold your breath in for a count of 10. Then let out your breath for a count of 10 (even happily sighing or “haaaa” if you want). Do this 10 times or however long you’d like. It’s a beautiful thing!

10. **xxxooo** – and don’t forget your x’s and o’s! (see below)

POI is an acronym meaning “Peace of I”. It is something that Dr. Len (of Self Identity through Ho’oponopono) uses from time to time. Here is a link directly to Dr. Len’s Peace of I prayer. Enjoy! It is a way to wish you from all of the Universe, the “I”, in one quick phrase in email. ☺ (Like saying Namastè is as well.)

EWOP, also an acronym, means “Everything Works Out Perfectly”. This is Huna-based. EWOP is about faith, faith in the Universe and ultimately faith in YOU, since we are all the entire Universe. There is a lot of articles and websites out there about Huna, so I say go to town if you are driven to find out more! ☺ Huna is one of many awesome paths to follow. Here is an awesome website I found in my online search: www.huna.com

Follow your Bliss, I’m sorry, Please forgive me, I love you, Thank you, POI and EWOP.

This is awesome!!! I just happened to come across this article while I was looking up EWOP (huna saying for Everything Works Out Perfectly) online for my Newsletter. And this is an EXCELLENT exercise for Ho’oponopono, because Huna incorporate the Family problem solving method of Ho’oponopono. Check it out!!!

Ho’oponopono means to make right. Essentially, it means to make it right with the ancestors, or to make right with the people with whom you have relationships. We believe that the original purpose of Ho’oponopono was to correct the wrongs that had occurred in someone’s life including Hala (to miss the thing aimed for, or to err, to disobey) and Hewa (to go overboard or to do something to excess) which were illusions, and even ‘Ino (to do harm, implying to do harm to someone with hate in mind), even if accidental.

This description is by no means a complete training in how to do Ho’oponopono. While appropriate to do for yourself, for yours and others safety, it should not be done with someone else without training.

For example, let’s say your five-year-old grandson punched another five-year-old intentionally with hate in mind. If asked, then the one who was punched would forgive the other immediately, because it is inappropriate for anyone to carry guilt any longer than they had to, if it were not necessary.

We call this the Hawaiian Code of Forgiveness, and it’s an important thought, because when we forgive others, who are we forgiving? Ourselves, of course.

If you are familiar with Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), there is a saying, “People are only doing the best they can with the resources they have available.” If you’ve heard that before, it has to do with forgiveness. Think about it. As you do consider that you are included in “people.”

In the Eastern traditions, too, there is a real tradition of being aligned with and cleaning up relations with the ancestors. In Japan, China, as well as the Hawaiian tradition, it is thought to be important to align and clean up any past problems that you've had in relationships, especially with relatives.

At the same time, perhaps there are family patterns you do not want. Certainly you have heard the saying, "We just don't do that in our family," or "That's the way it is in our family." What happens then, is that certain generational themes get passed along in families, like sadness or any number of different traits. Ho'oponopono will allow you to clean this up.

THEORY: We carry inside us as parts of the Unconscious Mind, all the significant people in our lives. (These parts of us often look very much like Carl Jung's archetypes.) Ho'oponopono makes it "all right" with them. The process of Ho'oponopono is to align with and clean up our genealogy as well as to clean up our relationships with other people in our lives.

The Process of Ho'oponopono:

1. Bring to mind anyone with whom you do not feel total alignment or support, etc.
2. In your mind's eye, construct a small stage below you.
3. Imagine an infinite source of love and healing flowing from a source above the top of your head (from your Higher Self), and open up the top of your head, and let the source of love and healing flow down inside your body, fill up the body, and overflow out your heart to heal up the person on the stage. Be sure it is all right for you to heal the person and that they accept the healing.
4. When the healing is complete, have a discussion with the person and forgive them, and have them forgive you.
5. Next, let go of the person, and see them floating away. As they do, cut the aka cord that connects the two of you (if appropriate). If you are healing in a current primary relationship, then assimilate the person inside you.
6. Do this with every person in your life with whom you are incomplete, or not aligned.

The final test is, can you see the person or think of them without feeling any negative emotions. If you do feel negative emotions when you do, then do the process again.

Sparks

The Spark is such a synchronicity for me because I noticed about two years ago that I could 'see' other people's sparks within them. Their life essence. I was already well practiced in psychic awareness, gave readings and energy healing and this just seemed a higher level in awareness. I then started working with this in my healings (reiki, etc.) and noticed that I could also see the Aura of the person's spark and what emotions, thoughts, messages may come through by this connection. I started calling it their Spark since that's what it is to me!! Then coming back to Ho'oponopono this year and realizing this connects my ability to 'see' others' Sparks with such divine merging/coming-togetherness that I know this is my path at a higher level!

Reiki & Ho'oponopono

In my healings I connect to the Spark of the participant and send messages of 100% perfect health physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually (as this is what they/we are: perfect, whole and complete now) and also 'receive' whatever impressions that are given to me from Divinity. Since Ho'oponopono I am incorporating saying the 4 phrases and being in that vibration during healings. I use all of the energies I have been attuned to in combination with Ho'oponopono and it just feels stronger, higher, lighter, yet deeper. As I evolve, this way will evolve. It's all very divine and magical!

My experiences so far...

Ho'oponopono packs a punch and you don't even realize it's happening till you sit back after a whirlwind and then it hits you! Once you start, the changes commence. They can be heart-wrenching, frustrating, unhappy, depressing or joyful and BLISSFUL! (The end result of course obtaining more and more blissful states of being and allowing.) They can be subtle or in your face, they are fast, they are incredible! This is amazing!!! It truly gets you to Zero in EVERY moment the more you wake up to its possibilities! Just saying the phrases to anyone, anything, any emotion wakes you up and frees you to just be. The art of allowing is my most recent lesson. I have noticed that no matter what is going on, even if it's not to my expectations, I remind myself to be in the NOW, allow, breath and Ho'oponopono/erase/clean clean clean. Clarity comes.

I am noticing true changes not only in myself but in those around me (the ones I Ho'oponopono mostly and some that I don't).

Ho'oponopono, Me & Reiki: As I explained above when I turn the "reiki on" I now include Ho'oponopono with it. This truly packs a significant punch to what I am reiki'g. I've also noticed without even putting out a request for it many more Web Site design requests. I had been letting that part of my passion wait till I completed other projects (like this website) but then BOOM the Universe told me (with the requests it sent my way) that I am to get started now! Amazing! I feel lighter, happier and my energies in connecting with my Angels are stronger. Even writing this I feel that special energy hug from them very strong as they channel anything they want me to say and include.

I'm hearing wonderful things about Ho'oponopono & EFT! Such as the links I have at the bottom of this article. It seems that Ho'oponopono works awesome with other healing techniques. Do what feels best for you!

Those around me:

1. My husband has always been open minded! One of the many reasons I married him. In the past he was trying to get his Web Design business to flourish in such a way that things flow smoothly. It had its challenges. However, I began tapping him and this intention for prosperity & happiness (the eraser tool). I intended for him to be happy no matter what is happening and prosperous. Suddenly more epiphanies are coming his way. He let go more so again in his daily decisions. And he decided he would receive work with little or no effort (so there is no trying or doing) and once he made that decision a call came in for a web site request! He then started listening to the Zero Limits Audiobook I gave him and is seeing more results since starting Ho'oponopono himself. Makes me so happy!
2. Resonance: People around me are starting to question themselves and how they are living, working or being. They are becoming more aware and awake. Like the tuning fork idea [Joe Vitale](#) speaks about or the [G-String Theory](#) by Ilana Marks (a tremendous woman with wonderful insights and abilities), that those around me are starting to vibrate at a matching rate/frequency as I am.

xxx's and ooo'

In seeing an "x" in the sky today I received the inspiration about what x's and o's mean to me.

When my cute munchkin-butt baby woke up to get a bottle just after dusk set in, I decided to walk outside on my deck briefly and looked up to a beautiful very clean blue night sky with a very big "X" in the sky. I knew this was another sign and synchronicity to articulate what x's and o's have come to mean for me and how you can spread the word with just those two letters as well!

x's to clean , clear and erase , send love and transmutation ! o is the state of nothingness/zero . One leads to the other. x is love and erasing/transmuting/Ho'oponopono all in one. o is the state of zero, the state where you receive inspiration from Divine/God and take action from those messages, the ultimate state of being. Just being...Be...

x = Love/Ho'oponopono | o = Zero/Divinity

" To be done with memories once and for all,
they must be cleansed to nothing once and for all. " ~ Dr. Len

So I " x " to " o " ! I Ho'oponopono/Love to reach Zero/Being ! I hope you enjoy Ho'oponopono and may it nourish your soul! I leave you with one last comment: There are so many Ways! So many different ways to elevate your soul. Follow what feels right to you. That is the best Way for you! And know that all ways lead to the same! Contact me anytime with comments and questions!

Sungazing

Gaze directly at the Sun

Please note that this is an excerpt from my book, [Divine Embrace](#), which also explains Kundalini & Ascension in further detail and how you can work through your symptoms and more.

Sunrises and Sunsets have a beautiful power over me as I bask in their glow. I am reminded and overflowing with the Divine right then and there. Trees hold a luminosity I never knew existed until recent years. Their energy and Prana is amazing and revitalizing to the mind, body and Soul. Flowers remind us of the blossoming enlightenment that is our destiny through the evolution of all of mankind. Not to mention they are extremely and uniquely stunning and filled with enjoyment in their exquisite beauty.



Since the Sun sends Prana to the food we eat and the air we breathe, it is not a stretch to know we directly receive Prana from the Sun. We can receive pure Prana straight from the Sun by simply sitting out in the sun or by also using a technique called sungazing. Sungazing is an amazing ancient process that brings solar and healing energies to the body, mind and Soul. I've recently picked up this practice again and I feel amazing throughout the entire day. Not just for a few minutes or hours but the entire day!

The practice of Sungazing is where you will gaze at the sun with your eyes (no glasses or sunglasses), during safe hours, barefoot on the Earth. These safe hours are anytime within the 1-hour window after sunrise or anytime within the 1-hour window before sunset. As Hira Ratan Manek of SolarHealing.com/Sungazing, states: "It is scientifically proven beyond a reasonable doubt that during these times, one is free from UV and IR rays exposure, which is harmful to your eyes. To determine the timings of sunrise or sunset, you can check the local newspaper, which also lists the UV Index as 0 during these times." On your first day you will start gazing for 10 seconds. On the second day you will add 10 seconds, on the third day you will add 10 more seconds, and so on. Hira Ratan Manek further states: "When you reach 30 minutes duration of continuously looking at sun, you will slowly be liberated from physical disease since by then all the colors of the sun will have reached the brain through the eye. Brain regulates the flow of color Prana appropriately to the respective organs." An obvious question is what happens when it rains or is cloudy for several days straight. I asked this question to Hira Ratan Manek who kindly and speedily responded back to my email query with: "Don't worry of missing days. They can be any number in row. Just continue from where you left. Need not restart at all. Practice when possible and just increase every time you do it as suggested. After sungazing close the eyes till the inner image goes away and than look elsewhere."

Usually by the end of 9 months or 44 minutes your practice will be complete, your body solarized. From then you will walk barefoot on the Earth for 45 minutes for six days or if you desire to no longer hunger food you can walk barefoot for 45 minutes a day for a full year. It is the conclusion of Hira Ratan manek that, "if you are fortunate to activate the brain optimally you surely will reach enlightenment". I have not fully completed this practice so I cannot give an official account of my own yet. However, Yogananda shares in his book *Autobiography of a Yogi* of his interviews with many saints and mystics regarding no longer desiring food that their "common reply was that the sun energy entered through a secret door and

reached the medulla oblongata in the brain". They did not share further what the secret was at that time. If you desire learning more you can check out Hira Ratan Manek's website at solarhealing.com/sgprocess.htm to view the full description of how to safely practice sungazing. As for me, I continue to sungaze sporadically and love the effects. So I know it is something I plan to continue throughout my life.



Take notice of the high quantity of Prana near trees, plants and flowers, as they receive Prana from the Sun and produce more of it. The Sun feeds and brings everything to life with its Prana force. The sharing of the trees and our divine course in life with them becomes more genuine. The trees are feeding us more life force as we live with them. We need the trees oh so dearly. We can also send them loving energy right back in thanks. The sharing is divine.

Working with nature and becoming more in tune with nature, as the animals do automatically, we become more energized, joyful, and in tune with the natural rhythms of life. We are more in tune with Mother Earth and intuition is more natural and innate. Just as animals are more in tune with catastrophic events of the earth, and other subtle disturbances and rhythms, so too, would we be if we only take the time to breathe in the essence of Mother Nature every day. Every day take time to walk in Nature, go outside and breathe the air (and prana), feel the sun and moon on your face and feel the essence of being a part of Mother Earth (and Shakti). We are a part of Mother Earth and she is a part of us. We can easily tune in to the inner yearnings of Mother Earth and our Divine purpose follows suit. It's an amazing connection.

NASA Confirms – Super Human Abilities Gained

by Stasia Bliss



Ever wanted to be in more than one place at a time? That's right, I'm talking about the super-human abilities that can be gained by those who follow the protocol for what's known as sun-gazing, a valid practice recently confirmed by NASA. Many proponents of this ancient technique, used by many cultures such as Mayan, Egyptian, Aztec, Tibetan and Indian yoga, report not only healing benefits to common illnesses, but obtaining super-human abilities such as advanced telepathy and going completely without the need for food.

What is Sun Gazing?

Sun gazing (also known as sun-eating) is a strict practice of gradually introducing sunlight into your eyes at the lowest ultraviolet-index times of day –

sunrise and sunset. Those who teach the practice say there are several rules to the practice. First, it must be done within the hour after sunrise or before sunset to avoid damaging the eyes. Second, you must be barefoot, in contact with the actual earth – sand, dirt or mud; and finally, you must begin with only 10 seconds the first day, increasing by 10 second intervals each day you practice. Following these rules make the practice safe, says sources.

Nikolai Dolgoruky of the Ukraine calls himself a 'sun-eater'. He has been practicing sun gazing for the past 12 years and has largely subsisted off solar energy since he began. Others have reported losing the need for food after only 9 months of sun gazing (by which time the practitioner has worked up to a maximum of 44 minutes). After 9 months of practice, you need only walk barefoot on the earth for 45 minutes per day, 6 days in a row to further the process of what has been initiated by sun gazing.

Sun-gazing is a practice also called the HRM phenomenon, coined as such after Hira Ratan Manek, the man who submitted himself to NASA for scientific testing to confirm that he does indeed possess the almost 'super-human' ability of not eating, gained through his dedication to this interesting marvel. Funded by NASA, a team of medical doctors at the University of Pennsylvania observed Hira 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for 100 days. NASA confirmed that he was indeed able to survive largely on light with occasionally a small amount of buttermilk or water during this time.

What happens to the body during Sun Gazing?

During your first 3 months of practice, the sun's energy is moving through the eyes and charging the hypothalamus tract, says those who have studied this technique and used it. The hypothalamus tract is the pathway to the rear of the retina which leads to the brain. The brain then, over time, becomes activated by the energy supply being received by the sun. You will first experience a relief of mental tension and worry, since most worry is fueled by the energy

received by the foods we eat. Since food gets its energy from the sun, it is said to be readily available to sun-eaters without the trouble of digestion. Though hunger is said to eventually cease, it is fine to continue eating regularly during initial stages, until appetite disappears naturally.

Another benefit early on is said to be an increase in confidence and an ability to easily solve your problems, as you are without tension. Everyone has at least a bit of psychosis, but during the first few months of sun gazing practice, it is reported that these attitudes go away and a positive nature gracefully replaces the old persona full of fears. By the end of 3 months, the gazing time will have increased to 15 minutes per day.

Reports on sun gazing say that the bad qualities normally associated with any person will gradually disappear and good qualities will remain, explaining that 'bad qualities' only develop in the absence of sunlight. Bad qualities like anger, fear, jealousy, lust – are said to disappear – and be replaced by a certain confidence and 'spiritual knowing' that senses more purely the heart of an issue.

At 3-6 months of gazing, the studies show that physical diseases start to disappear. They say that by the time one is gazing 30 minutes per day (building up 10 seconds per day) all the colors of the sun will have reached the brain. Color therapists attribute their healing of certain diseases to flooding the body and brain with the particular color that is lacking – depending on the ailment. For example, in liver disease, the color green is deficient. The kidneys need red, and the heart, yellow. All of the organs and all of the systems are said to respond to different colors of the rainbow, which is why it is also recommended to eat a diet rich in a variety of colors. It is recommended during the 3-4 month period that you use autosuggestion to see your body already healed of any perceived weakness or disease. This action will facilitate the process of returning to wholeness.

As you continue the process, it is reported that after 6 months, the energy stored from the technique is no longer being used for repairing the body or the mind and can move now into supporting you in gaining more super-human abilities.

What's Beyond Healing?

By seven and a half months of gazing, now at 35 minutes, need and desire for food is dwindling. According to sun gazing experts, food is not actually needed to maintain the body, only energy – and 'sun-eating' provides that energy. By 9 months, all taste for food, including aroma, all hunger pains and cravings disappear. Those who make it this far say that they report a noticeable 'change' in the way their brain feels – like it's "charged up." After 9 months of sun-gazing – reaching a maximum of 44 minutes – it is advised that you give up sun-gazing and redirect your attention now to the Earth.

For 6 days straight, one is to walk barefoot on the earth, 45 minutes per day. During this barefoot walking, the pineal gland is said to become activated. Professional sun gazers and those researching the science say that each toe is connected to a specific gland, and by walking barefoot on the Earth, you activate these glands. The big toe is thought to be aligned with the pineal gland, the second toe with the pituitary, then the hypothalamus, thalamus and finally the pinky toe correlates to the amygdala. Walking barefoot, with the sun now falling on the top of

your head, practitioners claim to create a sort of magnetic field in and around your body that recharges you and your brain.

Apparently this walking barefoot part is the most important aspect of the practice. As you continue walking on the Earth, this is when the magic really begins. The pineal gland is activated more and more by this walking procedure. Intellect is said to increase, along with memory. The pineal gland has navigational and psychic capabilities, meaning telepathy, the possibility of flight... now we are getting somewhere! Have you ever thought you would like to have your body in more than one place at a time? Well, sun-gazing is said to be the magical key to such abilities.

If you can barefoot walk 45 minutes every day for a year – you are golden. At that point, only a maintenance of 3-4 days a week is necessary to maintain the capabilities you have acquired.

Are there any dangers?

Doctors and eye care professionals caution against looking directly at the sun, saying that it will damage the retina. However, if done correctly, sun-gazing at the correct times of day, studies show there is no risk of damaging the eyes. Those who have been sun gazing for many years have had their eyes checked to show no damage, though it is advised that you have your eyes checked in the first few weeks of your practice, so you can know for yourself.

To sum it all up...

Remember, it's 10 seconds the first day, at sunrise or sunset, adding 10 seconds per day each day thereafter. After 90 days of accumulative gazing equaling 44 minutes, you cease the gazing and start the barefoot walking 45 minutes per day for 6 days. At this point, I could imagine, hey – if you made it this far, what's a year of barefoot walking an hour per day to keep it all? You will have to try it out and see for yourself.

If you are really interested in gaining super-human abilities, confirmed by reputable organizations like NASA, as the ones mentioned above, sun gazing sounds like a fairly straightforward path to enlightenment. To find out more about sun-gazing and how others have done it, visit the website on [Sun-Gazing](#). For part one of the amazing Sun-Gazing documentary, check out the video below.

Written by: Stasia Bliss



Chakras & The Energy Body

LEARNING THE ENERGY BODY

By Maggie Anderson (An excerpt from Divine Embrace)

“Kundalini is a process of revelation and spiritual renewal which radically alters our sense of self and our awareness of life.”

~ El Collie

The Universe is alive. It's all around us always. This Love Energy aka the Universe is a part of us. It IS us. Therefore we are this energy and we are energy beings. It becomes prudent for us to remain in a state of love as much as possible by clearing and cleansing our energy bodies. We are energy beings first and foremost. Even our physical bodies are made up energy particles made compact and dense to function in this reality.

Take an "inner body" awareness test right now within yourself. Feel your inner body. Close your eyes for a moment and find out if there is life inside your hands. Don't ask your mind. Instead go to your hands directly. By this I mean become aware of the subtle feeling of aliveness inside them. It is there. You just have to go there with your attention to notice it. You may get a slight tingling sensation at first, then a feeling of energy or aliveness. If you hold your attention in your hands for a while, the sense of aliveness will intensify. Some people won't even have to close their eyes. They will be able to feel their "inner hands" at the same time as they read this. Then go to your feet, keep your attention there for a minute or so, and begin to feel your hands and feet at the same time. Then incorporate other parts of the body--legs, arms, abdomen, chest, and so on--into that feeling until you are aware of the inner body as a global sense of aliveness.

The "inner body" isn't really the body anymore but life energy, the bridge between form and formlessness. Make it a habit to feel the inner body as often as you can. Communicate with it and receive messages for yourself from your body. After a while, you won't need to close your eyes anymore to feel it.

Eckhart Tolle clarifies this well here when he guides us to, “See if you can feel the inner body whenever you listen to someone. It almost seems like a paradox: When you are in touch with the inner body, you are not identified with your body anymore, nor are you identified with your mind. This is to say, you are no longer identified with form but moving away from form-identification toward formlessness, which we may also call Being. It is your essence identity. Body awareness not only anchors you in the present moment, it is a doorway out of the prison that is the ego. It also strengthens the immune system and the body's ability to heal itself.”

Our Physical body is not all that we are. We are energy beings within a physical body. We must balance ourselves not just physically with exercise, eating right and tending to physical issues in that respect but also our Soul's. Our souls are energy. In order to cleanse the Energy body we must be cleansing on all levels: Physically, Mentally, Spiritually, and Emotionally. Our physical body (as detailed below) requires a regular healthy diet and healthy exercise. We also must adhere to listening to our emotions, not suppressing them and releasing them as they come up in healthy ways. If you are angry, talk about it or at least admit it to yourself in order to work through the emotions to forgiveness and gratitude. Our mental state can be found in our thoughts. Watch carefully what you are thinking. Those thoughts come out of your body into energy bubbles and process to the Universe and right back to you.

Remember to be in a clean state of mind. Breath awareness will help rid you of useless thoughts (most thoughts are useless!) Take a moment and breath. Be aware of your breathing: In and Out. Then ask yourself a question directly from Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth* book, "What is my relationship with the present moment?"

Spiritually our body receives messages from all of the other levels (Emotional, Mental and Physical). In order for our Spiritual body to run properly it needs to be free of the garbage that comes in through these other levels. So we must always be mindful of what flows in to us in all areas of our lives. Our spiritual or energy body is made up of seven main Chakras and these are fed and surrounded by our Aura.

Our Auras and Chakras maintain a recording of our thoughts and emotions and beliefs. All is recorded here from the past, present and future. These thoughts, emotions and beliefs if not handled in the present moment but rather repressed cause manifestations in the physical that might start as exhaustion and low energy to an even more dyer physical illness relating to whatever it is you are repressing or holding in.

Also, our energy body will always maintain good health and a positive well-being. It is made to maintain well-being first and foremost. When we get a cut our body naturally builds its defenses up for healing. Our bodies will never lie. Even if a person is lying to another or to themselves the energy body will send messages and signals to you and others that you are lying to (or rather not being authentic with the self). If we have a physical illness that has started in the body, our body will let us know. It will send us messages of feeling physically drained to start and then get more progressed with symptoms. We can ask for a message from our body. The more we become in tune with the energy self that we are the better we hear the messages We may receive symbolic messages to a possible physical illness and then to what we can do in order to come back into balance and well-being with ourselves. It's only when we consciously hear the message and face this as occurring AND take action for bringing ourselves into to balance that the healing can begin.

Sometimes it is so much easier for another (such as a medical intuitive) to remain neutral about what is happening to us internally for us to hear the message of what is happening and what we can do to correct it. But know that the answers are within you. We can listen to the messages we are receiving pretty much daily on what we can do to constantly stay in balance with ourselves. Take the little hints that come your way about eating different foods our body is requesting, about exercising, about living a less stressful existence and taking time out for ourselves. Anything that comes to you is right. You are your best teacher when knowing your body. Learning to sit quiet with ourselves will allow us to start listening to our inner soul and its messages for us. If you are requiring physical medical treatment know there is also an energy level treatment to match.

We are not just physical beings but energy beings. Do not ignore the physical body but rather come into balance with a physical treatment (if necessary) as well as a holistic treatment (such as visualizations, herbal supplements, psychotherapy, color therapy, meditation, removing ourselves from an unhealthy person or work situation, etc.) If we correct the physical issue but not the energy situation that made it occur in the first place, we are setting ourselves up for the same exact physical issue to reoccur or the physical treatment to not even work. So taking action on ALL levels of your being (the physical and energetic levels) assist us in succeeding our way to balanced well-being.

Learning the inner workings of our energy bodies can really open our eyes to how we create our physical well-being via our thoughts and emotions. This can also assists us in learning

the inner workings at such a level so that we are empowered to heal ourselves and therefore no longer produce physical illness. A fantastic book that I have found that also assists us with our energy body is *Anatomy of the Spirit* by Caroline Myss.

I would like to assist you in understanding a little bit about our subtle energy bodies and Chakras for yoga classes and energy healings you take part in to be more enhanced. I will take this a bit deeper than the explanation I've shared already. Some may be a bit of a repeat but it is helpful to reread in order to really engrain this and remember the energy system that is who we are. Kundalini (or Sushumna) is considered a part of our subtle energy body along with our energy centers or Chakras, Meridians and Nadis or channels. Meridians almost completely follow the main vein line of blood in the body. Meridians seem to be a median between the Chakras and the physical body transporting energy and information back and forth. Meridians are pathways that subtle energy flows through within the physical body. Each meridian is usually associated with an organ or physical system of the body, and supplies that organ or system with subtle life energy. As an example, the liver meridian starts on the top of the foot and travels up the leg. Briefly, Wikipedia.org offers meaning of the word Nadi, "(the Sanskrit for 'tube, pipe') are the channels through which, in traditional Indian medicine and spiritual science, the energies of the subtle body are said to flow. They connect at special points of intensity called Chakras. Nadis seems to correspond to the meridians of traditional Chinese medicine. Nadis are not nerves but rather channels for the flow of consciousness. The literal meaning of nadi is 'flow'. Just as the negative and positive forces of electricity flow through complex circuits, in the same way, prana shakti (vital force) and manas shakti (mental force) flow through every part of our body via these nadis. According to the tantras there are 72,000 or more such channels or networks through which the stimuli flow like an electric current from one point to another."

As we've discussed, there are two pathways within our body that flow aside the Sushumna (current for Kundalini) and as you balance these two opposite poles within your body you awaken the Kundalini. These are the Ida and Pingala. Ida is the Lunar channel or the feminine side of the body. This is the cool side of the body. Pingala is the Solar channel or masculine side of the body. This is the heat side of your body. It is put best by HamsaYoga.com: "As you focus your eyes and willpower between the eyebrows and strongly visualize the circulation of life breath Prana & Apana, up & down the spine respectively, both positive and negative poles are established on the opposite sides of the hollow spinal tube, between the Ajna Chakra and the Muladhara. The magnetic pull between the two poles brings the actual circulation of the Sushumna current, and awakens the subtle layers of the Kundalini. Such must be your absorption that as you inhale you become the cool ascending breath word of Prana, transmuting the atoms of oxygen into life energy in the spine. As you exhale, you become the warm descending breath word of Apana burning the carbon-dioxide and the venous blood of the body." We will practice this third eye focus during the ceremony process.

Now, let's dive into our Aura and Chakras. Every "exchange" between people involves an "exchange" of energy. Our Chakras, first introduced to us by the ancient Hindus, are our main energy vortices. There are hundreds, but there are 7 main Chakras that are most focused on. Our Chakras are aligned with our spine, which is our Kundalini (Sushumna) pathway as well. Our Chakras are a part of our spiritual body and are also connected to our Aura. There is a transference of energy that happens to whomever we meet, talk to or hang out with. We must keep in mind that there must be a balance of give and take. We are all connected. Here's a little energy cleansing tip: FEEL your bliss even if it seems not to be here in the present moment, but as if it IS ALREADY here in the present NOW. FEEL it, taste it, BE IT and it comes. ☺ This will also affect your energy body and what you attract!

Julia Meggles-Brenner, of Kajama.com, explains the power of being more conscious of our energy body, “The more we remain conscious of our own energy/vibration and what's happening beneath the surface of our awareness, the more power we'll have to manifest what we want. In addition, when we pay attention to our intuition and purposefully work with it to attract the sorts of people and experiences we desire, life just gets better and better.”

It's prudent we stay consciously alert and aware of what is going on in our energy body, and our physical, mental and spiritual bodies as well as our vibration and surroundings. Consistent conscious energy awareness is part of a daily practice to keep our energies healthy and clean of debris. Not to mention we know where we are and what needs changing or shifting. Our ability to make positive change is beyond powerful! And our body is one great place to focus this beautiful power of ours. It's time to take care of our spirit in its entirety and we can't do that when we ignore a huge part of ourselves which is our energy body. By learning the inner workings of our energy body, we can then pay more attention to our energy body and its inner workings as much as we do the physical body.

Body awareness is important. Listen to your body! Talk to your body. Honor your body on all levels. What you bring in to your physical body flows into your energy bodies and vice versa. Pay attention to the subtle energy shifts within your body. You will feel certain twinges, aches and pains; some physical and some energetic. Ask your body for the message and honor the truth and wisdom the body gives you.

Here is an experience on integrating body, mind and soul for healing. Lily Cornford was a specialist in Color Healing Therapy and used to run a healing center in England prior to her passing. Lily has said that when Chinese doctors operate (or at least the traditional ones) they would speak to the etheric body before surgery and explains what was being carried out and ask it to divert its energies from the organ being operated on. And they had very good success with surgery. Lily herself had her appendix out and had a great deal of pain that lasted a long time after her surgery. So one night, in her “imagination” only, she opened her scar. She went down a stepladder into her abdomen and talked to the etheric body of her appendix and told it what had happened. She then nipped off the etheric body, blessed it, apologized to it for the trouble she'd given it and blessed it again. Then she closed everything up and went to sleep and the pain had completely disappeared; this with her thoughts and imagination. You can see the power we have when we tap in to our minds, body and soul together. As we shed our emotions naturally without repression we thrive along the waves of life.

There is much to discuss about our energy bodies, of which I have only touched on briefly here. To follow I will go deeper into the two major focus points: Aura and Chakras. On to our Energy Body:

Aura

The aura is an ever-changing beautifully colored energy field that completely surrounds all living things. It's like an oval egg surrounding our bodies. The aura is composed of many layers starting with an inner layer closest to the body and moving outward. Higher layers represent a different part of the persona consciousness with the inner most layers connected to the physical body followed by higher layers including the emotional, mental and spiritual layers extending outward.

These layers correspond to the Chakras. The closest layer being the densest layer is the red Root Chakra layer. The next one further out is the orange Sacral Chakra, the next the Yellow Solar Plexus Chakra, and so on. Depending upon the person's thoughts, emotions, karma and attachments to this world the aura can be felt 4 feet away from the body to even 32 feet from the body or even more. Remembering now that space is of no essence so even remote effects can be felt of another's aura if you are linking together.

Visually when I look at someone's Aura it may not be seen as I describe here. Instead things will get amplified by Chakra color for me to pinpoint and focus on. Each clairvoyant will see things in the way that is easiest for them to interpret and each uniquely from the next.

Our aura is created by all of our thoughts and feelings both conscious and unconscious as well as the energies flowing through the physical body and our Chakras. Your health is affected by the condition of your aura and vice versa. Treating the aura can be a very important part of a healing session. As your Aura receives energy from the Chakras that emits out into the world, so, too, does your Aura take in Energy that feeds back into your Chakra system. It is crucial to work on cleaning and clearing your Aura and Chakras daily. A perfect cleanse is the companion CD I've created for this book, *Divine Embrace Chakra Awakening Meditation*, found on my website MaggiesBliss.com.

Have you ever noticed a radiant pregnant woman or someone in a new relationship deeply in love? Have you ever observed a baby? They are just so darn cute and cuddly! Tickled pink. Their auras are clean and clear. What they carry with them is a higher vibration of pure Divine love. If we could see their auras we would see vibrant beautiful expanding colors. Being a new mom for the second time I get the benefit of this experience again. Watching my beautiful baby girl enjoy life brings so many ah-ha moments to me. Some old, some new and some at higher levels of comprehension.

I'm noticing how she just loves to be touched, tickled, and receive cute butterfly kiss. (Those very light kisses.) She especially likes it on her face, neck and back of her head. She just scrunches her cute face up and enjoys every moment! She is starting to laugh now and that brings a new level of happiness too. Bella is a very happy-go-lucky child and we are so blessed. I've noticed that her and many baby's and children know how to enjoy life in the moment. They relish in the little pure enjoyments and sensations that bring immediate satisfaction. A bath is a very exciting happy time for our baby girl. Light touches to her skin sends her pure love and enjoyment. Her face lights up at the slight touch of a breeze. Those cute prickles or goose bumps you get from a light touch are so fun to see. These baby's...they know how to live. :) They live with what they've got and enjoy it. We can learn so much from such tiny wise beings. With every happy moment she lives she raises her vibration and those around her.

Have you noticed how when you are ON you are SO ON. Things just go perfectly and you are smoothly sailing through your day. Green lights all the way to work. Happy people flock to you. You emanate pure joy. I'm betting your aura felt clean and clear today. And then there are those opposite days that we want to go by fast, but seem to take longer because we are resisting the negative moment rather than letting them flow in and then out. One bad thing happens and right on to the next. On this day a negative experience spiraled into the next. When in this downward spiral you also risk negative entity attachments. Getting your vibration higher will assist those entities to release their hold. They only have power over you if you let them. A great way to lift your aura is to stop this spiral and do an aura clearing on yourself. Simply visualize pure Divine white light filling your entire being and aura. This will assist you to uplift your aura.

We each have a unique vibration and aura. It's our soul signature. Our unique vibration is what attracts our experiences. How we FEEL is how we are vibrating. AKA feel GOOD and your frequency is at a higher vibratory rate to attract higher better more feeling good experiences. Do a daily, hourly check-in on how you're feeling. Keep feeling good! If you notice yourself in a negative spiral, stop. Breathe. Relax and know that everything works out perfectly. Breathe and try the tips I've included throughout this book to uplift your Aura and your vibrations.

Chakras

Chakras are wheel-like energy vortices within our bodies aligned with our spinal column. The concept of Chakras originates from the Hindu scriptures, Upanishads. Each Chakra has petals, like a flower, that blossom one at a time depending upon your unique progression in your own evolution. They take the universal life energy that is always around us and transform it into various frequencies our subtle energy system needs to keep us healthy; physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. For example, Antara of www.Kundalini-dance.com writes: “Physiologically each Chakra links the energy body with the physical body, each Chakra has the vital role of channeling universal energy into the vital organs and the specific body systems that it governs. For example, the heart Chakra channels life-force into the physical heart, lungs and the respiratory system as a whole, when we breathe into the heart Chakra we stimulate the thymus gland, which is in charge of the immune system.”

There are seven main Chakras (energy centers): Root, Sacral, Solar Plexus, Heart, Throat, Third Eye and Crown. I’ve been made aware of the High Heart Chakra located in the Thymus. The High Heart Chakra is in many teachings, including the beautiful teachings of Magnified Healing. And I am of the belief that there are hundreds of minor and major energy centers. Two other main energy centers to think about are one Chakra above the crown Chakra and one Chakra below the feet. These are the connections to the Father Sky/Universe and to the Mother Earth/Grounding. There are also mini Chakras points in the hands and feet and upper nostrils. We will focus on the seven main Chakras as our focal points of energy that make up the rainbow bridge that we are. There are hundreds of books that go into great depth about the Chakras so I will only give a high level overview here that should be more than enough to get you started (if this is your first viewing of what Chakras are).

The Root Chakra (lowest) brings in the lower grounding frequencies that are needed for physical survival. Denise Linn reminds us that the first Chakra is, “a sacred passageway for energy from the Mother Earth to you.” Our Kundalini Serpent is located here wrapped 3 and ½ times around until awakened. And in some yoga traditions it is said that the Kundalini Serpents also rest in the Sacral Chakra, just above the root Chakra located at your naval. The Sacral Chakra is where the feminine and the masculine join together in Divine union. And the highest or Crown Chakra brings in the spiritual levels of energy, which are higher frequencies/vibrations. As I’ve said, each Chakra corresponds with a layer of the aura. Negative feelings or thoughts can become lodged in the Chakras reducing the amount of subtle energy they are able to provide and adversely affecting one’s health. Treating the Chakras proves to, also, be a very important part of a healing treatment. (See diagram to follow.)

Each Chakra is a filter of its own. Depending on which Chakras you reside in (at any given moment or space in time) will depend on how you perceive the world around you. From the Heart Chakra and up there is no judgment; just a Oneness connection. The lower three Chakras seem to still provide a pivotal connection to the Earthly existence and grounding. I stress this because it is important to have discernment over common daily activities and to survive here on this plane. If you are focused too much in the higher Chakras you may not be as grounded and may not be as good a decision maker of life situations here in this reality. It is nice to have balance in all Chakras. Remember not to disregard the lower Chakras as “lower” as they are still a necessity for living a good life here. Balance is the key. Each person already has filters from their past lives and experiences from this life. We view the world through these filters. And our Chakras also provide filters, as a sort of lens we look through in life.

As you progress and as Kundalini continues to rise in you, you will notice a new “higher” way of looking at life and life experiences. How you saw something years ago when you were mostly centered in your root Chakra, compared to how you view that same experience now residing more in the Heart Chakra are two completely different views. Neither way is wrong. Both are right. It is just a different filter. As you come from a place of neutrality more and more, as well as from all Chakras

being more in balance, you will notice as an observer the game of life and the blissful experience we live in every moment.

“Just by looking at someone's auric field you can see which Chakras are in trauma. A Chakra to me looks like a funnel or vortex. In the Eastern tradition they are described as petals or wheels of light, but in Western terminology, it's a vortex, six to eight inches in diameter, containing smaller vortexes. All these vortexes spin, pulling in life energy from the energy all around us. Each vortex relates to a particular organ. A trauma tears open the Chakras, causing some of the vortexes to fail at pulling sufficient life energy into the organ. Those organs deprived of energy will not function well.

I use my energy field by clearing and balancing it, bringing energy in through all my Chakras, then running it out my hands. So, it's not just my energy, it's energy I take in. That's why it's called channeling healing energy. Your body acts as a transformer during the healing, and the regulation of the energy through your field is important. You can change the frequency of the energy out of your hands, change where it goes, you can make it very specific to rebuild certain structures.”

~ Barbara Brennan

It is very important to clear, cleanse and balance your Chakras daily. When your Chakras are balanced, your Aura is clean and clear as well. The opposite is true as well. Always keep your Aura clean, clear and protected and your Chakras will remain clean and clear as well. When your Chakras are clear and balanced Kundalini has a clear pathway to rise up in divine timing. A daily ritual is a good practice to have, such as the one explained in this book. Just as you clean your physical body, your energy body is equally vital. Ground many times daily. Grounding releases energy to the Divine Mother Earth for transmutation. If you are an Energy practitioner (i.e. Reiki, etc.), you can utilize Energy to help cleanse, clear, balance and protect your Aura and Chakras. Also important to mention is that the higher your vibration gets the more susceptible you are to external energies, therefore enhancing your energy “protection” (i.e. higher vibrations) is also necessary. Strengthening your Chakras and Aura to remove and withstand negative energies is part of the awakening process in the Divine Embrace Sacred Energy Awakening Ceremony. (See diagram, to follow, with descriptions of the Seven Main Chakra Energy Centers.)

"Thanks to ancient Tao masters passing down their tradition for thousands of years, we now know the secret of the Inner Smile is hidden within our inner heart. The inner heart is not the physical heart, and it is not the emotional or feeling heart. There is a "third heart", just as there is a "third eye". This inner heart is a portal to direct experience of what is called "soul", a concept in the West that has successfully eluded all definition." ~ Michael Winn

Seven Main Chakra Energy Centers



Root Four Pedaled Lotus Chakra (Kundalini, 1st Chakra) – Red. Muladhara Chakra. Located at the base of our spine; the tip of our tailbone. Earth element. Material world. This Chakra is our Kundalini and Grounding Chakra; our sense of safety, survival and security (i.e. financial stability). Directs adrenals, large intestines, teeth, skeletal system, blood, immune system, lower back, spinal column, lower extremities, reproductive organs,

and colon. If out of balance issues such as the following will occur: kidneys problems, lower back pains, hip and groin problems, eliminative imbalances and constant or ongoing pain. Lack of abundance, poverty consciousness, low self-esteem, fear, anxiety, insecurity, trusting, vulnerabilities, as well as feeling safe, lack of boundaries, lack of vitality, confusion, courage, restlessness and grounding issues may reside from this Chakra as well as be corrected when balancing this Chakra. This is the Chakra where our Kundalini rests. The Serpents that are coiled 3 and ½ times around. The Kundalini rises from here through our entire Chakra system as we ascend to enlightenment.



Sacral Plexus Six Petaled Lotus Chakra (Hara, Navel, 2nd) – Orange. Svadhisthana. Also known as the location of the Dantien. Located at our navel. Water element. Sensuality, Creativity, Joy, Passion, emotions, emotional pleasure, fluidity, flexibility, nature, feelings, flow and desires. This Chakra is where the feminine and masculine join together in Divine union. Our desires are located in this Chakra. This Chakra is used when manifesting our wants and desires of all types. It is debated that the Kundalini actually rests within the location of the Sacral center rather than the Root Chakra.

However, it's quite possible that both ideas are correct. This Chakra directs sexual organs, womb, abdominal area, cervix, adrenal, kidneys, joints, synovial fluids, lymphatic system, movements of muscles and joints, hands, spleen, small intestines and our sense of taste. If out of balance the lower stomach, intestines, ovaries, uterus prostate or genital issues may occur. And you may

experience relationship challenges, mood swings, lack of joy, pleasure and intimacy, detachment from people, difficulty being flexible, boredom can ensue, depression, blocked creativity and emotions, sensual issues, self-pity, self-destructiveness or may become overly attached to others when out of balance. When balanced your creativity thrives and you feel movement, positive passion and life flow through you.



Solar Plexus Ten Petaled Lotus Chakra (Power, 3rd) – Yellow. Manipura.

Fire element. Your core, the center of your being. Here is where our Power and transformation is located. Associated with free will and Divine Will as well as freedom, clarity and intuition. Our self-esteem and self-worth is designated here. So it is prudent for a balanced Solar Plexus to stand in our power. If we give our power away to someone or something else this Chakra will be out of balance. Be aware of the

sensations in this area, as they help you become aware of actions you should take; for example a falling sensation could mean caution. The Solar Plexus is the seat of our intuition. Sayings like, “I went with my gut instinct.” are actually referring to our intuition located this area of the body. Your belly may ache or feel ill when in areas, around people or in precarious situations that are negative, dangerous or extremely powerful. If you listen to the sensations here, you will be able to obtain the message being sent to you via your body and this Chakra. If you ignore the intuition or gut instinct the sensations may grow stronger and manifest into physical ailments. This Chakra physically directs sympathetic nervous system, diaphragm, pancreas, liver, gall bladder, muscles, large intestine, stomach, digestion and metabolism. If out of balance ribcage, lungs, pancreas, spleen, stomach, acid reflux, liver and adrenal glands or even linked to kidney problems may occur. Other characteristics that tell you this Chakra may be out of balance are fear, lack of self-esteem, confidence or focus, insecurity, indecision, feeling closed off, mental confusion, ego rather than balanced confidence, feeling like others are controlling you, overly optimistic or pessimistic, no intuition, lack of personal control or no personal boundaries.



Heart 12 Petaled Lotus Chakra (4th) – Green. Anahata. Air element.

Located in the center of our chest just to the right of our physical heart. Love is the Heart Chakra. Love is healing. The heart Chakra is associated with Unconditional Universal Love. Our ability to Love ourselves and others comes from the heart center. A deep compassion is felt for the self and others. It is our connection to others. Our heart center is our

connection to above and below. It is our center; our balance. When balanced we are in harmony with others and the Universe. Directs heart, thymus, blood vessels, skin, lungs, bronchials, breast/chest and circulatory system. If out of balance respiratory infections, asthma, acid reflux, allergies and even heart issues may occur. Also, other signs this Chakra is out of balance are feeling low on the love meter for life and the self, judgmental of self and others, anxious, longing, dominating others, difficulty listening to others, not able to receive from others, loneliness, low self-

esteem, lack of self-love, not following your hearts desire or isolation from others. Forgiveness is a key element to opening up a restricted heart Chakra. Forgiveness of others and of the self. As you forgive you open up your accepted heart to share the love, compassion and joy that is your true essence with others. Coming from the heart is made most easily possible when all other Chakras are in balance. An open heart brings forth your most authentic self. You can have an open heart and still be empowered. In fact, empowerment works well with an open heart.

There is an addition to the Heart center that I am being guided to mention located in the Thymus area (just above the green Heart Chakra). It's been called the **High Heart** or **Thymus Chakra**. It is light pink in unconditional loving color. Our High Self communicates to us through our heart. Give it an occasional tap when needing to feel grounded, connected, and peaceful. Tapping in this location is very healing and will also connect you to the Divine. It is also a technique recommended in Massage Therapy.



Throat 16 Petaled Lotus Chakra (Communication, 5th) – Sky blue. Vishuddha. Sound. Vissudha meaning purification. Located in our throat. Your ability to communicate on the physical plain, as well as the spiritual plain comes from this Chakra. This Chakra is about finding your voice and expressing your inner truth and authentic creative expression. Directs throat, neck, voice, thyroid, endocrine glands, parathyroid and hypothalamus. If out of balance sore throat, thyroid problems and lymph glands issues may occur. Other symptoms are

shyness, inability to speak for yourself or with clarity, lying to the self, fear of sharing your authentic truth with others, speaking too much, dominating others with your words, difficulty listening to others, feeling insecure, feeling uncertain or blocked creativity. Water water water. The Throat is communication with Spirit. Water is a symbolic visual of Spirit. So it makes sense because we are also made up of mostly Water. When we are in connection with Spirit we are using our hydration system. Drink loads of water for easy communication, eliminating dehydration. (((As we expand our third Chakra we open up to our aura and ethereal realms via this Chakra. Authenticity and truth flow from here. If blocked you may notice you are not speaking your truth and thereby lying to the self with your expression. Allow the truth of your creative divine expression to be emulated. Embrace the trueness of who you are and allow it to flow freely. Express yourself and fear not your vulnerable state but flow with your expression. Music and dance and all forms of creative expression can assist you in activating this Chakra. When balanced your self-expression is fluid, harmonious and graceful.



Third Eye Chakra (Brow, 6th) – Indigo. Ajna. Light. Clear seeing (or clairvoyance) comes from this Chakra. This is where our ability to see both physically and intuitively resides. Our Psychic Abilities, accurate interpretation, inner knowing, vision, intuition and dreams are located here. When balanced it allows us to see clearly on all levels. You make good choices and are in the right place at the right time most often. Your intuition is clear. Mental clarity and thinking are also focused in this

Chakra. The third eye is where the pineal gland is located and also directs the lower brain (cerebellum) and central nervous system. DMT (Dimethyltryptamine) is a naturally-occurring tryptamine chemical that can open up other dimensions to you. DMT can expand our consciousness to new broader levels. The pineal gland releases DMT naturally in all of us. So if you keep your third

eye clear and balanced, and incorporating a meditation on the third eye this can assist you in reaching other dimensions. Oneness is felt here, duality ends at this Chakra. Past, Present and Future are seen from this Chakra. Truth of all things can be obtained with your third eye. The third eye Chakra directs the eyes, brain, nose, pineal gland and pituitary gland. If your third eye Chakra is out of balance your connection may not be that clear or balanced and might even seem like a scary connection if any connection is reached. You may experience self-doubt, rely too much on others for decisions and are easily swayed by them, have rigid beliefs, lack of clarity, little imagination and openness, confusion occurs, and on the other end of the scale may be too out there with an overactive imagination, unable to distinguish between inner and outer reality, easily forget dreams or are overwhelmed by dreams and your psychic abilities are either completely shut off or going haywire. And physically, if out of balance, eye problems, upper sinuses, headaches and head colds may occur. Sometimes while working through a clearing and balancing of this Chakra you will feel aches or warm pressure. Even simply thinking about it now, I am feeling this sensation. It is completely divine.

It is a common practice of mine and many spiritual meditators to close our eyes and, with eyes closed gaze our physical eyes up to look at the third eye in between the eyebrows in the center of the forehead. Holding this focus brings benefits to opening up the third eye and connecting to higher consciousness. We will utilize this method in the *Sacred Energy Awakening* process. As you meditate on this Chakra and even on the indigo color associated with this Chakra you will begin to notice a clearer quality to your insights and a deeper psychic awareness.



Crown A Thousand-Petal Lotus Chakra (7th)

— Purple/Violet/Gold/White. Sahasrara. Our connection to Cosmic Consciousness, Universe, Spirit as well as to thought, universal identity, as well as self and universal knowledge expansion. Your experience of being All That Is happens here. Your ability to be in the world but not of it expands here. This Chakra also directs the upper brain (cerebrum), cerebral cortex and the central nervous system. If out of balance any

type of infection, headaches, physical health problems regarding the top of the head, spinal cord, pituitary gland, central nervous system, thalamus, hypothalamus, upper sinuses, neuralgia and ear problems may occur. You may also experience a lack of connection to Source, rigid beliefs, unwilling to see others points of view or confusion. Or on the flip side of an imbalanced Crown Chakra you may live too much in the fantasy world and be addicted your spirituality so much so that your earthly needs are severely ignored. In yoga you are to harm none, not even and especially the Self. Taking care of ourselves and our needs allow us to be more open to receive the Oneness connection while also having better capacity to assist others in their pursuits as well. If you are feeling stuffed up or have headaches and pressure, try placing your tongue on the roof of your mouth, a common yoga technique that dates back centuries. This allows for smooth energy flow in your entire body. Also, try opening up your crown Chakra by visualizing a lotus on your crown blossoming and opening up. This will send out blocked energy that has been building up to the head area. When the time is right the energy needs a way out. Full connection is made. When balanced this Chakra brings us a higher understanding, knowledge and wisdom, bliss and spiritual connection.

In Kundalini, the “Serpents” will rise up and if there are any blockages in your Chakras, the Kundalini will attempt to clear and cleanse. If there is resistance or fear the awakened Kundalini will attempt to release the fear through experiences and symptoms mentioned in my ***Divine Embrace book (Chapter 6)***. It's all divine. Sometimes it is more "painful" for others on the get-go and then it smooths out. It is blockages from this life and past lives combined for final release. I've read that the full Kundalini integration process can and has taken approximately five years once the Kundalini is awakened. However, this is different for every person. No one person is the same. For some it's 15 years. But for all it's a lifetime transformation. It is doing its divine duty and clearing out the blockages and for you it's just in offering the allowing space. Ground, meditate and treat your body good while continuing to exist beautifully in life. We are ever growing and evolving. Even self-realization is not an end. The Universe is expansive. We will continue to evolve. Even in self-realization you will still have challenges and will still need to keep your light shining.

For the most part, I have not had severe physical experiences to date. Only the occasional challenge in this regard. I have had challenges to myself emotionally, mentally and spiritually with minor physical experiences. It's been a ride for sure, but mostly just a smooth wake up call for me. We each experience it in a unique way. The more severe the symptoms, the higher the amount of karma coming up and/or the higher amount of resistance and fear on your part. (At least that's what I'm hearing.) Stop resisting and let it flow through you. Surrender. I know this can be an internal battle. Awareness is half the battle and surrendering is the latter. 😊

“Life has a bright side and a dark side, for the world of relativity is composed of light and shadows. If you permit your thoughts to dwell on evil, you yourself will become ugly. Look only for the good in everything so you absorb the quality of beauty.”
~ Paramahansa Yogananda

It's my wish that you have a smooth transition for your highest good. Also, do as best you can not to take on others upsets or negative happenings. That is theirs and not yours. You can be in bliss and still care about them. If you get too into what they are upset about, you attach cords that you do not want to have attached unhealthily and take on their "stuff". See the Cord Cutting exercise with Archangel Michael to follow in this section. Grounding as well as Cord Cutting assists you in not taking on other peoples "stuff" and severing those ties. Use methods that you resonate with as that will be the perfect way for you.

Kundalini rising within you causes a transformation that brings about a new, clear, clean, rejuvenated, evolved human being. Susan A. Carlson of KSN Organization, www.KundaliniSupportNetwork.com states, “Kundalini is a natural, biological phenomenon, a matrix that transforms the body-mind-spirit complex for health, peacefulness, and blissful living. Although Kundalini causes at times profound, spiritual experiences it is not the exclusive domain of any spiritual tradition or religious body. Kundalini's purpose is to start and finish a process of transformation of making a complete and natural human being who is at peace with him/herself and with the natural world. Kundalini activation is a teachable and reproducible process.”

To follow I am placing a few tools to assist in your energy body's well-being: a Chakra & Aura Clearing and Rejuvenation Meditation, Breathe Into Each Chakra visualization, White Light

Bubble visualization, Cord Cutting with ArchAngel Michael, Closing the Chakras exercise when feeling psychically overcharged for a more balanced way of being, the Golden Egg Shield and Getting it Out exercise. As always, take what resonates with you, tweak what you like and discard what you don't resonate with.

Note that I also include a form of the Chakra & Aura Clearing and Rejuvenation Meditation on the *Divine Embrace Chakra Awakening Meditation* CD that you may have purchased with this book. It is the complement to this book and a part of the *Sacred Energy Awakening Ceremony* process. The *Divine Embrace Chakra Awakening Meditation* CD is more complete than what is included below. Below I have placed only the Chakra balancing portion of the meditation. I may mention some of these strategies in other parts of this book but I am summarizing here for easy reference. Personally, I practice the Chakra & Aura Clearing and Rejuvenation meditation every day immediately upon waking. Practice these energy exercises as you see best for yourself.

Chakra & Aura Clearing and Rejuvenation Meditation

Before starting any meditation it is nice to call in your God, Light Team and Guides of choice with any intentions you may have. Here is one example to use as an invocation. While in Namaste (prayer) Mudra hands (more on Mudras to follow in the Mudra section): "I invoke the Divine God, Goddess, Angels & ArchAngels, Guides and Ascended Masters of positive love and light. We ask for your blessings and presence during this practice. With Gratitude, faith and trust we embrace the magnificent powerful Divine God Goddess within. As we contribute our divine connection with love to the collective consciousness, we raise all beings vibrations, as well as the planet and the Universe." Or simply call in your guides and ask for their presence during this Chakra & aura clearing. It doesn't have to be elaborate unless you prefer it.

Get comfortable sitting in a chair with legs and arms uncrossed. Close your eyes and breathe. Slowly and deeply. With each breath you relax more deeply. As you inhale you receive positive loving energy. As you exhale you let go of all anxiety and challenges. Letting go confident that all is in divine order. Slowly and deeply. Release. Inhale with your nose. Exhale fully each time. Really feel the air moving in and out of your body. And the calming effects of full breaths. As you inhale the wonderful oxygen you breathe out stress and anxiety. Relax. Positive In. Negative Out. Satisfying breaths. Melt away. Breathe deeply in.....and....out. wash away all concerns. Quieting your mind and harmonizing your nervous system.

With your closed eyes, look up to your third eye, the center between your eyebrows. Continue to look up while enjoying the breath. Breathing is very powerful and becoming aware of our breath brings harmony and balance to our bodies.

Increasing relaxation, improving circulation. Breathing reduces stress and anxiety, restores balance and vitality, and improves physical & mental wellbeing. Allow yourself to become more comfortable, more relaxed. Drop your shoulders and relax. More peaceful. Deeper and deeper. Breathe in annnnnd out. Your muscles tense and release. Quiet, calm, centered and focused.

Now release your eye gaze from your third eye. Allow your body to feel soothing and relaxed. Breathe. Let your concerns wash away. Call forth freshness into your life. Discovering that the power within you can help you become all you desire. Trust. Allow yourself to be fully present in the moment. Live in the now. Restoring the balance between your inner and outer worlds. Experience true joy and peace.

So now rest and breathe. Next it is important to ground yourself. Visualize the sun light coming down into your crown Chakra then going all the way through your body, your feet and out to the center of the Earth, where then the Earth Shakti will burst its brilliant white light energy back up through this column of light through each of my feet (sometimes one at a time or at the same time) and meeting at the center of my lower spine flowing upward and down through your arms and then out your crown Chakra to the sun. The sun and earth connect and a line of energy through your being then emulates its brilliance and shines outward throughout your entire energy being and bodies. Grounding, Connecting, Centered and Protected.

We now call on the Violet Flame of St. Germaine to clear and cleanse your entire being. The Violet Flame now flows up through your body and envelopes your entire being and aura. Cleansing and clearing. Really feel this clearing and transmuting all misqualified energies through its Violet Flame. You then feel ArchAngel Michael merge with your light filling your Solar plexus with more light, light energy that bursts with light and spreads all around you; your Aura; your energy bodies. Building your energy and raising your vibrations. As you are energized, the ArchAngel of pink Unconditional Love is called, filling your heart with a translucent sparkling pink rose. This rose blooms and emits loving energy throughout your heart filling your entire being; basking in a feeling of ever expanding love. Be within this energy and let it build. Bask in it. Warm delicious feelings surround you; ever building. Then we call on the power, wisdom and love energy all of the ArchAngels. This energy is seen as blue-white sparkling Angelic energy. Feel the blue-white angelic energy surround you. Next Gold light energy saunters down as if dancing in spirals around you and filling your body from head to toe and expanding outward. Finally, God's white light flows in sealing you. God's gleaming white light of Universal Life Force of Love surrounds you and your Aura. God's pure white light surrounds you severing all negative cords and attachments from you and to you now, transmuting into pure Divine light. Only positive love and light flows near. Take your time feeling each of these colors and vibrations. *(Note: If you don't have much time this one paragraph alone is a visual that you can do to cleanse your entire being. I will do this one section in its entirety separately every day or several times a day when I feel it is necessary.)*

We each have a God Spark. Visualize and feel the divine spark within you. The energy of the Divine is magnified permeating every cell in your whole being and you are transformed into pure light. You are the light and the light is you. Be with the brightest most assuredly Divine white light that bursts into your vision and your entire being. You are opened up and aligned with your Higher Self. Your soul cries with its beauty and power. You are in the place now of knowing that you are deserving of all you desire. That the Universe is ALWAYS providing to you as that is exactly the purpose of creation. Breathe. You are aligned and allowing all good to come to you.

Now visualize a ball of pure sparkling light just below your root Chakra. See this energy ball emanating and pulsing as it is infused with more life force energy, building and building. Pulsing in hypnotic rhythms. Infused with The Divine breath. Primal sacred energy building. Tantalizing. Infusing. The energy now flows up your root Chakra filling, clearing, cleansing and infusing your red Root Chakra with its magnificent energy. The Root Chakra is your grounding Chakra, where your sense of safety and security is located. The spiraling energy cleanses all mis-qualified energies transmuting into pure light. This energy spirals up to your orange Sacral Chakra infusing it with cleansing, clearing pure energy. As the circle of energy flows through each Chakra it is infused with more infinite energy infusing each Chakra. The Sacral center is the Chakra of your Sensuality and desires. This Chakra is used when manifesting your wants and desires of all types. Your Sacral center is cleansed, cleared and balanced. Desires flow in balanced splendor. The energy now circles and spirals upward to your yellow Solar plexus. Your core, the center of your whole being. Here is where our Power is located. The energy now cleanses and clears transmuting all released energies into pure light as you now take your power back and are empowered to follow your true path. The energy now spirals upward to your green Heart center, Our ability to Love ourselves and others is located here. The cleansing energy vortex fills your heart center with pure light, leaving only room for pure love. Your heart Chakra is now beaming with clean and clear vibrant green loving energy. You easily give and receive unconditional love now. Repeat in your mind as I say out loud: I am love. I am light. Now the energy spirals upward building in intensity as it flows to your sky blue Throat Chakra. Your ability to communicate on the physical plain, as well as the spiritual plain is centered in this Chakra. The circle of energy infuses your throat Chakra with pure brilliant light cleansing and clearing the way for astounding communication in all areas of your life from daily connections to higher spiritual and angelic connections. See your Throat Chakra a beautiful light blue. Breathe. Now the circle of energy flows upward to your indigo Third Eye Chakra, Your third eye is where your psychic abilities and intuition are located. This also directs your thinking and reason. Take your physical eyes with eyelids closed and look up at your third eye. Feel this penetration within the center of your forehead. Feel your third eye being balanced and beautifully transmuted in pure essence. You may even see an outline of your third eye opening up now. Release your hold on looking at your Third eye when ready.

Feel surges of energy build as the circle of light now spirals upward to your Crown Chakra, your Lotus. This is your connection to All That Is. You see beams of Purple, Gold, and White light as the energy is cleared and a path is opened, Feel surges of energy build as the circle of light now spirals upward to your Crown Chakra, your Lotus. This is your connection to All That Is. You see beams of Purple, Gold, and White light as the energy. The energy is cleared and a path is opened, as your connection to the Universe is strengthened now. See an expanding Lotus bloom as your Crown opens up. As the energy is complete in revitalizing, cleansing and balancing your Chakras it will now flow upward and outward through your Crown Chakra.

See now beams of white light start to swiftly flow through all Chakras. This beam starts from the bottom flowing up your red/root Chakra, (red & spinning healthy, cleansed and cleared) to the orange/sacral Chakra, to the yellow/solar plexus, to the green/heart center, loving, and up to your blue/throat Chakra, spinning clearing and cleansing, and up to the /third eye/indigo color spinning

vibrant, cleared cleansed, flowing upward to the your Crown Chakra, your Lotus of brilliant purple and white light. Your Chakras are spinning and whirling, full of energy, balance and vitality. See the white energy that extends up and out from the crown Chakra, spreading your lotus infinitely, enveloping your whole being and soul of pure Universal white energy. You are completely refreshed, calm, and peaceful. Your energy is balanced. You are full of vitality. All your Chakras are now clean, charged and balanced.

Breathe Into Each Chakra

Using the Chakra chart shown previously in this section, visualize breathing into one Chakra at a time. Do this from the Root Chakra first all the way up to the Crown Chakra. You may want to only go to the Throat Chakra and stop, if you begin to get headaches from practicing this with the Third Eye and Crown Chakras. If a headache ensues, only do this for the first five Chakras as listed.

To begin, inhale and exhale full deep breaths for each Chakra one at a time. Maybe you will start out with one to three breaths per Chakra and work your way up to more breaths per Chakra. See the color of the Chakra in all its vibrancy as you breathe into each Chakra. Our breath is our Life Force and Prana energy. When you do this you are focusing on breathing Life Force energy into each Chakra. This is very cleansing and opening. Do this anywhere and anytime you need to.

White Light Bubble

The White Light Bubble is just as is sounds. Visualize yourself surrounded in white light – God’s Universal White Light or whatever your deity is. Imagine even that this light is your own. Since it truly is your own, since you are God Source energy expressing itself. Build your white light from within and expand it throughout your entire being. Or simply use the white light as a bubble that surrounds you, much like the Good Witch of the North from the movie *Wizard of Oz*. This is a great analogy and visual I received from Sylvia Browne many years ago.

Cord Cutting with Archangel Michael

Call on ArchAngel Michael. ArchAngel Michael is the powerful Angel of Protection and Leader of all ArchAngels. Ask ArchAngel Michael to sever all negative cords and attachments from you and to you now. As you ask, ArchAngel Michael is already working on clearing your energy fields and transmuting into pure light. Visualize this occurring. Take as long or as little time as you need. You may see ArchAngel Michael with his powerful sword cutting away all cords that do not belong. See what negative cords are attached to you and where. You can even get a sense of where they are coming from. It does not matter. See Michael cut those cords and transmute the energy into pure light. This is a practice I highly recommend doing daily or whenever you feel drained. ArchAngel Michael works fast and seamless. Express your thanks as he completes the cord cutting.

Chakra Closing When Psychically Overcharged

Sometimes you may feel that you are receiving too much feedback from the outside world or you may need to be a bit more closed off from that feedback and require something to bring a bit more peace. If that’s the case you may like to close your Chakras down periodically. It’s nice to close the Chakras down when psychically overcharged or open too much.

Visualize your Chakras one at a time going from ball size to quarter size. You can also visualize each Chakra as its corresponding color in a flower shape and watch the blossomed flower

shrink down to a bud. Once this visual is completed revitalize your energy by sending or connecting yourself to some rejuvenating white light.

Golden Egg Shield

Years ago when I was psychically opening up for the first time I would experiment with different methods of protecting myself from energy vampires and from receiving any type of energy transference that I didn't want. Although I now know more fully that these methods are aligning our vibrations higher and that is overall what keeps us from harm's way or rather from unwanted lower vibrational energies. The best methods I have found thus far are three methods; two of which I have already mentioned: the White Light Bubble and Cord Cutting with ArchAngel Michael. The third is pretty potent and depending upon your intention can block out even those things you didn't want blocked. So be careful of your intention when calling this one in.

Here's why. My friend, Dave shared with me a nifty protector shield that was shared with him. I was excited to use it the next day when I showed up at work. At the time I was an administrative assistant for an environmental business. I had a group of people to support. In the morning I decided to place this shield up and see how it went.

What you do is visualize golden liquid light coming down from the heavens meeting your crown Chakra or just above it and surrounding your entire aura and body with this warm beautiful golden liquid light. Gold is powerful and I use it as a visualization often. Once you are completely surrounded you will then feel the golden liquid light harden. I did this so well that I could hear the crackle of the golden liquid hardening like a dry golden egg all around me. It was that powerful to me.

So then I went on with the rest of my day doing a few odds and ends from the prior day's workload. At around 4p.m. I started to realize I hadn't heard from a soul all day long! No assignments from my managers, no one stopping by to say hello, no emails and no phone calls. I was flabbergasted. Then it hit me. The golden egg! Oh no! I promptly said thank you to the golden egg and let it go. I felt it melt back into liquid and dissolve into the Earth.

Amazing! What's more amazing is right after I did this – I'm talking mere minutes here – I received two or three phone calls and some rush jobs from at least two managers, as well as a few emails from people I had thought of during the day. I realized that not only was nothing getting in, but nothing was getting out too. My thoughts, feelings and energies stayed in the egg till I released it. My mistake was making the intention too strong and not allowing it to be more free flowing and malleable for loving energy to still flow through me. So now if I use the golden egg shield my intention is that this surrounds me with protection and still allows only love and light to flow to me and from me. ☺

Getting it Out

Our Chakras may be blocked due to feeling blocked by emotional issues or problems that arise. A healthy alternative when you have no one around you that you can trust to talk to is to talk to your Guides, Angels, Faeries, Higher Self, Ascended Masters, Deceased Loved Ones or God. This serves as a way of healing whatever you are working on now. In the end we are all One so we know that whatever is within us is merged with what is “outside” of ourselves. We need to release this in whatever fashion we can. It can be so healing to release whatever is bothering you. Talking to the loving, caring and energetic guides we have at our disposal is so refreshing. They want to assist, work with and heal. It is their loving duty to listen and help us integrate these learnings so we ascend naturally and blissfully. Take advantage of visualizing them in your mind and really having a conversation with them. Lead yourself to a beautiful spot in nature in your mind or even in this dimension of reality too and really get out what you are saying as if you are really talking with them. Because you really ARE. Try it. It’s amazingly refreshing and insights will come when the release has occurred. Really have a conversation and get out what’s bothering you or what’s going on. Then forget it. Let it go. Ahhhh. This is very cleansing for our energy bodies. Another variation of this is to write it down in a journal as if you are having that conversation. Oh so healing. 😊

PranaShakti is Our Life Force

All paths to wholeness lead to healing and vice versa. Shakti and Prana together make up our life force. Prana is also known as chi or ki and Shakti is the serpent Kundalini. In some translations prana and shakti are one in the same. Since one does not exist without the other, essentially they are One. Prana is everywhere. It is in the air we breathe, the food we eat, and in nature. It is what is requested in rejuvenating our energy system. The more prana within our system there is, the healthier we are. Trees produce more prana from sunlight and that is a major factor of why nature is so necessary for our bodies. As the trees exhale, we are nourished with oxygen. As we exhale the trees are nourished as well. We need the trees as much as they need us. It is said that Prana comes from above (the Sun) and Shakti from below (Mother Earth). Kundalini Shakti energy is the Cosmic Consciousness of the Universe. As Kundalini Shakti awakens (rises) it clears the Chakras to receive more prana. And finally, when Shakti has risen fully to the Seventh (Crown) Chakra she is united fully with the Divine male consciousness energy (Shiva). This is when full enlightenment occurs. You are transformed; awakened.

Nobody tells Kundalini Shakti what to do. Instead, you set aside your free will; you surrender and invite Kundalini Shakti to have her way with you, because she is infinite wisdom. She is unconditional Love. Yes, opposites exist but there really can be only one. It is prudent to embrace the darkness and the light. The abyss or void is our essence as the Divine. As we work with both Shakti and Prana together they work powerfully. Together they simply Are. Where each half of the whole come together and are One. It is not choosing one over the other or only working with one. It is about working with both forces. You can use the Prana energy for your intention and know and allow the Shakti Goddess energy to do her bidding for your highest and best, good. Surrender all outcomes to the Kundalini Shakti.

The idea is to work with the prana (chi, ki, energy) flow with intention in order to harmonize your bodily energies, while increasing vitality, in order to prepare for the awakening of the Kundalini Shakti. The use of Prana or God energy is intention based, however, always working in combination with and **allowing** the Shakti or Goddess energy for the highest and best, good of all. The combination is powerful. Surrender is crucial. As this is practiced with pure dedication the Kundalini rising, that flows naturally, will feel blissful. The guidelines and Sacred Energy Awakening Ceremony process I detail in Book One *How I Found My True Inner Peace* and this book will assist in clearing your Chakras and any blockages in order for Kundalini to rise in a more balanced fashion. We are all reaching this point naturally. But if you are not ready and start to rise your Kundalini without properly preparing your body the Kundalini side effects may be severe. Each of us experiences this in a unique fashion depending upon our own development for this life; this also being guided by past life (or other parallel life) work.

There is a culmination of power that occurs from this side and that side, male and female, yin and yang, God and Goddess, and together a powerful healing occurs; more Divine energy. The authenticity of it hit me with energy all over, warm with heat and energy building up through my spine. For me, this is a true testament to prana **and** Shakti working together. We are made up of this energy that moves in waves.

In fact, it is the conclusion of many doctors and mystics alike that it is the Kundalini awakening (Shakti) that increases Prana flow in our bodies. And I feel that choosing to utilize Prana or chi for the intention of assisting in the smooth flow of Shakti that comes forth assists with that intention. And as the Shakti rises more Prana is produced. And the cycle begins. This increased flow is seemingly part of the reason for some symptoms, such as Kriyas (explained in chapter 6 of *Divine Embrace*). The symptoms tend to be more balanced and less intrusive to those who have trained in activities such as those who practice yoga, tai chi, breathing techniques, healing and meditation, as well as those physically healthy, eating right and working through their issues. If we increase our Prana naturally now, we are assisting our bodies to naturally open up to awakening in a balanced and harmonious way. So by consciously dedicating time to receiving Prana and Shakti through our practice we will assist in our awakening. We can do this through the visualizations in the energy awakening process I include here, as well as through yogic techniques and many other methods; always doing the practice that works for you and your bliss.

You can flow with life by breathing more vibrant life into it through the conscious use of Prana, chi, ki or Universal life force energy. Use this infinite freely offered energy as your savior to higher vibrations. Simply breathe it in. Prana and Shakti build up your life force. Simply use it, cultivate it and build upon it to flow through your life. Through raising your vibrations, bringing more joy in your life and working with Prana energy you assist Kundalini Shakti in your own ascension.

Breathing in nature (Prana) is like quenching your thirst with water. So revitalizing and refreshing to your system. Prana is in the air we breathe, the sun we bask under and infused in nature. Prana is life force energy and we can no longer live without it as much as we cannot live

without our breath. You may even glimpse Prana as you gaze at the sky. It looks like mini swirling white lights.

Many Kundalini specialists talk about prana and the particles you see in the air. I was on a plane ride on my way from the east coast to the west coast for my Soul Coaching® Certification training with Denise Linn in California. As I was reading about Prana I decided to take a moment and look out the window. Normally you will see a blue sky or some clouds. This time I saw the blue sky and many Prana light particles all through the air. Now whenever I look at the sky I see them. It's truly amazing. They've always been there and I've simply overlooked them.

Sunrises and Sunsets have a beautiful power over me as I bask in their glow. I am reminded and overflowing with the Divine right then and there. Trees hold a luminosity I never knew existed until recent years. Their energy and Prana is amazing and revitalizing to the mind, body and Soul. Flowers remind us of the blossoming enlightenment that is our destiny through the evolution of all of mankind. Not to mention they are extremely and uniquely stunning and filled with enjoyment in their exquisite beauty.

Since the Sun sends Prana to the food we eat and the air we breathe, it is not a stretch to know we directly receive Prana from the Sun. We can receive pure Prana straight from the Sun by simply sitting out in the sun or by also using a technique called sungazing. Sungazing is an amazing ancient process that brings solar and healing energies to the body, mind and Soul. I've recently picked up this practice again and I feel amazing throughout the entire day. Not just for a few minutes or hours but the entire day!

The practice of Sungazing is where you will gaze at the sun with your eyes (no glasses or sunglasses), during safe hours, barefoot on the Earth. These safe hours are anytime within the 1-hour window after sunrise or anytime within the 1-hour window before sunset. As Hira Ratan Manek of SolarHealing.com/Sungazing/, states: "It is scientifically proven beyond a reasonable doubt that during these times, one is free from UV and IR rays exposure, which is harmful to your eyes. To determine the timings of sunrise or sunset, you can check the local newspaper, which also lists the UV Index as 0 during these times." On your first day you will start gazing for 10 seconds. On the second day you will add 10 seconds, on the third day you will add 10 more seconds, and so on. Hira Ratan Manek further states: "When you reach 30 minutes duration of continuously looking at sun, you will slowly be liberated from physical disease since by then all the colors of the sun will have reached the brain through the eye. Brain regulates the flow of color Prana appropriately to the respective organs." An obvious question is what happens when it rains or is cloudy for several days straight. I asked this question to Hira Ratan Manek who kindly and speedily responded back to my email query with: "Don't worry of missing days. They can be any number in row. Just continue from where you left. Need not restart at all. Practice when possible and just increase every time you do it as suggested. After sungazing close the eyes till the inner image goes away and then look elsewhere."

Usually by the end of 9 months or 44 minutes your practice will be complete, your body solarized. From then you will walk barefoot on the Earth for 45 minutes for six days or if you desire

to no longer hunger food you can walk barefoot for 45 minutes a day for a full year. It is the conclusion of Hira Ratan manek that, “if you are fortunate to activate the brain optimally you surely will reach enlightenment”. I have not fully completed this practice so I cannot give an official account of my own yet. However, Yogananda shares in his book *Autobiography of a Yogi* of his interviews with many saints and mystics regarding no longer desiring food that their “common reply was that the sun energy entered through a secret door and reached the medulla oblongata in the brain”. They did not share further what the secret was at that time. If you desire learning more you can check out Hira Ratan Manek’s website at solarhealing.com/sgprocess.htm to view the full description of how to safely practice sungazing. As for me, I continue to sungaze sporadically and love the effects. So I know it is something I plan to continue throughout my life.

Take notice of the high quantity of Prana near trees, plants and flowers, as they receive Prana from the Sun and produce more of it. The Sun feeds and brings everything to life with its Prana force. The sharing of the trees and our divine course in life with them becomes more genuine. The trees are feeding us more life force as we live with them. We need the trees oh so dearly. We can also send them loving energy right back in thanks. The sharing is divine.

Working with nature and becoming more in tune with nature, as the animals do automatically, we become more energized, joyful, and in tune with the natural rhythms of life. We are more in tune with Mother Earth and intuition is more natural and innate. Just as animals are more in tune with catastrophic events of the earth, and other subtle disturbances and rhythms, so too, would we be if we only take the time to breathe in the essence of Mother Nature every day. Every day take time to walk in Nature, go outside and breathe the air (and prana), feel the sun and moon on your face and feel the essence of being a part of Mother Earth (and Shakti). We are a part of Mother Earth and she is a part of us. We can easily tune in to the inner yearnings of Mother Earth and our Divine purpose follows suit. It's an amazing connection.

Angels are also our guides and helpers with Prana and Shakti. We can call on them anytime to cultivate higher results for the highest and best, good always. Angels are masters of Prana and slaves to Shakti, just as we are. They are magnificent beings here to assist in our evolution. It is wonderful to note the striking results that occur when the Angels are called. It is that much more potent when you ask for their willing assistance. Although, yes, they can only help when asked and only when it does not interfere with our Divine plan. Angels may also be seen as higher aspects of ourselves. You decide. Either way, I have experienced miraculous moments with the calling of the Angels.

You must balance out the Prana and Shakti energies when cultivating intentions. There is an art to working with Prana and Shakti energy. And likewise there is an art to surrendering. You are never controlling an outcome. You are really more simply aligning your vibrations with the highest possible outcome with intention that is placed for the highest and best, good of all. Then you send it out allowing Shakti to do its will. Surrender. You allow for the highest and best, good and thereby stay in line with the natural rhythms of life.

I am reminded of an analogy my friend Akira Dawn, from SpiritSpace.wordpress.com, shared with me about our true Divine selves. The source is unknown. Our true selves are like the stillness between the breath. When you inhale there is a space before you exhale and likewise when you exhale there is a space before you inhale. This is also likened to the grace note in music. That time when all the music stops. The guitar, the drums, the singing all stop for just one beautiful moment before powerfully picking up the music even more alive than before. As my drummer Husband, Don P. Anderson IV states, "The resonance of the drum is felt between notes. The vibration exists between the notes." It's the space between that holds our true eternal essence.

Although Prana and Shakti are separated here for distinction, they are all aspects of Source and/or the Divine. As we **all** are. The distinction is made and then we bring the two halves of the whole together, making One. We as humans have a masculine and feminine side of us that makes us whole. The Divine is in EVERYTHING and EVERYONE. All are aspects of the One God. Prana, Shakti, You and Me, we are One. We work together for the Divine.

The Vibrational Body

Our bodies are made up of frequencies. We each resonate and vibrate at different levels unique to each Soul. This is referred to as our Soul Signature. The frequency of our bodies have a vibrational rate, a color or colors, a number, even sacred geometry shapes; all unique to each one of us. Our soul also has a Soul Group that resonates in our frequency range. This group can also incarnate with us and part of the group can also be in Spirit, working with us as guides.

As a part of our body's make-up, I would like to discuss further how the Grid and our DNA tie together to formulate our vibrational body.

The Grid - We are all a part of the Universe. We are one with it. The Universe itself has a vibration and is a grid of sacred geometries. The Earth has a vibration. This vibration is part of the grid that surrounds the Earth. This grid is linked with all of us as well and is now being (more) "activated". Not only to we each have a vibration and a sacred geometry around our bodies, so too, does every object, plant and tree. Everything.

These geometry shapes form a perfect grid around our bodies and may even align with or rather make up a part of our Aura. As we align with higher vibrations something in our sacred geometry is activated as well moving us along the ascension ladder. Sometimes we falter and sometimes we get back "on track". Just as in Kundalini, the snake will rise and fall and rise again, as we align. Once it starts it can be a pretty amazing and funky ride! I am still learning about the grid and sacred geometry myself. We don't really need to know about Sacred Geometry for ascension to still happen. It just does. (As it has been doing all along.) However, if Sacred Geometry pulls at your heart strings, there is something for you there to research. Check it out and find the hidden messages just for you.

DNA – It is said that we are made up of 12 strands of DNA. Two that are active and 10 that are considered “junk” DNA. But these really are not junk. These extra strands are now being “turned on”. As a part of our Ascension and coming more fully into our Light Body, our DNA is changing, evolving. We are going from two working strands to an activated 12 strands of DNA. With the activation of these DNA codes we easily awaken our light body into higher consciousness. The more we ascend, open up, and work with the energies the more we may find DNA encoding a prominent factor in ascension. Even just by constantly consciously being aware of the Universe and the synchronicities in our lives as we intend it to be, we are also activating the DNA codes and realigning deep energies in our Light Body. Also, a most recent sharing that Wayne Dyer discusses in his book *Excuses, Be Gone* and David Wilcox chats about on his several guest spots with *Coast to Coast Am Radio*, is it is now being scientifically proven that we can change our DNA. That’s right folks we are not locked in to our ancestor’s patterns and genes. It is our choice. We have no more excuses!

Tiara Kumara statement on ChildrenoftheSun.tv says it perfectly, “As we come from love rather than fear, we transition into heightened states of clarity and pristine vibration. As clarity increases, we are able to more fully access the spectrum of DNA encodement to fully awaken our light body and transition into higher consciousness. Like the caterpillar in a chrysalis, crystallization is a vibration achieved through a very personal metamorphic process. This highest alchemy requires the release of all fear and conditioned mental and emotional construct. The children being born today carry this pure, crystal frequency and New Earth blueprint.”

And also, Kate A. Spreckley from SpiritPathways.com confirms, “Our 12 strands of DNA activate and connect to our 12 Chakra points, energy doorways through which we access our Spiritual heritage. The 12 strands of DNA serve as links through the 12 Chakras to the energy web outside of our bodies. The 12 Chakras act as energetic doorways into our body connecting us to the vital forces of existence. It is through opening and activating these portals of energy that we can begin to truly know ourselves. In activating all 12 strands of DNA we create an alignment within ourselves allowing us to gently shift into much higher vibrational levels and frequency of light, helping our ascension process by further awakening our human consciousness.”

Light Spark

We all seem to have a light spark within us. Pure, radiant Divine Light within. It feels to be the fire within us. Our core essence. Our inner fire is our vitality, spontaneity, creativity, and life force. I’ve been able to see this in others as well as connect with it during my Energy Sessions. I have seen this as white or as different colors. It seems to be a connection to All That Is. Kind of like the core of Earth connects you to the Universe as a whole. As you connect with the Center of Earth (its crystal core) you are simultaneously connected to the Universe or All That Is. It brings you there. There is an entire Universe inside each and every one of us! I connect my Light Spark to others Light Sparks within. As we are connected we are one; Communicating at that higher level.

It seems that what I have tapped into is the spark of each person I come in contact with. When I am seeing the colors I am seeing what Chakras the person is working through and what

blockages may be in the process of burning off. I've recently dreamt of a curvy snake-like fire that has all the colors of the rainbow. I feel this is a symbol of growth, unity and Kundalini awakening. The connection I make during an Energy Session seems to assist the fire in reaching its goals for purification. As part of the Sacred Energy Awakening Ceremony you will be reaching in to yours or a student's Light Spark (inner flame), connecting and purifying. As you remember the 100% perfect whole and complete person they are, you are holding that space for them to remember and heal themselves. And they, too, link with that energy connection and remember they have always been and always will be a pure connection of God/Goddess/Universe. When you are in that space in you and they are in that space in them, you are One. This is also the meaning of Namaste.

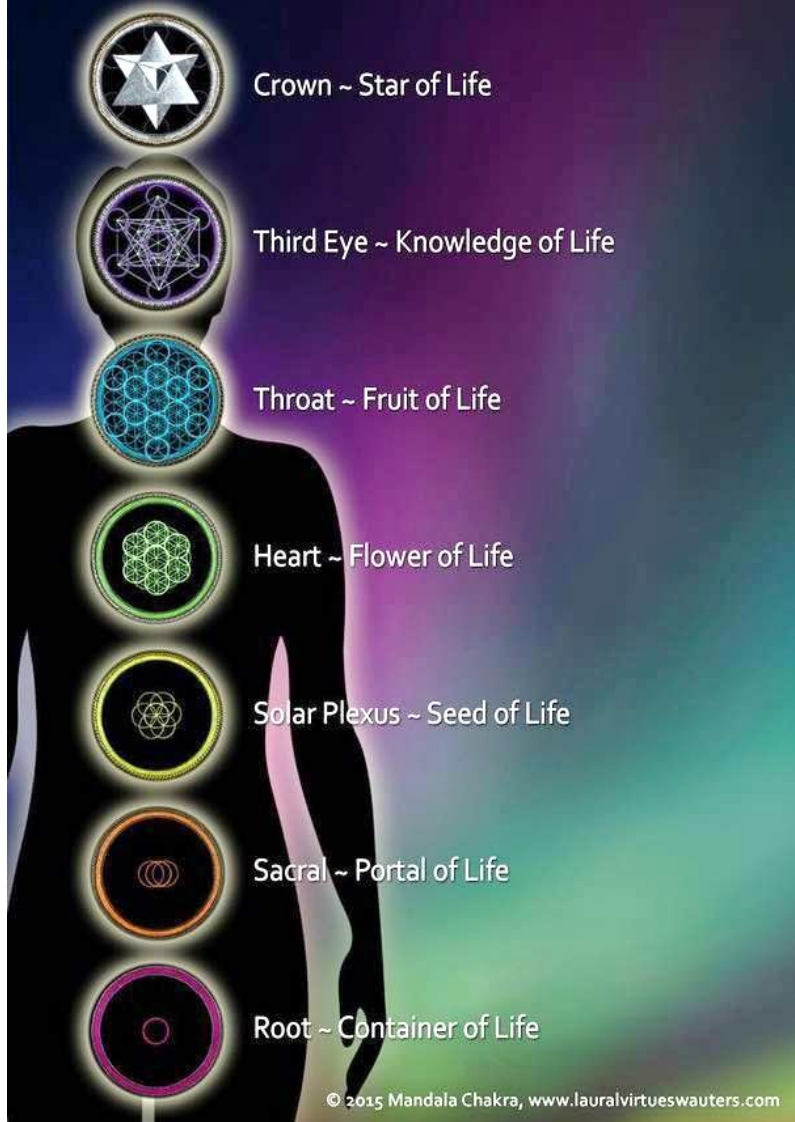
By Maggie Anderson

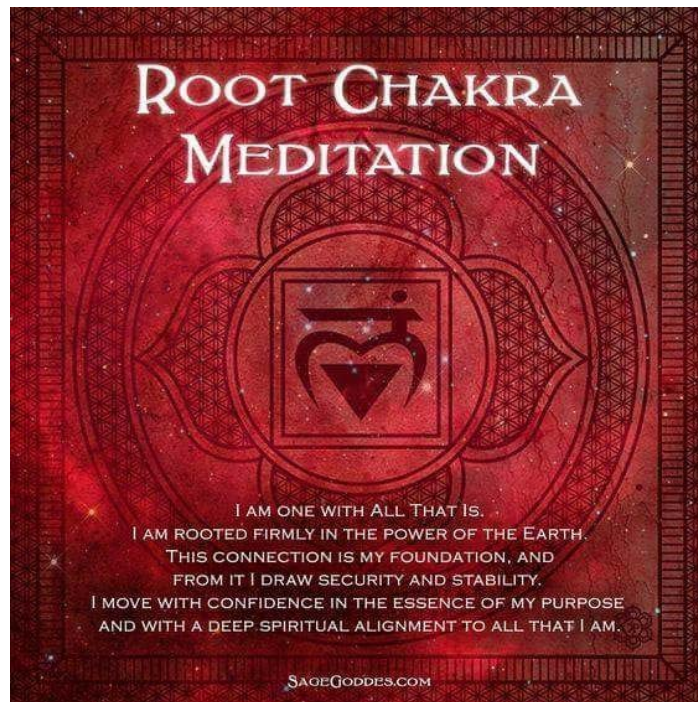
(An excerpt from Divine Embrace)



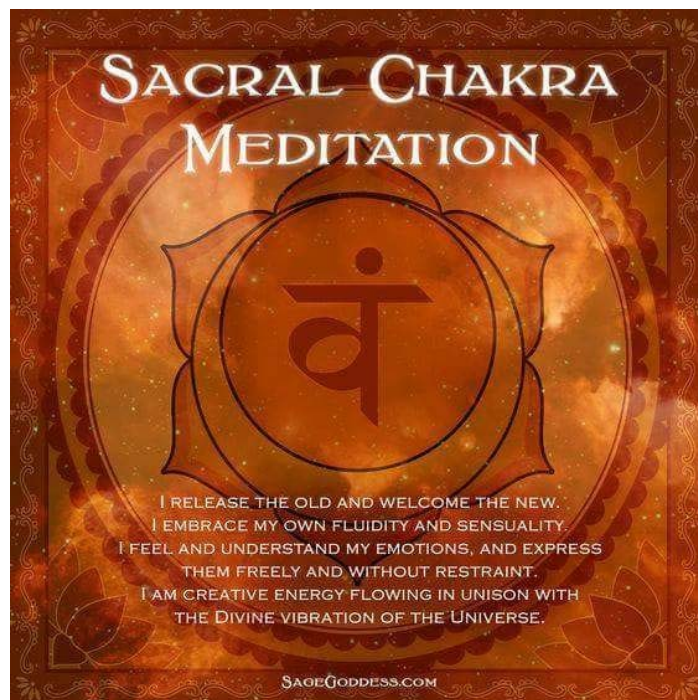
SACRED GEOMETRY

Seven measurements within the chakras

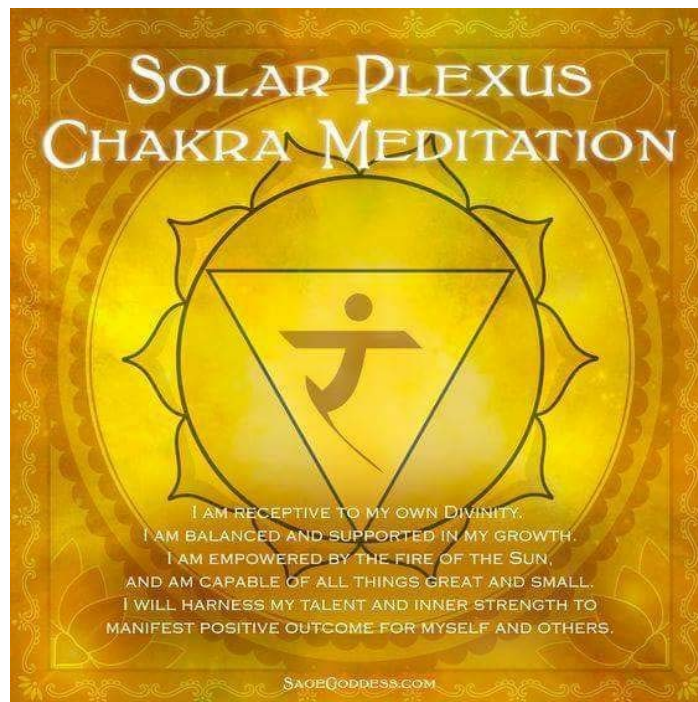




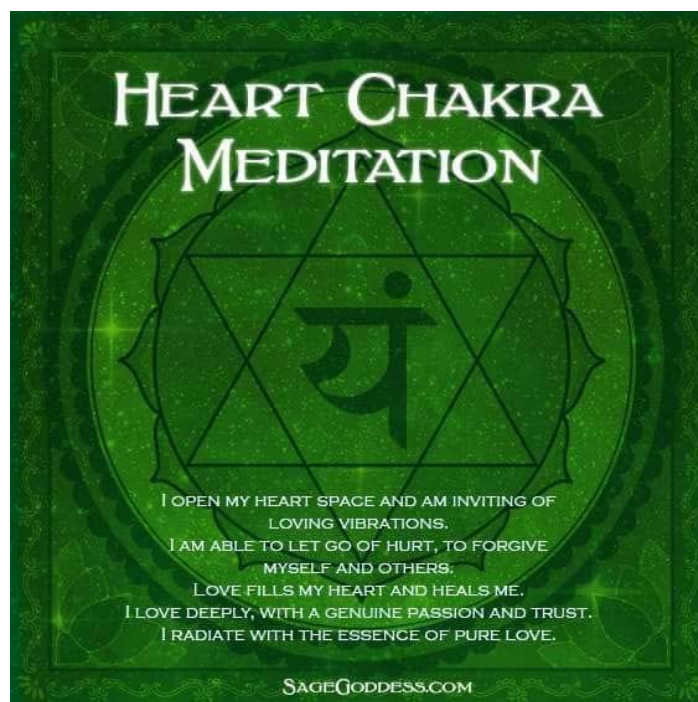
I am one with all that is. I am rooted firmly in the power of the Earth.
This connection is my foundation and from it I draw security and stability.
I move with confidence in the essence of my purpose and with a deep spiritual alignment to all that I am.



I release the old and welcome the new. I embrace my own fluidity and sensuality.
I feel and understand my emotional and express them freely and without restraint.
I am creative energy flowing in unison with the divine vibration of the Universe.



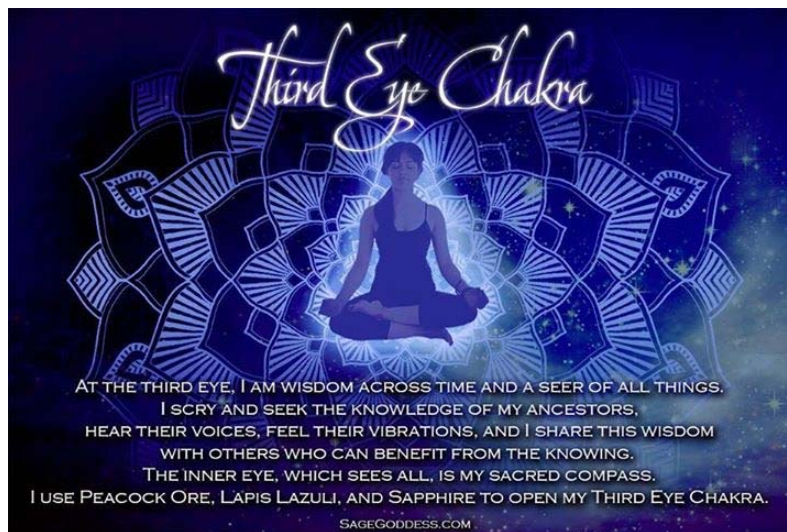
I am receptive to my own Divinity. I am balanced and supported in my growth.
I am empowered by the fire of the Sun and am capable of all things great and small.
I will harness my talent and inner strength to manifest positive outcome for myself and others.



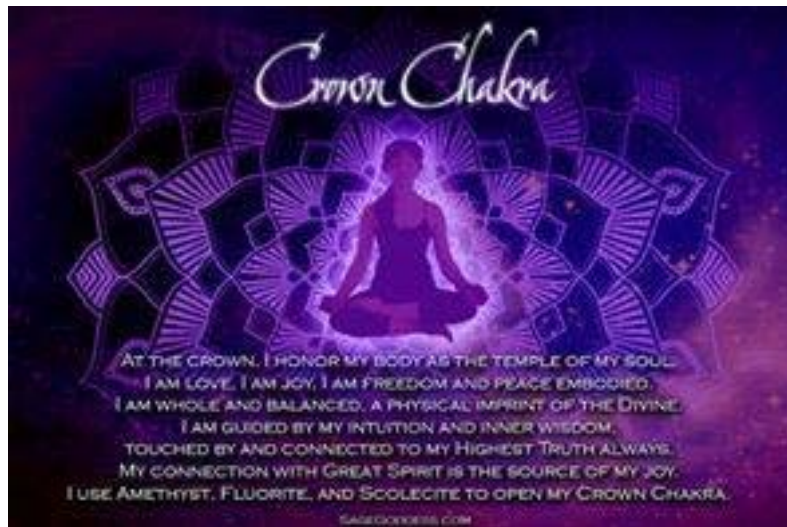
I open my heart space and am inviting of loving vibrations.
I am able to let go of hurt, to forgive myself and others. Love fills my heart and heals me.
I love deeply, with a genuine passion and trust. I radiate with the essence of pure love.



I speak in alignment with my most authentic truth. I express my thoughts genuinely and with clarity. I communicate my feelings with ease. I listen with interest. I am a divine receiver.



At the third eye, I am wisdom across time and a seer of all things. I scry and seek the knowledge of my ancestors. Hear their voices, feel their vibrations, and I share this wisdom with others who can benefit from the knowing. The inner eye, which sees all is my sacred compass. I use peacock ore, lapis lazuli, and sapphire to open my third eye chakra.



At the crown, I honor my body as the temple of my soul. I am love. I am joy. I am freedom and peace embodied. I am whole and balanced. A physical imprint of the Divine. I am guided by my intuition and inner wisdom. Touched by and connected to my highest truth always. My connection with Great spirit is the source of my joy. I use Amethyst, Fluorite, and Sclerite to open my Crown Chakra.

Chakras Made Easy

by [Sonia Choquette](#)

The concept of chakras comes to us from the yogic literature of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, thousands of years ago. Chakras are centers of energy found in everyone, and these centers receive, transform and distribute the universal life force throughout the body. As such, chakras play an important part in our physical, emotional and spiritual health.

While the traditional chakra system is made up of seven major chakras and several hundred minor chakras, other systems identify additional chakras located above and beyond the uppermost chakra in the traditional system, known as the Crown Chakra. The system described in this course looks at the seven major chakras and their functions.

HOW CHAKRAS WORK

Each chakra rotates in a spiral vibration, originating outside our auric field and then flows into various points along the spine, which are connected to the nervous system. Each chakra vibrates at a different frequency; the first chakra vibrating at the slowest densest vibration in the aura, moving up thru the seventh, which vibrates at a faster, more refined frequency. A healthy chakra can be identified by its clear and vibrant color, and the speed and smoothness of its movement. An unhealthy chakra is usually seen as having murky coloration and erratic or sluggish movement.

The activity of the chakras corresponds specifically to both physiological and psychic functions. For example, the first chakra focuses on your basic survival, so attends to both your bodily well being, as well as your basic sense of safety in the world. In the deepest sense, the chakras function as windows to the soul. Each chakra, like a window, allows a particular view and perception of some part of your physical, psychological and emotional life.

Each chakra has a specific tone, color and filter, which allow a person to organize and digest information energetically and use it in our physical world. Just as various sizes and shapes of windows, along with shades, blinds, drapes, curtains, or nothing covering the window at all, will influence your perception of reality, so too, does each chakra, depending upon its health, also reveal the world to you, both inside and out.

Imagine, for example, that one window is clear, another is cracked and distorted, and yet another fogged over. Just as you can see then how the condition of the windows of your home affect your view of your neighborhood, and so too do your chakras need to be clear and in good repair in order to give you the best, so too, most accurate view and experience of life.

The health and vibrancy of each chakra is influenced by both the energies that surround you and the energies projected from your own belief system (your thoughts and feelings.) This combined energy is then recorded and stored in your body and consciousness affecting how you feel and experience life. The more aware and informed you are about the state your chakras are in, and the more knowledge you have in how to keep your chakra system functioning properly, the happier and healthier you will be.

When your chakras are healthy and clear, your life flows smoothly. When any one of them is sluggish, shut down, or its vibration is weak, the imbalance can show up as a physical symptom affecting a particular area of your body, or as an emotional or psychological symptom affecting your outlook.

For example, a weak or sluggish third chakra can lead to low self-esteem and problems with

your stomach. A weak or sluggish fourth chakra is associated with having difficulties opening up to others and with a weak heart.

Fortunately, there are many things you can do to rebalance and stimulate the vibrational flow of your chakras. By working with this program, you will first come to understand the nature of each chakra. Second, you will learn how to tell if any of your chakras are in need of attention, and third, I'll show you simple behaviors you can do to work with each chakra to bring your life back into harmonious and healthy flow. The result is that you will start to feel more confidence, energized, and peaceful—at every moment in any situation.

COLORS OF THE CHAKRAS

The chakras teach us that we are bodies made up as rays of light. Each chakra has a color that resonates with a specific frequency on the color spectrum. As this light is refracted it moves through our chakra wheels, the corresponding color appears due to the varying degrees of this wave like energy.

For example, the crown chakra reflects white/violet because it has the shortest wave length, and white being the highest color on the color spectrum, while the root chakra reflects the color red, which has the longest wave length, and red is the lowest color on the color spectrum.

When interpreting chakra energy many people misunderstand that chakras moving slowly are stuck, and congested. The first three chakras are oriented towards the physical experience which is a more dense energy frequency so they naturally move slower than the middle and upper chakras. The heart chakra acts as the bridge between the physical chakras and the etheric spiritual experience which are centered in chakras five, six, and seven.

The colors that come through our chakra system affect us deeply, emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually. This spectrum of light affects every living cell. Because of this we can use color frequencies to rejuvenate our chakras and help us move toward wholeness. I want to take the opportunity to explain that the particular color of each chakra correspond to the classic color spectrum. Knowing this, work from the crown chakra, associate each of the following specific colors, working from the crown downward until you become familiar with colors of the chakras as follows:

7. Crown - Violet (white/gold)
6. Third eye (Brow) - Indigo
5. Throat - Blue
4. Heart - Green
3. Solar plexus - Yellow
2. Sacral - Orange
1. Root - Red

When you are familiar with the colors of the chakras you can use the color wheel to help better assess and strengthen the energetic condition of each chakra. Start by answering the following questions in your journal.

Which color is the easiest to imagine?

Which is your favorite color? How does that color make you feel?

What color is your least favorite? When surrounded by that color how does it make you feel?

As you explore these questions, allow your third eye, your sixth chakra to activate and open and see if you can recall specific memories associated with your favorite and least favorite

color. Write these memories down in your journal. Trusting your intuition and working with the previous lessons, what does your attraction to specific colors and resistance to others tell you about your chakras? You may wonder if your interpretation is accurate, but remember, the point of this course is to help you connect with your inner guidance, so feel the vibration and trust your first response and the awareness it brings, and you will energetically feel whether or not your insights are valid. No one knows your chakra system better than you, even if you are new to conscious awareness of your chakras.

BASIC CHAKRA CORRESPONDENCE GUIDE

Listed below are the basic correspondences of the seven chakras. As you work with chakras, refer to this list for applying awareness and action to the chakra you are attending to.

In the following guide, you will find a list of stones, essential oils, musical notes, and colors among other corresponding elements relevant to each chakra. When working on a specific chakra, use the stone, crystal, oil, color and musical note corresponding to that chakra to help strengthen its vibration as you work.

You can place the suggested stone on the chakra in focus, for example, and ask that it support the energy of its highest vibration making it whole and balanced. You can intone the sound corresponding to that chakra to help bring it into balance as well. Wear the color corresponding to the chakra to help balance that chakra's vibration in your body. Use your creativity to apply the corresponding elements in each chakra to your life. Follow your intuition. Have fun, play and intend to heal and balance as you work.

FIRST CHAKRA: ROOT CHAKRA

The root chakra corresponds with the element of earth. It is located at the perineum (base of the spine) and moves energy into the legs, hips and feet.

Here are some basic facts that are important to know about the root chakra:

1. The Sanskrit Name for the first chakra is muladhara, which means root.
2. The ancient symbol for this chakra is a circle surrounded by four lotus petals, with a square inside it.
3. The color of this color in the auric field is deep ruby red
4. All chakras have a corresponding musical note, which it vibrates to. The musical note for the first chakra is "C."
5. All chakras also have a corresponding Hindu or Vedic Mantra. For the first, or root chakra it is – "Iam"
6. All chakras also have a corresponding sensory experience in the physical plane –for the first chakra it is your sense of smell.
7. All chakras also have a corresponding essential oil or oils, which naturally activate and balance that chakra. For the first chakra the natural essential oils are sandalwood, cinnamon, cedar wood.
8. All chakras also have corresponding crystals and minerals, which naturally activate and balance that chakra. The crystals and minerals that correspond to the first or root chakra are ruby, hematite, black tourmaline, and bloodstone.
9. All chakras have a corresponding aspect in the physical body. The corresponding aspect of the root chakra in the physical body is the adrenal glands.
10. All chakras affect corresponding physical organs and physical body parts. The first or root chakra affects the immune system, rectum, bones and bone marrow, base of spine.
11. Each chakra corresponds to an emotional aspect in the human experience. The first or root chakra's main issue is survival
12. Each chakra, when in balance, calls into action a personal right. The first chakra, the root chakra calls into action our right to have."

13. Every chakra also has a corresponding astrological sign or signs and planets. The first chakra corresponds with the astrological signs of Aries, Taurus, Scorpio and Capricorn, and the planets Mars, Pluto and Saturn.

SECOND CHAKRA: SACRAL CHAKRA

The second chakra is also known as the sacral chakra and corresponds with the element of water. It is located in the lower abdomen about two inches below the navel.

1. The second chakra's Sanskrit name is Svadhisthans.
2. The second chakra's ancient symbol is a circle surrounded by six lotus petals.
3. The second chakra's corresponding color in the auric field is Orange.
4. The musical note corresponding to the second chakra is D.
5. The Hindu or Vedic Mantra for the second or sacral chakra is Vam.
6. The corresponding sensory experience in the physical body for the second or sacral chakra is that of Taste.
7. The corresponding natural essential Oils for the second or sacral chakra are Jasmine, Rosemary, Neroli, Ylang Ylang.
8. The corresponding crystals and minerals for the second or sacral chakra are Moonstone, Citrine, Topaz, Amber.
9. The corresponding hormonal gland in the physical body for the second or sacral chakra is the Pancreas.
10. The corresponding organs the sacral or second chakra affects are the bladder, kidneys, pelvis, lymphatic system, ovaries & testes.
11. The main psychic issues the second chakra affects are one's emotions and sexuality.
12. The corresponding personal right of the second or sacral is "to feel."
13. The corresponding astrological signs for the second or sacral chakra are Libra, Cancer, Scorpio, and the planets Venus and Pluto.

THIRD CHAKRA: SOLAR PLEXUS

The third chakra, known as the Solar Plexus corresponds with the element of fire. It is located below the sternum, over the stomach region.

1. The Sanskrit Name for the third chakra is "Manipura."
2. The ancient symbol for the third chakra is a circle surrounded by ten Lotus petals and within it a triangle.
3. The corresponding color for the third chakra, the solar plexus is Yellow.
4. The corresponding musical note for the third chakra, the solar plexus is E.
5. The Hindu or Vedic Mantra for the third chakra, the solar plexus is RAM.
6. The corresponding sensory experience in the physical body for the solar plexus is that of Vision.
7. The natural essential oils for the third chakra, the solar plexus are Juniper, Lemon, Bergamot, and Grapefruit.
8. The natural corresponding crystals and minerals for the third chakra are Yellow Topaz, Tigers Eye, and Citrine.
9. The corresponding hormonal glands in the physical body for the third chakra are also the pancreas and adrenals.
10. The corresponding organs the third chakra, the solar plexus affects are the respiratory system, stomach, liver, gallbladder, spleen, small intestine, lower back, and sympathetic nervous system.
11. The main corresponding psychic issue of the third chakra or solar plexus is that of personal power and the right to act.
12. The corresponding astrological signs for the third chakra, or solar plexus are Leo, Sagittarius, Virgo, planets mercury Jupiter, Mars.

FOURTH CHAKRA: HEART CHAKRA

The heart chakra corresponds with the element of air. It is located in the chest area at the cardiac plexus region.

1. The Sanskrit Name for the heart chakra is Anahatra.
2. The ancient symbol for the heart chakra is a circle surrounded by 12 lotus petals, within it a six-pointed star.
3. The corresponding colors for the heart chakra are Pink for romantic, emotional, aspect of the heart, and green for wise, sage compassion.
4. The corresponding musical note for the fourth chakra, the heart chakra is F.
5. The Hindu or Vedic Mantra for the heart chakra is Yam.
6. The corresponding sensory experience in the physical body for the fourth chakra, the heart chakra is Touch.
7. The corresponding essential oils for the fourth chakra, the heart chakra are Rose, Carnation, and Sandalwood.
8. The corresponding crystals and minerals for the heart chakra are Rose quartz, Rhodonite, Emerald, and Diamond.
9. The corresponding Hormonal Gland in the physical body for the heart chakra is the Thymus gland.
10. The corresponding organs in the physical body for the fourth chakra, the heart chakra are the Heart and circulation, immune system, skin, lungs, bronchial tubes.
11. The main psychic issues corresponding to the heart chakra are relationships, and love and the right to love openly and be loved.
12. The corresponding astrological signs for the fourth chakra are Libra, Leo and Sagittarius, Planets Venus, Saturn, Sun.

FIFTH CHAKRA: THROAT CHAKRA

The fifth chakra, also known as the throat chakra corresponds with the element of ether. This may be looked at as dew in the early morning, or the aura of all things contained in physical form. It is located at the throat area, slightly below the Adams apple.

1. The Sanskrit Nam for the fifth or throat chakra is Vissudha (purification.)
2. The ancient symbol for the fifth or throat chakra is a circle surrounded by the 16 lotus petals and inside it a circle containing a triangle.
3. The corresponding color the fifth, or throat chakra is the color Sky blue
4. The corresponding musical note for the fifth or throat chakra is G.
5. The Hindu or Vedic Mantra for the fifth or throat chakra is Ham.
6. The corresponding sensory experience for the fifth or throat chakra in the physical body is the sense of Hearing.
7. The corresponding essential oils for the fifth or throat chakra are Lavender.
8. The corresponding crystals and minerals for the fifth or throat chakra are Aquamarine, turquoise, and blue quartz.
9. The corresponding Hormonal Gland on the physical body for the fifth or throat chakra is the Thyroid and Parathyroid.
10. The corresponding organs in the physical body for the fifth or throat chakra thyroid, neck, vocal cords, mouth, teeth, gums, jaw, ears, muscle.
11. The main psychic issues for the fifth chakra are communication, self-discipline and expression, truth fullness with the right to speak.
12. The corresponding astrological signs for the fifth or throat chakra are Taurus, Gemini, Aquarius, Planets Venus, Mercury, Uranus and Mars.

SIXTH CHAKRA: BROW CHAKRA

The sixth or brow chakra corresponds with the element of light. It is located between the

eyebrows middle of brain at Pituitary gland.

1. The Sanskrit Name for the sixth, or brow chakra is (ASNA) to perceive.
2. The ancient symbol for the sixth or brow chakra is a circle surrounded on each side by two large lotus petals (or a lotus with 96 petals) and inside it a triangle.
3. The corresponding color for the sixth or brow chakra is deep indigo blue.
4. The corresponding musical note for the sixth chakra is A.
5. The Hindu or Vedic Mantra for the sixth or brow chakra is AUM.
6. The corresponding sensory experience in the physical body for the sixth or brow chakra is Intuition.
7. The corresponding essential oils for the sixth or brow chakra are Geranium, sweet pea, and lavender.
8. The corresponding crystals & minerals for the sixth or brow chakra are Lapidolite, Azurite, amethyst, lapis lazuli.
9. The corresponding Hormonal Gland for the sixth or brow chakra is the Pituitary Gland.
10. The corresponding organs for the sixth or brow chakra are Brain, nervous system, and Pineal pituitary, gluons sinuses.
11. The main psychic issues corresponding to the sixth chakra are mental clarity, sharp intellect, and the ability to "see" clearly and the right to see.
12. The astrological signs corresponding to the sixth or brow chakra are Sagittarius, Pisces, Aquarius and the planets Jupiter, Uranus, Mercury and Neptune.

SEVENTH CHAKRA: CROWN CHAKRA

The seventh chakra, also known as the crown chakra corresponds with the element of transcends/cosmos connection. It is located at the cerebral cortex, midpoint of the sagittal suture, or in other words, at the highest point on your head.

1. The Sanskrit name for the seventh or crown chakra is Sahasrara (thousand fold.)
2. The ancient symbol for the seventh or crown chakra is the Thousand Petal Lotus (thousand petal lotus)
3. The corresponding color for the seventh or crown chakra is White/gold or violet/silver.
4. The corresponding musical note for the seventh or crown chakra is B.
5. The Hindu or Vedic mantra for the crown chakra is AAHH.
6. The corresponding sensory experience for the crown chakra is Transcendence, or in other words the ability to remain in the world but be unaffected by it.
7. The corresponding essential oils for the seventh or crown chakra are Jasmine, frankincense, lotus.
8. The corresponding crystals and minerals for the seventh or crown chakra are Moldavite, diamonds, amethyst, clear quartz.
9. The corresponding Hormonal gland for the seventh or crown chakra is the Pineal gland.
10. The corresponding organs in the physical body to the seventh or crown chakra are the Central nervous system, muscular and skeletal system.
11. The main psychic issue surrounding the seventh or crown chakra is Spiritual awakening, the understanding that we are not physical, but rather eternal Spiritual beings in temporary physical form and the corresponding right is the right to know.
12. The corresponding astrological signs to the seventh or crown chakra are Capricorn and Pisces, and the planets Saturn, and Neptune.

Energetic Heart for Yoga Teachers – Our Collective Power

by Shiva Rea

Every teacher can feel the shift that happens in the midst of teaching when the collective energy in the class begins to synch. It is a palpable sense of connectedness – a heightened quality of flow as movement, breath, and embodied awareness come into flow. As you may know and feel, our heart has a tremendous role in such shifts of consciousness that we feel at the heart of yoga.



I have spent the last three years immersed in writing about the syncopating power of heart rhythm in creating individual and collective states of flow whether we are in stillness or in motion. I researched the world's spiritual traditions from the Judeo-Christian to Sufi culture, and across the traditions of yoga from the Vedas to early Tantras and found a universal vision of a "heartfire" or the energetic heart. Despite several hundred years of a limited concept of the heart as purely a cardiovascular pump, western science is returning to an understanding of an energetic heart and can now measure the electromagnetic field of the heart which not only extends beyond our body but has a central role in creating individual and collective flow ([Heart Math Institute](#)).



When we come together, the electromagnetic field of our heart begins to "sense or read" the heart rhythm of each other. This happens naturally as heart rhythms either begin to syncopate together to create a sense of "coherence" or "dissonance" between people, i.e. harmony or resistance.

Through the process of writing my latest book, "[Tending the Heart Fire – Living in Rhythm with the Pulse of Life](#)", I have begun to see how practical and effective the techniques of yoga are in accessing the energetic heart not only in creating internal flow but in collective flow. I began to understand meditation is the syncopation of our three primary rhythms – breathflow, heartrhythm, and our brainwaves. We these rhythms are in synch, we are at our highest state of functioning – individually and collectively and our heart organ literally serves as the rhythmic conductor always trying to bring us into a state of harmony or "yoga". The shadow side of human nature in approaching life as a competition effects the yoga room, teachers and studios. Within the "business of yoga", we need ways to cut-through this tendency of separation and subtle dissonance. Creating community and drawing upon the practice of yoga in collective flow is one of the smart and most rewarding ways of sustaining your classes and studios.

In 2007, I started the [Global Mala Project](#) to connect the larger community of practitioners beyond any one school or style of yoga to practice forms of a "mala" or 108 for [UN International Peace Day](#) to raise consciousness and funds. From large-scale gatherings in Newark, NJ and Washington D.C. to over 40 countries around the world, the Global Mala has continued as an open process that any yoga teacher-studio can join in your own way as a free event or in a

regular 1.5 – 3 hour class or as a fundraiser to support any organization that connects to your community.

Since leading Yoga Mala (108 Surya Namaskar, meditation cycles, mantra) practices all over the world in the last two decades, I have experienced some of the most profound collective experiences in these 1-3 hour Yoga Mala practices of unified breath. The activation of the collective energetic heart may sound corny but it is a palpable energetic shift that raises consciousness and community.

In my soon to be released book, “Tending the Heart Fire: Living in Flow with the Pulse of Life”, I discuss how to practice or lead a Yoga Mala. Whether you bring teachers together in one studio or amongst many, you will feel the support and renewal of the heart of yoga when the news of the day is often so disheartening. We must massage the dissonance that is so easy to reinforce and draw upon the power of yoga practice for the revitalization of our energetic heart – individually and collectively. May we our inspiration keep the inner fire of our practice, teaching and studios in vitality.

~ Shiva Rea, prAna Ambassador



Mudras

Divine Embrace Mudra

Mudras are kriyas for the hands. I have been doing a specific Mudra (sacred hand position) for years without realizing it was a form of Mudra. I have decided to call this mudra I have been given: The Divine Embrace Mudra. Courtesy of Wikipedia, a **mudrā** is a symbolic or ritual gesture in [Hinduism](#) and [Buddhism](#). While some mudrās involve the entire body, most are performed with the hands and fingers. **Mudrā** ([Sanskrit](#)) is a 'spiritual gesture' and energetic 'seal of authenticity' employed in the [iconography](#) and [sadhana](#) of [Dharmic Traditions](#) and [Taoic Traditions](#); particularly those influenced by [Tantra](#), [Shinto](#) and [Shamanism](#).

There are acupressure points in our hands that when pressed send healing effects to all parts of our body. Each part of the hand correlates to a part of our body. This is amazing. This is another positive effect from just practicing Mudras. The effects are physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. This I'm sure is Divine and part of the reason for the variety of mudras in existence now. As your practice performing mudras you are opening up your heart and soul to higher energies. And we do these so naturally. Mudras in certain positions will activate one side of your Kundalini rising and in the opposite formation another side of your Kundalini is activated. This is why many Kundalinites are doing certain hand mudras whether they choose to or not. Shakti takes over and assists your body to do what it needs best. Most of you will notice mudras coming to you naturally as well in your ascension process. And sometimes you are not drawn to perform mudras at all and that is perfectly divine as well. Allow and enjoy.

Next I will explain the mudra divinely given to me as well as a couple more that you may be drawn to use during yoga, healings and meditation.



The Namaste Mudra/Anjali Mudra: In yoga, we often use this mudra as a Salutation Seal. We are all aware of the prayer position or Namaste Mudra at the heart center. This is one of my favorites! I will do this often and usually will (as in yoga) bring this up to my third eye and back down to my heart. An amazing deep connection is felt from within when I practice this mudra and motion. Do this slowly and over time you will feel something triggered by this motion. I, occasionally, use this same movement with the Divine Embrace Mudra as well (described next). We will use this mudra during various parts of the ceremony.



The Divine Embrace Mudra: To connect to our “Diamond Body” or Light body assisting in our ascension. The Divine Temple mudra is exactly as is shown to the left. The hand position: Hands held at chest level; index fingers on both hands are raised, touching each other; remaining fingers are crossed and folded down; thumbs are crossed and folded or are touching each other at tips. The index fingers are then placed further down in a position of a triangle and brought down a bit making a temple or diamond shape. This mudra is to be used in various stages of the Ceremony and as you feel you are drawn to use it.

I've found that while utilizing this hand position I am filled with energy, forever connected, and at peace.

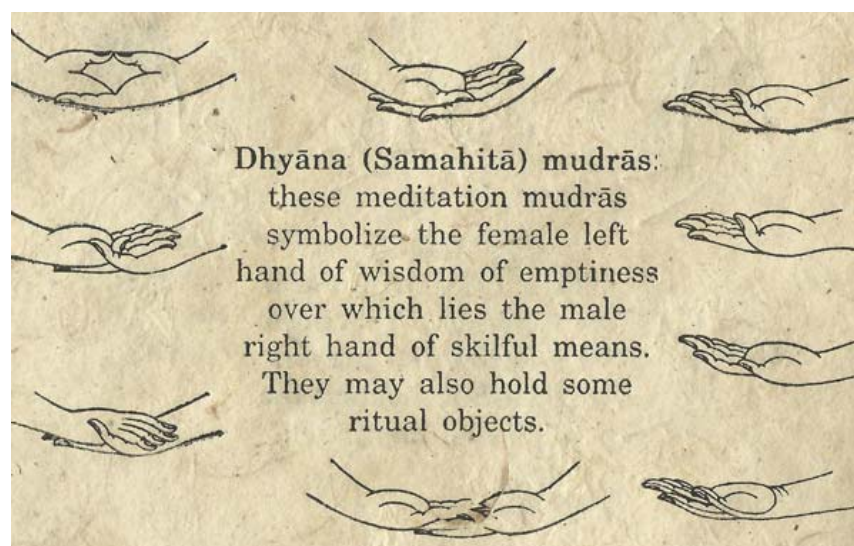
Some people cannot actually physically do the Divine Embrace Mudra, so the Namaste Mudra or the following Mudra are both excellent alternates. The following hand mudra is slightly different than the one I have been doing. It is very similar. So if you are unable to connect with the Divine Embrace

Mudra you may do the Enlightenment or Temple Mudra to follow or simply place your hands in prayer position. Do what you feel guided. All three Mudras are beautiful in connecting.



The Enlightenment or Yoga Temple Mudra: Mudra of Supreme Enlightenment – The hand position: Hands held at chest level; index fingers on both hands are raised, touching each other; remaining fingers are crossed and folded down; thumbs are crossed and folded or are touching each other at tips. This represents All-Encompassing Buddha, Life force who illuminates the Universe, etc. This mudra is often used in Yoga (asana practice) and called the Temple Mudra. The

hand position: Hands held usually up or in different positions depending on the yoga pose; index fingers on both hands are raised, touching each other; the difference in the Yoga Temple mudra is that sometimes the thumbs are touching each other and *facing out* like the index fingers; remaining fingers are crossed and folded down. You will feel if it resonates for you or not. Do it simply when you feel guided.



symbol	mudra	chakra	place on the ladder
		Surrounding chakra (unknowable) Hekate	the Ori of Ori God herself the ground of our being
		Auric chakra (ultraviolet) Hestia	the Emi of Ori the gods speaking to us as we see them our mission in life
		Crown chakra (violet) Kore	the Vivi of Ori releases obsession allows calm abiding receives messages from the gods
		Third eye chakra (indigo blue) Psyche	the Ori of Emi releases confusion/ignorance allows knowledge of true will and courage to connect with the gods
		Throat Chakra (turquoise) Neith	the Emi of Emi releases misunderstanding/hatred allows clear communication and creativity in relationships
		Heart Chakra (green) Isis	the Vivi of Emi releases apathy/non-engagement allows love and pleasure in relationship
		Solar plexus Chakra (yellow) Tanit	the Ori of Vivi releases fear/anxiety/guilt/shame allows courage and pleasure in one's own accomplishments
		Sacral Chakra (orange) Anat	the Emi of Vivi releases anger/resentment allows creative force and pleasure in creativity
		Root Chakra (red) Gula	the Vivi of Vivi releases frustration/blockages allows healing, manifestation and physical pleasure

mudra meditation

10 Powerful Mudras and How to Use Them

By Leo Carver



In the practice of Yoga, you are encouraged to use your body in many ways, but ultimately with the intention of drawing yourself inward. Mudras are powerful tools for accomplishing this. The term *mudra* applies to the use of hand gestures during meditation that carry specific goals of channeling your body's energy flow. There are more than 100 known [mudras](#) that have been developed over the centuries. Here are 10 commonly used mudras that have been championed for centuries for their efficiency in providing health and empowerment.

The Elemental Structure of the Hand

The ancient sages could intuit the presence of the five elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth) in the human body. Our hands are thought to hold energetic points for these elements and thus the use of mudras is a way of manipulating these elements. Within the hand gestures, there not only connecting principles at play but also freeing actions taking place depending on the mudra.

- **Thumb: Space**
- **Index Finger: Air**
- **Middle Finger: Fire**
- **Ring Finger: Water**
- **Pinky Finger: Earth**

1. Gyan



This is probably the most familiar mudra in mainstream society. Meditators are often seen pairing this mudra with their practice. The intention of the *Gyan* mudra is to improve your concentration and sharpen your memory. This is a great mudra to use when seeking to gain knowledge. Try holding this mudra while meditating for insight into your life or a specific issue.

Method: This mudra is performed by touching your index fingertip to the tip of your thumb, while holding your other three fingers straight.

Elements: Space + Air

2. Buddhi



This mudra is used for mental clarity. You perform this gesture when you need to understand intuitive messages from your subconscious (i.e., dreams or meditations that puzzle you). One of the most powerful benefits of this mudra can be found in the improvement of communication, such as improving internal and external dialogue.

Method: This mudra is performed by touching your thumb to your pinky finger, while holding your other three fingers straight.

Elements: Space + Earth

3. Shuni (or Shoonya)



This gesture is used to improve intuition, alertness, and sensory powers. It also purifies your emotions and thoughts.

Method: This mudra is performed by touching the tip of the middle finger to the thumb tip, while keeping the other three fingers straight and relaxed.

Elements: Space + Fire

4. Prana

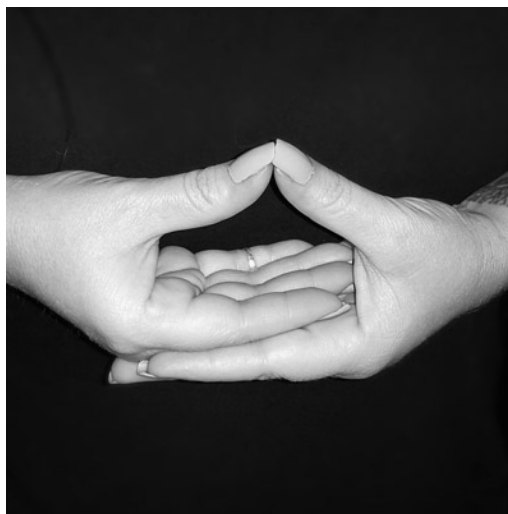


The *Prana* mudra is said to be one of the most important mudras due to its ability to activate dormant energy in your body. [Prana](#) is the vital life force within all living things. This mudra will help awaken and enliven your personal prana, and put you more in tune with the prana around you.

Method: Perform this mudra by touching your ring and pinky fingers to the tip of your thumb, while keeping the other two fingers straight.

Elements: Space+ Water

5. Dhyana



The *Dhyana* mudra is shared across several eastern meditation disciplines. The Buddha is often pictured doing this gesture. The significance of this mudra is to bring you into deeper, more profound concentration. This gesture can also help bring you tranquility and inner peace.

Method: To do the *Dhyana* mudra, simply sit with your hands facing upward, right hand resting on top of your left palm. The right hand, representing enlightenment and higher spiritual faculties, rests over the left hand, representing the world of maya, or illusion.

Elements: All

6. Surya



The *Surya* mudra is intended to increase the [solar/fire element](#) in the body and improve metabolism and digestion. It is also useful in reducing heaviness in the body and to help ward off colds, since it increases core body temperature.

Method: Perform this mudra by bending your ring finger to the base of your thumb so that your thumb touches the ring finger's knuckle. Stretch your other three fingers straight without stressing the hand.

Elements: Space+ Water

7. Apana



The *Apana* mudra is good for mental or physical digestion and for eliminating waste material from the body. This gesture may also be a form of aiding in mental and emotional digestion when applied to “evil” outside of the body.

Method: To do this posture, bring your second and third fingers to your thumb. The way you position your fingers may differ depending on the discipline you are learning from. Some say that you should rest the two fingers just slightly behind the tip of the thumb, but in many depictions, this mudra is demonstrated by bringing the middle and ring finger to the tip of the thumb.

Elements: Space+ Fire+ Water

8. Ganesha



The *Ganesha* mudra is widely used and is named after the Hindu Ganesh. Ganesha is said to be a remover of obstacles. Similarly, this mudra is great for relieving yourself of all types of obstructions in your life; it can help you regain positivity and courage when dealing with hard times. By performing this mudra, you bring your attention and energy into the heart center, opening up your lungs and heart to the subject of your meditation.

Aside from the mental and spiritual benefits on your heart chakra, the pulling motion is also beneficial to your cardiac muscles and good for tension in this area of the body.

Method: Place your left hand in front of your chest with your palm facing outward and left thumb down. Next, place your right hand in front of your left with your right palm facing toward you and your left palm. Lock your fingers together, holding them in a half-bent position like a claw.

During your meditation, inhale deep, holding your hands in this gesture, then pull outwardly on your hands as you exhale without unlocking your fingers. Repeat this motion up to six times, then reverse the gesture (i.e., put your right hand in front of your chest facing outward with the thumb down). Be sure to perform this mudra the same number of times in each direction to maintain the balance of the pulling act.

Elements: All

9. Vayu



The *Vayu* mudra is good for diseases related to air imbalances, such as gas-related pain, flatulence, joint pain, bloating, and abdominal discomfort. This mudra helps regulate [Vata-related issues](#), both mental and physical, relieving them by bringing your air element back into its proper flow.

Method: At first glance, this mudra may seem very similar to the *Gyan* mudra. The difference is the Vayu has you connect the thumb to the knuckle or hump of the index finger, as opposed to the fingertip in Gyan. Press down on the index finger to your level of comfort; this gesture is intended to relax not strain the joint. For optimal results, do your [Pranayama exercises](#) while holding this mudra.

Elements: Space + Air

10. Rudra










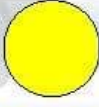













This mudra is often associated with [Shiva](#) as it applies to your internal transformative abilities. The word *Rudra* means "lord" in Sanskrit, which is fitting for this gesture because the main benefits affect your personal power center—the solar plexus. It is said to improve clarity and concentration of thought. Often this mudra is prescribed for those dealing with dizziness, exhaustion, and chronic tension in their body. You can use the Rudra mudra (say that out loud for a laugh) to energize your physical body and empower you to reach your highest potential or goals.

Method: To do this mudra, connect your thumb to your index and ring fingers while keeping your other two fingers as straight as you can.

Elements: Space + Air + Water

Chakra Cleansing & Balancing Mudras & Mantras

While SEATED in Easy Pose (Cross-Legged on the Floor), VISUALIZE the CHAKRA LOCATION: its COLOUR and REPEAT the MANTRA for 3 MINUTES for EACH CHAKRA: beginning with Root Chakra...

<u>CHAKRA NAMES, PURPOSE & LOCATION</u>	<u>MUDRA</u>	<u>PROCEDURE</u>	<u>MANTRA & CHAKRA COLOUR</u>	<u>CHAKRA SYMBOL</u>
1. ROOT CHAKRA MULADHARA (SURVIVAL) Base of Spine, on Perineum.		Thumb & Index fingers touch. Arms Straight, hands on knees. Chakra Sound... Long L-A-A-A-M.	 LAM	
2. SACRAL CHAKRA SWADHISTHANA (CREATIVITY) Hips		Place Hands in your lap with your palms facing upwards, right palm resting on top of left. Chakra Sound... Long V-A-A-A-M.	 VAM	
3. SOLAR PLEXUS CHAKRA MANIPURA (WILL POWER) Two-Inches Below Naval		Place Hands between your heart and your stomach. Chakra Sound... Long R-A-A-A-M.	 RAM	
4. HEART CHAKRA ANAHATA (LOVE) Heart		Right Hand: Index finger and thumb touching at Heart Centre. Left Hand in same Mudra resting on the Knee. Chakra Sound... Long Y-A-A-A-M.	 YAM	
5. THROAT CHAKRA VISHUDDHA (EXPRESSION) Throat		Hands by Stomach, fingers interlaced and thumb tips touching. Focus on Throat Chakra. Chakra Sound... Long H-A-A-A-M.	 HAM	
6. THIRD EYE CHAKRA AJNA (INTUITION, WISDOM) Third Eye		Hands in front of the lower part of your breast, Middle fingers stand up tips touching, other fingers bent at first joint as shown. Chakra Sound... Long A-A-A-U-U-M.	 AUM	
7. CROWN CHAKRA SAHASRARA (SPIRITUAL CONNECTION) Crown		Hands in front of your stomach, fingers interlaced, Little fingers pointing upwards. Chakra Sound... Long A-A-A-A-N-G.	 ANG	

©Copyright rosykaur.com. All Rights Reserved.

Index to mudras-Mudras for emotional well-being

Acceptance
Acceptance mudra

Calmness
4 mudra
Gyan mudra

Acceptance Mudra



Hand position

The index finger is folded into the space between the thumb and this finger, so that the nail touches the fold. The outer lower corner of the thumb's nail touches the inner lower corner of the pinky finger's nail.

Emotional / spiritual use
To overcome sadness or an unnecessary resistance to situations, this mudra can help to get into a mood of acceptance.

Concentration
4 mudra
Gyan mudra
Hakini mudra
Intuition
Bhudy mudra

Ahamkara Mudra



Hand position

Bend index fingers slightly and put the upper phalanx of the thumb to the side of the middle phalanx of the index finger, at the upper part. Other fingers are straight.

Emotional / spiritual use
Self-confidence and self-assertion. For counteracting fear and timidity.

Energy
4 mudra
Apan mudra
Pran mudra
Prithvi mudra

Apan Mudra



Hand position

Join the middle finger and the ring finger with the tip of the thumb; the forefinger and the little finger should be held upright.

Physical use
Moves energy to the periphery of the body. This may help with constipation and urinary problems.

Emotional / spiritual use
Gives energy and makes one more self-confident.

Fear
Ahamkara mudra
Grounding
Gyan mudra

Back Pain Mudra



Hand position

Right hand: The thumb, middle and pinky fingers touch. Ring and index finger are extended. Left hand: Put the thumb's upper phalanx over the nail of the index finger.

Physical use
Back pain, and particularly of the lower back, can be a sore feeling. When muscles start cramping, it can become very painful. This mudra helps against this escalation.

Patience
Shuni mudra
Self-confidence
Ahamkara mudra
Apan mudra

Stability
4 mudra
Prithvi mudra
Timidity
Ahamkara mudra

Bhudy Mudra



Hand position

The tips of the pinky finger and thumb touch.

Emotional / spiritual use
Improves feeling and intuition.

Gyan Mudra



Hand position

The tips of the thumb and index finger touch, other fingers are straight but relaxed.

Emotional / spiritual use
Stimulates the Root chakra, and grounds. Calms and improves concentration.

Hakini Mudra



Hand position

Let the tips of the corresponding fingers of each hand touch.

Emotional / spiritual use
People tend to naturally put their fingers in this position while talking. This helps to concentrate.

Pran Mudra



Hand position

The tips of the pinky and ring finger touch with the tip of the thumb.

Emotional / spiritual use
Gives energy.

Prithvi Mudra



Hand position

The tip of the ring finger and thumb touch.

Emotional / spiritual use
Increases energy, and fosters a sense of inner stability and self-assurance.

Shuni Mudra



Hand position

The tips of the middle finger and thumb touch.

Emotional / spiritual use
Helps being aware of the moment, and thereby makes one more patient.

Set of four mudras for balancing energy



Emotional / spiritual use

The overall effect is that you get calmer, more relaxed and concentrated.

The separate mudras (hand positions) have the following effects:

Thumb touches tip of index finger: Opens the Root chakra, and moves more energy to the legs and lower body. Makes one calmer and more concentrated.

Thumb touches tip of middle finger: Fosters patience.

Thumb touches tip of ring finger: Energy, stability and self-confidence.

Thumb touches tip of pinky finger: Intuition and feeling.

Hand position Execution

This is a simple way of balancing your energy that you can do almost anywhere, while sitting, standing, walking, lying down. Set of four mudras for balancing energy that are used in a sequence. Alternately touch the tips of each finger with the tip of your thumb. Keep each connected for a few seconds or longer and do for a few minutes total. Do this with both hands simultaneously.



Mantras, Chanting & Music

Mantras, Chanting and Music

Music is a key factor to resonance and **many** underlying factors. It plays a part in everything we do. It's what assists Yoga and meditations in being so melodic and powerful. Music is why I am a fan of the workout I practice called Turbo Jam and Turbo Fire, as it keeps me going. Turbo Jam and Turbo Fire, created by Chalene Johnson, includes martial arts with a twist of dance that includes upbeat dance music to the beat of every move you make. Music snaps us out of a bad mood, uplifts us and gets us in a better mood. It's what gets our emotions out when we need a release. It's what keeps us jazzed for higher better ways of being and living. Music is Divine resonance at its best.

I have been guided to using Chanting, Mantras and Seed Mantras throughout my awakening and find them to be so beautiful in reaching powerful, blissful states of being. Chanting can also be beneficial for intentions and manifesting. There are many mantras all over the world that may or may not be a part of a religion. Sound, also, correlates to various locations in our body and while we actually create the sound with our vocal cords, there are different key elements in our brain and body that are triggered for profound vibrational effects depending on the tone. So the mantras hold much power and healing when said aloud. Not only that, as you carry your voice outward, you are carrying sound out into the Universe. Each sound and voice is unique. Each person's voice holds a unique vibration. And as you talk, sing or chant you are projecting your unique sound frequencies out into the Universe. Some feel heavenly sounds are what created the Universe. Sacred geometry is held within sound and certain sounds emitted activates sacred geometry. Silence holds a sound vibration as well. Listen to the space between. Sound is extremely powerful and most of us are blessed with a voice that can provide its own vibration to the whole.

In a *Divine Cosmic Message* I recently channeled I talk of the **power of sound**: I see a visual of me lying back against a tree gazing at the stars during a peaceful starlit night. There's still so much happening energetically (as there always will be). We're still in the midst of big energy. A Divine Cosmic heart opening doesn't just go away. Thank goodness. It's miraculous and bigger than just one of us. It's within us and outside of us. It's the inward opening to the outward energy flowing in.

Today I worked with the galactic golden central sun energy flow into me during my chakra balancing. When I reach my heart an amazing deeply penetrating energy opens my heart like a blossoming flower. I see my Blue, my extraterrestrial 5D guide. But instead of coming to me as blue in color, she is green! Since she usually comes to me all blue, I named her **Blue**. A few days ago Blue came to me all purple. I realized today Blue is a chameleon that changes colors depending upon the chakra being cleansed. How cool is that! I've asked my guides to be blunt with me and hold nothing back that I need to know. So this is a very easy way to tell me what's being cleared.

My throat chakra is also penetrated today. It's very much my throat chakra/my voice communicating the authentic truth sent to me from the Universe through the emerald green heart. We must speak from heart. The heart is the center of our being and where we truly tap into what's real within us, our desires and the Cosmic Heart center.

When I initially connected with my guide, Blue, a few months ago, we connected third eye to third eye and suddenly I heard sound. Just sound from within. Blue communicates telepathically through sound. Sound is in everything. Potent, powerful and healing. Music transforms you in a moment. It can take you back, change your emotions from uplifted to down or angry to filled with love. It's time tap into our sound tools we have all around us for powerful upliftment! Singing bowls, drums, chanting, singing...just everything! Even if you're deaf, sound can heal. The vibrations emitted from sound transforms, cleanses and clears. Feel it within.

Find powerful healing sounds that keep you uplifted and cleared during these powerful ascension times. The cleansing that happens with sound is magical and can be immediate!

As I said, let's tap into the Power of Sound. From singing bowls, the rhythm of the drum, to emotionally moving music you love and Divine mantras and chanting...all are methods to utilize at this time to align your energy to the highest of the high. Steer clear of negative songs even if the

melody is nice, the words have an effect on us. Dr. Emoto has done powerful studies on water with sound and words. The more uplifting the music, words, and sounds the more beautiful the crystals formed in the water. The more chaotic and negative the sound and words the more gross and icky the formations become in the water. We are made up of mostly water! So think positive, listen to uplifting sounds and even write positive words on your body and the water you drink to keep layering the magic. Sound penetrates deep into our soul. Divine clearings can be felt as you listen and/or actively chant.

We can choose chants in Sanskrit or a dialect called Gurmukhi. When choose Divine chants you may choose a simple but powerful chant, such as: Om (the sound of the Universe), or more lengthy chants like Sa Ta Na Ma (Satnam extended and much like Om in its meaning...I love Sa Ta Na Ma by Mirabai Ceiba), or Aad Guray Nameh, Jugaad Guray Nameh, Sat Guray Nameh, Siri Guroo Dayvay Nameh (Aad Guray Nameh by Jai-Jagdeesh is POWERFUL penetrating my heart every time I listen. This is a protection mantra aligning you with the truth of Divine Wisdom).

Mantras are mini-meditations. There have been clinical studies. They have been scientifically proven to reduce stress. They change your brains chemistry. They can move your brain from sadness to happiness, from anxiety to peace. In the word Mantra, ‘Man’ means “mind” and ‘tra’ means “free from”. So the work of the Mantras means to free you from your mind and get back into the heart space. In ancient traditions, we repeat mantras 108 times. Why repeat the mantras 108 times. In this ancient tradition, we are said to have 108 chakras, centers or channels in the body. Those channels are Nadi’s. 108 Nadi or channels in the body. When you recite this mantra 108 times you literally are pushing that energy, that sound into all 108 energy centers in the body. When all of the energy centers are full, it is an automatic alignment. Set the intention that every time you recite the mantra it will go into all 108 energy centers, then recite the mantra 108 times and sit quietly for a minute to integrate. Just allow that to happen within you. You can use a mala that has 108 beads to keep track of how many mantras you have done. The center bead is called the guru bead and is not a part of the 108 beads. It’s a little larger than the rest to help you know where to begin and when to stop.

For each sound you make there is a Chakra it is resonating with to cleanse and remove blockages. Certain notes and sounds are designated for each of the seven main Chakras. When you make these sounds you are sending healing frequencies to those Chakras. For example, in one school of Bijja Mantra the mantra “Lam” or “Lang” is used for cleansing the root Chakra. In the western school of sound you may use the deep “Uh” sound for the root Chakra. The vowel sounds create different harmonics which correspond to the Chakras. There are many variations depending on where you look for your information. Choose what feels best and true to your soul.

Connect with your spiritual power through Divine resonance. Chanting allows you to be in the moment while balancing your mind, body, emotions and breath. Not only are you raising your vibrations, your energy system is, also, cleansed for a deeper connection during a chanting meditation. What you chant is not as important as your willingness to be fully in the moment of chanting itself. Chanting is practiced all over the world. Chanting has tremendous benefits for your entire being. As you chant in the moment, you feel joy. Chanting also produces natural painkillers within the brain.

I’ve also had the privilege of experiencing healing drum circles. One of those experiences was during my Soul Coaching® training at Denise Linn’s Summer Hill Ranch up on the hill in the dance barn at dusk. We all gathered together in a circle and Denise Linn led us through some ancient drum circle beats and pretty soon we were all playing our drums and feeling alive. We then went into a beautiful technique with Su and Edward, Reiki Masters also in the Soul Coaching® Training course with me. They showed us how we can easily incorporate Reiki or any healing energy of thoughts and prayers into the drumming. Each person receiving a Reiki drum healing will stand in the center. Two to four people giving the healing will stand around the receiver. The practitioner can use a drum that is circular with a 3.5 inch deep frame providing excellent resonance, with braided cords used for cross bracing. Face the inside of the drum towards the receiver and start drumming. Keep the inside of the drum facing the receiver and the healing energies and loving intentions are sent through the

vibrational resonance of the drum to the receiver. While hitting the drum the practitioners will circle around the receiver, moving the drum up and down, over the receivers head and wherever they are magical drawn to drum. A full healing of drum vibrations and Reiki is very powerful! Giving is just as healing as receiving. That night I was more awake than ever!

I am lucky to also have a powerful drummer for a Husband. His drumming is uniquely methodic, melodic and spiritually transforming. Drum therapy is powerful for many people. The rhythm of the drum gets you up, gets you moving, gets you releasing and transmuting the old stagnant energy. You feel more alive. You feel renewed. You feel your divine spirit awaken when you let go, let loose and drum.

Healing through sound holds powerful results. Sound healing comes in many forms from music to playing different instruments like drumming, to song, chanting, vibrational machines, etc. Music can take you to new places and new dimensions of reality. Music can uplift your soul and it can bring sadness to you in an instant. Music can assist you to raise your frequency and bring your vibrations to higher blissful states.

Now, color healing is the act of visualizing colors for a desired result. There is also a variation of using color lens' on a light in order to visually see the color and heal. And if you blend sound healing with color healing there seems to be an even higher affect. Each color vibrates at a certain frequency of sound. If you visualize pink, you will also correlate that color with a sound. Research can assist you in finding the right sound for the color you desire, or rather for the desired result you can find which color and sound works for you. Explore this more if this healing path sounds intriguing to you. No one healing therapy will work for every person. Each of us are unique. So too are the paths we choose that will assist in our healing to liberation. You may heal by removing blockages through drumming, chanting, counseling, movement, breath and more. It is up to what feels right for you. What are you drawn to?

Combining sound, color, movement (like yoga) and breath gives you a powerful connection within your body to truly heal on all levels. These methods are all ways of removing the blockages (i.e. Karma) within the body.

The Daily Om gives us a great exercise for chanting, "There are many different chants. They can be composed of names, words, sounds, syllables, or even sections of text. To begin, sit comfortably with a straight back and take a series of long, deep breaths to open and flex your lungs. Then, take another breath, and with resonant tones direct your breath outward in the form of sound. Simple syllables like 'oh,' 'ee,' or 'mm' are easy to remember."

My Husband enjoys toning while in the shower. He will do as described above and tone out a tune to the sounds mentioned or whatever he is divinely drawn to tone or chant. Through utilizing your vocal cords, you emanate energy throughout your entire being that can have significant physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing benefits. Healing such as clearing out congestion from a cold to ridding yourself of a headache, to even more striking symptoms on all levels for long-term healing results.

Some Mantra's will call upon a God or deity to assist with the vibration of the mantra. In this section I share with you some of the many mantras I feel a strong connection. You may use any or all that you are called to use now and anytime!

1. Om

(Can be pronounced one of two ways: ohm or aum)



Om means God/Goddess/The Universe. The most used and easily remembered chant of **Om** is a universal wonderfully connecting mantra. It is a wonderful mantra to come back to when you find yourself too much in your mind thoughts. Simply Om them away. You can chant out loud (most powerful) or even in your mind. Both are truly healing and transcendent. This is said to be the sound of creation. Om is a beautiful mantra that when combined with the focus of the energetic center of our sixth Chakra (third eye) is a powerful tool for uniting our energies with the Universe. This Mantra brings a peaceful boundless connection to All That Is. An appreciation for your life and the interconnectedness of All That Is comes forth when chanting this mantra. I've found this mantra extremely powerful in groups (as with all mantras).

Best explained by Web Designer, Nur Karlica Iversion, of www.designbynur.com/eng/buddhascreensaver.htm, "Om' is the primal sound or vibration from which the entire universe constantly emanates. It is the sound of creative departure and return. It is thus the essence of all Mantra. The sounding of 'Om' is the beginning of a transformative process which delivers us to a state of awareness enabling us to actually experience identity with the supreme Creative Principle."

The mantras and Divine Embrace Chakra Awakening Meditation CD tie in the Sound and hearing portion of the senses for the Sacred Energy Awakening Ceremony process. While affirming out loud you are also utilizing and toning different parts of your brain and bodies. As a part of the ceremony process you will listen to the Divine Embrace Chakra Awakening Meditation CD. We are not just sitting and receiving during this Sacred Energy Awakening Ceremony. We are taking part in this important awakening. We are feeling this energy with our entire being as we receive. So as the student sits and enjoys following the steps on the CD and the process thereafter with a partner (if possible) the partner will add to the energy in your energy connection process for a higher awakening to occur; even planting a seed for building of energies and frequencies. This awakening attunement process as with everything is intention-based. As you send the energy higher you are intending and feeling the light being sitting in front of you ascending.

2. Shanti

(Śānti: Use the ah sound for the "a". Sounds like: Sh-ah-n-ti)

शान्ति

Another Mantra we may recite is the Mantra, "**Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti....Shanti Om**". Shanti simply means Peace. In Buddhism and Hinduism the threefold Shanti is generally interpreted as meaning the Threefold Peace in body, speech, and mind (i.e. peace in the entirety of one's being). Also peace within ourselves, peace with all that is of the Earth and peace with all that is beyond the Earth. A universally accepted symbol for peace or Shanti is a white dove.

Hindu teachings typically end with the words Om Shanti Shanti Shanti as an invocation of peace, and the mantra is also used to conclude some Buddhist devotional ceremonies. I have experienced this beautiful mantra at the end of yoga classes as well as during and at the end of some Puja's (Hindu ritual). If guided, I usually complete my own personal daily ritual with, "Om Shanti Shanti Shanti...Shanti Om". It feels so wonderful to chant this as an individual and most powerful as a group as well.

3. Om Mani Padme Hum: Sacred Sanskrit Blessings Mantra

(In Sanskrit form it sounds like: ohm, mah, nee, pahd, me or may, hum. And in Tibetan form is sounds like: Ohm mani peme hung.)



This is one of my favorite mantras. Simply saying this mantra emits a beautiful portal of energy. This is a Buddhist mantra meaning the jewel in the lotus. Or “The Jewel is the center of the Lotus” or “The jewel of consciousness is joined with the Heart’s Lotus”. This mantra is for healing the heart. It is said that all teachings of Buddha are contained in this prayer or mantra. Tibetan Buddhists believe that saying the mantra (prayer), **Om Mani Padme Hum**, out loud or silently to oneself, invokes the powerful benevolent attention and blessings of Chenrezig or Avalokitesvara, the Tibetan Buddha embodiment of Compassion. Viewing the written form of the mantra (as above) is said to have the same effect -- it is often carved into stones and placed where people can see them.

Spinning the written form of the mantra around in a **Mani** wheel (or prayer wheel) is also believed to give the same benefit as saying the mantra. Influenced by Tibetan Buddhism, small hand wheels and large wheels with millions of copies of the mantra inside, are found everywhere around the world. I have this mantra on a Mani wheel in the form of earrings. What’s nice is they are made to spin as well, so it truly is beneficial even in this small form. In my Feng Shui training this mantra is actually recommended to recite with your Feng Shui cures when you place them in your home. Just in reviewing this chant again I am filled with warm energy. This can be powerful.

4. Heart Sutra Mantra: Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhisvaha [Gata Gate, pāragate, pārasaṃgate, bodhi svāhā]

(Sounds like: Gatay, Gatay, Para gatay, para sum gatay, bodhi swaha)



This Mantra is a Mantra for the connection of Heart. This Mantra is of transcendent knowledge, the Mantra of deep insight, the unsurpassed Mantra, the incomparable Mantra, the Mantra which calms all suffering should be known as truth, for there is no deception. Gone, gone, gone beyond, completely gone beyond, enlightenment/awakening, Swaha means “I offer myself”. More information about this mantra and many others can be found here:

www.visiblemantra.org/heart.html. As you recite each mantra you feel the inner work and hidden meanings of each as they relate to you and your inner soul. Experiment with different ones to find which ones resonate with you at any given time.

5. Om Nama Shivaya

(Sounds like: Om Na-ma Shee Vi Yah)

“May the elements of my creation abide in me in full manifestation.” ~ Deva Pramal

6. Om Namō Niraya Nya

(Sounds like: Om Na-mo Ner-ri-ya Ni-ah)

I bow down to the Divine Spirit.

7. Om Gum Gona Pataya Namaha

(Sounds like: Om Gum Gon-a Pa-ta-ya Na-ma-ha)

Om means God. Gum is another word for Ganesh. Lord Ganesh is the remover of obstacles. Gana Pataya means I activate the oneness. You'll hear Namaha at the end of many mantras. Namaha is a sacred offering you make at the end of a mantra. This mantra is for obstacle removal.

8. Shreem

(Sounds like: Shr-eee-m)

One word mantra for Lakshmi. Lakshmi is the Goddess of abundance, prosperity and flow. Reciting this calls in prosperity for yourself. Use your Mala for manifestation. In this case, it's for abundance, prosperity and flow. It's powerful and magical.

9. Aad Guray Nameh, Jugaad Guray Nameh, Sat Guray Nameh, Siri Guroo Dayvay Nameh

(Sounds like: Aaad goo-ray naa-may, Saat goo-ray naa-may, siree goo-roo day-vay naaa-may)

Language: Gurmukhi

Source: Sukhmani Sahib (prayer of peace)

Author: Guru Arjun Dev Ji, Fifth Guru of the Sikhs

Translation:

I bow to the primal Guru
I bow to the truth that has existed throughout the ages
I bow to True Wisdom
I bow to the Great Divine Wisdom

This is a mantra of protection and is recited to invoke the protective energy of the universe. Yogi Bhajan taught that this mantra should always be chanted 3 times in a row. This mantra is chanted after tuning in to a class with the Adi Mantra. Many people chant this mantra when they need extra protection. It is part of the "triple mantra", and is often spoken before driving a car to create a protective energy around those in the car.

When you cannot be protected, this mantra shall protect you. When things stop, and won't move, this makes them move in your direction. ~ Yogi Bhajan

8. Satnam

(Sounds like: Sut Naam)

Sat Nam is often translated as ‘true name’ or ‘true vibration.’ Sat Nam is also translated as ‘Truth is my identity.’

Sat Nam is a mantra that we use when we practice Kundalini Yoga. A mantra is a sound we use to project the mind on a particular frequency.

When you speak this mantra, the word **Sat** rhymes with but. **Nam** rhymes with mom. Also, when you speak the mantra, be aware of your tongue. In English language, when we pronounce a “t” sound, the teeth hit together. When you utter the “t” in Sat, you’ll want to put your tongue into it; allow the tongue to hit the roof of the mouth.

Kundalini Yoga is a precise science, and the mantra will be most effective if chanted precisely. When chanting, be sure to bring the sounds up from your navel point, through the heart, through the throat to strike the roof of the mouth, and thus stimulate the hypothalamus in the brain. Chanting mantra is not a matter of making sounds, but a yogic experience of body awareness.

Sat Nam is often referred to as a “seed mantra,” a mantra that resonates with the wisdom that says within the seed is contained all the knowledge of the fully grown tree. So, when you plant such a seed within your consciousness, over and over and over again, your soul awakens and you are given your destiny.

Now, press your hands together at the palms and bring the thumbs to your sternum. Bow your head slightly. Inhale. And go ahead and say: **Sat Nam!**

10. Sa Ta Na Ma

(Sounds like: Saa Taa Naa Maa)

Sa Ta Na Ma is an extension of Satnam. Sa Ta Na Ma by Mirabai Ceiba is a magical version of this mantra that I play often. The description of Sa Ta Na Ma is best described in the below excerpt that also includes a beautiful way to meditate with this powerful mantra. In addition to the powerful benefits mentioned in the article below, I’m told this hand mudra shared in the below article is a part of tapping certain parts of the brain synapses that aren’t regularly fired to help stave off Alzheimer’s and dementia (best if practiced regularly early in life and earlier in the stages of this debilitating disease).

Kirtan Kriya for Evolutionary Change

by Guru Rattana, Ph.D.

Mantras are powerful tools for clearing and restructuring the subconscious mind. **SAT NAM** and its derivative SA TA NA MA are the two basic mantras taught by Yogi Bhajan to reorient the mind and thus open us up to the possibility of transformational change.

SAT NAM seeds the truth in our consciousness by waking us up to our divine identity. SAT NAM is the seed or bij mantra.

SA TA NA MA incorporates the nuclear sounds of SAT NAM. SA TA NA MA uses the primal sounds to connect us to the evolutionary nature of existence itself. It is referred to as the panch shabd, which means a mantra with five sound currents. The fifth sound is "A." When we chant SA TA NA MA we imprint the evolutionary code of the universe into our human psyche.

SA is the beginning, infinity, the totality of everything that ever was, is or will be.

TA is life, existence and creativity that manifests from infinity.

NA is death, change and the transformation of consciousness.

MA is rebirth, regeneration and resurrection which allows us to consciously experience the joy of the infinite.

SA TA NA MA is so primal that its impact on our psyche is like splitting an atom. The power of his mantra comes from the fact that it rearranges the subconscious mind at the most elementary level. It has the power to break habits and addictions because it accesses the level of the mind where habits are created.

Yogi Bhajan said that, "Behavior patterns are the result of the radiance of the psyche and frequency of the magnetic field in relationship to the universal psyche and magnetic force."

The radiance of the psyche is dependent upon the active functioning of both the pituitary and pineal glands. The pituitary gland regulates the entire glandular system. The secretion of the pineal gland creates a pulsating radiance that activates the pituitary gland. The mind goes out of balance when the pineal gland is dormant. The imbalance makes it seem impossible to break mental and physical addictions. The mantra SA TA NA MA to a powerful tool to recreate balance in the mind.

Kirtan Kriya: Sa Ta Na Ma Meditation

Kirtan Kriya, often referred to as SA TA NA MA meditation, is the most important meditation in Kundalini Yoga. It was one of the first meditations taught by Yogi Bhajan and remains today as a foundation meditation recommended for every student. Yogi Bhajan said that if you can do only one meditation, this is it. It does everything for you in the order that you need. It is your teacher. And as you practice it, you will come to realize that it is your best friend. Whatever you need at the moment, it will readjust and align you to bring balance into your mind and thus your life.

This meditation is given for everything from breaking habits to achieving emotional balance. I knew one woman who had been very emotionally upset for over two weeks. Finally she went to a quiet spot in the woods and did 31 minutes of Kirtan Kriya and voila, she felt relaxed and whole again. It helps you focus and center yourself. It is a catalyst for change because it is a very powerful spiritual cleanser. You may go through a lot because you will be releasing a lot. Be present to what you are experiencing and be willing to let it all go. The process will allow you to give all your garbage back to God. If you want to maintain the status quo, don't do this meditation. If you are willing to change and welcome a new dimension of being into your life, this meditation is for you.

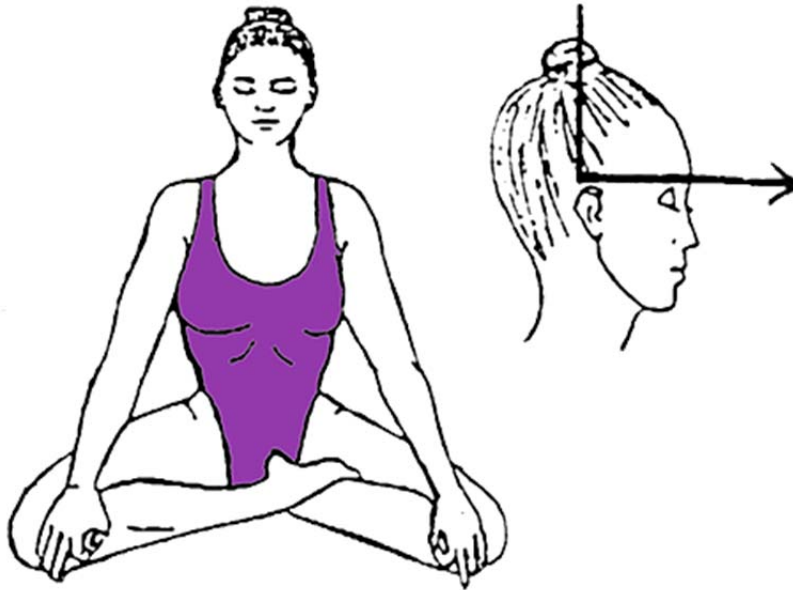
The bottom line is that this meditation works. All you have to do is do it. You can trust the process and the technology.

****Now here is one of the best selling points. Do you think about an old lover and want to be liberated from the grips of the past and release him or her from your aura? This is the meditation! There is nothing**

more powerful to release the auric pain we suffer when we break up with a lover. It will reestablish your aura as your own.

Directions:

Sit with a straight spine. Bring your mental focus to the brow point.



Chant SA TA NA MA. While chanting alternately press the thumb with the four fingers. Press hard enough to keep yourself awake and aware of the pressure. Keep repeating in a stable rhythm and keep the hand motion going throughout the whole meditation.



SA press the thumb and the first or Jupiter finger together with pressure.

TA press the thumb and the middle or Saturn finger together.

NA press the thumb and the ring or Sun finger together.

MA press the thumb and the small or Mercury finger together.

The Jupiter finger brings in knowledge, expands our field of possibilities and releases us from limitations.

The Saturn finger gives us patience, wisdom and purity.



The Sun finger gives us vitality and aliveness.

The Mercury finger aids clear communication.

Each time you close a mudra by joining the thumb with a finger, your ego "seals" its effect in your consciousness.

Visualize or feel each individual sound come in the crown chakra at the top of the head, down through the middle of the head and out to infinity through the third eye. This is very important and must be done with each sound. It is an essential part of the cleansing process. If this part of the meditation is not done, you may experience a headache.

While doing the meditation, you may experience pictures of the past come up like on a movie screen in your mind. Let them dance in front of your eyes and release them with the mantra. This is part of the cleansing of the subconscious mind. If emotions come up, you can also incorporate them in the chanting, i.e. if you feel anger then chant out the anger. Whatever you experience is OK. Do not try to avoid or control your experiences. Simply be with what is going on and go through it. It is all part of the cleansing process.

Timing - 31 Minute Version

For the first 5 minutes chant OUT LOUD. (The voice of humans.)

For the second 5 minutes chant in an audible WHISPER. (The language of lovers.)

For the next 10 minutes chant SILENTLY. (The language of the divine). Keep the hands, L in the head and tongue moving.

Then 5 minutes WHISPER.

End with 5 minutes OUT LOUD.

The last minute, listen inside and hear the mantra and experience the L in the head. Do not do the finger movements.

Optimally this meditation is done for 31 minutes. It can also be done for 62 minutes by doubling the times.

11. Waheguru (or Vahiguru)

(Punjabi: ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ, vāhigurū) (Sounds like: Wah-hay Goo-rooo or Vahguru)

Waheguru in Sikhism, is the name given to the Supreme Being/God who is universal, self-illuminated, perpetual and gender-less. Waheguru is the Gurmantra or primary Mantra; it is the reference to the Almighty God; the Creator; the Supreme Soul; the Sustainer; etc. The word 'Waheguru' literally means the "Wonderful Lord" in the Gurmukhi language. God has many names in Sikhism and Waheguru is probably the most important and the most common.

Beginner's Guide to Common Chants

Ever wonder what you're chanting during a yoga class? Nervous about chanting the wrong thing? The Yoga Journal Guide provides translations, historical information, and pronunciation tips for common chants.



1. Aum

The Primal Shabda

Om, actually pronounced "Aum," is an affirmation of the Divine Presence that is the universe and is similar to the Hebrew "Amen." There are many ways of chanting Aum, but this is an approach that will initiate you as a Shabda Yogi, one who pursues the path of sound toward wholeness and higher states of consciousness.

2. Lokah Samastha

A Chant for Wholeness

Lokah samastha sukhino bhavanthu.

May this world be established with a sense of well-being and happiness.

3. Gayatri

Being Illuminated by Sacred Sound

Om bhur bhuvas svaha
Thath savithur varaynyam
Bhargo dheyvasya dhimahi
Dhyoyonah pratchodhay-yath

We worship the word (shabda) that is present in the earth, the heavens, and that which is beyond. By meditating on this glorious power that gives us life, we ask that our minds and hearts be illuminated.

Perhaps the most revered of all Hindu mantras, is the Gayatri Mantra, which is found in the first sacred Vedic scripture, the Rig-Veda (3.62.10). Gayatri literally means "song" or "hymn," but the word also indicates an ancient verse meter of 24 syllables, typically grouped in three octets.

This mantra is addressed to the solar deity Savitri, the Vivifier (and so also called the savitri-mantra); originally its motive was to petition for the god's blessings. Gayatri is personified as a goddess, wife of the creator god Brahma, and mother of the Vedas, because it's believed that its syllables gave birth to and so embody the essence of these sacred texts. Every upper-caste (male) Hindu repeats this mantra during both morning and evening devotions, and on certain other special occasions.

The recitation of the Gayatri Mantra begins with the sacred syllable Om, followed by what's called the "utterances—the names of three of the seven mythic Hindu worlds, bhur, bhuvar, svah, which are respectively Earth, the Middle Region, and Heaven. These worlds symbolize three states of consciousness, from our ordinary earth-bound consciousness to consciousness of the "heavenly" Self. Next comes the verse itself. This has been rendered into English in many ways; as one example: "Let us contemplate that beautiful splendor of the divine Savitri, that he may inspire our visions" (translation by Georg Feuerstein). The recitation concludes with another Om.

4. Om Namah Shivaaya

Om Namah Shivaaya, Namah Shivaaya, Nama Shiva

I bow to Lord Shiva, the peaceful one who is the embodiment of all that is cause by the universe.

5. Bija Mantras

Seed Mantras

In the "seed" (bija) mantras each seed is conceived of as the sound-form of a particular Hindu deity, and each deity is in turn a particular aspect of the Absolute (Brahman). It's said that just as a great tree resides in within the seed, so does a god or goddess reside in each bija. When we chant the bijas, we identify each syllable with the divine energy they represent.

Sound	Pronunciation	Awareness
Lam	Curve the tip of your tongue up and back, and place it on the rear section of the upper palate to pronounce a sound like the word <i>alum</i> without the initial <i>a</i> .	Base of the spine
Vam	Place the upper set of teeth on the inner section of your lower lip and begin with a breathy consonant to imitate the sound of a fast car. Pronounce the mantra like "fvam."	Genitals
Ram	Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of the front section of the upper palate, roll the <i>r</i> as in Spanish, and pronounce the mantra like the first part of the word rumble.	Abdomen
Yam	Inhale audibly through your mouth, and pronounce the word <i>hum</i> (as in humming); allow the breath to extend beyond the resolution of the consonant.	Solar Plexus and Heart Area
Ham	Inhale noiselessly through your mouth, and pronounce the sound like the word <i>yum</i> (as in yummy); allow the sound along with your breath to fill your mouth and throat cavity.	Throat
Om	Inhale audibly through your nostrils, and direct the stream of air to the point between your eyebrows. Pronounce the sound along with your exhalation as a subtly audible whisper, allowing the sound and breath to resonate in the cranial area.	Point between the eyebrows

Translations courtesy of Russill Paul's *Wkh \rjd riVrxqg*.

Can You Say Om Namah Shivaya?

What's old is new again. Chanting is a hot ticket in yoga studios across the country.

By Phil Catalfo



On a cool summer evening, several dozen people gather in a modest-sized room at Piedmont Yoga, Rodney Yee's bustling studio in an upscale neighborhood near downtown Oakland, California. They doff their shoes and jackets, grab blankets and bolsters, and find places on the floor. But they're not here to do asanas. They've come to dip into the same spiritual well that spawned yoga, only this time they're intent on doing it not through twists, inversions, or backbends, but by opening their mouths and singing in a language none of them speaks.

Along one wall sit three people: a short woman with long hair, waiting quietly before a microphone; a wiry fellow, setting up a pair of tabla drums; and a tall, bearded, bear of a guy popping lozenges into his mouth and taking a few slugs of bottled water. As the crowd settles in, he noodles on a harmonium, a mini-keyboard that generates sound by means of a hand-operated bellows. He pumps the bellows with his left hand while his right hand plays the keys. His name is Krishna Das, and he has come to lead this group in an evening of kirtan, devotional chants from the Hindu tradition.

Having first encountered kirtan several decades ago on a pilgrimage to India, "K.D.," as he is often called, has spent much of the intervening years conducting and taking part in group chants like this and producing several popular albums of kirtan. His services have never been in greater demand: On his week-long visit to the San Francisco area, he led kirtan at other yoga studios in the region and appeared in an evening of discourse-and-kirtan with famed American spiritual teacher and cultural icon Ram Dass.

I join the 40 or so people who've gathered, finding a spot directly opposite Krishna Das and a couple of "rows" back. An incorrigible singing junkie, I never pass up an opportunity to lift my voice, either solo or with others. I haven't taken part in a group kirtan chant in a good 20 years, since the last time I found myself inside an [dvkudp](#). At the time, I found it pleasant enough, but got kind of bored by the melodic simplicity and repetitiousness of the chants. Now, however, I'm a bit more inclined to find satisfaction in simpler pursuits.

All attention focuses on Krishna Das. He talks for a few minutes about his guru, the Indian saint Neem Karoli Baba, known by the nickname "Maharajji" ("great king"). K.D. traveled to India in 1970 to meet Maharajji; in 1973, a few months before "dropping the body," the sage asked K.D. to return to America. K.D. asked Maharajji, "How can I serve you in America?" only to have the question tossed back at him. Perplexed, his mind went blank; after a few minutes the words came to him and he said to his guru, "I will sing to you in America." He's been chanting ever since.

Kirtan is simply chanting the names of God. The words are largely comprised of the various Sanskrit names of Hindu deities: Krishna, Ram, Sita (Ram's wife), Gopala (the baby Krishna), and so on. There are also occasional honorifics such as "Shri" ("Sir"), exclamations such as "Jai" or "Jaya" (loosely, "praise"), and supplications like "Om Namaha Shivaya" ("I bow to the Self"). K.D. explains that the format of kirtan is "call and response"—he sings a line and the group echoes it. The purpose of repeating these names, in ever-shuffling combinations, is a simple one: to merge with the Divine. At Piedmont Yoga Studio, Krishna Das—the name, given him by Maharajji, meaning "Servant of God"—closes his eyes and centers himself for a moment. The room quiets in anticipation. He begins to work the harmonium, and it belches forth a wheezy drone of chords and melody. "Shri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram," he chants. "Shri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram," the 40 or so attendees sing, a bit tentatively. "Sitaram, Sitaram," he adds (combining the names of Ram and his wife). "Sitaram, Sitaram," the group agrees. The woman sitting beside Krishna Das sings the responses into her microphone, helping the group along. After a couple of repetitions, the tabla player joins in, adding some propulsion to the effort, and the kirtan has begun in earnest.

The beat of the tablas can be felt through the hardwood planks of the studio floor, and the inviting rhythm quickly sets knees and legs in motion, even for those sitting in Lotus position. The chant goes on, and I sit with my eyes closed, relishing the deep breaths and sonic exhalations and enjoying the melodic variations. After perhaps five minutes, I notice the chant has picked up energy, and I open my eyes out of curiosity. Startled by what I see now—a swaying group of bodies and a number of arms extended toward the ceiling, waving back and forth like the tendrils of so many sea anemones—I think: How did I wind up at a Grateful Dead concert?

The first chant lasts a good half-hour. At its conclusion, there is silence again, but charged this time with elation, alertness, and eagerness. After a brief, engaging talk, K.D. launches into another chant. The pattern plays out repeatedly over several hours: easy, quiet beginning, building gradually in rhythm and intensity, climaxing in exultant cries and inspiring half a dozen or more of those in the room to stand, dance, run in place, and even perform what appears to be a personal form of calisthenics. One woman seated to my left wears a look of bliss, complete with ear-to-ear grin, the entire evening, and repeatedly reaches forward and upward with her hands as though working a huge lump of sacred clay, or reaching into a magical electromagnetic field, or both. For my part, I have a great time singing along, riding the energy, and feeling my insides open with each deep breath and long vowel. (Aaaaaahhhh, eeeeeeee, ooohhhh: these sounds, I found, are good for you.) But many of the others at the workshop—more experienced, perhaps, in the art of achieving transcendence—are clearly plugged into a higher voltage.

Musical Ritual

"Human longing for ritual is deep, and in our culture often frustrated," writes theologian Tom F. Driver in [Wkh P dj lf ri U l x do](#). His simple observation explains the surge of interest in chant and other rediscovered rituals. Certainly, in a society where many believe singing is something done by people other than themselves and purchased in the form of concert tickets or a CD, our understanding of the aesthetic and ritual dimensions of the human voice has diminished.

Although we can't prove it, chant, or sacred singing, was probably one of the first expressions of human spirituality. "It seems very clear," says singer-songwriter Jennifer Berezan, "that humans have been sounding and chanting as far back as the Paleolithic Age and beyond." Berezan's album, [UhWxuqlqj](#), which blends original and traditional chants from cultures around the globe into a seamless, hour-long opus, was recorded in the subterranean Oracle Chamber of the Hypogeum at Hal Saflieni, a temple on the island of Malta. This chamber, renowned for its special resonance, was created for devotional rituals 6,000 years ago. "It's likely," she adds, "that for thousands of years there were unbroken practices of sound and song, possibly often relating to various life/ritual practices such as birthing, planting, harvesting, death, and shamanistic practices of healing and visioning."

Robert Gass, author of [Fkdqwlqj=G l v f r y h u l q j V s l u l w l q V r x q g](#), also believes that ritual vocalizing was one of the first, and remains one of the most universal, human impulses. "We have no recordings of the earliest humans," he says, "but when we encounter indigenous tribes who've had little contact with modern civilization, they all have sacred chants that their oral history traces back to their earliest origins. And if you look into creation myths from different cultures, in almost every case the world is said to come into being through sound, through chant. It's in Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and Native American religions. That's evidence, in a way. The other evidence you can look at is young children: Almost all young children make up repetitive songs—they lose themselves in the rapture of singing."

Gass has worked with chant and other forms of spiritual music for decades. He founded Spring Hill Music, a recording company devoted to "transformational music," in 1985; its catalog includes two dozen releases by Gass and the chant ensemble [R q Z l q j v r i V r q j](#). He points to five key elements of chanting that make it such a powerful and universally appealing practice. The first two, he says, are characteristic of all types of music: association (or triggering), in which one's experiential memories, built up over time, invest a piece of music with ever-deeper levels of meaning; and entrainment, in which the body-mind is induced to align (or vibrate) with a melody or rhythm to which it is exposed. "If you're in a room and there's a heavy drum beat," says Gass, "your body will almost involuntarily start to move."

The other three elements, according to Gass, are especially characteristic of chant: breath, i.e., the salutary effect on the chanter's respiration as it slows from the normal 12 to 15 breaths per minute to between five and eight breaths per minute (which is "considered optimal for mind-body health," Gass says); sonic effects, namely the pleasurable sensations and healing effects of extended vowel sounds typical of sacred chants; and intent, which reflects "our desire to be close to God." Gass adds that chant derives its power from the synergy of all five elements working together. "It's sort of like a secret weapon," he says. "You're not thinking about it; it just happens."

"It" often goes beyond a generalized feeling of well-being or delight to more dramatic experiences. Yoga teacher Chaula Hopefisher, a former professional jazz musician who for several years has led chanting sessions at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health, has seen a range of emotional and spiritual responses. Participants in her chanting sessions have included recovering drug addicts and others in halfway houses, who may be facing issues of sobriety, childhood abuse, or a life-threatening illness such as AIDS. She finds the chanting can evoke deep healing in them. "The big tattooed guys are marshmallows hidden under hard exteriors," she says. "When I sing to them and tell them to breathe very deeply and know that it is safe to feel or to remember, they often cry. They connect the singing, devotional experience with safety—with God, really. The hardest, most set-in-their-jaws people are also the most devotional." Hopefisher released her first album in 1999, *P xaw0Fraruhg Fkdqg*, a cross-cultural collection recorded in a progressive fusion/world music setting.

Everybody's Chanting

Hopefisher's clients are only part of a larger phenomenon: the growing interest in chanting, which is especially pronounced in the yoga world.

To some extent, chanting has even been incorporated into the regular yoga curriculum. At Jivamukti, "chanting is integral to our *kdwkd |rjd* classes," Miller says. Every single class at the studio, she says, begins with the group sounding Om three times, and proceeding to a brief chant, which differs from class to class and teacher to teacher. All classes conclude with three group Oms, and some teachers also lead another brief chant at that point. At Yoga Works, some teachers lead the three Oms, and a few add other chants (Iyengar teachers, for example, may lead invocations to *sdwdqmdol*). Leslie Howard opens and closes all her classes at Piedmont Yoga with chants, both because of her own affinity for singing and because the clientele enjoys it. "Students say they love that we're exposing them to other aspects of yoga besides the physical," she says. "Sound, to me, is the most primitive form of life. It touches the deepest part of you."

Something plenty deep was clearly being touched in many of the participants during the kirtan sessions I attended over the course of several months, starting with that summertime Krishna Das gathering at Piedmont Yoga. The following month I returned to the same studio for an evening with Jai Uttal, which also drew 40 or more eager chanters. A few weeks later K.D. was at the "Yoga, Mind, and Spirit" conference in Colorado, leading afternoon workshops and regaling 800-plus conferees in evening concerts. As fall progressed into winter, Uttal led several more kirtan evenings at Bay Area studios, and saw attendance grow from "25 or 30" a year earlier to more than 100 on several occasions. At one Berkeley studio where he appeared, the room became so full that latecomers were actually turned away for fear of violating fire regulations. In the rarefied culture of the yoga community, Krishna Das and Jai Uttal, it seems, have emerged as the Pavarotti and Domingo—or, if you prefer, the Mark McGwire and Michael Jordan—of kirtan.

Unlikely Stars

At first glance, K.D. and Uttal seem a study in contrasts. Krishna Das has a large frame and looks like he'd be at home on a basketball court; in fact, he originally attended college "mainly to play basketball." Uttal is shorter and wirier. Both are easygoing and garrulous, but Krishna Das has a more avuncular aura; Uttal seems more intense, as though some part of him were continually engaged in a deeply creative process. The two singers' vocal styles differ as well. K.D., whose oaky baritone was described by Variety as "not that far removed from that of folkie Gordon Lightfoot," favors simpler melodies and improvisations, allowing his resonant voice and heartfelt emotion to fill the space. Uttal's tenor vocals, like the densely rhythmic and richly eclectic music he performs with his band, the Pagan

Love Orchestra, are more complex, full of brilliant, idiosyncratic trills in the Indian tradition. Yet the two men's chanting work is identical in spirit, and the paths they took toward their vocations remarkably similar.

Both grew up in the New York City area, and both traveled to India as young adults, in that time when the doors of perception, having been flung open by the social and spiritual tumult of the 1960s, seemed to be coming off their hinges. K.D. was born Jeff Kagel; he sometimes goes by "K.D. Kagel." He was emotionally adrift in his early 20s, "looking for love" and living in upstate New York "on a piece of land owned by some Jungian acidhead mountain climbers," when he first encountered Ram Dass, who had recently returned from his first trip to India and encounter with Maharajji. Until then, K.D. says, "I'd been running around after every yogi who'd come to the States for years."

When he heard Ram Dass speak, "I knew that what I was looking for existed. I felt that the search was real, that there really was something to find, there wasn't just psychological pain to be had." In time he realized that in order to find that "something," he'd have to go experience Maharajji directly. One night not long after first arriving in India, K.D. was taking a walk by a crater lake near the mountain town of Naini Tal, when he encountered kirtan for the first time. "I heard this chanting from a very old temple there," he says, "and it blew my mind. I don't know how to explain it. It drove me crazy. I couldn't believe the intensity, the joy, the happiness of what they were doing. I didn't even know what they were chanting. I didn't know anything about it, but I started to go by there every Tuesday night. I later found out they were chanting to Hanuman."

Hanuman, the monkey god, is one of the most revered figures in Hinduism. In the Ramayana, a classic spiritual text, Ram's wife Sita has been abducted, and Hanuman, his devoted ally, helps reunite the divine couple. One of the most beloved devotional chants, the 40-stanza "Hanuman Chaleesa," extols his virtues and magical attributes. For both K.D. and Uttal, the Chaleesa carries special power and meaning, and Hanuman particular import.

After returning to America, Krishna Das chanted on a more or less informal basis. Eventually, in 1987, he formed Triloka Records with a partner, and since then he has released [vhyhudodæxp v](#), including One Track Heart (1996) and Pilgrim Heart (1998). Having experimented on the first two albums with a world-music approach to the arrangements and accompaniment, K.D. returned to a simpler, more traditional setting in later albums. "I don't want to be a musician, a star," he says. "I have no aspirations at all any more. I just want to sing."

Triloka has also released several Jai Uttal albums before he left the label to work on an "experimental" project. Born in Brooklyn as Doug Uttal, Jai—the name was given to him by his first yoga teacher—was probably ordained to be a musician: His father Larry, a successful music-business executive, "discovered" Al Green and put out the first album by the legendary band Blondie. His parents started him on piano lessons at age 6, but after a few years he "got sick of it." As a teenager he became attracted to folk music, took up the banjo, and "got into old-timey pre-bluegrass Appalachian music." Then I got into psychedelic music," says Uttal, "and became a fanatical [Jimi] Hendrix fan. I packed away my banjo and got into electric guitar, and Indian music."

He enrolled at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, where he planned to study music and religion. But on the eve of registration for his first semester, he attended a concert by the Indian sarod master Ali Akbar Khan. "I knew his albums," he recalls, but the concert performance "just blew me out. I only lasted at Reed for three months, then came to the Bay Area to study at the Ali Akbar College of Music."

But Uttal became fully immersed in Indian music over the course of numerous journeys to India. For several years in the early 1970s, he lived in West Bengal, where he encountered the Bauls, itinerant "madmen" lost in divine rapture and its musical expression—namely, chant. He'd first heard of the Bauls on an old Nonesuch recording entitled The Street Singers of India: Songs of the Bauls of Bengal, but during his Indian sojourn he met them, sang with them, learned their songs and, more importantly, their devotional attitude. They remain "a major musical and spiritual influence on me," he says. Over the years, in the course of several extended visits to India, Uttal also spent time with Neem Karoli Baba, whom he describes as "a central figure in my life." He also went to many of the same northern temples

where Krishna Das fell in love with kirtan, including the one by the lake outside Naini Tal. In time, Jai too became enraptured, and his life and work have largely revolved around chant since then. He has by turns studied Zen [p h g l w d w l r q](#) and yoga, but he professes that "chanting is [his] spiritual practice," not just his profession.

The awesome transformational power of chant may derive in part from a phenomenon along the lines of British scientist Rupert Sheldrake's theory of "morphogenesis," which holds that it is easier for something to happen if it has already happened before—not because of any technical know-how handed down, but because a kind of energetic or cognitive breakthrough has been achieved. "We're all going on a journey together [when we chant]," Uttal says. "The more each person reaches into his heart, the easier it is for the next person to do it. Because these chants have been sung by so many people for so many centuries, when we do them we plug into that energy field and are nourished by it. We derive strength, we're getting juice, from centuries of people singing 'Sita Ram.'"

In the end, chanting is, as Ram Dass put it at the San Francisco event in which he appeared with Krishna Das, "a method of the heart." As K.D. says, "It's all about how you do it, not what you do. If you're singing from the heart, you could be singing 'Bubbula, Bubbula,' and it wouldn't matter, because you'd be connected."

There is a famous image of Hanuman, the Hindu monkey god, that has been made into a poster. To prove the purity of his love, Hanuman has torn open his own chest. Instead of a heart, there is a radiant image of Sita and Ram in eternal union. Uttal sees this as a sublime metaphor for the workings of devotional chant.

"When we chant," he says, "we are 'tearing open our chests'—opening our hearts to reveal our true identity—and finding God there."

Singing may be just as healthy as yoga, scientists say

Eric Pfeiffer, Yahoo! News



Jennifer Lopez performs in concert (Atlantic Wire)

Deep, controlled breaths and coming into harmony with those around you. It sounds like a description of some of the basic fundamentals of yoga. But it could also be applied to singing. Does comparing the two sound like a stretch? Not to some scientists who say that [singing is just as healthy as yoga](#).

The London Telegraph reports that researchers at Sweden's [University of Gothenburg](#) have found that the heartbeats of choir members begin to synchronise, resulting in a calming effect on the mind and body that has the same health benefits as the ancient practice of yoga.

“Song is a form of regular, controlled breathing, since breathing out occurs on the song phrases and inhaling takes place between these,” Dr. Björn Vickhoff, who led the study, told the paper. “It gives you pretty much the same effect as yoga breathing. It helps you relax, and there are indications that it does provide a heart benefit.”

To get their results, researchers had a group of teenagers perform three singing exercises: chanting, humming and singing a hymn.

Of course, the study could not make a direct comparison of the overall physical benefits of yoga compared with singing. After all, there are a variety of yoga practices, many of which place an equal if not greater focus on physical development as they do on breathing or meditative exercises.

Still, there seems to be an abundance of evidence indicating that singing is healthy, including the simple fact that [singing has been shown to release endorphins](#). Meaning that those who take part in the activity generally tend to feel better, which in and of itself can have a positive impact on overall health.

In addition, [studies at Australia's University of Newcastle](#) have found that singing lowers levels of depression and anxiety in the elderly and improves a general sense of well-being for those of any age.

Those who sing regularly also breathe more efficiently. That sounds fine and good for everyday living. But the Telegraph notes that a 2012 study by Cardiff University found that cancer patients

who sang in a choir had a greater expiratory capacity, which benefitted their treatment and recovery.

A 2008 joint study by Harvard and Yale even notes that a Connecticut town had a higher than average life expectancy directly tied to the large number of residents who participated in choir activities.

Still, despite the promising results from the Gothenburg study, [Vickhoff isn't telling people to roll up their yoga mats just yet.](#) "The medical effects need investigating further," he said.

For the Love of Music

By Clara Roberts-Oss • January 27th, 2013



Music is the soundtrack of our lives. What we listen to affects how we interpret our experience. That's why a really good DJ is important. Whether you're [DJ-ing](#) in a club, at your house, or in a yoga class, you have the power to create any kind of mood you like.

My love affair with music started in the womb. My parents played Gregorian chants on headphones for my listening pleasure as I floated in my mum's tummy. Music was always playing in our house growing up. My father was known for his mix tapes in the community. He's made over 200 mixes in his day. When I took my first class at Jivamukti Yoga, I fell in love. I could tell the teacher had thought out how her playlist set the

tone for the class. Two things made vinyasa my yoga style of choice: breathe based movement and that music is an integral part of the practice. A good playlist is one that takes you on a journey.

I thought I'd share my creative process on how I make yoga playlists. It usually starts because either I hear a song that [inspires me to move](#), there's a theme I would like to work with, or there's a *bhav* (mood) I'd like to create. From there I go through my music files and find other songs in the same genre or that have the same *bhav*. You can also find like-minded songs through 'Genius' on iTunes. Depending upon the BPMs (beats per minute) of the song, it goes into one of four categories of the playlist. From there, you create the rest.

The opening is usually one to two slower songs to set the stage while you're doing your [surya namaskars](#) (sun salutations). The next three songs start upping the energy. The third part is the peak/meat of the playlist. These songs will have the highest energy of the playlist, 30-50 minutes. Peak pose is usually around the 55 min mark of a 90 min class. After the peak pose, we move to the floor series: backbends, hip openers, twists and forward folds. During the floor series I begin I bring down the energy by slowing the tempo. The first two songs of the fourth part are bit slower than the peak and by the end of this part, they are super mellow readying... for the savasana song. What's great about doing it this way is I rarely need to look at a clock while I teach as I can tell what time it is by where I am in the playlist. My playlists are usually 75 min long as I factor in 5 min for intro at the beginning and 5-8 min at the end for meditation and closing prayer. I also have a savasana playlist just in case I need a bit more music at the end and my current playlist is over.

Many people ask me where I get my music. I am blessed to have a couple friends back in NYC and San Fran that share what they're excited about every so often. They've also come to know my tastes and send me things randomly when they think I'd dig it. Compilations are a great way to find out about new music (i.e. Buddha Bar, Asian Travels, Punjabi Lounge, and [Shiva Rea's](#) compilations are great). Genius in the iTunes store is also good. I'm from the electronic era so I love world beats mixed with electronica. Too many words in a song can make you feel like you're competing while teaching. There are times when I love hip hop and other genres with a lot of lyrics if I'm teaching an intermediate/advanced class as I don't have to talk as much. However in open level classes, I prefer playlists with less lyrics in the peak part of the class as I'm usually cueing a lot.

The most important thing to remember when making a playlist is that it should be music that inspires you! If you're inspired by the music, it will come across in your teaching. There's nothing worse than being in a

class with elevator music (that's what I call music playing softly in the background). Either play music and have it enhance the class, or don't play it all. Music has the ability to take us deeper into our experience and it has the ability to take us out. So be conscious of how the music is shaping the experience.

Clara received her 200 hour Vinyasa certification with Lauren Hanna at Sonic Yoga NYC in 2003. She met Shiva Rea shortly thereafter and, felt as though she had come home. Prana Flow, Shiva's style of vinyasa, had created a language for the kind of movement Clara had been doing her whole life. She, too, understood the idea of fluidity. Our bodies yearn to move like water and when we do, our bodies hum with excitement. Clara completed my 300 hour Prana Flow Certification with Shiva.

How to Set the Right Tone with Music

Set the mood and pace for your class with music playlists.

By Jodi Mardesich

As soon as I enter the *shala* and hear the moody, spacious music, my mental chatter volume subsides. I forget where I'm going later, where I came from, and I'm ready for yoga—that sweet state of union of the body and the mind.

After attending [BIAZZ P RWRQ](#) class with Sarah Tomson Beyer for more than a year, I have a Pavlovian response to the music she plays. The music invites me into a state of surrender, daring, and acceptance. Her sequences start slow, pick up momentum, pull back a bit, and build again to a crescendo. At the peak, the music is thumping and we're trance-dancing; then the music leads us back toward the surrender of Savasana—and all the poses are choreographed to her playlist.



"People have been dancing to rhythm for centuries," says Tomson- Beyer, a yoga teacher and physical therapist in Park City, Utah. "Why is it so strange to move your body when it happens to be in a yoga studio?" I confess that I used to be one of those teachers who was afraid of playing music in class. The vibration of sound literally can change your energy or shift your mood. It can be a positive shift, but can also agitate or offend. I worried that my musical tastes might not gel with my students' preferences. And while music is appropriate for some classes, like vinyasa, it might not fit with some styles, where there is a lot of verbal instruction and less flow (think Iyengar).

Set the Mood

The ubiquity of iPods, along with playlist-building technology, has given teachers a way to personalize music for their classes. Andre Daley, a teacher and founder of Wholly Yoga in Grand Rapids, Michigan, used to rely on presequenced CDs from Yogafit. "I didn't have to think about the flow of the music from warm-up to active flow to floor work to cool-down and relaxation," he says. But now that he creates his own playlists, he can match the songs to fit his sequence—and also his theme. (See his lists on [dvvh/d dgg fkdqjh](#). "With a little creativity and a lot of work, the whole practice comes together around the intention or focus of that practice," Daley says.

Andrea Drugay, a teacher in San Francisco, agrees. "The right music can provide the inspiration to guide a class (or be guided in a class) into new directions that the teacher or students might never have imagined before," she says.

So which comes first, the music or the sequence? It depends on your planning style. For Drugay, it's the sequence, followed by music. "The playlists I use for my [Srzh hu \rjd](#) and vinyasa flow classes have more high-energy tracks than those I use for gentle flow," she says. For restorative and prenatal classes, she keeps it simple, repeating a track of Tibetan bells with ocean waves. ([Www.33bowls.com](#))

For Tomson-Beyer, it's usually the music that inspires her class. "Once I have a combination of music with a consistent theme throughout, I then see what movement arises from that feeling—power-filled movement if the music is intense or fluid, watery movement if the music and mood are more mellow."

Cue Yourself

Creating a playlist is an art that can be more time-consuming than scripting a sequence. But aside from setting the tone for the class, a skillfully designed playlist can also give you cues and remind you what to teach. It helps with timing and the pace of the class, Tomson Beyer says.

Planning ahead, Drugay starts with songs that she knows work, from Krishna Das, Thievery Corporation, or Deva Premal. She drags a few songs into a new playlist, listens to snippets of other songs that might fit, and builds from there. "I've successfully worked in music from Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, Mozart, bebop jazz, hip-hop, and underground techno tracks, just by keeping an open mind when I'm creating a playlist," she says.

Getting Technical

There are several different ways you can create a selection of music for your class:

Create a playlist via iTunes on your computer. "The iPod playlist is great because most studios have the proper hardware cable that you can easily hook into," says Tali Koziol, an aspiring yoga teacher in Denver who regularly publishes playlists on her blog. Songs created in the playlist are synced to your iPod next time you connect it. You can go old-school and create a CD of your playlist if an iPod hookup isn't available.

Create a playlist online. Playlist.com hosts playlists you create, giving you the choice of songs uploaded by other members. However, it requires an Internet connection if you want to play it in class. Also, songs come and go, and if a song is removed from the site, it's no longer in your playlist.

Share your playlist. You can help students recreate the vibe they've experienced in class by publishing your playlists. iTunes lets you create an iMix, which shows up in the iTunes store. Your students can preview songs (iTunes plays 15 seconds only). Drugay has been publishing iMixes of her playlists for more than a year, and she publishes them on her blog as well (<http://shapeshiftteryogamusic.blogspot.com>). Playlist.com lists work well for sharing on a website or blog. "I can arrange the songs as I want and generate the code to embed the playlist or easily link to the URL when sharing it," says Koziol.

If you're looking for inspiration, you can listen to Pandora Internet radio. You create stations by typing in a favorite artist. Pandora then streams songs it thinks you will like. Blip.fm is a great way to find songs by keyword. Searches on names of Hindu deities like Ganesh bring up a wealth of results. Or search for yoga playlist online. Many teachers publish theirs.

All these tools make it easy to create playlists and get used to being the deejay for your class. But they require advance work, and if you're not prepared, music—or the technology itself—can be distracting in unintended ways. For example, if you forget your iPod or don't have a CD, you might want to think things through before streaming Pandora Internet radio off your cell phone in class. It might work, as long as the random songs that stream on a station work for the class—but you'd risk a phone call ringing through and disturbing class.

Playlist Tips

Be mindful of transitions. "The music has got to flow seamlessly, like breathing," Drugay says. "If a track ends abruptly or starts too loudly, that won't work. Gentle beginnings and endings are key, even if it's a high-energy song." Settings in iTunes let you edit transitions between songs. "I often will edit the start and stop time of each song and have a fade between songs with a cross-fade," says Sarah Kohl, a teacher in Columbia, Missouri.

Be flexible. If a song isn't working, skip to the next, or shift to another playlist. "Once or twice, a song that I'd thought was awesome when I was making the mix turned out to feel awkward during the class. But that's rare," Drugay says.

Go for it. It can be distracting when a teacher isn't confident with her music. "I've been distracted only when music is turned down extra low, like the teacher wants it to be there but also doesn't," Drugay says. "Make up your mind, I say, and be confident in your decision."

Practice makes perfect. "I always do a personal practice to a playlist before I debut it in a class, just to be sure," Drugay says.

As teachers, we create and hold a space for our students. Our sequencing sets a mood and a pace—and music can augment that. Kohl's classes often have a mix of students whose ages range from 16 to 75. "I don't want to isolate any of them, but I also don't want to discourage folks from experiencing something new," she says. "Also, I find that a mix-up of music helps keep folks 'in the moment,' because they never know what's going to happen next."

http://www.yogajournal.com/for_teachers/2728?utm_source=myyogamentor&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=bullet&_wscid=55408191FCF9BA172D8314D2ABB55E63011286FA2C90D37C



Pranayama Breathwork

Time to Breathe

Breath Awareness

Create space with breath. As you focus only on your breath your attention to mind thoughts goes away and you are in the present moment allowing space and stillness to be there. Breathing, in and of itself, holds the key to our divine connection. For without breathing we would not survive. Become aware of your breath in every moment. Your breath is always in the present. Breath awareness is most powerful and transformational.



Breath is the key to relaxation. Pranayama is a Sanskrit word that means lengthening of the prana or breath. Prana is life force or vital energy. Pranayama yoga is a practice of control of breath. Prana itself is the essence and energy of God/Divine itself. It is everywhere. It is in the trees, the flowers, the sun and it is vital to our very survival. That is why we are so linked with Mother Nature.

Ancient yogi's believed that we are each born with a certain amount of breaths. So as we work towards elongating our breaths or controlling our breathing we elongate our lifespan. Whether the number of breaths per individual life is true or not, conscious breathing is beneficial for our mind, body and soul. Practicing pranayama/breathing technique reduces stress, cleans and clears toxins from the body and so much more.

Breathe... I've seen profound results in just breathing through your intention and feeling it. Breathe very deeply in and very slowly out. Use the full capacity of your lungs. Be with the sound and rhythm of your breath. Become aware of your breath and most especially at the tail end of your out-breath. There is a stillness and energy here. Focus on your breath for a time. Feel the energy body within you expand. Breathe and then your focus is on the intention while allowing the energy to flow to you and through you. You are focusing only on the present moment. In this present moment your power resides. When in this present state of mind you can pinpoint and focus on your desired goal. Be focused and enjoy the divine energy flowing to you always. Remember what you focus upon expands. So focus on the positive elements of love, peace and joy as you intend! Enjoy breathing in the present moment!

As stated in Heart of Yoga by T.K.V. Desikachar, "An emphasis on long inhalation and holding the breath after inhalation intensified the effects of a yoga posture in the chest area and supports the elimination process and has a cleansing effect on the body by enlivening the organs, especially abdominal region. An emphasis on long exhalation and holding the breath after exhalation intensifies the effects of the posture in the abdominal region (energized and heats the body)."

There are a variety of powerful ways that you can practice pranayama yoga to benefit your entire body. The use of pranayama techniques are very beneficial for smoothing out Kundalini symptoms that are too intense. Some forms I have come across are: Quiet breathing, Deep breathing, fast breathing, spinal breathing and many others. When practicing these versions of breathing it is imperative to your health that you do these with proper guidance and follow the instructions given.

“Breathe. Let go. And remind yourself that this very moment is the only one you know you have for sure.” ~ Oprah Winfrey

Breath awareness is a beautiful meditation to practice wherever you are. Just breathe and be aware of the breath. Watch your breath. Come into the present moment. As you breathe in, be with the inhale. As you breathe out, be with the exhale. You will find your inner calm a comforting place to be that is strangely familiar. Energy is our life force. It has been called Prana, Chi, Ki, etc. When we breathe we take in oxygen and life force energy to survive. As you breathe in, you are taking in Light and Energy. Let's call it **Light Breathing**! Simply be aware that your breath is powerful and causes subtle but noticeable shifts from within. Below you will find several Breathing Techniques listed, scroll down to find the one(s) you'd like to practice.

Breathing Techniques (in detail below):

Long Deep Belly Breaths	Kapalabati Breathing	Full-Wave Breathing	Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Sodahana)
Breath of Fire	Ujjayi/Ocean Breath	Lion's Breath	Cooling Breath
Happiness Breath	Breathe into Each Chakra	Breath of Joy	Bhastrika Breathing
Dirgha (3-Part Breath)			

Long Deep Belly Breaths

Breathe FULLY! Breathe DEEPLY. Breathe long deep belly breaths. Breathe deeply using the full capacity of your lungs and then take time to really feel your stomach filling with air. Feel the rhythm of your breath. Fall into this rhythm and allow it to soothe you. When we were babies we knew how to breathe correctly and fully. Watch a baby breathing. Their belly goes out and in. Stop focusing on how you look and breathe. Feel most comfortable from within. Most of us move into breathing through our chests and lungs still never taking a full breath. So when you become conscious of the power of breath awareness, take those moments to breathe deeply and fully. Even watch your lungs and belly inflate and then deflate. Deep, slow, full breaths are key to really bringing in the energy to your body in beautiful most healthy ways. You will truly feel the difference immediately. This is a process to condition yourself back to breathing healthily and also uplifts the energy. Some yogi's out there have a goal to have less numbers of breaths per minute. So instead of 20 breaths per minute you can reduce it to four long deep full healing breaths per minute. And you can work your way towards this goal over a long period of time. But don't worry about the number just breathe fully and deeply. Disease is carried away with the breath and also very good for any lung-related problems. So allow your body to come back to its natural innate breathing rhythm. Do this full breath process and also simply practice breath awareness of natural rhythm breathing without force. Both bring profound results.

Full-Wave Breathing

I've been lucky enough to have attended a workshop to learn a Full-Wave® Breathing technique with

Linda Jaros at the Life Breath Wellness Center in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. The Full-Wave® Breathing technique was created by Dr. Tom Goode. This is much like I just explained with breathing naturally like a baby but with a new awareness. Breathe in deep through your nose into your lower belly, then your middle belly or diaphragm and then fill your lungs. Then immediately exhale it all out naturally through the mouth. It doesn't have to be a long slow exhale, just release it out. Let it all go. And without holding your breath at the top or bottom of breaths, keep the flow going. Inhale low in belly to chest, filling your lungs and exhale even with a sigh if you like. Try this technique daily for at least 10 breathe or even for 20-45 minutes (if you have the time) for 30 days. You will be amazed at the results in your body, mind and spirit. Upon the first time trying this technique, my body began to tremble with shakes or tremors. These weren't like tingles from extra oxygen (that I was receiving also). These were real Kundalini activated trembles and shakes. It was fun to witness. As you do this technique you are, also, working with and rising up the Kundalini energy within you.

Breath of Fire

There is also a yogic Breath of Fire (Agni-Prasana), a cleansing & energizing breath, powered by abdominal contractions. This is a technique to achieve higher states while shedding energy blockages. It's a fast paced breath that is known for assisting in releasing a lot of negative energies. In this technique you take in fast balanced inhales through your nose and fast balanced exhales out of your nose. This technique of fast sharp breaths removes heavy, stagnant energy from our bodies. A way to assist you in practicing this is to first have your mouth open and stick your tongue kind of like a dog and breathe very fast in and out. Then when you are ready, close your mouth and do this fast breathing through your nostrils. There is no pushing or pulling. You'll simply feel a pull in your solar plexus area and possibly a root lock feeling at the root chakra level. Remember this is fast breathing in and out of your nose in equal time. Keep the breath equal. Don't actually try for the Breath of Fire. There is no trying. With Breath of Fire you are natural, easy, fluid and powerful. No pushing or pulling of stomach or diaphragm or chest. Just quick, fast, easy breathing. Find a good rhythm and fall into it. The key to the breath of fire is to let the upper abdomen, the diaphragm truly relax and let the breath breathe you. Breath of fire will speed up the benefit of your yogic exercises.

You can also do this technique standing. Stand, arms easily at sides. Shake your body, really let it all out. Then jump body up and down fast and short in rhythm with your breathing through the nose. This aids in movement and breath while visualizing Kundalini rising if you like. You can also do the Breath of Fire while sitting comfortably and with legs crossed. Hold your arms up, thumbs out, and all other fingers facing in at the first joint. Close your eyes and do the Breathe of Fire for as long as you can, then hold it for longer. Breathing with movement is very powerful. And in movements, such as Yoga, breath is a key factor in keeping rhythm and to, also, achieve what goals you are setting up for the yogic practice. Yoga is has great balancing benefits for incorporating the combination of breath and movement.

To bring the Breath of Fire to an advanced level the technique is the same, you just increase the power and the pace within which you breathe. So you can move to intermediate or advanced for extra pace and power. During this breath you are naturally pulsating your lower regions, naturally waking and stirring your Kundalini. Energy pathways start to open up and you start to get vitalized. You will notice changes immediately as you practice this pranayama. Practice. The Breath of Fire magnifies benefits of any exercise when used in conjunction with the exercise! Do not practice the Breath of Fire if you are

Kundalini awakened or going through terrible symptoms, as it can aggravate or enhance the process. In such cases, only practice this under the specific guidance of a guru or wise teacher.

Breath of Fire will entirely charge the nervous system, causing the glands to secrete and purify the blood. When it is done with certain postures and movements in yoga, which are meant to put contracting (drawing in) or expanding (releasing) pressure in nerve plexuses and glandular centers, those areas are made to fire and become completely charged.

As an area becomes charged, the sexual (seminal) fluids are released into the bloodstream and flow to those charged areas, so that gradually those areas will maintain that charge and pranic pressure builds throughout the body converting Bindu (Tamasic and Rajasic energy) to Ojas (Sattvic energy), which fills and permeates the entire body and mind.

Kapalabhati Breathing

Now, the Breath of Fire is not same as Kapalabhati (Kah-pa-la-bhati) breathing, also called the “Cleansing Breath” or “Skull Shining Breath”. It’s easy to get these confused since they both are very powerful and focus on the core with a fire breathing technique. Kapalabhati breathing is a forceful breath, where we contract the abdomen, diaphragm and rib cage (pulling on the root lock with each contracting breath), where the simple relaxing of the rib cage brings the air back into the lungs, without inhaling and you force the air out again (also in a rhythmic manner). It has powerful exhales and passive inhales.

Kapalabhati clears the body from the constant intake of toxins, thus detoxifying it. This technique helps to replace any toxic air with fresh air. Practicing this filters out negative and unnatural things held in the frontal lobe. The breathing mainly takes place from the abdomen, as opposed to the chest, and this specifically is what helps to remove the toxic air. Kapala means “the skull” and bhati means “brings lightness.” Kapalabhati helps to make the motions of your diaphragm very easy and controlled. This helps it to discard the muscle cramps present in bronchial tubes. A lot of force is used to do this pranayama. While exhaling, the process is very strong and while inhaling, the process is very calming.

It is a very energizing technique, and when done correctly it will reboot all your muscles. It is also a cleansing technique that places emphasis on cleaning the air passages and blockages in the chest as well as the nasal passage. It helps deter asthma, diabetes, bronchitis and allergies. The breathing exercise purifies the lungs and nasal passages. Breathing in this way lightens your skull by extracting problems like sinusitis. This is an invigorating and energizing practice as it fills your stuffy skull with fresh air. The practice also improves bowel movements which rids the body of the many diseases. Excellent for Respiratory Problems – It is also one of the best exercises for asthma patients and people suffering from respiratory problems. This stimulating breath can do wonders for every single tissue in your body.

The breathing technique will invigorate your spine. Increases Blood Circulation – It is also useful for maintaining blood pressure. The abdominal organs also become strengthened from the pressure applied to these organs while breathing and exhaling. It increases the blood circulation due to fresh supply of blood. It is also useful for removing impurities from the blood. Tones Your Abdomen -The abdominal area is toned with the help of this breathing technique. It helps clear the entire nervous system which proves to be very useful in making the body fit.

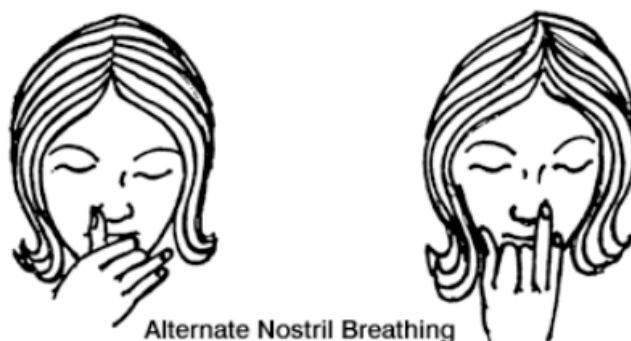
Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Sodahana)

The brain and spinal cord comprise your central nervous system (CNS). In the Yogic system, this is energetically paralleled by the "sushumna channel." We are energetic beings. Our central nervous system actually flows electricity. Nerves are physical in structure, but our "energy" that flows within the nerves is exactly that. Were the yogis describing this subtle but crucial difference with the Nadis? Some say yes. This adds the flow of conscious awareness through the body as another aspect of "life force" not included in a merely physical nerves/electricity view.

Sadi Nardini states, "In western anatomy, the network of nerves that connect at different levels of the spinal cord control both conscious and unconscious activities. It is through the spinal cord that information flows from these nerves to the brain and back again. The nervous system is divided into the Somatic Nervous System which controls aspects of our bodies under voluntary control (mainly muscles) and the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) which regulates individual organ function and homeostasis, and for the most part is not subject to voluntary control. It is also known as the Visceral or Automatic system. The Parasympathetic Nervous System (reflected by Yin/Ida Nadi) influences us to passivity, relaxation and rest. When out of balance, and predominating, this system can trigger lethargy, depression and fatigue. Another breathing technique assists you in holding your breath in for a few moments. While you hold your breath you are sustaining the life force within just a little bit longer. This is very healing."

The Sympathetic Nervous System (Yang/Pingala Nadi) influences us to activity, alertness, and movement. When overstimulated, this system can trigger anxiety, and the fight-or-flight response. To come back to balance, we can use the option of holding the breath in a yogic breathing technique called Alternate Nostril Breathing. This yogic breathing technique is known as the purifying breath or Nadi Shodhana. Using this breathing technique cleanses, clears and balances the Nadis.

I highly recommend this yogic breathing technique to assist you through Kundalini symptoms and to balance out the Nadis in the body. Alternate nostril breathing is said to relieve heat and cold symptoms, balance both sides of the brain, assists with better breathing for those with asthma and is very calming to the central nervous system. Practicing this cleanses and rejuvenates vital channels of energy as well as brings a soothing calm. This is also beneficial as a preface to Kundalini symptoms (or side effects) you may experience and will assist in balancing out what would have been a harsh symptom. This breathing technique cleanses the nervous system, clears nasal passage, strengthens the heart and releases mental anxiety.



It is much easier to do this while watching another guiding you. Your hand is held in front of your nose, you will alternate your thumb and pinky finger to block one nostril at a time. Each inhale and exhale is done slowly to the count of four. If desiring a cooling effect, block your right nostril first and breathe in through your left nostril (to the count of 1, 2, 3, 4). Then block your left nostril and breathe out through your right nostril (1, 2, 3, 4). Then block the left nostril and breathe out through the right nostril (1, 2, 3, 4). Leaving your left nostril blocked, breathe in through the right nostril (1, 2, 3, 4). Block the right nostril and breathe out through the left nostril (1, 2, 3, 4). Repeat the cycle of alternate-nostril breathing a few times and end the cycle with an exhale through the left nostril. For a warming effect, begin your first inhale through the right nostril and finish the cycle by exhaling through your right nostril.

Ujjayi Breath (Ocean Breath)

Ujjayi (pronounced – oo-ji-ya) Pranayama is an important part of a Vinyasa yoga practice. Also known as the Ocean Breath, Hissing Breath and Victorious Breath. This pranayama is most often used in association with the practice of yoga poses, especially, my favorite, the Vinyasa style. Vinyasa yoga is breath-synchronized movement, and the breath used most often is Ujjayi breath. Learn this breath while seated in a comfortable cross-legged position. Once you feel confident, begin to use it during asana practice. The challenge is can to commit to that same breath during challenging harder poses. I challenge you to make this breath a priority.

Ujjayi breath is breathing only through the nose, while constricting the throat. To begin you can do this with your mouth open and hear the hissing sound your breath makes when your throat is tightened. Then close your mouth and that hiss or ocean sound goes more within. Some people like to say it sounds a little like Darth Vader. That might help you understand what it sounds like. When inhaling pretend you are sucking through a straw in the back of the throat, then when exhaling it's like fogging the glass on a window. Try mouth open ocean breathe then close mouth and replicate breath.

"Ocean breathe is what allows this practice to become a meditation and when the practice becomes a meditation in action it has an absolute impact on the way that you will respond once you step off the mat. Keep you in your body. It'll certainly keep you more connected in your mind. And hopefully it will allow you to be more openhearted in the way that you react to the world." ~ Sean Corne

What you are doing is bringing more oxygen into your lungs than a normal breath. The air that comes in through your constricted throat is a powerful, directed breath that you can send into the parts of your body that need it during yoga.

Benefits include: Mind, body and spirit relaxation and calm, lowers blood pressure and treats insomnia. During a workshop I had with Sadie Nardini she talked of her brother, the Marathon runner. He kept hitting his wall at eight miles. So he asked his sister what he could do. She gave him the Ojjiya breath. When he practiced this breath throughout his next run he was able to get past his wall, beyond eight miles, and then some and still not feel winded. These are amazing results! Proof this breathwork actually works.

While in yoga, when your teacher tells you to focus on your breath you can choose this breath technique and see your yoga practice enhanced. You'll feel a deeper sense of calm and peace throughout.

Cooling Breath (Sitali)

Choose a meditative posture. Stick out tongue. Roll the sides upward and breathe in through the opening, pulling in as much air as possible. Hold that breath and close mouth. Begin breathing slowly out of your nose.

Benefits include: Good for liver and spleen, treats fever, cools the nervous system and reduces high blood pressure.

Happiness Breath – Sukha Pranayama

Choose meditating position and begin breathing. Be aware of how the air flows in and releases. As you breathe in, think of happy things, as you breathe out, rid yourself of any worries or tension which is restricting the ability to be happy. Breathe in positive light happy energy. Breathe out and release all that no longer serves you. Breathe in light and exhale dark. Breathe in love and exhale it out to the world.

Your benefits from practicing this breath technique are: Your concentration improves, relieves stress and hypertension and nervous system becomes stronger. There have been studies done of positive people and negative people when they are up against a challenging situation. Those that are negative have a tougher time getting through the challenge and feel miserable during it. Those that are positive not only feel better, but they attract to them the solution to their issue much faster and easier. They surrender to what it and are happy anyway. 😊



Lion's Breath

Lion's Breath relieves tension in the face by stretching the jaw and tongue. It can be done in almost any pose. I've commonly seen it during Cat/Cow poses or as I like to call it Moving Cats flow. As another options, you may come to kneel with your seat resting in your feet. Place your hands on your knees. Inhale through the nose. Exhale through the mouth, making a "ha" sound. As you exhale, open your mouth wide and stick your tongue as far out as possible towards your chin. Option: You can also bring your drishti (gaze) towards your third eye as you exhale. Inhale, returning to a neutral face. Repeat 3-5 times. (Photo courtesy of: yoga.about.com/od/breathing/a/Yoga-Lions-Breath.htm.)

Breathe Into Each Chakra

Using the Chakra chart shown in the Chakra section of this YTT manual, visualize breathing into one Chakra at a time. Do this from the Root Chakra first all the way up to the Crown Chakra. You may want to only go to the Throat Chakra and stop, if you begin to get headaches from practicing this with the Third Eye and Crown Chakras. If a headache ensues, only do this for the first five Chakras as listed.

To begin, inhale and exhale full deep breaths for each Chakra one at time. Maybe you will start out with one to three breaths per Chakra and work your way up to more breaths per Chakra. See the color of the Chakra in all its vibrancy as you breathe into each Chakra. Our breath is our Life Force and Prana energy. When you do this you are focusing on breathing Life Force energy into each Chakra. This is very cleansing and opening. Do this anywhere and anytime you need to.

Breath of Joy

This is a great pose to practice if you find yourself in need of a quick pick-me-up or is great as a part of any yoga practice.

To practice Breath of Joy, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and parallel, knees may be slightly bent. Inhale one-third of your lung capacity and swing your arms up in front of your body, bringing them parallel to each other at shoulder level or a little higher, with palms facing the ceiling. Continue inhaling to two-thirds capacity and stretch your arms out to the side like wings to shoulder level. Inhale to full capacity and swing your arms parallel and over your head, palms facing each other. Open your mouth and exhale completely with an audible **ha**, bending the knees more deeply as you sink into a standing squat and swing your arms down and back behind you like a diver. Never forcing or straining the body or breath; simply be absorbed by the peacefully stimulating rhythm. Repeat 5-10 times.

Once finished return to standing in [Mountain pose](#) and close your eyes. Close your eyes and feel the vibration or hum in your body. Notice the effects. Feel how quickly your heart beats; feel the sensations in your face and arms; and the tingling in the palms of your hands.

Practicing Breath of Joy awakens your whole system. It increases oxygen levels in the bloodstream, temporarily stimulating the sympathetic nervous system, circulating more prana, and gently stoking agni. Through strong inhalations and synchronized arm movements, the practice awakens your whole system—increasing oxygen levels in the bloodstream, temporarily stimulating the sympathetic nervous system, circulating more prana, and gently stoking agni. A forceful exhalation lightly detoxifies the body and helps release pent-up tension. After completing several rounds, the parasympathetic system (which sustains the body at rest) kicks in, leaving the mind calm and focused. The result is a state of homeostatic balance that the yogis call *sattva*. These qualities make *Breath of Joy* especially effective in managing mood. The practice counters the shallow upper chest breathing of anxiety by inviting the breath to fill every milliliter of the lungs. Like a strong bright wind, it also sweeps away the sluggishness of depression and infuses the mind with a serene sense of clarity.

Contraindications/Modifications: If you have knee injuries or cannot stand, you may practice this in a modified way while seated in a chair. Also, this practice may not be appropriate for everyone. Skip it if you have high blood pressure or if you suffer from any kind of head or eye injury, like migraines or glaucoma. If you start to feel light-headed, instead of light-hearted, stop for a minute and just breathe normally.

Bhastrika Breathing

Bhastrika is a Sanskrit word which means bellows. In **Bhastrika** pranayama, the breathing pattern resembles the blowing of bellows. Regular practice of this breathing technique, will improve your resistance power. It will help you to keep diseases away. *Bhastrika pranayama* is all about inhaling and exhaling completely so that your body gets maximum amount of oxygen. (This breath is very similar to the Full Wave Breathing technique I list above.) Follow the steps given below and learn to do *Bhastrika pranayama*.

- Be seated in comfortable posture. *Padmasana* (crossed leg) and *Vajrasana* are the ideal yoga postures to practice *pranayama*. Place your hands on your knees. Feel relaxed. Focus on your breathing pattern and be relaxed.
- Breathe in by inhaling forcefully through both the nostrils. Make sure that your lungs are full with air. Once you inhale fully, exhale with great force making hissing sound.
- In *Bhastrika pranayama* one needs to apply force while breathing in and breathing out. You can determine how much speed to apply while inhaling and exhaling keeping in mind your health and endurance power.
- When you breathe in while performing *Bhastrika pranayama*, your abdominal should not blow up. Instead your chest area should blow up. Repeat the procedure for 5 to 10 times.
- You have successfully completed *Bhastrika pranayama*. One should perform *Bhastrika pranayama* for 5 minutes everyday. Those who have high blood pressure or heart disease should not practice *Bhastrika pranayama*.

The health benefits of performing *Bhastrika pranayama* are: Helps to throw out toxins and cures illnesses of respiratory track, Boosts the supply of oxygen and purifies blood, Helps to keep negative thoughts away, Increases warmth in the body and helps to prevent common cold, Regular practice of *Bhastrika pranayama* keeps you away from all diseases.

Dirgha (3-Part Breath)

Dirgha breath is also known as the “three part breath.” This pranayama focuses on the three chambers of the lungs. The first is the lower level of ...

The first is the lower level of the abdominal area just under the floating ribs . This is the area that allows you to inflate like a balloon. The second area is the middle chest, or thoracic region just under the sternum. Breathing into this area lifts your rib cage and expands and contracts the intercostal muscles. The third section, or upper chamber, is in the clavicle region, located in the area of the upper chest and shoulders, up to the collar bone.

To practice: Begin sitting in a comfortable cross legged position. Or, lying on your back in *Savasana*, corpse pose. Relax the body, yet keep it active and alive. If sitting keep the spine straight. Close the eyes and begin to focus on the breath. With each inhalation lift the torso. Expand the rib cage. Place the hands on your abdomen. With each inhalation, notice how much you expand. With each exhalation, become aware of the rib cage contracting. Release tension with each exhalation, allowing the belly to drop further into your hands.

Once you feel comfortable, move your hands to the middle abdomen. On your next inhale, fill the first chamber. Then the middle chamber. Again notice your middle area expanding and contracting. And notice any restrictions in the muscles or breath. Now incorporate the last step which is to breath into the final chamber of the lungs. To see if you are fully breathing into the third chamber, place your fingers on one side of your clavicle bone, your thumb on the other side, cupping around your neck.

Begin to breath into the lower chamber, then the middle chamber then the third chamber. Feel your fingers rise up. Keep the breath smooth by synchronizing the inhalation and exhalation. On the exhales, let the breath spill out from the top to the bottom like a pitcher of water pouring out. On the inhalation

fill the pitcher up. At all times keep the breath smooth, effortless, and rhythmic. Be aware of any tension in the body and release it through the exhalation.

Dirgha pranayama is a wonderful tool for stimulating more internal awareness, calming the mind through the breath, and preparing you for deeper meditation.

Some other benefits: Dirgha pranayama calms the mind and relaxes the body, revitalizes the entire nervous system, delivers oxygen rich blood to the furthest area of the lungs, breaks irregular breathing patterns, and habitual shallow breathing, improves digestion and elimination, helps relieve constipation, strengthens the abdominal muscles, diaphragm, heart and lungs, and soothes discomfort during menstruation.

If you feel dizzy or light-headed stop for a few minutes then resume. Perhaps spend shorter amounts of time practicing this breath.

There are many other various breathing techniques through yoga that you can explore. Enjoy the process!

As you take a few minutes a day to consciously breathe you build a beautiful reserve of life force energy within. I'm finding it's most beneficial to focus on the spaces between breaths. The space between is most sacred. A blissful stillness is here. For me it seems highly beneficial to focus on the breathing out (exhale) for bringing in beautiful energy to self and others. There is a space between that occurs on the in-breath (inhale) as well as the out-breath (exhale). This space seems quite pivotal in building the energy. I will do a lot of visualization and energies on the holding of breath after an exhale before breathing back in. Another method is to pause on the in-breath as well as the out-breath. This brings your mind inward. Your thoughts wither away and you feel the divine connection. Practice this method as often as you like. Do what feels good for you during this process and every day!

Gerd Lange has put the importance of prana and breathing into perspective when he says, "In general, there are two things which we take in when we breathe. One is air and the other is prana, pure life-force energy itself, more vital than air for our existence. If you take away air, you have a couple of minutes before you die; if you take away water, you have even more time; and if you take away food you have much more time still, but if you break prana from spirit, death is instantaneous. So taking in prana with breath is absolutely crucial in sustaining our life."

Taking full deep breaths, in and out, assist us in taking in the Divine life force energy completely. The feeling is tremendous. Rebirthing is also a beautiful form of breathwork for profound transformations. I strongly suggest sampling rebirthing techniques from a certified Rebirther near you.

Working with breathwork is so powerful. And also when you incorporate the energy consciously within the breath you feel the rejuvenating affects. Expert Rebirther, Sondra Ray, explains the vital-ness of energy and breath: "Breathwork, or conscious breathing, is a physical, mental and spiritual experience. The physical part consists of connecting your inhale and exhale in a relaxed rhythm (with no holding at

the top or bottom). The spiritual dimension of conscious breathing is the heart of the matter. One purpose of breathwork is not only the movement of air but also the movement of ENERGY."

So I invite you to breathe deeply, consciously and be here now.

"Bit by bit, over a period of just a few weeks of sets and kriyas combining posture, movement, breath, sound and locks, the entire body will begin to feel magnetically electric and etheric, as the field becomes balanced with an inward dynamo-like force. As this charge builds and polarizes, the mind becomes very still, very clear and bright, and a radiance is felt in and through and around the body and head.

The feeling of the stressful need to think and act and to be the "doer" begin to recede, as the mind becomes more receptive and open to notice that there seems to be an almost automatic connectedness between one's aims and events and experiences that come to fulfill them. The feeling of a natural ever present oneness begins to emerge as a clearer always existing reality.

Little by little, outward tendencies of the mind towards the physical and mental begin to fade, and one abides in one's satvic presence - spacelike, pervasive, without the sense of me or mine - the Self-Effulgent Heart, where "I AM" is the single Truth." ~ www.kundaliniyoga.org

5 Reasons to Practice Breath of Fire

By [Jill Paschal](#) • December 12th, 2013

Kapalabhati Pranayama or "Cleaning Breath" is an intermediate to advanced *pranayama* that consists of short, powerful exhales and passive inhales. This practice is also known as the "Breath of Fire." The exercise purifies the lungs and nasal passages. It is a powerful, one of a kind breathing exercise that will help the entire body.

Kapalabhati helps to make the motions of your diaphragm very easy and controlled. This helps it to discard the muscle cramps present in bronchial tubes. A lot of force is used to do this *pranayama*. While exhaling, the process is very strong and while inhaling, the process is very calming. It is a very energizing technique, and when done correctly it will reboot all your muscles. It is also a cleansing technique that places emphasis on cleaning the air passages and blockages in the chest.



Benefits

1. Cleanse Yourself of Toxic Air

Kapalabhati clears the body from the constant intake of toxins, thus detoxifying it. This technique helps to replace any toxic air with fresh air. The breathing mainly takes place from the abdomen, as opposed to the chest, and this specifically is what helps to remove the toxic air. *Kapala* means "the skull" and *bhati* means "brings lightness." Breathing in this way lightens your skull by extracting problems like sinusitis. This is an invigorating and energizing practice as it fills your stuffy skull with fresh air. The practice also improves bowel movements which rids the body of the many diseases.

2. Excellent for Respiratory Problems

It is also one of the best exercises for asthma patients and people suffering from respiratory problems. This stimulating breath can do wonders for every single tissue in your body. The breathing technique will invigorate your spine.

3. Increases Blood Circulation

It is also useful for maintaining blood pressure. The abdominal organs also become strengthened from the pressure applied to these organs while breathing and exhaling. It increases the blood circulation due to fresh supply of blood. It is also useful for removing impurities from the blood.

4. Tones Your Abdomen

The abdominal area is toned with the help of this breathing technique. It helps clear the entire nervous system which proves to be very useful in making the body fit.

5. Helps with Decision Making

A sense of calmness is also achieved due to the lightness of the skull. *Kapalabhati* helps one to think better and make decisions quickly while also keeping the mind alert. This is a wonderful breathing technique to help the mind and soul, as it helps to awaken the spiritual power which heals many problems facing many of us today.

Contraindications

It should also be noted that *Kapalabhati Pranayama* is not recommended for those who suffer from cardiac problems, hernia and spinal disorders. In addition, those who suffer from severe respiratory infections, colds and nasal obstruction should not perform this breathing and cleansing technique. Most physicians usually ask people suffering from high blood pressure and diabetes to refrain from performing this breathing technique. Those with abdominal ulcers should also avoid performing the technique. If you are pregnant, you should not practice this type of breathing exercise.

Since there are some *Kapalabhati* risks it is best to perform it only after consulting with a qualified yoga instructor who has practiced this breathing technique and is familiar with it.

Jill Paschal is a yoga teacher and a plant based nutrition coach who has a genuine love for people and specializes in personalized yoga classes, one-on-one, children's yoga, those with limited mobility and small groups. Jill has a true passion for yoga on and off her mat which results in her compassion for others and all living creatures. Her clear instruction bring an all-encompassing and complete atmosphere to her classes, making it possible for students of all levels and interests to find joy in practicing yoga.

Jill lives in Orange County, California with her husband Patelli and their chihuahua Cookie.

Website: www.jillpaschal.com

Ujjayi Breath and Its Benefits

[Betsy Paul](#) Business Development Coordinator at Avtron Industrial Automation

Recently I taught a gentle yoga class to a mixed group of students. Some of them had been practicing yoga for a long time, while others were brand new to yoga. I was interested to find out that some of the students who had been practicing yoga for a while were not familiar with Ujjayi pranayama, a breathing technique that warms the body and rids the body of toxins.

The class theme was on detoxifying the body and mind, a wonderful theme for a spring yoga class. While we often talk about spring cleaning our physical spaces, many times we forget that our bodies and minds need spring cleaning too, especially after the extremely cold winter we have had. BBBRRRR!!!

At the beginning of class, I taught Ujjayi pranayama, also known as ocean breath or victorious breath. It is a breathing technique that is at once energizing and relaxing. Ujjayi pranayama warms the breath before it enters the lungs. It generates heat within the body, making it easier for the body to release unwanted toxins. The breath also heats the joints, making it easier to do yoga poses.

To practice Ujjayi pranayama, you need to constrict the muscles in the back of the throat, breathing in and out through your nose, with your mouth closed. The sound that this breathing technique makes is somewhat like the ocean, and a little like Darth Vader from Star Wars. When you hear that sound, you are probably doing it correctly. The inhales and exhales should be long and even. Not only does Ujjayi breath warm the joints and get the body ready for yoga practice, but it also calms the mind. And after all, the primary purpose of yoga is to calm and center the mind.

The calm feeling that Ujjayi breath generates improves concentration, relieves stress, stimulates the metabolic rate and increases blood circulation through the body. It also enables the lungs to absorb more oxygen. Additionally, it instills endurance which assists in linking the breath with yoga asanas/poses.

Some people experience dizziness or a light-headed feeling when they practice Ujjayi breath, due to the constriction of the throat muscles; this is rare, however. I would argue that with so many stress factors that we as a society face, everyone should try this calming breath in an attempt to move through stressful situations towards better health and happiness.



Bandhas & Koshas

Bandhas

Bandha' (bond, arrest) is a term for the "body locks" in Yoga, treated under the heading of mudra. Specific bandhas are:

- **Mula Bandha:** contraction of the perineum
- **Uddiyana bandha:** contraction of the abdomen into the rib cage
- **Jalandhara Bandha:** tucking the chin close to the chest
- **Maha Bandha:** combining all three of the above bandhas

Mula Bandha (Kegels & Prana Cord)

In Yoga, we are often doing a root lock called Mula Banda, where you lift the pelvic floor up (feels like a Kegel in women) shooting Kundalini Shakti energy up the sushumna channel (spine). Most accurate is to say that you are lifting the space that is between your genitals and anus (the space between also known as our prana cord). That is the space between. The center line. Most often in Kundalini Yoga it's described as squeezing the sex organs, navel/Sacral chakra and allow that Kundalini Shakti energy to flow up the spine. Amazing and sensual, right. So I have to admit that I've been procrastinating this particular post for a few days. Though still Divinely timed since I just posted about twin flame energy yesterday. So my Guides knew I needed time to adjust to sharing this as my throat chakra allows it to flow out.

During the Sacred Energy Awakening Ceremony found in my Divine Embrace book you have the option to add more Shakti to the flow of energy. You can benefit from doing kegel exercises. Kegel exercises are the tensing and releasing of the muscles in your lower regions or rather the pelvis area. It's not simply the action of holding your pee muscles, but rather a more broad use of the pelvic muscles. Most accurate is to say that you are lifting the space that is between your genitals and anus (the space between also known as our prana cord mentioned later in this section). That is the space between. The center line. This is where the muscles are that you will tense and release during kegel exercises. You will use this as the main focal point while expanding outward to all the muscles in your lower pelvic region. Best explained to women is to imagine all the muscles in your vagina also contracting upward. Men can even figure out where their muscles are by making their penis twitch. At least that is the start of feeling the full region of this muscle practice. As we do this we are practicing Mula Bandha, otherwise known as Root Lock or Root Lift. Tightening the Pelvic floor muscles assists us with breathing more fully and keeping proper alignment in the body. We are able to sit up straight and is the only way the lower belly/abdominals can contract. This offers better energy flow.

These muscles tend to not be worked and toned in the majority of us. Though there are many that have this muscle overworked and that is also something to be worked on and loosened rather than contracted. As you practice you will receive wonderful toning and wonderful Shakti energy. I even recommend doing them every day.

The first time I was introduced to kegels I had just given birth to my son. I wish I had known about them prior to birth and prior to pregnancy. Giving birth flows more smoothly if the muscles are strong and incontinence (a known side-effect after giving birth for a lot of women) would decrease. Incontinence actually develops during the last trimester of pregnancy due to the heavy weight of the baby causing the pelvis to lean forward and not properly hold up the organs.

I didn't try very hard to stick with kegel exercises after my first birth and then seven years later I was pregnant again. This time I was determined to do it right for my physical body. I knew that this also allows for a better labor and delivery, so this was incentive to at least do a few kegels a day. It helped that the aerobic video I used by Denise Austin also included kegels. I know that many factors allowed for my smooth delivery. I was only officially in labor for two hours! Woohoo! (A far

cry from the 16 painful hours from my first birth.) I manifested a knowing of a fast, healthy delivery every day of my pregnancy, as well as practiced a daily workout that, again, included kegels. Today I use them to stay healthy and to ignite Shakti energy up the spine.

I find that while visualizing beautiful blue-white light flowing from my Root Chakra all the way up my spine and out my Crown Chakra in combination with doing kegels that a more powerful and sensual pure connection to the Divine occurs. I mention this earlier as the ancient yogic method of 'Root Lock' or Mula Bandha. Another practice that will assist the energy to flow upward during Mula Bandha is to also include placing the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth, either on the mound behind your teeth or the soft plate. This connects the gap and brings forth the flow of energy.

Since doing kegels can greatly enhance Shakti energy you can see the benefits. We must remember that this is a spiritual practice. To feel sexual and sensual is not "bad" or "naughty". In fact, it's quite normal. We must get out of this old way of thinking that has been conditioned in us. It truly IS divine to connect on ALL levels, physically, mentally, spiritual and emotionally. If you leave one out, there is no balance. The physical connection, since we have physical bodies, is just as crucial as the mental, emotional and spiritual connections we make in our daily practice. Just as we walk in nature to feed our physical body and soul, we will connect in sensual ways as well, as our bodies have been made to do so with the Divine. Remembering that following our joy is all we are meant to do! Following our joy leads us to grace, gratitude and divine loving connections.

Now, something that I've also loved to practice is the same visualization, while doing kegels during sexual encounters with my Husband. Not only do I benefit in the most Divine energy flow with my Divine connection and the connection with my Husband, but my Husband is also feeling more sensations and bringing up his Divine connection. A wonderful divine connection occurs as both you and your partner can do these visuals and exercises while having a pure Divine intention.

The Prana Cord is another wonderful part of our being. Prana [pra'na] in Hinduism is the all-pervading vital energy in the universe. Every being has a Prana cord. This is our connection to the Earth and to the Divine. This Prana Cord flows through the center of our body, through our spine, all the way up and through our Crown Chakra as well as down into the Earth connecting at the core. The area between your genitals and the anal area is the mid-section of your body. As I mentioned previously, there is a small piece of skin here that can be most sensitive, especially in men. Also, engage the belly or abdominals for a powerful connected and lift.

This was introduced to me several years ago now. When I heard that if you practice pushing this area up while doing yoga poses, this will greatly enhance the energy flow and assist you in keeping the yoga pose with less physical effort, I had to try it. It's amazing how true it really works. I have done this in yoga poses as well as just simply during my exercise workouts. It really does assist in wonderful energy flow as well as better endurance. Fatigue is reduced significantly. Our cells are filled with life force energy to keep us going. And because we are still doing a kegel exercises for this practice, they are working together simultaneously bringing up the energy flow and Shakti energy. Both of these together are Mula Bandha.

Pelvic tilt, mostly practiced in Tantra exercise, is a beautiful way to open up the energy flow through your hips and joints in that region. I won't go into all the wonderful Tantra exercises, as that would be a book in itself. I find it beneficial to have the teacher present for proper positioning and motion. However, for the pelvic tilt, it is simple. First we have good posture and good alignment with head, neck and spine. Next we just move our hips forward and back, as we would during a sensual lovemaking encounter with our mate. Bend your knees if you are standing up. If lying down, you can do what feels most comfortable. Breathing becomes easier and more potent to energize the body. As we do this we will feel our spine come into better alignment, as well as energy start juicing up from your root Chakra (Kundalini base) on up. This blended with the kegels, prana cord lifts, and visualization of blue-white energy up the spine will align you with higher levels of energy and Shakti flow. You will feel amazing during and after.

When we combine the pelvic tilt with kegels and prana cord lifts we have a powerful combination that brings our energy to optimal levels. Don't take my word for it. Try it. You will be

pleasantly surprised. When we are in harmonious flow of life energy the self-healing abilities of our bodies are at maximum capacity. As we fuel our bodies daily with healthy intakes of food, exercises and energy flow we allow our bodies to be at those optimal levels of life force energy. I strongly feel that as we do daily practices on **all** levels (physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally) our energy is maximized, self-healing is automatic, and life flows to and through us in powerful, graceful and beautiful ways.

The my *Divine Embrace* book, the Sacred Energy Awakening Ceremony (in Chapter 9) has a section where, if you have a partner, they will send energy from your Root Chakra up your spine and out your Crown Chakra. While doing this with a partner you will simply do the process on the CD and your partner will work the other energy process. However, if you are able to do this by yourself, you will have an extra option to include at this point in the process. So when you get to the part where you are sending energy up the spine, you will then be able to do kegels and prana cord lifts while visualizing the process. This will feel amazing. Remember that you will receive the same benefits whether you have the option of a partner or not. Having the partner adds something extra to it, but you will still feel great results in both options. Do this as many times as you are drawn to. It is amazing.

3 Bandhas: Mula, Uddiyana, Jalandhara

by Sadie Nardini

In class, after the foundation is set, we focus on stimulating the Abdominal Core and Energetic Core, then AS WE MOVE INTO OR REMAIN IN EACH POSE, we use the bandhas as muscular “energy herders” to move prana up through the Spinal Core from root to crown.

We do this by generating each transition and asana **FIRST** from the pelvic floor activation = **MULA BANDHA**, then upwards to the navel, and then the lower ribcage = **UDDIYANA BANDHA**, then into the heart, then to the head = **A SLIGHT JALANDHARA BANDHA** and outwards to the limbs as an expression of that core connection. All bandhas should be activated to about 25% of your total capacity. An active, yet gentle lift.

MULA BANDHA: “Pelvic floor lifts as if you need to go to the loo but have to hold it”. This bandha contains energy from the root, supports the breath and helps with lower back and sacrum protection.

MUSCLES ACTIVATED: The levator ani, the coccygeus, the perineum, and pyrimidalis, a muscle in the lowest front abdominals by the pubic bone.

UDDIYANA BANDHA: “Draw your navel in and up as if to touch the underside of your heart, and take the low front ribpoints in, and slightly closer.” This bandha keeps the lower ribs from jutting forward, allows softening and freedom in lower and mid back. Contains energy into the inner body. **MUSCLES ACTIVATED:** transversus abdominis and rectus abdominis.

JALANDHARA BANDHA: “Slide your soft palate back, and up, keeping your front and back throat open, neck in its natural curve.” This bandha opens energy from heart to head, stops jutting forward at the jaw. **MUSCLES ACTIVATED:** Sternocleidomastoid and Rhomboids.

The head should remain in alignment over the pelvic bowl in most poses, unless you are passively stretching it [side angle dropping head]. The back of the neck is never constricted. If there was an orange resting there, you would never make orange juice!

Often, students drop the head back [Camel, Up Dog] or jut it forward [Seated Forward Bend, chaturanga] instead of **using the head as an extension of the spine**. To slide the head back into neutral if it’s jutting forward, OR to slide it back into alignment during backbends, apply a slight Jalandhara Bandha, sliding the soft palate back and up, keeping the front and back of your neck open equally, and the jaw and skull will follow.

What Are The Koshas And What Can They Do For You?

by Nicole Carlin

The koshas are energetic layers or sheaths that move from the outermost layer of skin to the deep spiritual core. The koshas provide a framework for conceptualizing ourselves. Much like the chakra system, the kosha layers come packaged with their own individual physiological function and psychology. In some respects, the kosha layers mirror the psychology of the chakras.

For those of you wondering what the individual koshas are and how they relate your being as a whole, below you'll find brief descriptions of each.

1. Annamaya kosha

The first layer of the koshas represents the physical body, including the skin, muscles, connective tissue, fat and bones. When you pinch the side of your waist and feel the skin and muscle under your fingers, you engage with annamaya kosha. For a lot of people the first layer might be where we spend the most time hanging out, locked in our physical senses

2. Pranamaya kosha

The second layer represents the pranic or subtle body — in essence, it's the circulatory system for prana, or “life-force energy.” It also includes the fluid, physical aspects of the anatomical body that control the movement of blood, lymph and cerebrospinal fluid through the body and the circulatory movement of breath through the respiratory system. In psychological terms, pranamaya kosha controls our bodily and spiritual rhythm.

3. Manomaya kosha

The third layer takes us into the deep recesses of the mind, emotions and nervous system. While modern science has developed an acute understanding of the inner working of the brain, the mind, motivations and emotions still retain a mysterious quality. The manomaya kosha makes up the control panel for the emotional and physical body, sending messages through your brain synapses and the central nervous system. It's this layer where you move from physical feeling and rhythm to emotional feeling.

4. Vijanamaya kosha

Diving underneath the sea of emotions in the manomaya kosha, we reach the wisdom body of the fourth kosha —Vijanamaya. It's here that we develop awareness, insight and consciousness. Emotions left unchecked by awareness are destructive. The awareness of vijanamaya kosha illuminates our deeper desires and motivation and allows us to see the choice we have in all things. Instead of simply feeling or acting, we choose to feel or act with intention. Sometimes the intention is simply to move past the emotion into pure sensation and bliss.

5. Anandamaya kosha

The fifth and last kosha drops from conscious awareness into the pure and radiant bliss body. Within the anadamaya kosha, you might experience connection with all things, liberation from suffering and a state of being often described as “in the flow.”

Throughout the day, notice yourself shifting between the koshas layers:

Right now I feel hot.

Right now I'm paying attention to my breathing.

Right now I feel upset.

Right now I understand why I reacted that way yesterday.

Right now I'm deep in meditation.

Right now I feel bliss.

Yoga helps you to create a track to the deeper subtle kosha layers, so they're easier to access. As asana prepares the outer body, yogic breathing turns your attention to the pranic body. Lastly, yogic philosophy provides the tools for bringing awareness to your fluctuating emotional state of mind, so you can embody and radiate health and bliss.

The Koshas: 5 Layers of Being

By Linda Johnsen

Subtle Body Yoga

If you're a typical health-conscious Yoga International reader, you've probably already exercised today. Whether you went for a brisk walk, played some tennis, or worked out at the gym, you recognize the importance of keeping your physical body in shape. But have you exercised your subtle body yet? Or your causal body? According to the yoga tradition, every one of us has five bodies, each made of increasingly finer grades of energy. And if we intend to live a fully balanced, healthy life, it tells us, all our bodies need to be kept in good condition.

**According to the yoga tradition, every one of us has five bodies,
each made of increasingly finer grades of energy.**

The five progressively subtler bodies that compose our personality are described in a yoga classic called the Taittiriya Upanishad:

1. "Human beings consist of a material body built from the food they eat. Those who care for this body are nourished by the universe itself.
2. "Inside this is another body made of life energy. It fills the physical body and takes its shape. Those who treat this vital force as divine experience excellent health and longevity because this energy is the source of physical life.
3. "Within the vital force is yet another body, this one made of thought energy. It fills the two denser bodies and has the same shape. Those who understand and control the mental body are no longer afflicted by fear.
4. "Deeper still lies another body comprised of intellect. It permeates the three denser bodies and assumes the same form. Those who establish their awareness here free themselves from unhealthy thoughts and actions, and develop the self-control necessary to achieve their goals.
5. "Hidden inside it is yet a subtler body, composed of pure joy. It pervades the other bodies and shares the same shape. It is experienced as happiness, delight, and bliss."

These five bodies are called koshas, or "sheaths," in Sanskrit, because each fits in the next like a sword in a scabbard. Only the densest is made of matter as we know it; the other four are energy states invisible to the physical eye, though we can easily sense their presence inside us when we pay close attention. Since the inner bodies are the source of our well-being during life and are the vehicles we travel in after death, India's ancient yogis developed specific exercises to strengthen and tone each one in turn.

Your Second Body

You're already familiar with your **physical body [Your first Layer]**. It's called annamaya kosha in yoga, (maya means "made of" and anna means "food" or "physical matter.") But yoga also makes you aware of a second body, the organizing field that holds your material body together. This is the life energy that governs your biological processes, from breathing to digestion to the circulation of your blood. It's called chi in Chinese medicine and prana in yoga. The ancient Egyptians called it the ka.

Acupuncture and homeopathy don't directly affect your physical body; they work on the vital force that activates and sustains it.

Acupuncture and homeopathy don't directly affect your physical body; they work on the vital force that activates and sustains it. Orthodox physicians in the West recognized the importance of the vital force up till the 19th century, but with the development of sulfa drugs and antibiotics, their attention shifted from the energy states underlying human biology to focus exclusively on the physical body itself.

The energy body is called the prana-maya kosha in yoga. When it ceases to function your physical body can no longer operate. Your heart and lungs stop working and your cells begin to disintegrate. In Western culture we strongly identify with our material body, yet without prana supporting and directing it, it can't survive more than a few minutes.

Yoga devotes an entire class of practices called pranayama to replenishing

the vitality of the pranamaya kosha. Exercises like diaphragmatic breathing, the complete yogic breath, and alternate nostril breathing are specifically designed to enhance the proper functioning of your second sheath.

In addition, getting plenty of fresh air and sunlight is essential for maintaining the health of the vital force. Yoga texts explain that the sun is the ultimate source of prana, and it is said that some advanced yogis go for years without eating; instead they simply absorb the prana radiated by the sun. For most of us, however, fresh whole foods are a major source of prana.

Your Third Body

The third sheath or mental body is the apparatus responsible for our sensory and motor activities and our day-to-day awareness when we're functioning "on automatic." It processes input from our five senses and responds reflexively. When we move through life passively, reacting to our environment rather than actively shaping it, our awareness is focused here. Many people, and most animals, routinely operate at this level.

This body is called manomaya kosha (which means "body made of thought processes"). In the West we associate our routine mental state with the brain, but according to yoga the entire nervous system (including the brain) merely mediates the activity of the manomaya kosha, expressing the commands of this higher energy state through the physical body.

You get a clear sense of what the mental body is when you observe a patient in a coma. Their second sheath is still operating so their heart continues to pump and their lungs expand and contract. But the person has no awareness of the external world and no ability to take action because the activity of the mental body has shut down. The pranamaya kohsa operates from the moment of our first breath to our

last, but the manomaya kosha shuts down temporarily on a daily basis, regenerating itself during the state of deep sleep.

The health of the manomaya kosha is tremendously enhanced through the practice of mantra meditation. This soothes and balances this inner body, and helps release “knots” of energy tied up in mental complexes and obsessive thoughts. Yogis who spend a great deal of time in meditation often have very little need for sleep, in part because their mental vehicles are functioning optimally, like a car that’s just had a tune-up.

The mental body “feeds” on the sense impressions we offer it. If we supply our third sheath with a continual stream of violent TV shows and video games, for example, it begins to crave increasingly aggressive forms of stimulation, and may become more agitated and less sensitive to the suffering of others. If we “stuff” it with too much work or too much play we may experience a form of mental “indigestion,” leaving us feeling harried or exhausted. A harmonious environment, interesting professional challenges, and fun and supportive relationships offer an ideal diet for the mind. A daily session of pratyahara, or sensory withdrawal, leading into meditation provides an excellent inner tune-up.

Your Fourth Body

Subtler still is the vijnanamaya kosha (vijnana means “the power of judgment or discernment”). It’s often translated as “intellect,” but the real meaning is broader, encompassing all the functions of the higher mind, including conscience and will. It may be easier to understand the distinction between the third sheath or mental body and the fourth sheath or intellectual body by taking a look at those in whom the vijnanamaya kosha is underdeveloped.

One such type is someone who doesn’t seem to be in control of her life, who is constantly reacting to circumstances rather than making a decision and responding proactively. This kind of woman has a hard time making up her mind, thinking for herself, or being creative. She has very little willpower and is continually the victim of her own poor judgment.

Another example of a deficient fourth sheath is someone without strong personal ethics. He may attend religious services and speak piously about moral values, but when the opportunity arises to benefit himself at the expense of others, he doesn’t hesitate to act. His ability to discern between right and wrong is weak; conscience is a platitude rather than a living experience for him.

An activated fourth sheath is what distinguishes human beings from animals. Only humans have the ability to direct their own lives, free from the promptings of instinct, and to make moral choices. The sages considered the development of a healthy vijnanamaya kosha so important that they placed the exercises for it at the very beginning of the yoga system. These are the yamas and niyamas, commitments every yoga student is asked to make: not to harm, lie, steal, overindulge, or desire more than you actually need; instead you are asked to be content, pure, self-disciplined, studious, and devoted.

Jnana yoga also works with this kosha. This is the path of the intellect in which you are advised to study spiritual truths, contemplate them deeply, and finally incorporate them into the very core of your personality. On this path your spiritual understanding becomes the “food” with which you nourish your intellect.

As your meditation practice deepens over the months and years, your ability to connect with inner guidance is enhanced. You begin to experience the events in your life, even the painful ones, in a calm and objective manner. Your yogic lifestyle, contemplation, and meditation lead to clarity of judgment, greater intuitive insight, and increased willpower as your vijnanamaya kosha grows stronger and more balanced.

Your Fifth Body

In the vast majority of humans, the fifth sheath is totally underdeveloped. This is the anandamaya kosha, the subtlest body which is experienced as ananda (spiritual bliss). Generally only saints, sages, and genuine mystics have done the inner work necessary to make ananda a living part of their daily experience, and most people are hardly even aware that this level of consciousness exists within themselves.

Generally only saints, sages, and genuine mystics have done the inner work necessary to make ananda a living part of their daily experience, and most people are hardly even aware that this level of consciousness exists within themselves.

The anandamaya kosha is extremely important in yoga because it's the final and thinnest veil standing between our ordinary awareness and our higher Self. Many individuals who've had near-death experiences have reported experiencing a brilliant white light radiating all-embracing wisdom and unconditional love. This is the experience of the anandamaya kosha. Saints and mystics purify their minds so that they can have this experience throughout life, not just for a fleeting moment at death.

In the tantric tradition, spirit is often symbolized as Shiva, the transcendent Lord who is ever immersed in divine consciousness. Matter/energy is called Shakti, the Supreme Goddess whose divine body is this entire universe. It's said that they love each other with unspeakable intensity. Their supreme love is experienced in the anandamaya kosha, where spirit and matter passionately embrace.

We can awaken our bliss sheath through three practices. The first is seva, selfless service. This opens our heart to our innate unity with other beings. The second is bhakti yoga, devotion to God. This opens our heart to our unity with the all-pervading Divine Being. The third is samadhi, intensely focused meditation, which opens our heart to our own divine being.

Radiant Health

You are a multidimensional creature. Your awareness manifests on many different planes. Yoga introduces you to yourself and trains you to live fully and gracefully at every level of your being. From the hatha postures that strengthen and tone your physical body to the breathing exercises that balance and vitalize your life force, from the meditation practice that quiets and clears your mind to the self-study and selfless love that open up an inner world of knowledge and unity, yoga is a holistic system that develops and integrates every part of your personality. By getting to know your five bodies and the inner Self (whose awareness illumines them all), you can experience the health and fulfillment of an enlightened life.

Experiencing Your Five Sheaths

The five sheaths are not theoretical constructs. They are real parts of your being that you can actually experience. The following eight-step exercise will help you get a fuller sense of these inner dimensions of your personality.

1. Sit comfortably with your head, neck, and trunk in a straight line. Sit upright without straining. You'll feel both alert and relaxed.
2. Close your eyes, withdrawing your awareness from the sights and sounds around you. Bring your full attention to your physical body. Be aware of your head and shoulders, chest and waist, back and abdomen, arms and legs. This is your annamaya kosha.
3. Bring your full attention to the point between your nostrils and feel yourself breathe. Gradually your breath will flow more slowly, smoothly, and quietly. Be aware of the energy pulsing through your body. It's making your heart beat, your lungs expand and contract, the blood course through your veins, your stomach gurgle. The force orchestrating this movement—not your physical body itself—is your prana-maya kosha.
4. Shift your awareness into your brain. Pay attention to the part of your awareness that's regulating your sensory input and motor output. This is the part of you that notices your nose is itching and orders your hand to scratch it. It notes that you're uncomfortable sitting in one position for so long and wants you to move your legs. It generates the reflexive mental chatter that continually fires through your mind. This is your manomaya kosha.
5. Lift your awareness higher inside your skull. Sense the part of your awareness that consciously made the decision to participate in this exercise and right now is commanding you to sit still and complete it. It recognizes the value of expanding your self-awareness and compels you to get up early in the morning to do your hatha postures and meditation, even though lazing in bed might be more pleasant. This is your vijnanamaya kosha.
6. Center your awareness in your heart. Relax deeply; keep breathing smoothly and evenly. Now, taking as much time as you need, allow yourself to settle into a state of complete tranquility. Buried deep in that inner peace is a sense of purest happiness. This is not an emotional euphoria, though as you leave this state it may pour out of you as a sense of great joy and gratitude. It is a space of perfect contentment, perfect attunement, and abiding stillness. There is no sense of lack, or fear, or desire. This is your anandamaya kosha.
7. Now simply be aware of your own awareness. The pure consciousness that is having this experience lies beyond this experience. It is your true inner Self, your immortal being. Rest in your own being for as long as you can hold your attention there.
8. Return your attention to your breath. Breathe slowly, smoothly, and evenly. Open your eyes. Take a moment to relax and absorb this experience before you get up.

From Death to Birth—and Beyond

In many yoga texts you'll find the five sheaths grouped into three. The physical body and vital force are called the sthula sharira, the "gross body." The mental body and intellect are called the sukshma sharira, the "subtle" or "astral body." The bliss sheath is called the karana sharira, the "causal body." These are recognized in many different spiritual traditions. Plutarch, a Greek priest who presided at the Temple of Delphi in the first century ce, called them the soma, psyche, and nous, respectively.

The gross body disintegrates at death. The subtle body disintegrates at rebirth, allowing you to develop a new personality in your next life. The causal body reincarnates again and again, carrying your karma with it like luggage. It finally disintegrates at the time of liberation, when the higher Self disengages from the cycle of birth and death.



Savasana

Corpse Pose

Sanskrit: Savasana

Image of courtesy of Yogajournal.com

Savasana, also known as the corpse pose is not pretending to be dead. Rather it is the pose at the very end of most yoga asana classes. It is the relaxed position of every part of your body and the time and space allowed for you to take some time for yourself as well as to integrate all of the poses you have worked on during your yoga class. During this time you may fall into a very deep meditation or you may receive much needed guidance on some things that you finally let go of during a vigorous or gentle yoga practice. Your body is finally relaxing and rejuvenating.



Directions on how to come into the pose:

Lie down flat on your back. Bring your body to a neutral position. Soften the lower back, but don't flatten. Legs full extended out. Your feet slaying to the outside. Your arms are straight and slightly away from the body, palms up. Rock your body slightly from side to side and broaden the back ribs and shoulder blades away from the spine. Eyes closed. Be sure your chin is not jutting upwards too far or hugging too closely to the neck. It is prudent you also quiet the mind as best you can in this pose. Allow yourself to listen to the instructor's direction for as long as they last and then simply let go. Relax and go deeper into the pose. Allow your whole body to melt into the mat. Feel yourself releasing and letting go deeper and deeper. Soon your full consciousness may be felt or you will be in so deep that when you come back to the room you will not remember a thing. Each savasana holds something unique to ponder.

To come out of this pose, wiggle your fingers and toes. Allow yourself to come back fully aware of the room and its energy. Bring your knees to your chest and give them a hug. Then gently roll over to one side and hold it hear for a moment. Next, slowly lift yourself up and come to easy seated pose (legs crossed and back straight) with eyes closed. Listen to final words from your instructor and do any final OM's. Open your eyes and feel the refreshed rejuvenation from a beautiful practice. Feel the space and connection you allowed your body, mind and soul to experience during this time. Ahhhh. :)

When not to do this pose or to modify/Contraindications:

If you have back injury or pain, do this pose with a bolster under your knees. If the pain still exists do not do this pose. Also, if you are pregnant be sure you are raising your head and chest up on a bolster or even a pillow.

THE ART OF LETTING GO: SAVASANA

FINAL RESTING POSE... IT'S SIMPLE BUT IT ISN'T EASY

July 29th, 2015 | Erin O'Brien

Many of us take time out of our busy schedules to show up to yoga class. We begin our practice on our mats, observing our thoughts as they dwell in the past or race toward the future until we hear the soothing sound of the teacher's voice inviting us back into the room, and into present moment. We move through the postures, stretch our bodies and discover new capacities to be with ourselves in a strong, kind, loving way.



We leave our comfort zones and step into our learning zones.

Our energy moves, shifts, rises and falls. At the end of class, we enter *savasana* or “corpse pose” where we let go of all effort and receive the benefits of the practice. Or where we’re *invited* to let go. For many modern urbanites, it’s just not that easy.

As a newbie to yoga, I did not understand why we would just lie on our backs at the end of yoga. I was all about the movement and the workout! In stillness, my mind would wander into the past and the future. I admit, I often used *savasana* to plan the rest of my day.

Looking back, I can see I held the belief that relaxation was the equivalent of laziness.

Students have shared that it’s very difficult for them to quiet the mind... that they are already thinking about the To Do list waiting for them on the other side of the studio door. Others have shared they feel they aren’t “allowed” to just relax. Even for just a precious few minutes.

As B.K.S. Iyengar has said, “It’s much harder to keep the mind still than the body. Therefore, this apparently easy posture is one of the most difficult to master.”

If you are having trouble letting go in *savasana*, the first thing you can try, is stop trying. You can just let it be whatever it is. You can also focus your mind on a body scan or listen to all the sounds in the room, just outside the door and farther away.

I did not arrive at my first yoga class with the intention of calming my mind — for me it was more about a healthy body — but over time something started to happen. I began to truly let go of all effort in *Savasana*. I stopped trying to “do” *savasana* and then really did access an inner calm.

So, while I began yoga for the workout, I continued my practice so I could maintain my inner peace, watch the fluctuations of my mind, and surrender into the feeling of “emptiness” or “clarity” I receive in *savasana*. *Savasana* has become my favorite posture. I can now see that this final resting pose is, in fact, the most advanced posture there is.

The Subtle Struggle of Savasana

by Nikki Costello

Don't underestimate the art of relaxation. Savasana can be the most difficult pose of your practice.



Although it looks easy, Savasana (Corpse Pose) has been called the most difficult of the asanas. Indeed, many yoga students who can happily balance, bend, and twist through the rest of class struggle with just lying on the floor. The reason is that the art of relaxation is harder than it looks. It doesn't happen on demand: You can't just say, "OK, I'm going to relax, right now!" (Just ask the millions of Americans who have trouble falling asleep at night.) That's why Savasana is such a gift. The pose sets up the conditions that allow you to gradually enter a truly relaxed state, one that is deeply refreshing in itself and that also can serve as a starting point for meditation.

When you first start practicing Savasana, it can be a struggle to relax in the pose; you may lie there feeling tense and staring at the ceiling. Or, like some students, you might fall asleep the moment you lie down. The essence of Savasana is to relax with attention, that is, to remain conscious and alert while still being at ease. Remaining aware while relaxing can help you begin to notice and release long-held tensions in your body and mind.

Savasana is a practice of gradually relaxing one body part at a time, one muscle at a time, and one thought at a time. When you do this practice day after day, it conditions the body to release stress and can improve your sense of physical and emotional well-being. But when you have allowed tightness and tension to build up in your body, relaxing—even when you lie down—feels

impossible. That's why it's important to practice the other, active asanas before attempting Savasana because they stretch, open, and release tension in the muscles. They also help relax the diaphragm, so the breath can move freely.

Working with props to support one part of the body at a time can help you learn to consciously relax and refine your practice of Savasana. Elevating the calves on a support (see Step 1) relaxes the legs, which can become fatigued from yoga practice, exercise, standing long hours, or even from sitting too long. This variation also improves circulation and releases tension in the back muscles, allowing you to rest more deeply in your Savasana. Elevating the back and supporting the head, on the other hand (see Step 2), helps to open your chest, release the shoulders, and enhance the natural flow of the breath. If your energy or mood is low or if you hold a lot of tension in your upper back and shoulders, this variation will be good for you. Observe the breath as you practice. Spend several minutes here taking long and even breaths. You may notice that your brain becomes quiet and your thoughts slow down, allowing your mind to become clear and focused.

In the full version of the pose, you will rest your entire body on the floor. Extend your arms and legs outward from the torso evenly and symmetrically. Mentally scan the body from head to feet, gradually releasing each body part and each muscle group; take time to notice all the places where the body is making contact with the floor. With each exhalation, imagine each limb getting a little heavier and spreading out a little more.

If you feel uncomfortable in any part of your body, you may need further support. Use props to relieve any pressure and release tension so you can fully relax. Lying flat on the floor is an unusual experience and can feel strange at first, so be patient with yourself. Over time, you'll enjoy it more. Even if you feel like moving, try to stay there for a few minutes until it becomes easier. Gradually notice that a feeling of complete stillness draws you inside. You may notice that the breath has become quiet and almost invisible.

When coming out of Savasana, first take a few deep breaths. Give yourself a few moments to regain physical awareness of your arms and legs, and then slowly move your body with gentle attention.

A regular practice of Savasana will train you again and again in the art of relaxation, an essential quality for meditation and a true experience of yoga. As you release your physical body, you may even discover another part of yourself that is light and free.

Nikki Costello is a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher living in New York City.

Prepare for Rest

Practicing Savasana before sleeping can promote deep, quality sleep. Position yourself in bed using the same points of alignment and supports you use for Savasana on your mat. Spend several minutes in the pose relaxing your mind.

Step 1: Support Your Legs on a Chair

Relax your back and relieve your legs.

Set It Up:



1. Place your mat in front of a chair or couch.
2. Lie in the center of your mat with your knees bent.
3. Lift your legs, and place the back of your calves on the chair or couch.

4. Rest the back of the arms on the floor with the palms facing upward.

Refine: Adjust your support if necessary to be sure the entire calf, supported equally. Place a blanket under your head and neck (all the way to your shoulders) so that you can drop your chin and direct your gaze downward toward your heart. If you wear glasses, remove them. Place a cloth over your eyes. Turn the upper arm so that skin rolls away from the chest, and gently tuck the shoulder blades in toward your back so the center of the chest is broad and lifted. Be sure no part of the arm is touching the torso.

Finish: Relax the back muscles by allowing them to spread from the center out to the sides. Bring your attention to the whole back, feeling the back ribs in contact with the floor. With each inhalation, notice the back ribs spreading and the lungs filling. With each exhalation, notice them contracting. See if you can feel the floor with all parts of your back, from the pelvis to the head.

Step 2: Support Your Back and Head with Folded Blankets

Open your chest and observe your breath.

Set It Up:



1. Place a bolster or a stack of folded blankets vertically on your mat and another folded blanket where your head will rest.
2. Lie back on the bolster or blankets with your knees bent.
3. Place the folded blanket under your head and neck.
4. Extend your legs one at a time.

5. Check that each leg is equal distance from the midline of your body.

Refine: Be sure the blanket is under the entire neck, all the way to your shoulders. If you wear glasses, remove them now. Place a cloth over your eyes before adjusting your arms. Extend the arms at the sides. The arms should be far enough away from the torso to allow the upper inner arm to roll away from the chest. Keep your armpit area open and the shoulders releasing down toward the floor. Spread and open the palms and fingers, and then allow the back of the hand to soften and rest on the floor.

Finish: Bring your attention to your breath. Simply notice the natural flow of your breath coming in and going out. For several minutes, observe the breath and focus on filling the lungs evenly, right and left. Consciously expand the chest both upward and outward as you inhale; release the breath slowly and smoothly. The practice of breathing consciously, using this support, will have a soothing and calming effect on your nervous system.

Final Pose: Savasana



Set It Up:

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent.
2. Keep your head centered, not allowing it to fall to either side.
3. Extend your arms to the sides.

Refine: If you'd like to use a blanket under your head or something over your eyes, prepare that before adjusting the arms. Turn the upper inner arms away from the trunk, and gently tuck the shoulder blades in, bringing a little lift to the chest. Do this without overarched the lower back. Maintain the arm position,

and then stretch the legs out one by one. Allow the inner legs to roll outward and relax completely.

Finish: Allow your breath to flow smoothly in and out. Close your eyes and relax the facial muscles, beginning with the forehead and eyelids. Then relax the cheeks, lips, and tongue. (Relaxing your tongue will release tension in the face, which has a direct effect on the brain and mind.) Relax the throat and neck. Continue to bring attention to each part of the body, consciously relaxing each part, starting with the head and traveling all the way down to your feet. When the physical body is still and at rest, the breath naturally draws you inward toward the essence of yourself. Rest with a spacious feeling of light in your heart.

Optimize Your Pose

Explore these modifications of Savasana:

- **To relax the eyes and mind:** Gently place a cloth or eye bag over your eyes to block out the light and relax the pupils.
- **To relax the abdomen:** Place a sandbag, block, or a few blankets horizontally across your lower abdomen.
- **To support your neck:** Place a folded blanket or cushion under your neck and head until your forehead is slightly higher than your chin.
- **To relax the lower back:** Place a rolled-up blanket or cushion beneath your knees.

Elements of Practice

We are used to engaging our muscles and our brains to achieve our goals, yet in Savasana, we must become equally skilled at letting all that activity go in order for the pose's beneficial effects to arise. It's hard to let go of the idea that everything important happens when you are moving and taking action. Yet a deeper part of yourself waits for those moments when you are completely relaxed to reveal its truth. A feeling of connection, clarity, all-knowingness, love, or joy may arise from this state of ease and relaxation—a taste of what meditation offers.

How to Teach Savasana: Help Students Master Corpse Pose

by Julie Gudmestad

Help your students fully experience the benefits of Corpse Pose (Savasana), through the exploration of their anatomy.



Help your students fully experience the benefits of Corpse Pose through the exploration of their anatomy.

Ahhhhh, Savasana. Our students so look forward to it. They just flop down on the floor, and deep relaxation overtakes them—right? This is the one pose, they hope, for which they don't have to process detailed instructions, or fuss with props other than a blanket for warmth.

Or do they?

Actually, with just a little attention to setting up the pose, our students' experience of rest and replenishment can be deepened. And who doesn't need to get maximum benefit from their rest time? So many of our students come to class exhausted and depleted that Savasana may be the most important pose we teach them. Not to mention the fact that if they leave class feeling relaxed and refreshed, they're more likely to make it a priority to get to class every week.

The Savasana Set-Up Counts

First, let's take a look at the big picture: How do your students place themselves in the room? Ideally, as the muscles relax in Savasana, the body should have room to spread

freely on the floor, like an ice cube melting, losing its hard edges and forming a puddle. Any sense of being crowded by objects on the floor, or especially by another person, results in a subtle pulling-in action—there won't be complete letting go. Similarly, any body part touching a wall limits the sense of room to expand and leaves a subtle sense of compression rather than expansion. You may have to scan the room and invite students to move from a crowded area to one with more open space.

Now that your students are evenly spaced around the room, how can you help them use props to deepen their relaxation? It's important to remember that any pain, or even discomfort, results in muscle guarding and tension. So students will greatly appreciate any positioning that will help relieve pain and lead to a deeper sense of letting go. Lower back pain associated with hyperextension (overarching of the spine) is usually eased by supported bent knees, whether by a rolled blanket under the knees or a chair under the calves. This strategy works by putting slack in shortened hip flexors, including by releasing the iliopsoas, so they don't tip the pelvis to the anterior and pull the lumbar spine forward into hyperextension. The knee-flexed position also decompresses the lower back and lengthens the muscles there. Conversely, students with a flat back, or those with lower back strain due to forward-bending activities such as yard work or housecleaning, might feel best with a small roll under the lower back to support the normal curve.

Fine-Tune Your Corpse Pose

As you scan the room, take a look at your students' head and neck position as well. When the chin is higher than the forehead, the neck is usually hyperextended, or overarched. Cervical hyperextension while lying supine may be due to tight, short pectoral muscles in the chest, or tight muscles in the neck, including the sternocleidomastoid in the front and the upper trapezius and levator scapula in the back. As in the lower back, hyperextension in the cervical spine can cause pain and discomfort due to tight muscles and compression of the small joints on the back of the vertebrae. This head and neck position is also relatively energizing (think backbend yoga poses) and invites the inner gaze to look up and out. Correct this position by placing a firm, folded blanket under the head and upper neck—not under the shoulders, which would push them forward. This lift under the head will drop the chin, lengthen the back of the neck, and invite the inner gaze down toward the heart.

And speaking of the heart, positioning your students with an open chest not only deepens their relaxation but also makes room for the heart to pump blood and the lungs to fill more freely and with less effort. Study your students as they lie on the floor. Many students set themselves up with their shoulders curling forward and in toward their chests, especially if their arms are pulled in close to their sides. The chest drops and, again, there's the sense of compression and a limit to the ability to expand. Instead, while your students are settling in to Savasana, ask them to place their arms in the 90/90 position, which means 90 degrees at the shoulder (humerus, or upper arm bone, is on the floor and sticking straight out from the side), while the elbow is also at 90 degrees (the forearms are on the floor and parallel to the body, and the hands are resting, palms-up, beside the head).

This 90/90 position places the shoulder blades in an optimal position, which remains as you ask your students to straighten their elbows and sliding the arms down a closer to their sides (but not touching the side ribs). Coming into the pose this way leaves the palms naturally turned up and the chest effortlessly open. The spacious chest makes an open heart possible, and in the relaxed comfort of Savasana, your student may deeply experience *ahimsa*, nonharming for all beings.

Help Your Students Let Go: 5 Hands-On Assists for Savasana

by Deven Sisler

Senior AcroYoga teacher Deven Sisler and yoga teacher Britta Rael demonstrate 5 ways that hands-on assists can enhance the Savasana experience.

We've all seen the shirts that say, "I am just here for the Savasana." Well, I like to say, "I am just here for the hands-on assists in Savasana." Touch is the first sense that we develop in utero, and a calm, supportive adjustment can aid relaxation during our final resting pose more than any other technique.

Teachers, be sure to ask for consent, as hands-on adjustments may have the opposite effect if they are unexpected or unwanted. Tell your students you would like to offer them an assist to help them find more ease in Savasana. Ask them to place a hand on their own belly if they would like to receive your touch. Or, you can instruct students who don't want any touch to fold over a corner of their mat or place a "do not assist" card next to their mat.

5 Hands-On Assists to Enhance Savasana

BEFORE YOU BEGIN Take 3 breaths of gratitude for the opportunity to give supportive, compassionate touch. Clear your energy and intention of any distraction so you can be completely present with each student.



1. Feet

According to healing traditions, many of the body's energy lines begin in the feet, so that's where we start to invite initial relaxation. The feet can also be a less intimate body part, so beginning here may allow your student to become more comfortable with your touch.

Rub your palms together as you approach your student to gently alert them that you are near, while also making sure your hands are warm. Let your hands fall softly onto your student's feet. Take a breath here, simply making contact. Rock your weight to the right, and pour pressure through a straight arm, alternating on your breath to the opposite side.



2. Legs

This adjustment is particularly supportive if you have a student who lies in Savasana with their legs very close together or very far apart.

Scoop your hands underneath your student's heels or ankles, then come through kneeling to standing, using the strength of your legs. Arrive in a strong [Goddess Pose](#). Bend your legs from side to side to give a slow, gentle swinging motion to your student's legs to help release tension in their lower back and outer legs (editor's note: swinging motion not shown). With their feet in your hands, point your student's toes toward each other to increase internal rotation in the thigh, then point their toes out, creating external rotation. After a few breath cycles, gently place their feet hip-width apart on their mat.



3. Hands

This action will help release tension held in the shoulders and arms.

Standing to one side of your student, slide your hands underneath their wrists to cradle their hands. Lean away to draw their shoulders from their ears; inhale and release. Repeat twice more. As you place their hands back on their mat with the palms of their hands facing up, apply pressure to the middle of their palms to help them ground into relaxation.



4. Shoulders

Rub your palms together to warm your hands. Let your palms fall gently to the juncture between the deltoid (muscle covering the shoulder joint), collarbone, and pectoralis minor muscle (upper chest). As your student inhales, breathe in with them. As they exhale, apply a gentle pressure down. If their breath stays even and calm or deepens, those are cues that the pressure is increasing their relaxation in the pose. If their breath stops or holds, that is an indication that there is too much pressure and you should stop. Listen through your hands to the connection you are creating with your student.



5. Head

Many people are not aware of how much emotional and physical tension they hold in their head, neck, and forehead. Releasing this tension through physical touch can open the door to deeper relaxation in Savasana and life. The following adjustments to this sensitive area are incredibly subtle, so be sure to share them only with students who know you, trust you, and have invited your assistance.

Mindfully place your fingertips just under the ridge of your student's cranium (try palpating your own ridge first, if this is new for you). As you exhale, lean away, applying a tiny amount of pressure, which will draw the head away from the spine. As you inhale, release back to center. Repeat twice more if their face looks relaxed and breathing stays even. Slowly release your hands. Place your thumbs at the top of the forehead and your fingertips above the hairline; take a deep breath here. Draw your fingers away from each other along the forehead, then make circular motion at their temples with your thumbs (editor's note: circular motion not shown). Finish by giving three mild tugs at the earlobe.



Meditation

Mind Awareness

"I am aligned with the Universe, and the Universe is aligned with me.
No longer my mind, I am free." ~ Maggie Anderson

I couldn't believe it. I did it again! I totally and completely identified with my mind. Oh there were bouts of bliss, of that connectedness to the One Source, but I was back in. I was in the illusion in a major way! The ups, the downs, the yin, the yang.

It took receiving a link from a friend of an article by the wonderful Eckhart Tolle to remind me (*You Are Not Your Mind* blog post). And I thank you very deeply! I had already read his books "The Power of Now" and "A New Earth." And so I read again what I had known before and soaked it up like it was new...because it was, all over again.

I wrote this excerpt for this book when in the blissful connected moments we all bounce in and out of till we reach total consciousness. We will all get there and then we will "know." Mind thoughts are a disease that most all of us are afflicted and must rid ourselves of. It is time to be the witness and be free from the disease. Free from our thoughts to simply BE!

Our suffering is rooted at the conditionings of the mind and not really the circumstances of our lives. Outer circumstances when accepted and no longer denied or judged are simply that; just circumstances for us to work through in life. But the conditionings of our minds cause unhappiness because it starts to judge circumstances, deny them, ridicule them, get impatient with them and basically is unwilling to allow it to be there in the present moment and accept it for its beingness. The mind thought says it "shouldn't" be there so our suffering begins. But when we accept it and allow it to be there, the challenge transmutes into a better flowing experience. Peace occurs in that very moment and that allows for the challenge to be handled more efficiently. It tends to be worked through more expediently.

Be still. Become the witness. Rid yourself of nonsense thoughts. Get rid of negative thoughts about self, about others, about life, and about pretty much everything. The space between is where you can feel utter bliss. Let go of all thought and just be. Try to observe the space between your thoughts, the space between someone else's thoughts, the space between a musical note, and the space between anything. Here you find true connection with the Divine. As Osho gracefully states, "When the mind is silent you are in communion with existence; when the mind is noisy you are disconnected. Your own noise functions like a wall around you. Silence is the bridge."

Now, also, positive thoughts bring about positive experiences. The more positive you are the better you feel from within. You can start there. Simply monitor your thoughts. Just watch them without judgment. What are you thinking and feeling now? Right now? Release it. It is not you. It is only the ego that you identify with, but it is not the real you.

Feel the love and gratitude for all you have in your life in this very moment. As you do this you align with higher vibrations that are speeding their way to you with positive experiences.

You truly are doing awesome. We must remember, as much as possible, not to get down on ourselves. When we get down on ourselves, we are talking negatively to our Spirit and body. We have negative thoughts and emotions. This brings our energy down and keeps it down in our energy bodies. If you are clairvoyant you can actually see the cloud of ooze and icky energy within our Energy Bodies. Bring your energy back up. Remain focused! Live in your Joy!

Simply being in the witness state allows you to move through some pretty tough times and some pretty tough ascension symptoms (ascension symptoms are mentioned at length in Book 2: *Divine Embrace*). No matter what the symptom or experience, just be with it. Let it flow through you. As you watch, as only the observer, you shine the light on the symptom or negative experience and suddenly in its right time it fades away naturally. This is life in the flow. Instead, if you resisted, the symptoms or experience would last longer and be tougher on you. In the witness state you are surrendering and allowing what will be to be, while living in the present moment.

Being the witness is explained well by Eckhart Tolle in his book *A New Earth*, "The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but your thoughts about it. Be aware of the thoughts you are thinking. Separate them from the situation, which is always neutral, which always is as it is. There is the situation or the fact, and here are my thoughts about it. Rather than being your thoughts and emotions, be the awareness behind them. Don't seek happiness. If you seek it, you won't find it, because seeking is the antithesis of happiness. Happiness is ever elusive, but freedom from unhappiness is attainable now, by facing what is rather than making up stories about it. Unhappiness covers up your natural state of well-being and inner peace, the source of true happiness."

An analogy in yoga comes to mind here. When you are in a pose and simply surrendering yourself to be wherever your body is in that moment for that pose, you allow the wisdom of the body to flow through. If you, however, had resisted the pose or forced yourself further into a pose that your body was not ready for, a tougher experience arises. Simply breathe and allow whatever IS in the moment. An advanced yogi or yogini is not necessarily someone who is able to do all the toughest poses at the twistiest furthest level, but instead knowing and listening to the wisdom of the body for every moment. For example, if you can do a full forward bend, excellent. If you feel you are not up for it today or not ready for a full forward bend, but go halfway, excellent! It is the wisdom of listening to that which your body tells you in every moment that teaches you the art of surrender and living in bliss now.

And remember, our thoughts are things. We create from our thoughts and emotions. We also send negative beams of energy or positive beams of energy for whoever is in our thoughts in whatever fashion they are in our thoughts. So if we are thinking not-so-nice thoughts about someone else, they are receiving that icky energy. But if we are thinking nice thoughts about someone, they are, again receiving those nice thought-energy-forms. The important thing to also know is that these thoughts/emotions/ energy we create within ourselves always comes back to us multiplied. We think something it comes back to us much larger. So the more you see positive things and think positive things, the more you receive those. The same goes for the negative energy.

It's important to also know that all things in our outer reality is a mirror reflected back to us what is INSIDE of US! So whatever you are seeing, whatever you are noticing, whatever you are judging, whatever you are critiquing is ALL YOU. Whatever you see is something inside you that you created. So it's very helpful to always see the best in people and the best in all situations. As you do this you create energy multiplied in those positive stances you take.

Meditation is a perfect way to become aware of your thoughts and to rid yourself of those nasty useless things. In meditation you can easily become centered and still. We have useful logical thinking that proves helpful for day-to-day things, but outside of this our thoughts are mostly negative or not necessary. Try a meditation where you actually listen for the space between. It's the space between that carries beauty and grace. The more you practice this, the easier it becomes and the more aware and blissful you become (or rather bring back to the surface of who you truly are). Just breathe. Relax. And be.

Our mind thoughts are a disease. Thinking is a disease and since most all of us have this thinking disease we don't know it's a disease. Thinking is a part of the illusion we must remove in order to feel the Oneness with Self and with the All That Is. Our thinking keeps us in the drama and illusions of life. Our thinking causes the suffering we incur every day. We can separate ourselves from the thinking mind and remember we are not separate from others or the world around us. We ARE all One.

Our thoughts create emotions. And sometimes our thoughts seemingly conflict with our emotions. However, that is because we are not aware of our deeply unconscious thoughts from our past selves in this life and others. Become the witness of the emotions instead. That is the core of the truth to witness. There you will simply observe without judgment and then giggle with freedom from ever needing to be in the illusion again! So here is your reminder once again. Remember to be the witness. Remember to simply Be. In that space you are connected and you are Bliss.

"In music, a grace note is the pause between notes that is so important to the pacing of a song. Grace is the state we are in when we are doing nothing but just being who we are."
~ Madisyn Taylor, Daily OM

The Presence is On

Present Moment

Take a moment to ask yourself, "What is your awareness in this very moment?" Breathe deeply and listen. The calm that overcomes you is the stillness of the Divine.

Being in the present moment means living only in the *right Now*. Right in this very moment, how do you feel? Are you happy? Are you content? Are you relaxed? What are you thinking? Any number of things will come up. However, if any of those things are worry or fear about the past or worry and fear about some future event, then you are **not** in the present

moment. If you are feeling worry or fear you are not grounded and are not in the present moment. If you take a look at your very present moment, more than likely you will notice that you are doing just fine. You are happy; you are reading this after all! You are safe and content in most moments. As you live more in the present moment you start to realize the blessings within you and around you in every moment and you realize these moments are more and more in your life than had you not taken the time to focus and live in the present moment!

You will be amazed at some of the thoughts you will catch yourself thinking as you coming into the present moment. A friend of mine who is very positive on the outside was shocked to find out how negative her thoughts were at herself when she went on a silent retreat (no talking is aloud at a silent retreat). This is a tremendous epiphany that truly assists one to realize their thoughts are wreaking havoc in their system. Take an hour or a day or in every moment you can remember and watch your thoughts. How negative are your thoughts to yourself compared to what you would say to a loved one. Would you call a loved one an idiot? No, but I bet you might catch your thoughts telling yourself that. It's all relative of course. But if these thoughts are affecting you negatively – which usually they are on a deep level – then you need to wake up to them. You need to change your thoughts to your SELF first. Being present allows you the awareness to live in gratitude and bliss and there is no room for negative self-talk anymore. Take notice and be present Now.

The present moment may mean coming to terms with what you are feeling now, which may not be all positive and hunky dory. However, that is perfect and healthy! Admit it to yourself in the very moment. It is healing to go through your emotions immediately as you are feeling them. Rather than allowing them to be buried or fester over them for far too long. Buried emotions will fester in the body and become stronger and harder to deal with later. If you allow yourself the time to feel the emotions, to cry or to be upset and truly process the emotion in the moment, then further aggravated symptoms will not manifest themselves. Coming to terms with whatever is in the present moment is astoundingly transforming. Once you accept what is, no matter the circumstance, it can then be released. You've shined your light on the challenge and realize it is just that, another circumstance to realize your peace lies within. You can then create something new from whatever challenge is occurring now by accepting it, not repressing it. Create from the Now.

For example, someone who overeats may be burying emotional or stressful feelings with food instead of being present with the emotions or admitting they are stressed out. This is how I used to process on my tougher days and part of the reasons for the weight I had gained. An overeater is usually someone who's used food as a way to cope with tough situations, stress and emotional issues. You can usually see this physically by the extra weight if using this coping mechanism over time. Whereas you might not immediately notice in someone else who buries emotions with other addictions (such as alcoholism, work-a-holic, etc.) But these, too, will manifest physical symptoms eventually if not dealt with and brought to the present moment to process the issues that have been buried.

So if you stop the cookie before it gets to your mouth and ask yourself if you are hungry, you will realize you probably are not hungry. Then ask yourself what you are really feeling right

now. You may realize you are thinking about something that makes you sad or upset, i.e. an event or person. Or you are stressed from all the things you need to do or haven't done yet. Once you admit to these emotions and feelings you start to process them **in the present moment** rather than burying them with food. Then you start to Be in the present moment and after the healthy processing time passes you are again in a healthy present state of mind, simply feeling good.

As you go through the challenging emotions in the present moment, they subside much more quickly and much more easily. Remember that saying: Hear the whispers or you will hear the screams. You'll even find some transformational occurrences when in physical pain and moving through that pain while living in the present moment. You'll find the pain goes away faster. You'll find more epiphanies regarding why the pain is there and what your evolution from that incident will be going forward.

However, there is being in the present moment and having a future worry that you've already done all you can do to alleviate that stress or worry. For example, let's say there is a money issue. Let's say you are on the verge of foreclosing on your home and you've worked with the bank and tried all you can do. You are hoping to sell the home in order to alleviate foreclosure proceedings. In the meantime, what do you do? Worry? Hope someone buys your house. Sure! But beyond making the wish for the best, affirming: "Money flows easily and effortlessly to you now from all directions", calling in the Divine for extra assistance and thinking positive, processing the stressful moments that come up, the thing to do is to stop worrying. Stop worrying about the "What If's" that keep coming into your MIND. Your ego loves the drama and the negative thoughts that keep it alive. Stop worrying about the future. Start being present right now. Right now you are healthy and happy and enjoying time with the kids, thriving at a job, the list goes on. Think of the RIGHT NOW present positives in your life. And feel presently that all truly is well.

As you get out of the worry and fear of the future and the past, you move into the present moment. The present moment rocks! It holds blissful states of being and powerful transformations. It helps you realize that those 3D reality experiences are simply just that, experiences. You can add it to your resume when you cross over to the Other Side. But you will gain much in "points" if you can live in the present blissful moment and still process current lower reality experiences. But remember to simply process them as they come and not allow them to boil, not allow the ego to wallow for too long. Simply healthily process and let it go.

Being in the present moment allows you to move through many of the things I mention in this book and many healing transformations. Powerful results occur at such a high speed when in the present moment. Such as: surrendering, allowing, more easily releasing emotions and feelings, bringing gratitude to your state of being naturally, and my favorite feeling bliss!

I was at my sister's graduation/wedding celebration recently and experienced a blissful moment that seemed to stretch on forever. All of our family and friends were there. People laughing, talking, enjoying and living. My Husband had finished a beautiful jam session drumming with the family and my nephew, Ryan, on guitar. And for this moment my Husband was in his element cooking at the grill and me behind him on the deck. I looked over to my daughter who was

blissfully blowing bubbles with the other kids. Bubbles were everywhere. The song *Everything*, an Alanis Morissette song, came on the radio at that moment. And I stopped. I looked around slowly. I knew I was smiling. I felt an amazing connection with everyone and also with the happiness of the moment. Bubbles were mystically floating in the air. Beautiful scents of flowers and grilled food filled the air. Lots of laughter! It seemed to go by in slow motion as I enjoyed every drop of this moment. I wanted to stop and point it out to someone, anyone. But instead I remained in this state for as long as it lasted.

These blissful moments can happen at any time anywhere. They can be from a happy moment or a sorrow-filled moment. They can come through the darkness into the light and suddenly you see the present moment for what is always was and is. All moments are Divine.

By being present and in a blissful state you are also in an allowing state of being. You are allowing the Universe to fully support you. You will see how fully supported you really are, simply by being fully in the present moment and enjoying each moment as the Now. Your blissful state of existence opens you up to higher vibrations and higher experiences and vibrationally aligned people are naturally propelled in your direction. These same benefits come from a peaceful meditating state of mind. When you are meditating you are relaxed and present.

Grounding is an excellent exercise to get you into the present moment if you feel you have gone out of living in the Now. Go to the *Stand in the Earth – Grounding* chapter in my book *How I Found My True Inner Peace* to practice the many grounding exercises available. In conscious awareness of the present moment, love flows into all you do more fluidly and naturally. Simply breathe; be aware of your present moment now.

Mirrors – Conscious Awareness

“Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”
~ Chinese Proverb, Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular Essays*

Find your mirrors. Become aware and release your mirrors. Start noticing the mirrors around you in your life; from the big things to the little things. Remember everything we see in our lives —EVERYTHING—we attract to ourselves. Nothing is random. We can choose to see the messages in everything we see or not.

If you get angry or frustrated over something, then this is a mirror you need to recognize. If you react to something it is something you need to look at. This is a part of our shadow selves that we must see. We can't ignore the things that aggravate us and wish them away. We must first become aware of them, see what lessons we needed to see in them (some might call Karma), and only then integrate them for transmutation into pure life. Little by little we can recognize and integrate our shadow selves into ourselves, and little by little raise our awareness and our vibrations. We can however, see the positive in everything as well and thereby raising its vibration to a higher good, a higher awareness and appreciate all those mirrors! As you appreciate and feel gratitude for the lessons they integrate even faster, seemingly easier and you are in an inner peace.

Know that even while doing this work you can be in inner peace in that moment as well. They can co-exist.

The mirror is something to become very consciously aware of. As you will notice, the mirror contains your life experiences being shown to you or rather reflected back to you. Our “Shadow” will show up in these mirrored experiences of ours. We learn from the “Shadow” experiences and transmute those mirrored lessons. (I go deeper about our “Shadows” in Book Two *Divine Embrace*).

For example, why did you suddenly get impatient when your child interrupted you while trying to clean the house? This is a simple example. Let’s say your answer is that you knew later you would not have the energy to get this done, so you wanted to do it as fast as possible. Any interruption might delay that and ruin the mode you are in. So there is an unfounded fear that time will run out. There are also unconscious things going on, behind the scenes if you will, to become aware of over time. Maybe this is something engrained in you since childhood as was taught to you by your parents too. Maybe there are more insights that come to the surface as you neutrally (like a child) examine your reactions and the why’s and fears behind them. But you might be missing out on an opportunity to show kindness and compassion with patience to your child, even in the midst of cleaning house. You might miss out on a beautiful moment. Don’t get me wrong, when you say you need to finish cleaning they need to respect that time too, but there is a kind way (even kind in a stern fashion) to handle the situation rather than abrupt impatience. And during these moments you can just allow what will be to be, and still remain in your center, in your connection to source and in your inner peace.

Release the pent up emotions of anger, loneliness, sadness, jealousy, hatred, unforgiveness, fear, and the list goes on. As your Kundalini awakens, more “stuff” will come up. It is your job to allow this to flow through you and release it. Don’t resist it. Surrender. Just allow it to be. Be in these emotions and realize that the so called negative ones are a mirror of something within you that you are now ready to face and release. Suddenly you realize these feelings go away faster and more peace than you can imagine remains.

It is awesome to know that when you align with an even greater path for yourself, with even greater desires for the end results, how the Universe just meets your every need. There is a form of knowing what you want and becoming one with that result, while still surrendering to the outcome. We are supported by the Universe in all ways, always! This is a great reminder to not let fear get in the way of what we want because fear is nothing but what we feed it. We can sit with it, be in it and it will dissipate and dissolve, transmuting into pure energy!

Becoming conscious of every moment and remaining in your inner peace is becoming aware of any mirrors that come up and allowing them to surface for release. There may be forgiveness that needs to happen on your part to others and on your part to yourself. Just allow rather than burying them. Burying them only allows them to fester and surface in larger ways to get you to take notice of them. See patterns that show up and realize these are patterns to also become aware of and release. Patterns such as attracting the same type of partner in your life; for example, attracting an alcoholic as your partner or an abusive person. Whatever the pattern is, become aware of it. Ask

yourself what lessons there are for you to attract such a person. Is there something in your deep past of your childhood that brought this pattern up. Maybe it's a lesson you need to learn. Maybe it's attached to past lives where even going under hypnosis might help you. Just take what insights come to you personally and know that your Soul knows the truth and you will release this. Becoming aware of it is the first step. Allowing for forgiveness and release the second. Then it naturally integrates and transforms you into a higher being. More of your true divine self flows out!

No matter what, your lessons are your lessons. You will face them eventually. As I like to say, listen to the whispers or you will have no choice but to hear the screams. Akira Dawn of LovesGuidingLight.com sent out a 'Daily Spark' with the perfect message of looking within: "When our buttons are pushed our first impulse is to react - and usually in a big way. After all, that's what those defenses were put there for in the first place! To cover up that tender spot and keep it safe! If we're aware enough to not react...awesome. If we're not, that's fine, too, because either way at some point along the line we'll get the invaluable chance to become aware, and take a look at what's being triggered. To not point outside of ourselves...to instead take the time to take a look inside – this takes guts. And it is also one of the greatest opportunities for healing and personal growth that we can encounter. Be gentle with yourself. It's scary! But it's so worth it. :) *hugs!*"

When you wake up to the moments of the Shadow self being reflected back to you it is that much easier to face the challenges rather than repress them. When you repress them they grow bigger and bigger. Dr. Carl Jung agrees when he says, "Good does not become better by being exaggerated, but worse, and a small evil becomes a big one through being disregarded and repressed. The shadow is very much a part of human nature, and it is only at night that no shadows exist."

As you become aware of the ego moments, you are shining the light on the shadow or darkness. As you do this, it dissolves into nothing. You transmute. You transform. More and more! Keep it up!

The Mirror of All That Is: I find that when I remember that no matter what happens to me or around me, my Divine Self, my inner spark, that special place within me remains untouched. I am the Divine and as I remember that, my light spreads. As I remember this in times of strife or trouble, I come back to myself, my center. I realize it's always there...the Divine. I am always okay. I am always Divine. And I can choose to spread this around and reflect something back to myself that is more pleasing or simply first allow what is, see what lessons may be there, but not be *of* the experiences, just the observer (in Divine Light always).

Meditation – Go Within

Through meditation you can access the inner realms of the divine soul. Go within. Meditation is a master **key** component of a daily devoted practice that I strongly recommend. Meditation is a subtle yet powerful force that allows you to come back to yourself. To really see your True Self again.

The activity of our lives may take us out of our center and out of being in our knowing of the Self. Meditation gives us the breathing space to come back to our knowing. I would like to emphasize how important meditation is to your spiritual growth and well-being. Not only that, but many of us now know the powerful benefits of relaxations techniques that truly reduce physical symptoms from stress. We also have the striking benefits of released endorphins and other chemicals in the brain that naturally occur during meditation. Meditation washes away the darkness of our minds and shines the light paving the way for peace. Meditation allows us to see things as they truly are to the core of the Universe. As we slow down and still our mind we suddenly see the truth and do not get caught up in 3D illusions. We open up to full clarity of the present moment without the fears of from past or the future. Our ego's and personality dissolve, as our authentic Divine self emerges. Meditation is a subtle but powerful way to become closer with our Higher Self, Angels, Guides, God and basically in getting to know your true self once again. We are being guided. We have been guided all our life. And now you and I are being guided to get to know that which has guided us, which is truly your Self. Your higher self if you will. Meditation is the means to Self-Realization and Inner Peace.

I recommended practicing meditation daily at a consistent set time to be with yourself. Early morning or later in the evenings are great times to meditate as there is more stillness in the air from the frenzy of activity that happens during the day. Less energy from mass consciousness is berating your system. An hour would be nice, but if you can afford 5–15 minutes that will be a great beginning. As you do this you gain momentum as well as the many benefits of meditation. Although to begin, it is a great practice to have a set time. Joseph Campbell reminds us that our spirit needs time daily, “You must have a room, or a certain hour or so a day, where you don’t know what was in the newspaper that morning, you don’t know who your friends are, you don’t know what you owe anybody, you don’t know what anybody owes you. This is a place where you can simple experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be.”

And one of the several beautiful benefits is to the brain! Like Kim Marcille Romaner explains in her book, *The Science of Making Things Happen*, “The Tibetan Dalai Lama has participated in brain research since the 1990s, dispatching some of his most experienced practitioners to the United States for testing. Researchers discovered that the monks' brains behave differently than the brains of those who do not meditate. Gamma waves moving through the monks' brains were more powerful, as were waves associated with perception, problem solving, and consciousness. The longer a monk had been practicing, the more pronounced the change in the brain”.

Eventually, you will notice the meditative state of mind is flowing with you always. It's the stillness within. This state is a rising of consciousness and awareness to your Divine self. To have this state in most moments of your day assists you in staying in the Divine flow of life. To really listen and be aware of what is happening around you while remaining in your center to flow with life rather than be separate from it. This is what I have found and experienced in my daily meditation practice. You take it with you wherever you go. I have found utter bliss and the highest love when meditating and from the effects of meditating. You come in touch with the Divine aka your true self here. You can take this feeling and connection with you in your daily life.

All of the answers are within you. There is no need to ask of another. However, it is sometimes helpful to hear another speak or hear of their experience in order to go within and find the answers or ah-ha moments for yourself. We have an inner compass for life. When we check in with our divine self, the answers are immediately there. As you follow your true inner guidance the flow in your life is smooth, no matter the circumstance. But if you second guess yourself and go against your gut feelings from within, more challenges than you need to face may arise. The road may get bumpier than need-be. So go within, feel at the very core your true essence. Your soul never lies. You will feel good about the right path and not-so-great about a less-than-smooth path.

Although there may be questions, be open to the mystery. Allow the mystery to be there and enjoy it as it unfolds. In meditation this deeper allowing state is reached. Because in your soul you know, no matter what is happening, at the very core is peace and tranquility. In being open to the mystery you are also open to more magic and miracles to naturally occur in your life every day. In meditation you accept what is and no longer force a situation to change but see the lessons in them and move through situations. Matt Kahn of TrueDivineNature.com notes in his video that in trying to change what is, you are perpetuating your own suffering. You may be resisting by trying to change something in your life. Matt Kahn states further to stop resisting and come to a place of love for whatever is happening in your life. You will come to a place of loving the one that life is happening to. The only constant is change. This realization may be a peaceful concept to you that allows you to open up to the wonders of the world! A beautiful saying for this is: This too shall pass.

A relaxed state of mind shows the Universe that you are open and allowing what will be to be. As you are relaxed the Universe feels this by Law of Attraction and immediately rushes to your side and brings you all that you desire to manifest and more in supporting you completely. Meditation can assist us in aligning with our true deepest self and therefore move away from surface ego desires. This assists with the Law of Attraction working for our highest benefit. The meditative state of mind aligns with the true self. We no longer activate the law of attraction for those surface ego agendas. But rather we get out of our surface ego desires and into our hearts and allow the Law of Attraction to bring us the true alignment of our highest wellbeing. You will find the Law of Attraction working better for you in this state.

In this state, your walls come down and only bliss remains. As you meditate more consistently this feeling comes to you naturally. And there comes a time where meditating comes so easily you may not have to meditate for a half hour or an hour in order to reach a relaxed, open, blissful state of being. This feeling will simply be with you always.

In conjunction with meditating daily, take time out daily for solitude. Time for yourself to just Be – whether that is walking in nature, sitting in your living room reading or feeling the peace of the moment. You can decide to remove all the distractions, noise and mind thoughts that are in your way. Just wash them away and start in a clean fresh state. Take a deep breath and feel renewed. Of course, the challenges that come up in your life are your red flags to pay attention to something that you are missing. So it's not that you wash away something unpleasant, but that you see it and recognize it for what it is. So in meditation you are able to process it and see the deeper meaning behind why this is occurring or what you feel drawn to possibly do or not do next

in order to come back to a balanced state of being for yourself. Do this in any moment you feel more stress than usual. Do this countless times a day for connecting back to your true self again. Bring meditation into your daily living as your constant way of being.

Samskara's are deeply stored imprints from actions and desires asleep in the unconscious. During meditation and Kundalini releases samskara's can be released without ever becoming active. (Kundalini and Samskara's are discussed further in Book Two: *Divine Embrace*.) Once they are active, they produce the desires and result in actions creating more karma. So here you know the goal is to not accumulate more karma but to release those unconscious actions and desires before they become active and to stay in a neutral non-dual state of being. Meditation is one key element that will assist in release samskara's. Some things that occur to let you know that samskara's are being released are visions or images, hearing voices, memories, symbols and emotions. These types of things occur commonly during meditation and also during Kundalini releases. There is no need to focus on these, but to allow them to flow through you and release. Your state of awareness has filters that determine how you perceive everything. Every expectation, preconceived notion, every thought puts a filter into your clarity of awareness. So you perceive through a filter. Most all of us have filters. Through meditation, Kundalini awakenings and spiritual work we are able to dissolve the filters and ego personality while integrating our higher selves and opening up to who we truly are and always have been: our Divine Essence. As you naturally flow, samskara's are gone and you are more able to obtain and remain in the state of Oneness. As you can see, the benefits of meditation go to the core of our essence!

Meditation will allow you to surrender to what's happening right here in the very present moment. We only have right now and in practicing meditation you come to the awareness that it is okay that whatever is happening is happening. Because whatever it happening is happening for a reason to bring our attention to it and resolve those patterns within ourselves. So while a challenge is occurring we can be in the moment and surrender to the fact that it is happening. And from that presence we can work our way through the issues because we are open to its existence and clarity of mind and soul combined brings awareness to what we can then do or not do to bring ourselves back to peaceful alignment with wellbeing.

Meditation will allow you to feel the awareness of the Now; to eventually live only within present moment. Because our reality truly is only what's happening right now, not in the future or the past. So this awareness is our true reality. What a load off that is! No more worrying about the future. No more regrets of the past. No more ego thoughts bombarding us with guilt, worry, fear, or any other thoughts forms that just don't serve us anymore. Phew! It is very freeing to know that we only have and feel what is right now. RIGHT NOW. What do you feel right now. Now is all there is. Breathe into this awareness.

There are a variety of meditation techniques out there. You can use guided meditation or nothing at all. You can sit in the quiet darkness or not. You can light a candle, incense and have soft soothing music (preferably no words, since the words will distract you). You can even do movement meditation (one of my favorites). You do not have to do any of these things or you can do them all.

You have to do what feels comfortable to you. So take what you like and leave the rest. Just take time to simply Be for a while during your day.

In meditation it's a common practice to visualize a scene. Visualizing is just like daydreaming, fantasizing, etc. Have you ever played back a past event that happened and maybe even changed what actually happened in your mind? Or have you ever tried to "see" how things will go in a future event, like a date, or a baseball game, etc.? Have you ever wanted so much to tell someone off, and "daydreamed" that you were doing just that. You are seeing yourself in your "minds eye" doing this. You are using your "minds eye" to create this daydream or fantasy. It's as simple as that.

Now do not look too much into this. Don't analyze this to death. Just let the images, feeling or impressions 'come' to you. By looking too hard into this process you are creating a block in itself. What's easiest, in the beginning, is if you have visualization and/or guided meditation on CD. Someone to walk you through a meditation process will allow you to simply Be there and bliss out. You can listen to the visualization and see what is explained without having to remember anything. You can even record your own voice on tape to make your meditations that much more deep and relaxed. Then create your own details for the meditation, make it YOUR OWN. This will expand your mind. Help it flow with new images that come to you without you making it happen. Then eventually, you won't need to use the CD. The stillness within is all that will speak to you. You will also come to a place (if you haven't already) that you can obtain a sense of inner peace and wellbeing without requiring more than just your breath and conscious decision to be in your Inner Peace, your true divine soul self.

You will start to also become more aware of your surroundings. As you open up fully to the present moment through meditation. You become aware of all that is happening around you. The good and the bad. You will receive feelings about certain things and follow your gut. Divine guidance is found here. It pulls you on your path. You are naturally following the divine when in this beautiful state of being. As you become awakened and more aware, things of light will become brighter to you, and darkness even darker. Your surroundings are stronger and more in-your-face, so to speak. So always stick with your intuition on all aspects of your life. This is your guide to heading in the right direction on YOUR path. The more you meditate the higher your vibration will become and the less lower vibrational energies will be attracted to you.

"Meditation aids our conscious reconnection to source, and provides a clear channel for all our senses. Using crystals also helps to raise our vibrations, re-weaving our own crystalline matrixes with Earth energies thus decreasing our physical symptoms. Seeking the help of healers can sometimes be necessary to help us make shifts or facilitate change. Reiki, crystals, vibrational essences, DNA Light Code Activations, etc. may all be of help. Ask Spirit to guide you to someone for help with your healing." ~ Universal Life Tools

Starting to Meditate Basics

To start: Ground yourself! Picture yourself as a Tree. Or visualize cords from your feet going to the center of the Earth and a white light bursting from Earth's crystal core all the way back up the cords and into your feet, through your body and out your head. Grounding you to Mother Earth and connecting you to the Universe.

Then surround white light around you for protection. This sets the stage for a higher vibration so that you will not be susceptible to lower vibrational energies. Just picture a beautiful white light from within grow and grow to totally encompass you and your aura. Like a huge bubble or a cocoon. Feel unconditional love from the Universe to the depths of your whole being. Say your invocation of protection (this gets you into a higher vibrational state where you will not be susceptible to lower vibrations, they simply will not see you), for example:

“I invoke the Light of the Spirit here within,
I am a Clear and Perfect Channel, I am Love, I am Light.”

Say this three times!

Start by getting comfortable. Take your choice of sitting up in a chair (something I tend to HAVE to do so I don't fall asleep) or against a wall cross-legged, lying down (if you can stay awake) or if you can do this comfortably sit in lotus position. Close your eyes and clear your mind (deep breath, exhale slowly)...don't try, just stop thinking; as you let go of your thoughts and concerns, feel yourself sinking deep into emptiness. Breathe deeply at first, in through the nose, out through the mouth. Positive IN, negative OUT. Just relax and breathe. Picture and FEEL your body relaxing, from every body part, from your feet to your head. Slowly relaxing. Your breathing should be steady. Feel your body melt and your mind float freely. Slowly but surely getting into that meditative "state", otherwise called the Alpha State. You are in a neutral place, where there should be no attachment to emotions, people, places or things. This process should be slow and usually takes no more than 10 minutes to feel the full effect. At this time you can take a few moments to tilt your head up, with your eyes closed move your eyes up to look at your third eye (in the middle of your two eye brows at the center of your forehead). Take a little time and feel the pleasant pulsation or pressure from this action. As you do this you awaken your third eye for stronger more open connections.

It's important to get into this meditative state to receive a truly neutral message. At first it may be difficult to remain neutral for questions that do pertain to you or someone close to you, but with time you can do it. The more emotional attachment we have to the person or outcome the harder it is to receive accurate information. If receiving a message is not your goal simply go with the same process and just BE in this beautiful awareness of peace and tranquility.

A thought may come in, just say "cancel" or "go away" and breathe. Then your breathing will be short and hardly noticeable. If you can half sit (like leaning on a bedpost or wall with a pillow comfortably), half lay down, that's a good position. Now some people, like me in the beginning, like to have visualizations for meditation. Like a guided meditation on a CD. I have one that I offer

through my website and hope to record more soon. This book comes with another guided chakra balancing meditation that you can use alone or in conjunction with the sacred activation ceremony I entail further in this book. This can help in the beginning. If you want to receive messages you may need more time after the guided visualization just to sit and receive.

Sacred Space

You can create a sacred place where you are always safe to go, restore and connect. This place is your personal safe place to come relax, rejuvenate and heal. It is your inner realm sanctuary. Take time to make it feel and be your own. You may desire it to be a starry space field where you float and relax. Or you may desire a beach setting. My favorite is one of grassy fields, green trees sporadically placed, beautiful white and pink cherry blossom trees, flowers of all colors, with birds, butterflies, kitties and any other animals that come to me during meditation. Here in my sanctuary I come to a beautiful stream where as I was leads to a healing hot spring. I take a dip when I need cleansing and purification. Sometimes there are pools of healing waters of all the colors of the rainbow. I can simply sit and enjoy the sun-filled day. Sometimes my space is dawn or dusk and this takes me into new realms of peace. Make it your own. You may desire someone leading you in to this meditation or taping yourself to get you there without effort. This is something I offer as a Soul Journey for my clients. It is truly powerful and transformational.

Here you can meet your guides or ask to see if you can meet someone else, anyone. What happens here is real. It's not your imagination. Make it your own place. Sometimes the person you want to be there will not come, or will not come right away. Give it time and talk to whomever does actually show up to talk with you. Again asking that only the highest and best, good are aloud to come. Your Guides and Angels are there always to protect you. This may seem almost like your imagination, but it is not, it is real. Again, what happens in this place is real. The more you do this, the more real it becomes. The focus becomes clearer, you can see and hear more and receive longer clearer messages from your spirit guides and/or other beings that come into the picture.

Zen Method

Another meditation method was shown to me by a Zen Master at the Providence Zen Center in Cumberland, Rhode Island during a one day retreat. This retreat was a six hour Zen meditation. This was the longest meditation I've experienced in one sitting. We would sit in the lotus position or with legs crossed for 20 minutes in meditation and then do a walking meditation for 10-20 minutes. Then sit for 20 minutes and do a walking meditation for 10-20 minutes. And the cycle continued until complete. At sporadic times during the sitting meditation the meditation leader would walk around with a stick and ask that you lower your head to the floor exposing your back if you would like to receive a tap on your back. It is the idea that this will adjust your mind when needed as well as your body to stay present during the meditation. I'm sure there are other subtle benefits as well.

A short time in to the meditation we started to take turns going in to the Zen Master to have a discussion with him or to simply sit with him for however long we felt necessary. Some folks

had long debates about spiritual or life issues. Others chose not to go in. When I went in it was about three hours into the meditation. All the questions I had thought I might ask the Zen Master went away. I no longer required answers. So I didn't have much to talk about. He gave me a great meditation tip to keep me going through the last half. He said to simply chant a mantra in my mind coordinated with my breath. Breathe in, "Don't Know"; Breathe out, "Don't Mind". Don't know, don't mind, don't know, don't mind, don't know, don't mind. This is a wise mantra. The more I learn the more I realize I know nothing. The Divine is all-knowing. So leave it up to the Divine. Freedom. Not caring about what's going on around you is more of a way of accepting what is going on as Divine. You are simply observing in a neutral but peaceful place of being. Don't know. Don't mind.

Stay Strong

If you get out of your meditation practice, don't worry about it. Worrying will only hinder your growth in meditation. This will take away the whole point of meditating. So just get back into meditating when you can. But once starting back again with it, it's like starting all over (for some). You have to get back into that "state" again. But at first, don't worry if you can't get there just yet. You will meditate and nothing spectacular may happen, no visions, no sparks. Just work back at filtering out your thoughts. Once you get back into a regular schedule, or at least doing it more often, you can finally filter your thoughts out. Then you will get better with your intuition and your goals on strengthening your connection. But worrying about meditating and making contact you're your higher Source right away is not going to help you get there faster, it will only hinder you.

Meditation is the discipline of clearing the mind to explore your inner self. In the meditative state, one has almost completely shut out the outside world and is recovering sensory input from your subconscious. What you accomplish is not only a way to self-mastery, but you are open to all sorts of other things like psychic impressions. Those who meditate regularly, experience higher energy levels, lower blood pressure and reduced stress. During meditation, your brain activity levels (BAL) decrease from beta (everyday; wide awake) to alpha (asleep; drowsy or relaxed). Learning this is healthy all around. A focused mind can accomplish tasks more efficiently and process challenges more clearly. This state allows your mind to work with the Divine Source connection within you in the present moment always, allowing for highly lucid interactions with life. True inner peace ensues.

"Through intense deep meditation you reach a state that is beyond thought, beyond change, beyond imagination, beyond differences and duality. Once you can stay in that state for a while and come out of it without losing any of it, then the inner divine love will begin to pour through you. You will not see people as different, separate individuals. You will see your own Self in everyone around you. Then the flow of love from within you will be constant and unbroken." ~Swami Muktananda

Meditation and Journaling Assignment

As a part of your Online YTT homework, you will be required to keep a Meditation Journal. This is an amazing tool for getting down deep into the self and to learn more about what makes you tick at the Soul level. It's also very cathartic and a great way to get in the habit of connecting every day. Meditation is healing on all levels; physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It's recommended that you meditate at least 5 minutes or more. Please know that you'll get more from meditating for 5 minutes every day than a long deep 2 hour meditation every once in a while. After you do your daily meditation, write down your experiences. Preferably journal right after you meditate so you don't forget any insights, messages or intuitions that come up.

A little about Journaling and Automatic Writing:

My guide, named Blue, comes to me from Across the veil. She smiles her knowing smile. She shows me all the writing I have done and will do. A divine message comes in strong to journal your heart out. Start writing or typing (or texting ;)). It's said that writing pen to paper holds sacred energy and taps synapses in the brain in a unique way that typing may not. So when you can, make it sacred. And when typing or texting, see how you can make that sacred. Like having crystals nearby, lighting a candle or incense, playing soothing or uplifting music or taking yourself into a serene setting like the ocean. Set the tone and ambiance for sacred writing. And many times there's no time! You are just called to get it out and get it out now. Either way, it's releasing, penetrating and a way to divine information from your soul...and your guides and angels.

If you've ever meditated and have a hard time hearing the messages that can bring clarity to you, this is an amazing option to try. If you've ever found it hard to forgive someone or something or needed to get your emotions out, this is your tool. If you've wanted to clearly channel from your guides...start writing.

Write from your heart. Write what you see and feel. You may begin with a blank page or start with a few prompting questions. Perhaps a question you have in mind or something like:

1. What's next?
2. What do I do now? (The first thing that pops into your head is usually on point.)
3. If I had the answer to my situation or challenge, what would it be?
4. What do I need to see that I'm not seeing?
5. What do I need to know about the future?
6. What do I need to know about the past?
7. What's my passion?
8. What's the name of my main guide?

9. If my heart chakra had something to say to me right now, what would that be?

10. Why do I....(fill in the blank)?

11. What is my health challenge (fill in the blank of whatever health challenge is happening) trying to tell me?

12. Tap into the Akashic records (book of soul life past, present and future) and ask, "What do I need to know from a past life in order to stop a repeat pattern (like financial prosperity or lack thereof, relationship issues, etc.)?"

12. What is the truth...of the Universe...a situation, etc.?

When you have a thought write it down. As you begin to write, keep writing the first thing that comes in and allow it to be a light or deep channel. You'll feel your hands tingle or heat up even. If you so choose, with the proper container and guides and angels with you, some choose to allow spirits to take use of their hand and write on their behalf instead. I've only received information via channeling and write things down in the first example of channeling. I haven't connected yet to this other process. It has to resonate with you. Find your truth and write!

Write about forgiveness, anger, what frustrates or angers you, what makes you happy, or filled with love and Divine light connection?

Write about you dark side...your light side...ask how to see the divine in both and how to integrate them and become one.

The upliftment, shadow work and healing possibilities are endless! Perhaps you are an author and didn't know it.

Meditation heals, connects and brings clarity. You can go into meditation first. Have a pen and paper nearby. Choose a guided one or simply get quiet and after a while you'll feel the stirrings of your soul within and write. Tap into other realms and dimensions. Magic awaits you.

Only you see the world the way you see it. We need to see through your eyes. What do you see, feel, hear, sense and know?

As I channel this divine cosmic message they share with all of us: More magic than we can imagine still awaits us. So much is ahead that is good...don't forget to focus on the good as well!

Enjoy the many magical forms of automatic writing!

Namaste,
Maggie

Keeping Your Energy Strong

Centered and Safe

by Madisyn Taylor



Keeping our energy strong and pure throughout the day is vital to somebody that is sensitive.

Being a sensitive person in this world can sometimes feel very draining due to the fact that we are very receptive to the energy of the people and environment around us. Still, we want to be part of situations that involve small or large groups of people, and we would like to do it without becoming overwhelmed or exhausted. With a few simple strategies we can entertain at home and socialize in the world without running the risk of losing ourselves in someone else's energy or giving our energy away. All this takes is a little time and practice, and the result—being part of social events without ending up depleted—is well worth the effort.

The whole purpose of this self-care ritual is to help keep yourself strong energetically when you are in a situation that could potentially be draining. For example, if you are having a party, you might take some time to prepare beforehand. Just as you spend time cleaning your home and preparing food, it is essential to prepare your inner home for the event. This can be as simple as taking a mindful walk or a cleansing bath, or engaging in any other activity that gives you energy. You can even just sit alone for a set period of time, tuning in to your energy and connecting to yourself so that you are less easily carried away by the energy outside of yourself. You may employ a mantra such as "I am centered and safe in the home of myself." You can also charge a crystal or gemstone or any piece of jewelry with protective energy and wear it or carry it with you. This can be helpful during the event when just seeing it or touching it can remind you that you are centered and safe.!

Keep in mind that it is always acceptable to excuse yourself for a bathroom break or to step outside for a moment. This can give you the time and space you need to check in with yourself and correct any energetic imbalances you detect. Whether you are at home or out in the world, taking care of yourself in this way enables you to keep your energy strong, even as you open yourself to others.

10 Super Easy Meditations to Help You Chill the Hell Out

Isn't it about time you get some peace and quiet? Here is the ultimate fool-proof guide to helping you find your inner, calmer Om-er

By Amy Capetta



If you think meditation is only for hippies on mountaintops, think again. "I want to break the myth that you have to be sitting in a cave and chanting all day long," states davidji, lead educator of the Chopra Center for Wellbeing and author of [Secrets of Meditation: A Practical Guide to Inner Peace and Personal Transformation](#).

"Meditation is not about taking time out, but taking time in. It can be done anywhere and can take just five minutes. It's about opening up and connecting to the present moment -- since we spend most of our lives thinking and worrying about the past or the future."

The following 10 techniques, or "awareness tools," provide ways to find your inner serenity -- right in the here and now:

Visual meditation to take you off autopilot

This can be a soothing practice for someone who needs to take a time out to "stop and smell the roses."

"When we're commuting, running errands or taking a lunch break, we're not usually paying attention to what is going on around us," says davidji .

To do: Choose a non-moving object that is in a close proximity, such as a candle or a doorknob. Close your eyes halfway and stare at that object with a gentle gaze. Zone in on that object until everything else around seems to "vanish." Hold for a few minutes, and then slowly bring back your full awareness, without taking your eyes off the object.

Body mind meditation for stress, emotional distress or if you're feeling under the weather

"Our body never lies," says davidji. He explains that our bio-signals reveal our true emotions -- no matter what we're trying to hide from the world. "Then our mind sends these signals to our body, which reacts spontaneously, creating this perfect feedback loop. So if either the mind or the body is in turbulence, the other one will feel it."

In that sense, you can calm your mind by focusing on parts of your body.

To do: Close your eyes and begin a slow "body scan," focusing your energy on each body part, starting at the soles of your feet and ending at the top of your head. "When you feel any type of tightness in an area, 'breathe into' where the constriction is. Then on the exhale, allow the constriction to release," says davidji.

Sound meditation for a quick pick-me-up

"All of us are deeply touched by sounds," says davidji. "When you hear a nurturing sound, the body automatically releases the feel-good chemical called oxytocin, and it doesn't matter what else may be going on at that moment."

To do: Take a few minutes to listen to something comforting, like a favorite sound in nature, smooth jazz, or a voice recording of a guided meditation. When in doubt, find a sound with a slower beat. "Keep in mind that we will always find a heartbeat as the most soothing sound because the first vibration we ever heard was our mother's heartbeat from the womb," states davidji.

Energy meditation for an all-over tranquility

We have seven energy centers in our body, known as the chakras, and this type of meditation can help alleviate tension in one (or more) of these areas. "It's called 'chakra tuning,'" says davidji. "The conversation about the chakras have existed for thousands of years and that's because we know that pressure points are real," says davidji. "This explains why acupuncture, acupressure, chiropractic and massage are based on the premise that we have energetic pathways running through our body."

To do: Close your eyes and begin by focusing on The Root Chakra (-- located at the base of the spine, it helps ground us, associated with the color red). Inhale and exhale, thinking about the feelings and color related to this energy center. Spend about one minute here before moving upward to the next chakra.

Try to get through all the chakras in this order:

- The Sex Chakra - located on the lower abdomen, directs creativity and pleasure, associated with the color orange
- The Solar Plexus Chakra - located on the upper abdomen, governs empowerment and transformation, associated with the color yellow
- The Heart Chakra - located above the heart, deals with feelings of love and compassion, associated with the color green
- The Throat Chakra - located in the throat, controls communication and self-expression, associated with the color blue
- The Third Eye Chakra - located between the eyes, guides intuition and decision-making, associated with the color purple
- The Crown Chakra - located at the top of the head, offers limitless beliefs, associated with the color white

It's a lot at first but you will get the hang of it the more you practice.

Sensory meditation for a quick time-out

This entails focusing on one of the five senses, which will then "turn off" the other four senses. "And all of your thoughts will melt into this moment while developing a deeper awareness of this particular sense," ads davidji.

To do: Dab your preferred scent on your hands, (like lavender, vanilla or sandalwood), and cup your hands, close your eyes and breath deeply for about five minutes. "Focus on this aroma and allow it to relax and soothe you." Or try davidji's favorite method. The Chocolate Tasting Practice: Place a piece of chocolate in your mouth, close your eyes and allow the chocolate to melt in your mouth. "Your goal is to become aware of all the sensations as the chocolate breaks down."

Mantra meditation to calm a racing mind

Most mantras consist of an individual sound, syllable or vibration that usually has no meaning. The repetition of this vibration has the ability to slow down your thoughts, heart rate and breathing since your attention will be focused on this one sound.

To do: Close your eyes, take in a deep breath and repeat a sound to yourself either silently or out loud. According to davidji, the "perfect" mantra is the word Om. It contains every vibration that has ever existed and it has no meaning," he explains. "So if you silently repeat it over and over, it will never start a thought because it's meaningless!" However, if the "om" is too "out there" for you, try a simple yet positive mantra that has meaning, like "I am strong" or "I am whole."

Chanting meditation prepare for an important meeting

Similar to the mantra meditation, the repetitiveness of saying or signing the same words for a few minutes will open your throat and your voice. "It will allow your sense of expression to flow and can be a great practice before any important conversation, like a business meeting, a job interview or a serious chat with a partner," says davidji.

To do: Choose your favorite words -- anything from a religious prayer to your favorite song lyrics. "My only caveat would be that if you're going to sing, do not sing in a whispered tone -- belt it out!" he adds.

Metta meditation for low on self-esteem or if someone is on your last nerve

An ancient word for loving kindness, this meditation heightens feelings of love and acceptance for yourself, as well as for others and the world around you. "I love starting my day with one of these heart-opening practices," adds davidji.

To do: Sit with your eyes closed, slowly breath in and think loving thoughts. As you exhale, release these emotions. "So we're bringing the feelings of love and kindness into our heart, and then shining it out to everyone else," says davidji. "And when you release your breath, send the love to your friends, family, co-workers, acquaintances, and even someone you're upset with at the moment."

Samantha meditation to alleviate your fear

The definition of samatha is tranquility, and this practice is centered on peaceful thoughts. "This is the number one meditation I recommend for control freaks!" adds davidji. "It's about moving from feelings of fear or control to a feeling of trust."

To do: Inhale for a count of four, hold the breath to the count of four, release the breath to the count of four and hold that released breath to the count of four -- all while thinking of a calming image. "It's called four part breathing, and the only intention here is to relax. And each time your exhale, allow yourself to give up control of a situation and surrender."

Vipassana meditation to help you be more mindful

Also known as insight meditation, vipassana is meant to follow the samatha meditation. "The theory is that once you make your mind calm, then it's time for you to step into mindfulness," says davidji. While the other meditations are based on one focal point, insight meditation is about bringing attention to everything going on around you -- and to accept the present moment exactly as it is.

To do: With your eyes closed, take in a long and slow deep breath while allowing any thoughts, sounds, smells or feelings to enter the moment. Then slowly release the breath. "When you take in your thoughts, your physical sensations, the sounds, etcetera., do not react or judge them," explains davidji. "Just let them be."

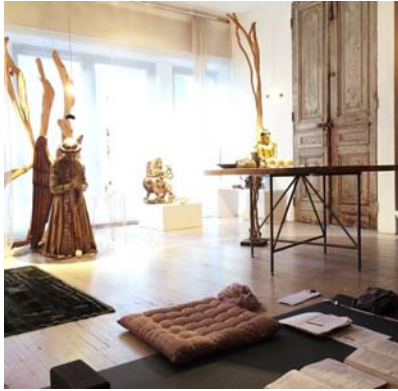


Yoga for Anxiety & Depression

Yoga for Anxiety & Depression

"When You Can Embrace the Darkness, You're One Step Closer to the Light"
— Amy Weintraub, author of *Yoga for Depression*

Changing Our Minds



When we are in any state other than a relaxed one, our emotions are running our lives. I had the thought that we often are either running away from those emotions or strapping them to us like grenades and running headlong toward whatever comes next. It's a lot of running either way.

In an attempt to break it all down, I composed this list of modern anxieties and some starter-thought-

treatments:

Anxiety: *There isn't enough time.*

Treatment: *My spirit is infinite. I can do all that I can with my human body and the daylight available until I stop to rest. I will listen for when I need to do that. Rest is equal in importance to doing.*

Anxiety: *I can't handle all of these feelings I'm having. I'm so overwhelmed.*

Treatment: *I can make a choice to face what is coming up for me. I can learn to create a manageable life, even if it means giving myself three times the time, cutting my expenses down to a third of what they are, and cultivating energy by making wise choices. I am able to be responsible. I know how to ask for help when I need it. There is no shame in building a team to help me.*

Anxiety: *I don't trust my government or today's leadership.*

Treatment: *I alone can make change in my local environment by becoming active. No one in politics is going to rescue me or make it easier. I can create meaningful community and fruitful solution-seeking dialogue in my own backyard. I can put plans into action to take care of myself as best I can under the circumstances.*

Anxiety: *I'm afraid of World War III.*

Treatment: *I am not going to live in fear. I am going to be love and be peace, and those cannot exist in a paralyzed or terrified emotional state. Those who would make war have everything they need to make it. I don't need to make it inside of myself to their model. I am going to tend to and talk about what comes up for me around this and try to create a calm state amidst my questions. I will read **Viktor Frankl** if I need more relative forms of inspiration and hope.*

Anxiety: *I am in pain. I am suffering.*

Treatment: *I am not alone. I must grieve what is not able to be. I cleanse my emotional body by feeling my real feelings, seeking others in my position for support, and admitting the nature and origin of my pain. Healing occurs over time and I can be patient and keep checking in with my soul while making holistic choices on my behalf. I can be open to life while I am in my healing process.*

Anxiety: *My job is killing me. I am silently wilting in the wrong line of work for me. I am not living my purpose.*

Treatment: *I know how to seek other work, even if it means I have to scale down my lifestyle. I can take risks. I can make a difference right now wherever I am. I am willing to align with what my spirit wants for my human form.*

Anxiety: *If I speak the truth, someone will get hurt.*

Treatment: *If I don't speak the truth, I will hurt, and likely others will, too. I can find fair language which helps me to be responsible for my health and wellness. I can express from my own heart without blaming and making someone else wrong. I will know what to say and do once I've become clear about what is true.*

Anxiety: *The way things are unfolding makes me so mad. I'm so angry that I want someone to wake up/change/pay for this/suffer/hurt/feel what I feel/see my side/hear my story/do it my way.*

Treatment: *I have a hand in how things unfold. I can make a choice to be humble and allow healing or I can make a choice to act arrogant and blaming. My voice is my own and what happens from here on is up to me. I may think something is terribly unfair. What can I do with myself to bring things into balance? How can I affect change in me that will naturally affect the change I want to see in the world?*

Anxiety: *I cannot forgive myself for what I've done/caused. I cannot forgive someone else for what they have done/caused.*

Treatment: *Forgiveness is an act of courageous self-compassion which relieves the body of toxic emotional waste. Without it, I become sick. I need not punish myself any longer, nor anyone else. I need to be free of these bindings and I can better help others who have been through this from my state of freedom from shame. I can acknowledge that what was done was wrong without living in a perpetual shame state and/or sentencing someone else to do so.*

Anxiety: *I am not enough. I don't have enough.*

Treatment: *I only need to be me. I do this well when I am connected/plugged into the Source which fuels me. I can name that Source in my way and find all of the ways which facilitate the recharge I need. It might be easier than I think. When I am enough for me, everything shifts, including how I experience scarcity or abundance, love or rejection.*

Anxiety: *It is very hard to be on this earth.*

Treatment: *Maybe the truth is that I am not native here. Perhaps my spirit originated elsewhere. In considering this, I can cultivate my relationship with the place I feel most at home while living my purpose here on earth, where I have for some reason been positioned. What can I look to which will teach me how to be more at ease, and in charge of my life and feelings? I needn't numb out the discomfort, but seek to understand what my existence is about and find meaning. It is quite possible that many people do not feel at home here and perhaps that is why we are often chasing our tails trying all the wrong roads in an attempt to come to peace with who we are not."*

by Pixie Lighthouse

Can Yoga Help Depression?

Feeling under the weather or down in the dumps does not indicate depression. Depression exists entirely on another level and causes symptoms of extreme sadness, feelings of hopelessness and endless fatigue. In severe cases, people with clinical depression no longer want to live, thus resulting in suicide. Doctors prescribe drugs, group therapy, and psychotherapy, but depression does not let go of the mind so easily.



Yoga for Depression

Yoga benefits people in a variety of ways, from alleviating stress and tension to calming the mind. The brain works in overtime during depression, always thinking and causing a disconnected state with the body. Yoga quiets the mind, creates inner calm and puts people in touch with their inner selves and purposes in life.

Chris Streeter, an MD and an associate professor at Boston University School of Medicine, talked about the benefits of hatha yoga for depression at a meeting with the American Psychiatric Association in 2010. A 12-week study showed an increase in GABA levels in people who participated in hatha yoga for one hour, three times a week. People with depression have decreased levels of GABA, the brain chemical that puts the brakes on anxiety.

How Yoga Helps

Hatha yoga focuses on building physical and mental strength through slow-paced movement and breathing exercises (pranayama). This yogic practice differs from vinyasa, which flows from pose to pose. Due to Hatha Yoga's nature, it gives a student time to hold a pose and meditation takes place around the end of the class. Depending on the class, teacher and style some sessions involves more meditation, seated poses, and breath awareness exercises. With complete focus on the mind and breath, a student can learn to reduce stress and achieve states of inner calm.

People with anxiety and depression do not always take in deep, meaningful breaths. In fact, most people who are experiencing mental and emotional stress do not breathe correctly at all. Yoga ensures proper breathing through standing, seated, resting, and balancing poses. Concentration on still or moving poses helps give one's mind the power to tackle one thing at a time, and the focused breathing delivers vital oxygen to the body and the brain.

Yoga, mantra, meditation and other yogic practices improve the symptoms of depression. Vinyasa stimulates the nervous system and helps burn off anxious and nervous energy. Hatha combines both stretching and breathing exercises to calm and strengthen the mind. No matter the yogic activity, it improves a person's ability to focus, breathe, and relax. Therefore, yoga can help people who are dealing with depression, but there is no room for error here. Those who are at risk should not be self-prescribing and professional counseling with an expert should be sought without delay.

Side Notes for Teachers

Unless you are a psychiatrist or psychologist, you should not be in the position of a consultant. Some new students may arrive due to referrals from professional counselors, but what do you do if one of your established students is suddenly dealing with a state of depression? The logical course of action is to advise anyone who is suffering from depression to seek counseling from a professional first. Yoga is a wonderful adjunct therapy for emotional and mental health, but our field as Yoga teachers is not about counseling patients. No one knows exactly how many lives are saved by proper counseling, but it is a fact that counseling prevents suicide. The last thing any of us wants is to aid anyone who is at risk with excuses, denial or procrastination.

By Kimaya Singh

Depression

There's a few reasons for depression:

1. **Physiological:** Changes in brain chemistry – Serotonin deficiency (Western doctors will use drugs, e.g., SSRIs, etc.)
2. **Psychological:** Unresolved issues related to childhood, traumatic events, etc. (Often what is recommended is psychotherapy or other forms of talk therapy)
3. **Yogic Scientific reason:** We are disconnected from our true self and feel isolated. The Yogic correction for this: yoga asana/postures/movement, pranayama, and meditation will bring about positive feelings and you will start to feel connected to who you truly are and emotionally balanced.

What leads to this "disconnect"?

In the philosophy of Yoga, all matter in the universe arises from the fundamental substrate called Prakriti....

Tamas is a state of darkness, inertia, inactivity and materiality. ...

Rajas is a state of energy, action, change and movement. ...

Sattva is a state of harmony, balance, joy and intelligence.

THE 3 GUNAS OF NATURE

In the philosophy of Yoga, all matter in the universe arises from the fundamental substrate called Prakriti. From this ethereal Prakriti the three primary gunas (qualities) emerge creating the essential aspects of all nature—energy, matter and consciousness. These three gunas are tamas (darkness), rajas (activity), and sattva (beingness). All three gunas are always present in all beings and objects surrounding us but vary in their relative amounts. We humans have the unique ability to consciously alter the levels of the gunas in our bodies and minds. The gunas cannot be separated or removed in oneself, but can be consciously acted upon to encourage their increase or decrease. A guna can be increased or decreased through the interaction and influence of external objects, lifestyle practices and thoughts.

Tamas is a state of darkness, inertia, inactivity and materiality. Tamas manifests from ignorance and deludes all beings from their spiritual truths. To reduce tamas avoid tamasic foods, over sleeping, over eating, inactivity, passivity and fearful situations. Tamasic foods include heavy meats, and foods that are spoiled, chemically treated, processed or refined.

Rajas is a state of energy, action, change and movement. The nature of rajas is of attraction, longing and attachment and rajas strongly binds us to the fruits of our work. To reduce rajas avoid rajasic foods, over exercising, over work, loud music, excessive thinking and consuming excessive material goods. Rajasic foods include fried foods, spicy foods, and stimulants.

Sattva is a state of harmony, balance, joy and intelligence. Sattva is the guna that yogi/nis achieve towards as it reduces rajas and tamas and thus makes liberation possible. To increase sattva reduce both rajas and tamas, eat sattvic foods and enjoy activities and environments that produce joy and positive thoughts. Sattvic foods include whole grains and legumes and fresh fruits and vegetables that grow above the ground. All of the yogic practices were developed to create sattva in the mind and body. Thus, practicing yoga and leading a yogic lifestyle strongly cultivates sattva.

The mind's psychological qualities are highly unstable and can quickly fluxuate between the different gunas. The predominate guna of the mind acts as a lens that effects our perceptions and perspective of the world around us. Thus, if the mind is in rajas it will experience world events as chaotic, confusing and demanding and it will react to these events in a rajasic way.

All gunas create attachment and thus bind one's self to the ego. "When one rises above the three gunas that originate in the body; one is freed from birth, old age, disease, and death; and attains enlightenment" (Bhagavad Gita 14.20). While the yogi/nis goal is to cultivate sattva, his/her ultimate goal is to transcend their misidentification of the self with the gunas and to be unattached to both the good and the bad, the positive and negative qualities of all life.

By Timothy Burgin

3 BASIC GUNAS (ARCHETYPES).

Most of those suffering from depression are in one of the first two Gunas:

1. Tamasic – lethargic and hopeless (losing our way)
2. Rajasic – living in an aggressive, over anxious state (running in place)
3. Sattvic – Balanced (moving forward in life)

Those suffering from depression accumulate samskaras (stored imprints or impressions) in the 5 koshas: the physical body (annamayakosha); the energy body (pranamayakosha); the emotional body (manomayakosha), the wisdom/understanding body (vijnyanamayakosha) and the bliss body (anandamayakosha). These samskaras are like grooves, or energy blocks which restrict the flow of energy, leading to depression, anxiety and physical illness.

Blockages in the chakras can be manifested as physical pain that can be existent in those suffering from depression. If there is an imbalance in the chakras or blockages, this can also be manifested as some form of depression/anxiety. Ida and Pingala are the 2 main nadis, or energy channels running along the body, weaving around the sushumna along the spine, and ending at the crown chakra. Ida represents the lunar or cooling energy channel, while Pingala represents the heating, energy channel. When these are out of balance, this can throw off the balance of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, which control the fight or flight response. Oftentimes, these nadis need to be balanced when one is suffering from anxious depression. Breathwork can assist! A few breathing techniques can be found further in this section.

How do we help alleviate depression with yoga?

First: determine type of depression: dysthymia (or lethargic depression, like a fog that never wants to lift); post-traumatic stress disorder (occurring after a traumatic event, e.g. war, major disaster, illness); anxious depression (anxiety or panic disorder); situational depression (depression which sets in after death, divorce or other major life change); bi-polar disorder (severe depression off-set by manic happiness and/or anxiety).

Second: Accept where you are – As found in Yoga Sutras Book I. You are not your thoughts; you are not your depression. You are not a depressed person -rather you are a person who happens to be depressed. Depression, like a thought, does not make you who you are and it too will not dictate your life.

Patanjali describes 9 obstacles to inner awareness in the Yoga Sutras: disease, doubt, carelessness, laziness, dullness, addiction, false perception, failure to reach firm ground, instability. Four states go hand-in-hand with these roadblocks: depression, anxiety, trembling, and unsteady breath. They can all be managed with the 8 limbed path: yamas (restraints), niyamas (observances), asana, pranayama, pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (absorption) and samadhi (enlightenment.) Although students may never reach samadhi, they will practice at least the first 6 limbs without even knowing it. A yoga practice which encompasses niyamas 3,4,&5: (tapas --willful practice), svadhyaya --self-study or self-observation without judgment, and Ishvara-pranidhana- surrender) is most helpful. Niyamas 1 &2, purity of mind & body (shauca) and contentment (samtosha), are fostered when the other niyamas are practiced.

Through yoga asana practice, we can slowly unblock and release trauma blockages or samskaras. We also develop a Witness Consciousness, acceptance for who we are, without judgment. Slowly, happiness follows and the dark cloud lifts.

In general, use **uplifting energizing** yoga asana flows and breathwork for lethargic-depressed students (warming active side of body is the masculine right side). For anxiety-depressed student use **calming/cooling breathwork and asana poses** (calming cooling side of body is the feminine left side). Balance out either flow with Alternate Nostril Breathing as this taps into both side of the body and brain and calms the central nervous system.

Yoga and the 3 Gunas: Sequencing for Sattva

We usually think of sequencing of yoga postures in terms of warming up the muscles and preparing for more challenging postures. However, sequencing principles go much deeper than that.

The sequence of a yoga class has the potential to contribute to specific states of mind and feelings in the body for the yoga practitioner. At the end of class the yoga student might feel high as a kite, ready to take a nap, or wanting to sit under a tree in stillness for the rest of the afternoon.

Usually, we don't incorporate considerations for creating a specific mental effect when sequencing a yoga class. But if you have ever thought about sequencing a class to get a desired effect, here's one way of sequencing you can try in your own practice or with your yoga students.

Yoga and the 3 Gunas: Sequencing for Sattva

In yoga and Ayurveda there are 3 gunas, or qualities: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Tamas* is associated with feelings of lethargy, heaviness, and inertia. If you wake up groggy and tired in the morning, it's usually a sign that *tamas* is dominating after a long night of inactivity.

Rajas can be described as feelings of excitement, being energized and full of activity, but also often a certain degree of restlessness and mental agitation. *Sattva* is a third quality and it corresponds to feeling expansiveness, joyfulness, lightness, and being the witness to your life. There is a feeling of being the observer and full of joy for no particular reason, all at the same time.

The original intention of yoga, according to the ***Yoga Sutras of Patanjali***, was to enhance the quality of *Sattva* (a calm yet alert state of mind). If the student goes into *Sattva* on a daily basis over many weeks and months, transformation of his or her life happens naturally. The student begins to carry that *Sattva* into his or her life.

According to Patanjali, one major goal of yoga is to change from ***Vyuthana Samskara*** to ***Nirodaha Samskara***. *Vyuthana Samskara* is a contraction in the body, agitation in the mind, or stress in the emotions. *Nirodaha Samskara* means one feels stable, comfortable, focused, alert, and ultimately has good health. The *Yoga Sutras* say that one goal of yoga is to bring all five layers of the *Panchamaya* system into *Nirodaha Samskara*.

When the *Nirodaha Samskara* is used as the foundational principle for our asana practice, the practice will definitely change. How can we as teachers help someone go from *Vyuthana Samskara* (contracted, agitated and stressed) towards *Nirodaha Samskara* (comfortable, focused and alert) within an asana class?

This is the million-dollar question and especially difficult to accomplish among many diverse human beings. Yoga teachers face the challenge of recognizing and lifting depressed individuals out of darkness as well as calming down hyperactive practitioners to achieve *Nirodaha Samskara*. If yoga practitioners follow five steps in a practice, it is very likely that we will move from the *Vyuthana Samskara* to *Nirodaha Samskara*, or at least a little closer to *Nirodhaha* than when we started.

This is where sequencing can make a difference. In order to experience a well-rounded and holistic yoga practice, one possible sattva-inducing sequence includes the five categories of asanas in a particular order:

1. Sun Salutations: Sun Salutations followed by standing poses create rajas, movement and heat, which melts away stress. Sun Salutations warm-up every major joint and muscle in the body. There are many variations for people who are not able to do classical versions of Surya Namaskara A, B or C. They can be done sitting in a chair, kneeling on the floor and modified from standing. Sun-salutations help to discharge any agitation or anxiety (rajas quality).

2. Standing Poses: Following Sun Salutations, standing yoga poses bring strength, confidence and vigor to the body by releasing anxiety and tension. Standing balancing poses are done at the end of the standing sequence. Standing poses help to promote attention of the mind.

3. Supine and Prone Yoga Poses: Lying down poses begin with a rest lying in supine position. This provides a check-in with the body, breath and mind. Lying-down poses include any asana in supine, inverted and prone postures. After the discharge of rajas in the Sun Salutations and standing poses, body and mind begin to settle down in the supine and prone poses.

4. Seated Poses and Pranayama: The seated postures are often done statically and are great for opening the hips and low back in preparation for sitting for pranayama and meditation. Seated poses help to focus inward and prepare the mind for seated pranayama. Pranayama cleans the nadis and settles the mind for meditation. This can be done seated in a chair if one is uncomfortable on the floor. Now the yoga practitioner is moving closer to a sattvic state of mind and body.

5. Meditation: Meditation, or *dhyana*, is the final step of the practice. This is where the mind comes into a one-pointed focus. In the yoga tradition, one becomes naturally absorbed and eased into deep meditation if the previous steps were successful. *Sattva* quality is dominant during this phase of the sequence.

I have a challenge for you long-time yoga teachers and students. Try this new way of sequencing and see what happens. Open up to a new way of being and teaching. Talk to your students about the importance of getting into a *Sattva* mind both on the mat and then carrying the *Sattva* into life.

By: Amy Wheeler, Ph.D.

Yoga for Depression

CHANTING | BREATHWORK | ASANAS

CHANTING: Uplifts the heart, creates vibrational energy, and opens the throat chakra. Chanting brings breath under control and emotions will follow. Here are a few of the many out there:

1. Mmm Zzzz OM
2. Sthira-Sukam Asanam (Yoga Sutra Book 2, 46)
3. Sthira (steady); Sukham (easy, comfortable, joyful); Asanam (seat, connection to the earth, posture)
4. Lokah Samasta Sukhina Bhavant (**Wah!** has a great song for this!)
May all beings everywhere be happy and free, and may the thoughts, words and actions of my own life contribute in same way to the happiness and to the freedom for all.

BREATHING: Pranayama

1. Nadi Sodhana- alternate nostril breathing

Calms the nervous system, particularly helpful for anxiety or anxious depression. Balances the nervous system (balances the nadis, enhancing prana)

2. Ujjayi breath (ocean breath)

Calms the nervous system, activates the parasympathetic response system which calms autonomic functions and stimulates the vagus nerve. This lowers the heart rate as blood pressure is temporarily increased.

3. **Kabalabhati (skull shining breath - a kriya)**
Stimulating, energy boosting - can stimulate energy in the lower chakras.
4. **Bees Breath (Brahmari)**
Calms the nervous system
5. **Uddiyana Bandha with Agni Sara (stomach lock with agitating fire)**
Stomach pumping with the breath held out and then a round of Kabalabhati. This not only helps digestion, but energizes the body & increased the prana, helping to lift the mental dark cloud (best for dysthymia or lethargic depression)
 - a. Stand with feet apart and inhale, raising up arms over head
 - b. Exhale through the mouth and place hands on knees
 - c. While breath is out, pump stomach by drawing belly button toward the spine and back out. Do this until you need to take another breath
 - d. Inhale to standing
 - e. Practice 12-20 rounds of Kabalabhati
6. **Pulling Prana (inhale arms up, fingers spread wide; exhale arms down, make fists)**

ASANAS: Yoga postures

Cater asanas to the depressed student -if anxious, start with movement and then slow it down to restorative postures; if lethargic, start slow and build up.....

Some Yoga flow/breath options:

Start them moving with free flow movement and music or lie on back and bicycle legs and pump arms in circles

Sequence 1

Start in Mountain Pose

- Interlace fingers overhead, moving into Half Moon on either side
- Come into Chair Pose
- Practice 12-20 counts of Kabalabhati
- Inhale and exhale through mouth into forward bend

Sequence 2

Start in Extended Child Pose

- Lift up onto Knees, raising up arms (fly up)
- Come back into extended child pose
- Come into cow, dropping navel to the raise, opening up heart
- Stretch back into extended Child Pose
- Repeat 3-5 times

Beneficial Poses

- Restorative backbends and inversions (particularly legs-up-the-wall with a blanket supporting lower back, supported bridge pose with bolster or blankets under torso and head and shoulders on the floor)
- Camel
- Cat/cow
- Twist (threading needle)
- Lion
- Cobra
- Bow
- Shoulder-stand and/or rabbit pose
- Fish
- Side bends (triangle....)
- Spinal rolls
- Bridge pose (great for trauma release). Also Bridge pose lifting arms up overhead on the inhale and releasing arms and body to the floor on the exhale.

Poses that, perhaps, are best to avoid

- Seated forward bend: If person is seriously depressed and lethargic, it's not always good to bring them into this pose where they may feel closed off. Alternatively, a standing forward bend using a chair or bolster (pillow) may work better.
- Head to knee pose (same reason as previous)
- Savasana. Try a supported reclining bound angle pose, Supta Baddha Konasana (with back & head supported with a blanket) or supported Savasana (with pillows or rolled blankets under knees, back and neck). Both helps lift and open heart center while allowing for deep relaxation.

Helpful Resources

Jivamukti Yoga Chants, Mantras and Prayers/ Sharon Gannon and David Life

Yoga for Depression by Amy Weintraub

Easing Depression, Yoga Journal primer by Richard Rosen

The Natural Prozac, Yoga Journal article by Amy Weintraub

Why People Don't Heal and How They Can by Caroline Myss

Change for Good, Yoga Journal article by Sally Kempton

The Wisdom of Yoga by Stephen Cope

yoga

JOURNAL

Change for Good

Free yourself from destructive emotional patterns and behavior. We can help you do it with these six simple steps.

By Sally Kempton

When I was in my 20s and taking my first tentative steps along the inner path, I spent a few months working with a Jungian analyst. I went because I felt stuck, paralyzed. I had a novel to write that I couldn't seem to focus on, a boyfriend who didn't seem to love me the way I wanted to be loved, and a general feeling of dissatisfaction with myself. The analyst used to have me lie down on her couch and take deep, full breaths for what seemed like hours, triggering my first experiences of real relaxation. But the most memorable thing she did was to introduce me to the concept of transformation. It happened one afternoon after my deep breathing, when I was lying on her couch going on about all the things that weren't working in my life. "You know what your real problem is?" she asked me. "You don't understand that it's possible to change."



I was shocked. "What do you mean?" I said.

"You think that the way you are now is the way you have to be. That isn't true. You can change all of it. You can change your relationships. You can change the way that you do things. You can change the way you feel."

There is nothing more radical than the moment you realize that it's possible to reinvent your life. I am not talking about changing your grunge look for all whites and mala beads, or even leaving a regular job to work for Doctors Without Borders. I'm talking about reconfiguring your mental and emotional attitudes, shifting your vision of life—the kind of inner shift that turns a pessimist into someone capable of seeing the perfection in everything; that lets an angry person channel rage into creative energy; that makes us happier, more peaceful, more in touch with the love and wisdom at our core.

This sort of transformation is the crux of the inner life: the promise of yoga, of meditation, and of the various forms of inner work and self-inquiry we undertake. Yet it's essential to understand what kind of change we're really after, and also to understand what that level of change requires. We don't want to limit our own possibilities by expecting too little from our practice. At the same time, we don't want to indulge in magical thinking or in the kind of spiritual bypass that makes us think we can simply meditate our way out of life issues.

Change Your Mind

many sources, of course. When it comes from within, we experience it as inspiration. Grace also comes in the form of the help we get from other people. In fact, others can be a major source of the grace that leads us to change.

This was certainly Dale's experience. She decided to treat her anger as if it was an addiction and ask for help. She told her coworkers she realized her temper tantrums were difficult for everyone and she wanted to stop having them. She asked them to help her by giving her a signal when they saw her being harsh. They agreed. After a few days, in which signals came several times an hour, Dale realized she spoke with a certain tone when she was being coercive with others.

Make Your Break

At that point, she came up with an internal self-inquiry process that any of us might find useful for breaking a samskaric pattern. Here's how it worked:

Dale would pay attention to the tone of her own voice and notice when it sounded coercive or angry. Then she would recall the feeling that had come up just before her voice changed. She realized that her urge to say something harsh always began with the same set of feelings—part anxiety, part frustration, but more surprisingly, a self-righteous feeling of excitement and power that she rather enjoyed. That sense of power would impel her to raise her voice and say things that made other people wilt.

Once she'd identified the feeling, she began to try to recognize it each time it arose, before she acted it out. Then, she'd stop and ask herself a question, "Do you really want to say what you are about to say?" or "Are things really the way you think they are?"

Because of her deep desire to change, and her willingness to work at it, Dale found herself on a transformative fast track. Within weeks, her coworkers were commenting on how much nicer she seemed, how much easier she was to work with. "I was so much happier," Dale said. "I think it was the first time in my work life that I felt people actually liked being with me." In fact, for a while, she felt sure that she'd accomplished a miracle—an instant turnaround in her way of being.

As it turned out, it wasn't quite that simple. But Dale had actually stumbled on one of the basic formulas for inner transformation, or breakthrough. First, she'd received a wake-up call. She'd let it penetrate, and she'd discovered in herself a powerful motivation. Second, she had asked for help in making her desired change—in this case, from the people around her. Third, she'd found a method, self-inquiry, which enabled her to identify her patterns so that she could become aware of exactly which behaviors and reactions she wanted to change. There was an essential yogic principle at work; just as the Yoga Sutra counsels, Dale was combining practice with strong aspiration, and the result was allowing her to bypass her old samskaric grooves and create new ones.

Create New Grooves

One of the best ways to create new samskaras is to keep consciously shifting your behavior and ways of thinking out of negative patterns and into positive ones. This idea is the basis

of many of the transformative practices we do in yoga—for example, the practices of truthfulness and lovingkindness, or Patanjali's practice of countering a negative thought or feeling with a positive one. Suppose that every time you feel angry, you make a point of remembering love, or of finding the energy behind the anger, or of looking inward and asking, "Who's angry?" or even of reminding yourself that there might be another way to look at the situation. After doing any of these for a while, you'll notice a shift in yourself. You might still fall into the anger groove, but along with the anger samskaras, you'll have developed an alternative set of samskaric grooves that will rise up along with your anger and remind you that there are more expansive ways of approaching the situation. Your practice will have created a positive "field" inside you that, in time, will become as strong as the negative one. You now have more choices about how you react.

Moreover, most of the core yogic practices—asana, meditation, study, mantra repetition, visualization, pranayama—not only create new, positive samskaras, they also have the power to wash away the old, limiting, pain-producing ones. Here, meditation is especially effective because it can literally flush old samskaras out of your unconscious. When mental static or strong emotions surface during practice, beginning meditators sometimes think they're doing something wrong. In fact, a rush of thoughts and emotions is part of the natural process of samskaric burn off, in which some of your layers of buried impressions come up to be released. There's a reason why a period of meditation or yoga will leave you feeling calmer, clearer, and less emotionally cluttered—even if your mind did not become noticeably calmer during the meditation itself. Simply practicing has cleansed your unconscious of some of its burden.

The classical practice for purifying samskaras in the Indian and Tibetan traditions is mantra repetition. When I was beginning spiritual practice, I used to be periodically assailed with painful emotions—guilt, confusion, and feelings of being inadequate or "bad"—as my samskaric backpack unloaded itself. If I could sit with the feelings in meditation, they would eventually dissolve, as if removed from my being by the energy of meditation. The process seemed to go even faster when I introduced my teacher's mantra into the mix.

When I offered the mantra into the vortex of mental turmoil, it soothed, focused, and actually cleaned out the buzz of mental static and the sticky residue of guilt and resentment. When I repeated it with intense focus, I sometimes felt as if it were washing my mind like a subtle Fantastik spray. After a couple of years of repeating the mantra regularly, my once uncontrollable mind had an entirely different texture. Even my body language seemed softer, more open.

Spiral Upward

One way to chart your "progress" is by observing a growing ability to stay out of certain samskaric grooves. The first time I noticed this kind of shift was after I'd been practicing intensely for a couple of years. I went to spend an evening with an old friend who had always seemed to know just how to trigger my feelings of inferiority and insecurity. This time, despite the fact he was his usual hypercritical self, I didn't get bent out of shape by it. Two years of practice had disarmed my own inner critic to the point where I could be around critical people without taking everything they said personally.

All this takes time. Even when we notice that certain tendencies and ways of thinking are

Given yoga's fundamental premise—that all of us, at our core, are made of the same powerful, loving intelligence that gives rise to all life, and that this intelligence is fluid and infinitely creative—it should be theoretically possible to change just about anything about ourselves. Some New Age teachers actually give that impression—they say, for example, that we can harness our power of intention to transform anything about our lives that we want to fix. But can a strong intention really change, for instance, our financial situation or romantic patterns? Can we heal a chronic or terminal illness by transforming our attitudes? Can we change our personality?

To these questions, yoga says yes and no. On the one hand, certain aspects of our basic personality and physical constitution seem to be ours for a lifetime—which is why even enlightened people famously express such individualistic personalities, and why no amount of stretching will lengthen your thighbones. On the other hand, there's no question that when we enter deeply into our consciousness, extraordinary shifts take place.

What yoga can definitely help us change (and, by extension, dramatically shift our experience of life) is the texture of our own mind, the stickiness of certain emotions and views, and above all, the quality of our inner state. The most powerful shifts occur when we experience a change in the way we identify ourselves—when we are able to see ourselves as the Self, the unchanging consciousness behind the mind, or when we are able to identify ourselves as the witness to our thoughts rather than becoming our thoughts and feelings.

Arguably, the core of our yoga practice is the work that we do to purify, reforge, and replace the inner patterns that in Sanskrit are called *samskaras*. Samskaras are the accumulated impressions—in scientific terms, the neuronal patterns—that create our character, our ways of thinking and acting, and our perspective on life.

The word *samskara* can be translated just the way it sounds in English: as "some scars." Samskaras are energy patterns in our consciousness. I always picture them as mental grooves, like the rivulets in sand that let water run in certain patterns. Samskaras create our mental, emotional, and physical default settings.

The tendency to think "I can't do this" when you're faced with a new challenge is a *samskara*, and so is the confidence that develops once you've mastered something that was hard for you. The tension lump that shows up in your right shoulder when you feel stressed is a *samskara*, and so are the song lyrics that pop into your mind unexpectedly and—in my case at least—often reveal themselves to be the perfect comment on the situation that you're in at the time.

Neurophysiologists mapping neural pathways in the brain report that each time we react in a certain way—getting angry, for instance, or procrastinating yet one more time—we strengthen the power of that pathway. The yogic texts make the same point. The bottom line in each case is that the way we feel, the way we react, and the behavior we manifest at any given moment are the result of *samskaras*, or neural connections, operating under the surface.

Once the *samskaric* pathways have been set, most people just keep running down them, like rats in a maze, reacting with the same old patterns and feelings every time they find

themselves in a situation that seems to mirror whatever the original trigger might have been.

You probably know, intellectually at least, how this works. When you're feeling abandoned because your friend hasn't called you in two weeks, you might understand that it isn't because he's stopped liking you. You may even realize (especially if you've done some therapy) that his silence is triggering one of your old samskaric grooves—perhaps a childhood memory of abandonment. Unfortunately, that doesn't necessarily stop you from reacting. Samskaras are powerful, which is why knowing better does not always change our behavior. There's a weight to those accumulated impressions. They are, on a daily basis, the reason we think and feel the way we do.

That's both good news and bad news. The bad news about samskaric grooves is that as long as the negative ones are in place, it's hard to escape the limitations imposed by our personal history. The good news, however, is that we can change those grooves. The brain is so fluid and malleable, so prone to take and hold impressions, that when we keep leading it into new pathways, the accumulation of new insights, practices, and experiences will eventually overwhelm the old ones and, given the right circumstances, even eliminate them entirely.

Heed the Call

I recently had the opportunity to watch one of my students go through this process. Dale, a magazine editor, routinely took out her frustration at work by criticizing her subordinates.

One evening she read a book by a contemporary spiritual psychologist in which the writer defined *evil* as "using power to avoid spiritual growth." Quickly, she realized that her outbursts toward others came from precisely this impulse—she was off-loading blame onto other people rather than looking at the sources of her own pain and frustration.

That night she lay in bed, filled with confusion and remorse, asking herself, "What can I do to change this?"

To break a pattern in ourselves, we often need some sort of shock, a wake-up call from outside. That's because inner patterns tend to self-perpetuate. Unless something comes along to shake us up, make us aware of our pattern, or push us out of the trough, we often go on looping around in the old grooves forever. The aftermath of such a shock creates a powerful field for change.

In fact, any moment during which we acutely feel the need for change is fruitful. Intense motivation fuels spiritual breakthrough, as we can see from the stories of sudden enlightenment that come out of so many traditions. When people ask me how they can change the qualities in themselves that create suffering—qualities such as anger, intense jealousy, or fear—I often say, "You have to deeply want to change." To paraphrase the poet Kabir, it's the intensity of the longing for change that does the work.

Strong aspiration not only motivates us to act, it also attracts help. Sri Aurobindo, the great Indian teacher of the early 20th century, used to say that human aspiration calls down the force of divine grace, and that this force is what brings breakthrough. Grace comes from

definitely disappearing, we're often discouraged because other, deeper tendencies seem slow to shift.

A few months after Dale's initial breakthrough, under the pressure of a sleepless night and a hard deadline, she heard herself calling one of her coeditors an incompetent, talentless idiot. The editor was crushed and told Dale that she hadn't changed at all. Dale was disappointed in herself. "What's the point?" she asked me. "I work so hard, and it doesn't seem to make a difference."

At times like this, it helps to understand that real transformation is not a linear process but more like a spiral. When you make a breakthrough in yoga practice or have an especially deep meditation or let go of a layer of anger or pride, it's often followed by an internal backlash. You might feel dry, irritable, discouraged, or disinterested in practice. You may find that you're drawn to foods that aren't good for you, or you're simply aware of a host of flaws and shortcomings. In my early years of practice, whenever this happened, I'd feel as if I'd somehow fallen or relapsed or completely blown it.

Over the years, I've come to realize that these relapses are actually part of the process of integrating new states. Our brains and bodies can't integrate too much change at once. So every time we make a real leap, there's a necessary period of recalibration. But even when it feels as if you've taken two steps backward for every step forward, if you look carefully, you'll see that you've actually landed in a new default position. A spiral moves gradually upward, cycling back to a position that looks very much like the same place you've been but is actually at a different level altogether. When you look carefully at yourself, you may notice that you have more awareness, so that when you catch yourself in an old pattern, you can move through it quickly. Perhaps the reactive pattern is simply less intense. Or perhaps you realize that even when you notice your own imperfections (or other people's), you're still able to stay in touch with your center, your inner self. Perhaps you have a new compassion for yourself. In short, you haven't moved backward at all. You are simply moving forward in a spiral rather than in a straight line.

Transformation is a long-term process. The big changes rarely happen overnight. At the same time, every effort you make on the transformational journey is exponential in its effects. Each time you consciously counter a negative samskara, remember the beauty of your inner self, or limit your reactive behavior to five minutes instead of five hours, you shift not only that pattern but thousands of related patterns as well. One day, you look at yourself and discover that you're living from an entirely different platform—you realize how much power you have and how miraculously fruitful a transformative journey can be.

That's when you realize that Krishna wasn't kidding when he told Arjuna, in the Bhagavad Gita, that on this path, no effort *ever* goes to waste!

Making Change

Identify the Change

Determine one pattern that seems most important to you and connect with your motivation for change. Work with one issue or behavior at a time. The more deeply you want to

change—and the more you focus on that pattern or issue—the more quickly change can come.

Enlist Support

Reach out to friends, family, and coworkers—anyone who loves you and can gently (and nonjudgmentally) remind you when you're acting out on old patterns.

Peer Inward

Practice looking inside to identify the signs—feelings, thoughts, body language, shifts in your voice—that reveal you are thinking or acting out of an old pattern. Remember, though, to do this as an observer, not as a judge.

Focus on Feelings

When you notice the triggers of your negative patterns, focus on the deepest level of feeling you can identify. This brings awareness to the energetic source of the behavior. Then, work with a practice that can help you disrupt the patterns in the moment. This can be as simple as stopping and taking a deep breath, or talking back to a negative thought.

Make a Commitment

Stick with your practice of self-inquiry and experiment with different ways of working to shift your state in the moment.

Stay Joyful

Take pleasure in even the subtlest changes (and remind yourself that each one has an exponential effect), and practice compassion for yourself when you experience setbacks.

Sally Kempton, also known as Durgananda, is an author, a meditation teacher, and the founder of the Dharana Institute. For more information, visit www.sallykempton.com.

Return to <http://www.yogajournal.com/wisdom/1719>

yoga

JOURNAL

Feel Happier

Battling depression can feel like a fight for your life. Yoga can help you stop struggling.

By Andrea Ferretti



It happened 11 years ago, but I remember the night I had my first full-fledged panic attack as if it were yesterday. I was sitting in the cramped balcony of the Marines Memorial Theatre in San Francisco with my then-boyfriend, watching a devastatingly sad and incredibly long play. By hour three my mood had plummeted. I fidgeted in my seat as I desperately wished that the performance would end. Then, suddenly, I felt my breath get stuck in my chest. I thought I was having an asthma attack. I put my hand on my heart and willed some air

into my lungs, but it wouldn't go. I braced myself against the arms of my seat as I tried harder to suck the air in. Nothing. Even though my chest was completely expanded, it felt empty. Then I really started to panic; I became convinced that if I didn't take in a big breath soon, I was going to die.

With my heart pounding in my throat, I pushed through a row of irritated people and bolted out of the dark theater. As I stumbled down the stairs and onto the street, I felt faint and completely disconnected from my body.

The rest of the night is a series of blurry snapshots. I remember the stunned look on my boyfriend's face when he came out of the theater and saw me. I remember him dragging a woman out of a cab and ordering the driver to take us to the hospital. Then I recall a moment of comfort when, at the hospital, a nurse sat me down, put her hands on my shoulders, and said gently, "Just breathe, sweetheart. You can do it." In that moment, the terror dissipated and I felt a split second of relief as I realized that I was not going to die. But the relief was quickly replaced by overwhelming sadness. Sobs welled up from deep within. They didn't stop that night. They rarely ceased for several weeks.

When I returned home from the hospital later that night, my mental state worsened. Along with the anxiety that I still felt after the panic attack, I was joined by another visitor: depression. In the weeks that followed, I was completely unable to soothe myself. I cried constantly and felt detached from the world. I awoke every morning dreading opening my eyes and grew frightened of crowded places like movie theaters, airplanes, and buses. Then one day I was afraid to leave my apartment. The thought of looking up at the vast expanse of sky above while being surrounded by strangers was too much. I'd heard about this condition, agoraphobia, but I couldn't believe it was happening to me. At that point I knew I needed to find help, and I did.

This might be the part of the story where you think I'm going to say that yoga saved me. That I traveled to India and meditated for 40 days in an ashram, which helped me find the

true meaning of life and live happily ever after. I wish I could say that, but it was antidepressants and psychotherapy that initially helped me manage my anxiety and depression. When I did start practicing yoga three years later, it helped me feel happier—more whole and connected. Yoga didn't "cure" me, but it has transformed my life over time. In the past eight years, yoga helped me create new thought patterns, feel self-love, and return to the present moment when my mind wanders off into a fearful future. It's also taught me to trust that life is good, whether or not things are going well. All this just from practicing asana? Well, not exactly. Practicing yoga has altered my inner landscape in many ways. I offer some of them here not as a definitive guide—depression and anxiety are complicated and different for everyone, and it's important to get a personalized diagnosis and treatment plan—but in the hope that someone else might find support and solace too.

Know your Depression

For me, anxiety and depression have always gone hand in hand. Over the years I've noticed that a panic attack or prolonged periods of anxiety can trigger depression in me. Although no one knows why, most anxiety disorders—including panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, and phobias—are accompanied by depression, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Asana practice helps counteract anxiety-driven depression because it reduces stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, inducing what's known as the relaxation response. Once the relaxation response kicks in, many people feel that instead of trying to escape their feelings, they can stay with them, which is essential to identifying the psychological factors that trigger their anxiety and depression. But the path to getting to this relaxed place varies by individual.

Patricia Walden, a senior Iyengar Yoga teacher, and the physician Timothy McCall, author of the forthcoming book *Yoga as Medicine*, who together teach workshops on yoga and depression, categorize depression based on the *gunas*—*rajas*, *tamas*, and *sattva*—which, according to ancient yogic texts, are three types of energy that manifest as behavioral patterns. *Rajas* is often characterized as dynamic and excitable; *tamas* by inertia, sloth, fear, or confusion; and *sattva* as pure "beingness" and lucidity, a state of equilibrium. Walden and McCall refer to an agitated, anxiety-infused depression as "rajasic" and a more lethargic, despondent depression as "tamasic."

If you're feeling rajasic, that is, agitated, anxious, and fearful, you might assume that the best yoga practice for you would be one made up of calming poses such as forward bends or restorative poses. But if your mind and energy are out of control, being completely still and willing yourself to relax may make you feel worse. In those situations, Walden recommends starting your practice with dynamic, invigorating poses such as Adho Mukha Vrksasana (Handstand), Virabhadrasana II (Warrior II), or Sun Salutations to burn off nervous energy and to give your buzzing mind something to focus on. If those poses are too difficult, Walden suggests that beginners try Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog). If you find Downward-Facing Dog too stimulating, use a bolster or block under the head. From there, supported backbends such as Viparita Dandasana can then lift the spirits without overly stimulating the nervous system, provided you focus on your breathing and don't aggressively work the pose. Walden recommends backbends because they open the chest, which is essential for relieving both anxiety and depression. For depression, Walden

suggests focusing on the inhalation, which draws life force into the body; for anxiety, it's best to focus on the exhalation, which promotes a calm, peaceful mind.

Once you feel more balanced and calm, restorative poses such as Supta Baddha Konasana (Reclining Bound Angle Pose) or Viparita Karani (Legs-up-the-Wall Pose) can offer much-needed rest. Walden also recommends keeping your eyes open in Savasana (Corpse Pose), since closing them can often intensify feelings of restlessness and anxiety.

Strengthen yourself with Awareness

In addition to its physiological benefits, yoga teaches awareness, an invaluable skill for people who struggle with anxiety or depression. If I'd had more awareness that night in the theater, I could have responded differently to my body's cues and perhaps been able to stave off a full panic attack. I would have noticed my shallow breathing—often a sign of anxiety—and tried yoga breathing techniques to help me focus and calm down. Or I might have noticed earlier in the day that I was exhausted and in no condition to be in such a stimulating environment. I might have even observed the effects of some deeper issues going on—at that time my job was miserable, my relationship was unstable, and I was sad being far away from family without a sense of home. If I'd been able to recognize any of those things, I could have made different choices along the way and perhaps reduced my suffering.

Usually, the first way Westerners learn to build awareness in yoga is by practicing the poses. But the myriad instructions heard in class aren't just designed to improve your poses. They give your busy mind something to focus on and therefore keep you in the present moment. For people with anxiety, this is a particular blessing. "When you're anxious, you can't focus on anything because you feel overwhelmed," says Judith Hanson Lasater, Ph.D., P.T., who wrote *30 Essential Yoga Poses*. "Having something concrete to focus on, like a pose or your breath or a mantra, is very settling."

Complex instructions also force you to tune in to the subtle shifts occurring in your body. As you become more aware of these changes, you'll begin to notice subtle alterations in your mind and in your mood, too. You'll feel in a tangible way how the body and mind are connected. "By building awareness of your body, you start to notice the content of your mind," McCall says. "You see what's going on in your mind as you're doing each pose. Maybe you're beating yourself up. Maybe you're as proud as a peacock. Maybe you just want to escape."

As you continue to hone moment-to-moment awareness of your body, breath, emotions, and thoughts in your yoga practice, you'll bring that awareness to your daily life. "When you're paying attention, you're more in touch with your thoughts and feelings as they arise in the moment, which is half the battle of resolving them," Lasater says. In other words, when you're able to identify that something is wrong, you can address that particular issue in the moment, rather than ignoring it and unleashing it later in some painful way, which Lasater calls "being at the mercy of your energy."

Add Acceptance

So, what's the key to *not* being at the mercy of your energy? It's learning what's behind it

(your awareness practice helps with this) and staying present with what's going on, even when you want to escape. That night in the theater, I wanted nothing more than to flee. I became convinced that once I got out of that building, I would feel better. But I didn't feel better. The truth is that for weeks, wherever I went, I wanted to jump out of my own skin. I learned from that experience that running from difficult emotions rarely works—eventually they catch up with you in all kinds of ways. But at that time I didn't yet have the skills to stay and breathe, and feel my painful emotions.

Sometimes though, panic or anxiety simply strikes, without being due to some deep-seated emotional conflict—you can suddenly feel hot and claustrophobic in an airplane when there are five hours to go before you land. It's equally important in those moments to observe your reaction from a neutral stance, stay with it, and watch as it passes away.

Yoga practice teaches the kind of acceptance you need to handle those situations, too. You'll undoubtedly have times when you want to come out of a pose because it's uncomfortable, it seems too hard, or it brings up difficult emotions. But yoga teaches you to notice how you feel and to use your breath to accept your current situation, even if it makes you uncomfortable, angry, sad, or agitated. As you learn to weather situations like these on your mat, you'll see that as quickly as difficult emotions arise, they also change and fade away.

You'll also be less fearful when similar feelings—whether physical or emotional—surface in your daily life. In fact, you'll gain confidence and know that you have the fortitude to cope with the array of emotions that course through you. Developing the ability to stay with pain can ultimately diffuse panic and depression, or allow you to get to the root of the difficulty. The ability to stay with pain will eventually allow it to subside.

Lasater believes that depression arises when a person tries to deny feelings such as anger or sadness and that learning to truly feel these difficult emotions is what weakens them until they pass away. "We develop a lot of strategies for escaping anxiety or sadness—overeating, drinking, even exercise—because we're a sadness-denying society," she says. "But when you learn to sit still in yoga or meditation, you become a container for your feelings. The discipline is not to interact with them, and they will pass away. Sitting with them really is the cure."

Michael Tompkins, who is a cognitive-behavioral therapist at the San Francisco Bay Area Center for Cognitive Therapy, concurs. "When one accepts panic instead of trying to push it away, it collapses," he says. Most people who experience panic or depression are so frightened by it that they focus their energy on never having such an experience again—which only makes things worse, Tompkins says. He uses the analogy of a rip tide: If you try to swim against it, it pulls you under. But if you float with it and wait until it drops off, then you can bring yourself back to shore.

Look Within, Know Love

One of the most disorienting symptoms of depression is feeling disconnected from yourself and the world around you. But part of nondualist yoga philosophy is the belief that there is no separation between one's self and the rest of the universe. Our tendency to see ourselves as separate is an illusion that the mind and the ego create. Nondualism can be an

elusive concept because we experience so much duality day to day, but even the smallest glimpse of it can forever change the way you see yourself in relation to others.

This seed was planted for me during a teacher-training course that Sarah Powers led several years ago. She was explaining the importance of meditation and implored us to sit daily. "When you meditate, you'll see your true nature," she said. "You'll know that you are perfect just as you are, because you are made from love."

At the time this sounded hokey. The possibility of being acceptable exactly as I was seemed unfathomable. Plus, I was terrified of exploring my inner demons alone and in silence. I raised my hand and asked, "What if you look inside and you don't see the goodness? What if it's just not there?" She answered, "You'll never know unless you try." Then she added, "Don't be afraid."

I was afraid and I didn't try. Not that day, that month, or even that year. It took three more years before I wholeheartedly surrendered to meditation. Then one day, in the midst of a meditation retreat, I felt it. The quietest, gentlest happiness. I suddenly felt as though I were a part of nature. It felt like tiny flowers were blooming in my heart. It felt as though I was surrounded by soft, shady trees. I felt a warm glow emanating from deep in my stomach, the same place that so often felt knotted and tight. It wasn't an explosive or ecstatic onrush of happiness. It was smaller and more comforting. And it dawned on me in that moment that I was completely fearless. I was anxiety-free. I finally understood the quote by yoga teacher and author Erich Schiffmann that has spurred me in my practice since the very beginning: "The release from fear is what finally precipitates the full flowering of love. In this state you will love what you see in others, and others will love you for having been seen. This is the softened perception of the world that yoga promotes."

That experience helped me trust in the flow of life. Suddenly, I knew that I with my quirks and neuroses, and my upstairs neighbor with his annoying habits, and even the people in the world who commit hateful acts are all made from love. I learned that when you connect with the deepest part of yourself, you realize that you are connected to everyone else, too.

I still have days, weeks, or months when I struggle with anxiety. I even have days when I fear that depression could once again come knocking on my door. But after years of getting to know myself better, I've come to have some appreciation for those emotions. Paradoxically, experiencing anxiety and depression has made me less afraid of life: I've been tested and I've made it through. It's also made me more sensitive to other people's struggles. I'm a better listener, I'm more compassionate, and I am *much* better at laughing at myself, which is a huge relief. I'm also convinced these experiences served as a moment of awakening that helped me find yoga, which has made me happier than I ever thought I could be. So even if you are in the midst of your toughest struggle yet, know that it will change; trust that it will give you deeper access to yourself. Someday you may even be grateful for it.

Andrea Ferretti is a senior editor at Yoga Journal. For additional ways that yoga can help with anxiety and depression, read *Kriya Cure*. Also, learn more about combining antidepressants and yoga see *Sitting with Depression*.



The Natural Prozac

The yoga mat is a good place to turn when talk therapy and antidepressants aren't enough.

By Amy Weintraub

On a fall afternoon in the mid-'80s, I sat on the tweed sofa in my psychiatrist's office, two years after entering therapy, feeling as depressed as I'd ever felt in my life, as she told me that I was one of those people who would always have empty pockets. What she meant, I assumed, was that my depression would forever interfere with my ability to feel fulfilled. What I heard was a life-sentence—I was a depressive.

Then, in 1989, I went to Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Lenox, Massachusetts. Though I'd been meditating irregularly since 1970, it was there that I took my first yoga class. The language of the class seemed familiar to me from a brief stint in cognitive therapy. If I could change the way I thought about myself and my life to thinking I wasn't a depressive but a person who sometimes felt depressed, my feelings would follow. In class, we were encouraged to listen to the wisdom of our bodies and to simply be aware of the sensations we felt as we moved into, held, and released an asana. So simple. So radically life-changing. Physically, I felt like Rip Van Winkle, waking up, in my case, after nearly 40 years of sleep.

What was this miracle taking place? I had always been an exercise nut. Why was this particular form of exercise not only making me feel better but changing my life? Within a year, I was no longer taking antidepressants. Six months after that, I was sitting in a workshop, in which the leader asked us to name ourselves. I closed my eyes and without hesitation, named myself "Abundance." What happened to those "always empty pockets?" I still had sad feelings from time to time, but the kind of mind-numbing depression that prevented me from properly putting two shoes in a shoe box or remembering how to fold a bridge chair was now just a story I could tell about how I used to be. If yoga worked so well for me, why weren't shrinks across the nation prescribing it to the millions they were putting on Prozac and other antidepressants, costing Americans \$44 billion annually?

There are billions to be made by the pharmaceutical industry with the promotion of the concept that what ails us is our brain chemistry, and if we take a pill, we'll be okay. Actually, for some of us, this may be true. A pill like Prozac or one of the other selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs) can increase the amount of serotonin in our brains, and we may feel better.

But what's wrong with this picture? Why are so many of us allegedly serotonin deficient? Research with rhesus monkeys has clearly demonstrated that early trauma, such as separation from the mother, actually changes brain chemistry. Studies have also shown that stress itself, including the stress of social separation, affects the balance of serotonin in the brain. Could it be that the stressors inherent in our modern culture are the source of an international serotonin deficiency, causing depression in epidemic proportions? "Many of us, it seems, at the fin de siècle, live deeply disconnected from our well-springs

of meaning and purpose, our vitality and authenticity," says psychotherapist and yogi Stephen Cope, author of the book *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self* (Bantam, 1999). Certainly, our postmodern culture has created a widespread emotional impoverishment. Since World War II, depression and suicide among adolescents has more than tripled. Even more startling evidence of our suffering is found in a study published in 1994, which determined that among people between the ages of 18 and 54, nearly half had suffered from a serious psychiatric illness.

Source of Suffering

Because of the stressful human and technological complexities of our age, we often assume that ours are the worst of times. But human beings have always suffered. "Living in the mortal body," the Buddha said, "is like living in a house on fire." In the yogic view, the source of our suffering is our ignorance—*avidya*. We have forgotten who we are. We create an identity out of what we do, who and what we love, how much money we make, and the things we surround ourselves with. From the classical yogic perspective, we are inviting disappointment, if not depression, into our lives because we have created an identity based on the five kleshas, or "afflictions"—ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and the will to live—that keep us bound to gross apparent reality.

Cope says that much of our modern angst has arisen from our inability to soothe ourselves, because many of us have not been given enough of the soothing experience of being safely and securely held as children. If early trauma can disturb our brain chemistry, could it be that healing experiences in psychotherapy and on the yoga mat can actually balance the chemistry disturbed by such trauma? Many psychotherapists and yogis believe that it can. Or, if some of them prefer not to talk in biochemical terms, they do feel that yoga works well with people who suffer from depression. Perhaps the most convincing stories come from practitioners themselves, who feel that yoga gave them back their lives.

Take Tracy, for example, a 27-year-old yoga student in Cleveland whose depression began with an emotional trauma, the loss of her mother when she was 15. Since beginning to practice yoga in 1995, she says, "I see that my depressions have a purpose, and that the downs are sometimes rest periods from my constant struggles." Or Ram, who was doing heroin with his girlfriend Debbie in the early '90s when the cancer that killed her was discovered. In desperation and grief, he went to his first yoga class, and after two months of regular practice, he was able to get himself clean and "for the first time...saw things as if I had been blind all my life." Ram is now a yoga teacher in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Or Penny Smith, a yoga teacher in Harleysville, Pennsylvania, whose depression is clearly biochemical. She, like a number of family members, has bipolar disorder and has cycled between mania and depression all her life. After her last hospitalization eight years ago when her doctors told her that she could expect to be in and out of hospitals for the rest of her life, she began to practice yoga. With the practice of pranayama, says Smith, "I was able to eliminate panic attacks completely." Now, during her depressive episodes when she awakens at 3 a.m., the repetition of mantras and deep yogic breathing help her to fall back to sleep. Her pattern of severe depression and manic episodes has tempered into mild depression, and she has not been hospitalized. Yoga changed Smith's life. "Without it," she says, "I might not be alive today."

Grief in the Tissues

International yoga teacher and clinical psychologist Richard Miller, founding editor of the *Journal of the International Association of Yoga Therapists*, says that most people he treats for depression have the belief that "I should be other than I am." The first step is to help people see how that belief manifests in their lives—in their thoughts, their breathing, and in their bodies. For example, a yoga teacher who was seeing Miller for the treatment of depression began, at his suggestion, to keep a daily journal where she

could see her judging thoughts about herself.

During a therapy session, he asked her to do an asana. "She immediately saw that her interest in the posture was 'Am I doing it right?' So we now had a body-based knowledge of this on-going, chronic belief."

Initially, the emphasis in Richard Miller's approach with a depressed patient is to help him see what he is accepting and what he is not accepting in his life. Then, the emphasis shifts to the nature of acceptance itself. Sometimes, according to Miller, when we accept something we've been judging as bad or wrong, we're merely "rearranging the furniture." To get at the root of the problem and prevent the depression from returning, we need to see that our basic nature is "free of judgment, open, and clear-seeing." Through the cultivation of such vision, Miller encourages people to understand that they are not their emotions. He helps a depressed person see that "I'm not sad, but sadness is present in my awareness."

The kind of nonjudging self-acceptance that we talk about in yoga class and in various kinds of psychotherapies—what yogis have called "equanimity"—can be challenging but ultimately redemptive for a depressed person. In addition, according to Miller, depression is a somatic-based problem that has gotten into the tissues, and people who are depressed need bodywork. "Yoga is an exquisite form of bodywork that eliminates the residue that has become lodged in the tissue." The yogic view is that the *samskaras* (impressions left from emotional or physical trauma) are primarily retained in the subtle bodies and are subsequently reflected through physical symptoms of tension in the gross bodies. "Yoga postures can penetrate what Wilhem Reich, the founder of the science of bioenergetics, called 'character armor,' our unconsciously held patterns of physical contractions and defenses," says Cope in *Yoga and the Quest*.

But yoga teachers differ over the use of asanas in treating depression, and the source of that difference seems to be whether you believe the yoga mat is the appropriate place for working with the emotions. Some teachers take a "the only way out is through" approach that allows and even encourages the darker emotions to surface on the mat. Such teachers might guide a student into staying present with the emotions that arise in slow, deliberate movements and in longer holdings of postures. Other teachers assume the mat is the place where a student emerges from the darker emotions and begins to feel relief. These teachers might recommend a vigorous practice and discourage postures that could promote brooding, like seated forward bends and Savasana (Corpse Pose).

International yoga teacher-trainer and student of B.K.S. Iyengar, Patricia Walden, takes the second approach. Her classes are designed so that people leave feeling less depressed. For people suffering from a depression characterized by inertia and fatigue, or who are going through a period of loss, Walden recommends a practice of supported backbends and inversions. For those who experience depression with anxiety, she recommends a more active sequence of postures, modified according to experience and physical energy level, to keep them "out of themselves." The energetic postures she recommends include Sun Salutations, backbends, and inversions.

Inverted postures are particularly useful because they alter the blood flow, including lymphatic drainage and cranial sacral fluid, according to Dr. Karen Koffler, an internist who trained with Andrew Weil in the Integrative Medicine Program at the University of Arizona. "If there is increased blood flow to the area, there will be increased bioavailability of oxygen and glucose—the two most important metabolic substrates for the brain. It follows, then, that those cells bathed in a solution that is rich in the building blocks required for the creation of neurotransmitters like norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin, will be better able to produce these chemicals." In nonmedical terms, then, as we practice yoga, we may literally be feeding our brain with a healthy dose of our own self-generated neurotransmitters.

Walden tells her depressed students to keep their eyes open wide, and if they are brooding, she guides them from posture to posture without pausing in between, to generate life force and focus the mind on the body. Because people who are depressed are often shallow breathers, she encourages strong inhalations. And at the end of a practice, she suggests a brief cool down, with a pose like Setu Bandha (Bridge Pose) to elevate and open the chest.

Though Richard Miller doubts that you can prescribe specific asanas across the board for people with depression, he agrees that trying certain postures on an individual basis is a way to start. In his own work with depressed students, he might suggest several poses, then carefully observe the person in the posture. As he watches, he might see that a person's energy is blocked in areas of self-expression—perhaps the chin is tucked and the throat seems constricted. Here, he might guide the student through an asana that opens the *vishuddha* chakra. Or if he notices that energy is blocked around the heart, he might do heart-opening postures involving *anahata* chakra. Since low self-esteem often accompanies depression, postures that energize the solar plexus at *manipura* chakra might help. "The important thing," says Miller, "is to watch how the energy moves in the body. You might find the energy moving from the throat down to the heart because there's sadness that the person has been living in a false self and hasn't been expressing the true spirit inside."

For Stephen Cope, it's not the asana itself that's important, but the quality of attention we bring to it that can make a difference for someone who's depressed. "Slow, deliberate movement anchors the mind in sensation and allows a deep relearning to happen." The practice of postures is intentionally meant to create the physiological foundation for the "steadiness and relaxation" of which Patanjali spoke 2,000 years ago.

From the Viniyoga perspective, depression is an energetic condition in which tamasic (meaning dark or sluggish) qualities of mind and emotions prevail, says Gary Kraftsow, founder and director of the American Viniyoga Institute, and author of the book, *Yoga for Wellness: Healing with the Timeless Teachings of Viniyoga* (Penguin, 1999). The Ayurvedic tradition provides the two governing concepts of Viniyoga therapeutic treatment. The first is *langhana*, embodying techniques that reduce, eliminate, calm, and purify. The second is *brahmana*, referring to techniques that nourish, build, tonify, and energize. So, for example, a person with depression characterized by lethargy may benefit from postures that are more brahmana, like Virabhadrasana (Warrior Pose) or Tadasana (Mountain Pose). But Kraftsow reminds us that each individual is unique and that all techniques should be adapted to the needs of the individual body's structure. For example, he says that though many people with depression have a rounded upper back and sunken chest, there are those whose upper backs are flat, so the postures that address the structural needs of that person might be different from those that work best for someone whose spine curves forward, though both individuals may be depressed. "Viniyoga's view is that the job of the teacher is to provide the appropriate method for the student and not be fixated on one modality."

In treating a person with depression, Kraftsow tries to meet the person where he is and to pace the yoga session accordingly. With someone who has little motivation to move, he starts progressively. He may start with the person lying on his back, then move toward more vigorous standing postures. Vigorous standing postures might be beneficial for someone who feels too lethargic to exercise, "but first you have to have a strategy for getting them off the couch. The best strategy may not be asanas, but simply inviting them out for a walk." In my own experience, when I'm feeling that lethargic, even a walk takes more energy than I can muster. So what do you do if you don't feel like practicing? Sometimes I play an audiotope and let another teacher lead my practice. And there are days when simply stepping outside my back door and raising my arms can lead me into strong, vigorous breathing and a pranayama practice. But occasionally, none of this works. Those are the times when Richard Miller says, "let the yoga come to you." He recommends taking one pose, or even half a pose, and doing it slowly and with great attention so that, for instance, your right arm "feels wonderfully delicious, and then perhaps you'll want

your other arm to feel that way, and your leg and the other leg." At these times, it's especially beneficial "to empty out the feeling of needing to do it right, to let go of rigidity and to practice so you really enjoy doing it." When self-judgment comes up in yoga, simply observe it. Miller says it's part of the eliminative process and is to be expected as we become aware of our old ways of thinking.

Pumping Prana

When Penny Smith eliminated her panic attacks through yogic breathing exercises, she was tapping into thousands of years of yogic wisdom. "Yogis understood," says Stephen Cope, "that even in the absence of immediate stressors, 'disturbed breathing' (thoracic breath) could perpetuate or re-create a state of sympathetic nervous system arousal, causing anxiety states, panic, and fear reactions." Thousands of years ago, yogis designed a system of deep abdominal-diaphragmatic breathing that relaxes the body and calms the mind.

In his experience working with patients at a mental health facility in Phoenix, yoga teacher Ted Srinathadas Czukor says that the most effective tool was pranayama. In one case, a 340-pound woman with numerous physical and emotional disabilities, who was often subject to panic attacks, usually had to be sedated before routine medical treatment. After a few months of practicing deep diaphragmatic breathing with Ted, a new note was added to her medical chart: "Before you begin your procedure, give her five minutes to do her yoga breathing. No medication will be necessary."

Several new studies done under the auspices of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences in India have concluded that a particular practice called Sudarshan Kriya, taught in this country as The Healing Breath Technique by the Art of Living Foundation, has remarkable therapeutic effects—a 68 to 73 percent success rate in treating people suffering from depression, regardless of the severity. According to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, an Indian spiritual teacher who has revived the ancient technique, the root cause of depression is a low level of prana in the system. The Healing Breath Technique is a purifying practice that involves breathing naturally through the nose, with the mouth closed, in three distinct rhythms, "flooding every cell of the body with both oxygen and prana, eliminating physical and emotional toxins at the cellular level," says Ronnie Newman, a Harvard-trained researcher in nontraditional therapies and Research Director for the Art of Living Foundation.

What Comes Up

In 1990, when Jon Kabat-Zinn published *Full Catastrophe Living* (Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1990) the general public learned of a system of stress reduction that he and his colleagues developed at the University of Massachusetts. The Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program (SR&RP), which has now been taught to more than 7,000 people, includes a 45-minute hatha yoga component, but its primary tool is mindfulness meditation. In study after study, the SR&RP has shown a measurable reduction in depression and anxiety. A recent yearlong study that involved 145 people in three separate countries, all of whom were at risk of a recurrence of depression, showed that those who participated in the SR&RP in combination with group cognitive therapy had a significantly lower rate of relapse than the control group. According to Zindel Segal, Ph.D., coauthor of the study, people were trained to follow their breath, to become aware of their thinking, and to step back and observe their thinking without reacting. Asanas were used to get the energy flowing and to move awareness into the body. The program incorporated slow stretching, directing the students to become aware of "what comes up." Segal echoes Richard Miller when he says "getting people to consider depression as a state of mind, of rising and falling mood, is more useful to them than to think of themselves as depressives."

Despite the evidence gleaned in a multitude of studies in Canada, Wales, England, and the United States that a mindfulness-based meditation technique, combined with hatha yoga and diet, is beneficial in

treating depression and preventing relapse, many practitioners say they cannot meditate when they feel depressed. For people suffering from severe depression, sitting in stillness and watching what comes up can become unbearable. On the other hand, some meditation techniques may work especially well when one is feeling depressed. For someone who has depression accompanied by low self-esteem and self-critical thinking, Gary Kraftsow recommends a technique in which the meditator focuses on his own positive qualities, what a psychologist might call cognitive reframing.

Hatha yoga is more accessible than meditation for most Westerners as a way of learning self-soothing, says Cope. "First of all, it is absolutely impossible to be obsessing about anything when you're fully in your body. The mat becomes a kind of external anchor for the self." A yoga practitioner can have "a regular, systematic experience of well-being and sense that everything is absolutely okay, and that I am absolutely okay. This can be very self-building, especially when done in the context of relationship with a class and teacher."

In fact, says Cope, many of our depressions are caused by a breakdown in relationship in our early years. We simply didn't get enough of that holding and soothing that a loving relationship provides. In the teacher/student connection, yoga can provide a mode of healing through relationship. "The contemplative traditions," says Cope, "share two fundamental premises with the world of Western psychotherapy: That which is damaged in relationship must also be healed in relationship, and character can only truly be transformed through relationship, not through solitary practice."

The language used by the teacher in a yoga class can help create that "relational container" psychologists talk about. Language also has the capacity to help students reframe their experience and move away from depressive thoughts. Rubin Naiman, Ph.D., a health psychologist and yoga practitioner in Tucson, Arizona, talks about how his yoga teacher gently and repeatedly encouraged him to do what he could until he found he was assuming postures he previously "knew" he couldn't. "I broke the frame of my old beliefs through encouragement and small steps. This parallels cognitive approaches for treating depression."

According to Shauna Shapiro, M.A., a doctoral student in clinical health psychology at the University of Arizona and coauthor of several recent mindfulness studies, the language a teacher uses in class "creates the intention behind the yoga practice," and our intentions play a crucial role in our well-being.

A Sacred Circle

When we're feeling depressed, we long for genuine connections with others who accept us as we are, and we often can find that in a yoga class. Richard Miller thinks that the ideal class for someone coping with depression would provide an opportunity for folks to share their stories in a nonjudgmental atmosphere. In her daily classes at her center in Rhode Island and on her retreats in Mexico, yoga teacher M.J. Bindu Delekta creates a "Sacred Circle" where such sharing is possible. Bindu Delekta might ask the circle of students, "How are your bodies feeling today?" Then she lets the energy of the sharing determine how the class will move, which she believes is more important than going through a prescribed sequence of postures. She fosters the relational community that the students are building for themselves with their sharings by using partner postures. The students build a community of trust as they learn to assist each other, touching and being touched in the process.

Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy takes just such a relational approach in working one-to-one with a client. "I think it's vital for the client/therapist relationship to be one that empowers the client rather than one that creates dependency," says PRYT founder Michael Lee, M.A., author of *Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy—A Bridge from Body to Soul* (Health Communications Inc., 1997). Through a dialogue between client and therapist, the Phoenix Rising process seeks to put words to the observations of self

that emerge in the conscious holding of a posture. "The loving and nonjudgmental presence of the practitioner" creates a "sanctuary" for such observations. The client can then begin to "witness, acknowledge, accept, and connect" these self-observations to daily life. As clients "dialogue around the experiences" with a therapist, they may identify core beliefs that support a depressed state of being. "In the integration phase of the work," says Lee, "the client may make new life choices that support a less depressed state."

Whether we practice alone, with a yoga therapist, or in a room full of like-hearted, like-minded people, establishing a daily practice of yoga creates a sense of everyday sacredness. It becomes a personal ritual in which we come home to our bodies, home to what is true for us that day, which may include depression and anxiety. But filtered through the lens of our practice, we can see ourselves more clearly, and as research indicates, the depressed mood often becomes less intense.

Accepting What Is

Krishna, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, didn't have Western medical science to back him up when he counseled Arjuna that he could do his duty and fight his clansmen without accruing karma if he let go of the fruits of his actions as he went into battle. But the evidence is in. Joel Robertson, in *Natural Prozac*, tells us that "the more personally invested you are in winning, the lower your serotonin levels will be when you lose and the higher they'll be when you win." Indeed, when we attach ourselves to the outcome of our actions, we may be having a negative effect on our brain chemistry. So we now have a biochemical reason to practice acceptance and nonattachment.

In his chapter on depression, Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul* (HarperCollins, 1992), among other best-selling books on spiritual psychology, asks the following question: "What if 'depression' were simply a state of being, neither good nor bad, something the soul does in its own good time and for its own good reasons?" If we can maintain our practice during these times of melancholy, there is evidence that we may be balancing brain chemistry in ways that make depression tolerable. We may not cure the depression with our practice, but we may begin to accept these times in our lives and be able to grow from "the gifts of soul that only depression can provide."

"Depression may be exhilaration waiting to happen," says Michael Lee. That's certainly true if you're a bipolar manic depressive. But when you're in a depressed state, whatever its source, if you don't have some kind of spiritual practice, it's hard to remember that "this, too, shall pass." I couldn't imagine exhilaration when I was on antidepressants and in treatment for depression in the mid-'80s. But now, after 10 years of daily yoga practice, when I feel depressed, I am capable of remembering that everything changes. I have developed as Thomas Moore suggests, "a positive respect" for depression's "place in [my] soul's cycle."

The poet, translator, and teacher Jane Hirshfield, herself a long-time Zen practitioner, often writes of her own strategies for coping with her "days of the black dog." At the end of her poem "The Door" in her collection *October Palace*, she expresses a way in which we might embrace depression:

The rest note,

unwritten,

hinged between worlds,

that precedes change and allows it.

In my own journey, I have come to the place where I can integrate and accept my darker moods, to allow them to teach me what I need to learn about myself this time around. Now when I have insomnia and feel lethargic and overwhelmed, symptoms I recognize in myself as depression, what I seek is something steadier than exhilaration. I seek a state of mind that permits me to accept the darkness as well as the light. Through my practice, I have learned how to rest in them both.

Amy Weintraub is a fiction writer and editor who teaches yoga and writing in Tucson, Arizona. She also edits books on spiritual psychology and yoga.

November/December 1999

This article can be found online at http://www.yogajournal.com/health/133_1.cfm

yoga

JOURNAL

Yoga for Anxiety and Panic Attacks

Help your students use yoga to address anxiety—both its symptoms and its root causes.

By Timothy McCall, M.D.

Many of the principles discussed in my last column, *Yoga for Stress and Burnout*, are applicable to anxiety and panic attacks, as those are in many ways exaggerated forms of stress. Both conditions are marked by a rajasic (agitated) state of mind and by what is known in Ayurveda as *vata derangement*. And both respond to various yogic tools, including asana and pranayama, as well as lifestyle adjustments and the cultivation of *pratyahara*, turning the senses inward.



Yogic Tools

One of the most useful yogic tools in these cases is a good asana practice, which burns off the nervous energy that can contribute to anxiety. And a number of breathing practices, including abdominal breathing and lengthening the exhalation relative to the inhalation, help reduce symptoms of anxiety. Scientific studies suggest that left-nostril breathing can effectively reduce symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder (and it's probably also useful for less extreme forms of anxiety).

In addition, the regular practice of both asana and pranayama leads to greater internal sensitivity, which can allow students to detect the first glimmer of an anxiety or panic attack and respond with yogic tools that might head off the problem. The earlier in the process you can intervene, the greater the likely efficacy.

For students who are open to them, bhakti practices such as prayer, chanting, and devotional singing may be highly therapeutic for anxiety. In the longer term, meditation and self-study (*svadhyaya*) offer the hope of getting at the deeper causes of the problem. Through meditation perhaps more than any other yogic tool, you start to see how busy your mind is, and you gain insight into some of the tricks that it plays. Many people may not realize how repetitive thoughts, of which they are usually barely aware, may be fueling their worries. Getting your students to start to see this pattern clearly is often the first step to bringing it under greater control.

Yoga Philosophy

In fact, seeing clearly can be helpful for anxiety and panic attacks in a variety of ways. Over the years I've seen many patients, most of whom were otherwise vigorous and healthy, with incapacitating panic attacks. Their hearts were beating hard and fast, they were hyperventilating, and they felt as if they were having a heart attack and might suddenly die.

But the reality is that a young and healthy person who is panicking is probably not going to have a heart attack no matter how fast and hard their hearts beat (when students are older or have risk factors for heart disease, such as high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol, you need to be more careful). It often helps them simply to understand that panic is at its core an emotional, not a physical, problem.

Seeing clearly is also useful in dealing with more run-of-the-mill anxiety. Most people who are anxious will admit, if they're honest and paying attention, that much of what they worry about never happens. And even if it does, the consequences are often not as negative as they would have predicted. Sometimes, in retrospect, they realize that the thing they feared the most was precisely what needed to happen for them to grow or learn or get out of a bad situation—in other words, it was ultimately a good thing. One useful self-study exercise is to have students write down the 10 things they're most worried about, then look back weeks or months later to see how many came true, and, if so, whether the consequences were as dire as they'd imagined.

Keep in mind that anxiety can be a useful symptom, and the ability to get anxious has survival value. Thinking about potential threats, and planning how you might lower the risk or respond appropriately, can be extremely useful, even lifesaving. Going over the same worry dozens or even hundreds of times, when the iterations bring no new insight, isn't helpful and can make you miserable.

This is where yogic philosophy can be useful. It teaches that, ultimately, no one can control what's going to happen. Despite your best efforts, some bad things undoubtedly will occur. All you can do is try to plan intelligently, give your best effort, let the universe take its course, and, when it does, respond as well as you can. When you realize that you ultimately don't have control over the future, it can take the pressure off—and that alone may reduce anxiety.

Take care of the present, said the great 20th-century master Ramana Maharshi, and the future will take care of itself.

Dr. Timothy McCall is a board-certified internist, *Yoga Journal's* Medical Editor, and the author of the forthcoming book *Yoga as Medicine: The Yogic Prescription for Health and Healing* (Bantam Dell, summer 2007). He can be found on the Web at www.DrMcCall.com.

Return to http://www.yogajournal.com/for_teachers/2390

yoga

JOURNAL

Sitting with Depression

Depressed people think they know themselves, but maybe they only know depression.

By Mark Epstein

A woman named Sally called me not long ago seeking advice. I had seen her for a single session in consultation months before, and we had talked about a variety of therapeutic and spiritual issues. Like many people with an interest in spirituality, she was suspicious of the role of psychiatric medications in today's culture. It seemed like the mark of some kind of Brave New World to have mood-altering drugs so readily available. But like many others, Sally wondered if there might be a medicine that could help her. She had been plagued with chronic feelings of anxiety and depression for much of her adult life, and despite a healthy investment in psychotherapy, she still felt that there was something the matter with her. When I spoke with Sally the second time, she had been taking a small dose of an antidepressant for several weeks, 25 milligrams of Zoloft, and she was finding that she felt calmer, less irritable, and, dare she say, happier. She was going on a two-week meditation retreat later that month. Something about taking her medication while on retreat made Sally uncomfortable, and that was the reason for her call. "Perhaps I should go more deeply into my problems while I'm away," she said. She worried that the antidepressant would impede that process by making her problems less accessible to her. "What do you think?" she asked.

Let me be clear right from the start that there is no universal answer in a situation like this. Some people notice when they take drugs like Prozac, Paxil, or Zoloft, antidepressants of the SSRI (selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitor) variety, that they feel cut-off from themselves as a result. They don't feel their feelings quite so acutely and sometimes report feeling numb. Some, both men and women, find that the drugs interfere with their ability to reach orgasm. Many others find that the damping down of their feelings is more subtle. One of my patients notices she no longer cries in movies, for example, but she is willing to accept this because she also no longer worries to the point of exhaustion about things she can do nothing about.

I was relieved to hear that Sally was feeling better. People who respond well to these antidepressants often have none of the side effects mentioned above. Instead they feel restored, healed of the depressive symptoms that they were expending so much of their energy trying to fend off. Less preoccupied with their internal states, they are freer to participate in their own lives, yet they often wonder if they are cheating. "This isn't the real me," they protest. "I'm the tired, cranky, no-good one you remember from a couple of weeks ago." As a psychiatrist, I am often in the position to encourage people to question those identifications. Depressed people think they know themselves, but maybe they only know depression.

Sally's question was interesting not only because of the drug issue but because of her assumptions about the nature of spiritual work. The notion that we need to go more deeply

into our problems in order to be healed is a prevalent one, and one that, as a therapist, I am sympathetic toward.

Certainly, ignoring the shadow side of our personalities can only lead to what Freud once called the "return of the repressed." Yet it struck me that there was a remnant of American Puritanism implicit in Sally's perspective, or at least a Judeo-Christian tendency to divide the Self into lower and higher, or better and worse.

When people believe that they are their problems, there is often a desire to pick away at the Self. People think that if they could just admit the awful truth about themselves they would start to feel better. But going more deeply into our problems can be just another variant on trying to get rid of our problems altogether to return to a state of original purity like the Garden of Eden. While most therapists would probably deny a religious influence on their thinking, many collude unconsciously with this mode of thought. Going more deeply into one's problems is the standard approach of most therapies, and it can lead to a kind of sober honesty and humility that gives people a quiet strength of character.

But to go more deeply into our problems is sometimes to go only into what we already know. I was sure that Sally did not have to go looking for problems on her retreat. Retreats are difficult enough even for people who are not depressed.

Sally's unresolved issues would come rushing in to fill every space whether she took her antidepressant or not, but she might have more success in not being sucked in by them with the medicine inside of her.

I told her that at this point I felt she needed to come out of her problems, not go into them more deeply, and that the antidepressant should not get in her way in that regard. To be overwhelmed while on retreat would not be useful. As a therapist influenced by the wisdom of the East, I am confident that there is another direction in which to move in such situations: away from the problems and into the unknown. If we stay with the fear this often induces, we have a special opportunity to see our own egos at work, defending against the unknown while hiding out in the very problems we claim to want freedom from. Buddhism is very clear about how important it is to move in such a direction.

The Buddhist writer and translator Stephen Batchelor, in his austere new book on the teachings of a third-century Indian philosopher-monk named Nagarjuna, *Verses from the Center: A Buddhist Vision of the Sublime* (Riverhead Books), eloquently describes how the mind can be set free of all constraints in meditation. He tells of how the eighth-century Indian monk Shantideva, author of *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, was liberated upon uttering the following words: "When neither something nor nothing/Remains to be known,/There is no alternative left/But complete non-referential ease."

Rather than going more deeply into his problems, Shantideva learned how to disentangle his mind from them. This is an approach that Western therapy has little experience with, but it is the foundation of Eastern wisdom. The contents of the mental stream are not as important as the consciousness that knows them. The mind softens in meditation through the assumption of a particular mental posture called "bare attention," in which impartial, nonjudgmental awareness is trained on whatever there is to observe. Problems are not distinguished from solutions; the mind learns how to be with ambiguity.

The imagery that describes this transformation in classical Asian cultures is revealing. When nourished with meditative awareness, the mind unfolds like a lotus, symbol of the primordial Buddha-nature that is obscured by our identifications with our problems. Buddhas themselves sit upon a lotus throne, symbol of a mind that contains everything but holds nothing. The lotus is another way of evoking the womblike nature of emptiness or *sunyata*, whose translation is literally "pregnant void." In Batchelor's book he describes how the understanding of emptiness "eases fixations," another way of talking about freeing the mind from an obsession with "problems." A translation of the Sanskrit *prapanaca*, "fixations" take root when we turn fleeting and ephemeral pleasures or displeasures into objects that we then try to hold on to.

They are evidence of a kind of psychological materialism that holds us as much as we would like to hold it. Sally felt that she should go more deeply into her problems, not to understand their empty nature, but to admit the awful truth about herself. But this sort of truth-seeking masked a continuing attachment to the kind of person she thought she should be: a person without problems.

We are freed from our problems, I have learned, not by going into them more deeply, but by knowing the empty and womblike nature of our minds. Sally did not need to make Zoloft into another problem. She could use it, rather, to help unfold her lotus mind in meditation.

Mark Epstein, M.D., is a psychiatrist in New York and author of *Thoughts without a Thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist Perspective* (Basic Books, 1996) and *Going to Pieces without Falling Apart* (Broadway Books, 1999). He's been a student of Buddhist meditation for 25 years.

Return to <http://www.yogajournal.com/practice/137>

yoga

JOURNAL

A number of yogic practices can not only help relieve depression but may put your students in touch with a deep source of joy and peace.

By Timothy McCall, M.D.



When physicians use the word "depression," they don't mean feeling disappointed or blue, or grieving a loss—normal moods that everyone experiences from time to time. Clinical depression is a persistently sad, hopeless, and sometimes agitated state that profoundly lowers the quality of life and that, if untreated, can result in suicide. Doctors aim, with drugs and sometimes psychotherapy, to raise their patients' moods, but yoga has much loftier goals. As a yoga therapist, you want not only to help lift your students out of depression but to quiet their restless minds, put them in touch with their deeper purpose in life, and connect them with an inner source of calm and joy that yoga insists is their birthright.

My work with students with depression has been deeply influenced by my teacher Patricia Walden, who, as a younger woman, struggled with recurrent depression. Yoga, particularly after she began her studies with B.K.S. Iyengar in the 1970s, spoke to her in a way that no other treatments had, including psychotherapy and antidepressant medication.

Are Antidepressants Bad?

In recent years, doctors have increasingly focused their efforts in treating depression on changing the biochemistry of the brain, specifically by using drugs to raise the levels of neurotransmitters such as serotonin. This is the mechanism of action of the most commonly prescribed antidepressants, the so-called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft. But there are many other ways—including aerobic exercise and practicing yoga—to raise the levels of serotonin and other neurotransmitters linked to depression.

While many people in the yoga world have a negative view of antidepressant medication, I believe that there are times when these medications are necessary and even lifesaving. While they have side effects and not everyone responds to them, some people with recurrent severe depression appear to do best if they go on and stay on medication. Others may benefit from using antidepressants for a shorter time to help them feel good enough to establish behaviors—such as an exercise regimen and a regular yoga practice—that can

help keep them out of the depths of depression after the drugs are discontinued.

Still, many people with mild to moderate depression may be able to avoid drug therapy entirely. For them, in addition to yoga and exercise, psychotherapy, the herb St.-John's-wort, and increased amounts of omega-3 fatty acids in their diets can help lift mood. These measures can also help in cases of severe depression, though St.-John's-wort should not be combined with prescription antidepressants.

One caution to yoga teachers: I have seen a lot of guilt-tripping of patients considering antidepressants, which people wouldn't dare do if the medication in question was for diabetes or heart disease. I think that's partly a remnant of the outdated notion that, when it comes to psychological problems, you should just buck up and will yourself to feel better. This approach, of course, rarely works and results in a lot of unnecessary suffering. As Patricia Walden says of drug therapy, "Thank God we've got this option."

Personalizing the Yogic Prescription

You'll want to personalize your approach for each student with depression, but Walden finds it useful to divide students into two major categories, each with its own characteristics and yoga practices that are most likely to be helpful.

Some students' depression is marked by a dominance of *tamas*, the *guna* associated with inertia. These people may have a hard time getting out of bed and may feel lethargic and hopeless. Students with *tamasic* depression often have slumped shoulders, collapsed chests, and sunken eyes. It looks as if they are barely breathing. Walden likens their appearance to that of a deflated balloon.

A more common type of depression is marked by a predominance of *rajas*, the *guna* associated with activity and restlessness. These students are often angry, have stiff bodies and racing minds, and may appear agitated, with a hardness around their eyes. In *Savasana* (Corpse Pose) or restorative poses, their eyes may dart and their fingers won't stay still. These students frequently report difficulty in exhaling fully, a symptom often linked to anxiety.

Asana for Depression

From a yogic perspective, people with *tamasic* depression lack life force or *prana*. You'll want to concentrate on practices that bring breath to the body, particularly deep inhalations. If they are able to tolerate them, vigorous practices such as repeated Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar), arm balances, and other challenging poses can be therapeutic. The body and mind are so occupied with the practice that it's hard to brood. When teaching vigorous practices to students with depression, don't worry much about proper alignment. As long as they aren't doing anything that might cause an injury, it's better to have them just do the practice and focus on the movement of the breath. Backbends, in particular, can be stimulating and help fight *tamas*. These range from restorative poses such as supported *Savasana* (done with a bolster placed lengthwise under the torso) and supported Bridge Pose (Setu Bandha Sarvangasana) to more active poses such as Camel Pose (Ustrasana) and full backbends (Urdhva Dhanurasana). Once you've gotten students to overcome some

of their *tamas*, they may be able to relax more deeply. If you try relaxation first, however, you may find them sinking into dark thoughts, defeating the purpose.

Students with *rajasic* depression also tend to respond to Sun Salutations and backbends, though some of them will find strong backbends too agitating. Vigorous practices have the advantage of helping students burn off some nervous energy, and also of being demanding enough to keep their attention from drifting.

Indeed, some students have such a tendency to brood or get swept away with anxious or negative thoughts that asking them to close their eyes in Savasana and restorative poses (and even during pranayama and meditation) may be counterproductive. Any of these practices can be done with open eyes or, if necessary, skipped entirely. In addition, Walden finds that propping students way up in Savasana, even having them lean on an inclined bolster placed against the wall, can be helpful. She'll often talk during Savasana, turning it into more of a guided relaxation practice.

In Part II of this article, I'll discuss using pranayama, meditation, chanting, and other yogic tools for depression.

Dr. Timothy McCall is a board-certified internist, *Yoga Journal's* Medical Editor, and the author of the forthcoming book *Yoga as Medicine: The Yogic Prescription for Health and Healing* (Bantam, July 31, 2007). He can be found on the Web at www.DrMcCall.com.

Return to http://www.yogajournal.com/for_teachers/2426

yoga

JOURNAL

In addition to asana, yogic tools including pranayama, chanting, meditation, and yogic philosophy can help students suffering from depression.

By Timothy McCall, M.D.

In Yoga for Depression, Part I I discussed the two major types of depression, *rajasic* and *tamasic*, as conceptualized by my teacher Patricia Walden (and her teacher B.K.S. Iyengar), whose work has heavily influenced my own. That article described asana practices that can help lift students out of depression. Now let's review other useful yoga practices.



Pranayama Practices for Depression

For students with *tamasic* depression, pranayama practices that emphasize inhalation may be useful. Of course, getting your students to focus on engaging their abdominal muscles to help squeeze additional air out of the lungs on the exhalation facilitates an easier, deeper inhalation on the subsequent breath. Such breathing practices as three-part inhalation, and Ujjayi on the inhalation with normal exhalation, are examples of practices that increase the length of the inhalation relative to the exhalation.

Students with more *rajasic* depression may benefit from practices that bring attention to and lengthen the exhalation. Examples include three-part exhalations and 1:2 breathing, where, for example, you inhale for three seconds and exhale for six. Strong breathing practices such as Kapalabhati (Skull Shining Breath, sometimes called Breath of Fire) and Bhastrika (Bellows Breath), which tend to activate the sympathetic nervous system, may sometimes be too agitating for those who are already restless and fidgety. Let direct observation of the student be your guide, since finding the appropriate practice is ultimately a matter of trial and error. Furthermore, since a student's condition may change day to day, what's appropriate may also vary.

Other Practices for Depression

Chanting and other bhakti (devotional) practices can be useful for depression. Walden says that these practices bypass the brain and go directly to the emotions. Not all students respond to bhakti yoga, but in those who do, it can be powerful. Chanting tends to keep the

brain occupied, and it's a natural way to extend the exhalation without thinking about it. You'd therefore expect it to be particularly useful for students with busy, *rajasic* minds.

Meditation can be a powerful tool over the long-term to facilitate greater levels of happiness. Dr. Richard Davidson at the University of Wisconsin has done research that shows that meditation tends to increase the activity of the left prefrontal cortex of the brain. Left-sided activation has been associated with greater levels of calm and happiness and well as more emotional resiliency, rendering practitioners better able to withstand the inevitable ups and downs of life. Students who are severely depressed may not be able to meditate, even if they keep their eyes open. If that's the case, try to initiate meditative practices when they are out of the depths of depression to help insulate them against recurrences.

Yoga philosophy can also be of help. Yoga teaches that the more you do or think something, the more likely you are to do it or think it again. Any habit—what yoga calls a *samskara*—tends to get deeper with repetition. Thus a negative and self-flagellating inner dialogue may not just be a symptom of depression, it may help fuel it. One practice that Walden suggests is to consciously cultivate gratitude. "Count your blessings every day," she tells her students.

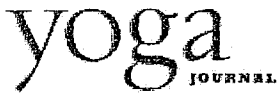
It can be useful to get out a pad of paper and try to list all you have to be grateful for. When you think about all the things that had to happen even for you to be born, it's a miracle you are here. Then there are all the people who've loved you, fed you, cared for you, and educated you throughout your life. It's also helpful to be thankful for the practice of yoga, which has been passed to us from masters who lived thousands of years ago, and the line of teachers extending from them to the present day. Such an exercise is an example of what Patanjali called "cultivating the opposite." The more you practice this—even if it's torturous at first—the deeper your "gratitude *samskara*" will become, and the more it can contribute to your well-being in the long run.

Taking a Step, No Matter How Small

Your students' journey out of depression begins with a single step from wherever they are right now. If they are severely depressed, it may be a struggle for them to practice at all. In that case, could you get them to commit to doing a single Sun Salutation, or even a single Down Dog Pose, every day? (Of course, once they get on their mats, they may find themselves doing more.) Or perhaps you could encourage them to study their interior dialogues to understand how recurrent thoughts may be sabotaging recovery. In severe cases, especially if suicide seems like a possibility, don't hesitate to refer your students to a doctor or psychotherapist. Even if such professional help is necessary, yoga can play a complementary role, likely rendering any psychotherapy or medication more effective.

Better still, even though yoga tends to help reverse depression slowly, its ultimate aim is much higher than achieving the "everyday discontent" that Freud viewed as the goal of psychoanalysis. Yoga, in contrast, teaches that life can be peaceful, full of purpose, happy, and even joyful, and that the source of that joy and contentment is found deep inside in each of us. Various yoga practices are simply tools to help get us there.

Dr. Timothy McCall is a board-certified internist, *Yoga Journal's* Medical Editor, and



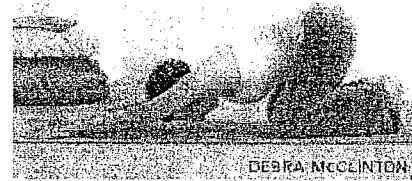
Yoga for Psychological and Emotional Problems

Yoga is a perfect complement to psychotherapy and other approaches to a variety of psychological conditions, including anxiety and depression.

By Timothy McCall, M.D.

You may think of yoga therapy as useful primarily for physical problems, but a major subject area in yoga is the mind, making it particularly useful for treating mental illness. In future columns, I'll talk in more detail about using yoga to relieve stress and burnout, anxiety and panic attacks, and depression, all of which yoga can help improve.

But one of the great beauties of yoga is that it's not just about taking your students from a negative state of mind to feeling "normal," which is the goal of most psychologists and physicians. Yoga aims much higher, seeking to put its practitioners in touch with a state of peace, joy, and equanimity that yogis insist is everyone's birthright. The key is getting your mind to work for you, not against you; millennia ago, yogis discovered a wide variety of practices to help achieve this end.



The Gunas

Yoga and Ayurveda, and the Samkya philosophy from which they both sprang, identify three general states of mind, called *gunas*. The three *gunas* are *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva*. *Tamas* is the state of heaviness or lack of movement; metaphorically, being stuck. The kind of depression in which a person sleeps excessively would be considered tamasic. *Rajas* implies movement, and a rajasic mental state is characterized by restlessness, agitation, and even panic. *Sattva* is the state of clarity, peace, and balance.

Even when two people carry the same diagnosis—say, depression—if one is tamasic and the other rajasic, your approach as a yoga therapist may need to be very different. In general in yoga and yoga therapy, the idea is to raise people who are tamasic to a rajasic state. A vigorous practice involving repeated Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar, for example) might be appropriate. Once you've gotten them out of a tamasic slump, you can shift your focus to moving them from rajas toward sattva, perhaps with inversions followed by deep relaxation (*Savasana*, or Corpse Pose).

When the *guna* of rajas dominates, it can be very useful to use an invigorating practice to "burn off steam." Afterward it may be possible for your students to settle into restorative practices or meditation, for which their minds may have been too "busy" earlier.

Thus, both the predominately tamasic and those who are more rajasic tend to benefit mentally from the kind of practice sequences that are common in general yoga classes. Most people feel sattvic after a

practice that gradually builds in intensity and then winds down toward the end.

One caution, though: Students who have reached the state of physical and emotional burnout or vital exhaustion, even if their condition is rajasic, may not be capable of a strong yoga practice. Rather than giving them a workout, you'll need to focus on more soothing practices, perhaps flowing from one gentle pose to the next. Or use guided imagery exercises such as Yoga Nidra to keep their busy minds occupied while not taxing their bodies too heavily.

Svadhyaya: Studying the Mind

Yoga teaches that the more you have certain thoughts, or certain kinds of thoughts, the more likely you are to have them in the future. These are mental *samskaras*; like grooves in a muddy road, they tend to get deeper over time. Modern science is confirming the truth of this ancient yogic insight with new understanding of neuroplasticity. Scientists now understand that the more you think or do something, the stronger the neural pathways become that connect the specific brain cells (neurons) involved. Thus the more you beat yourself up emotionally, for example, the more likely you are to do it again and again.

Before you can change a pattern, however, you first need to see it clearly. People often aren't fully aware of recurrent thoughts that may be undermining their health and well-being, or they may not be aware of how pervasive they are. Therefore, part of the yogic remedy is to encourage your students to consciously tune in to their inner dialogue. A good place to begin such svadhyaya is during asana practice: Are your students judging themselves as they attempt a pose? Is fear limiting them from attempting practices, such as Handstand, that their bodies are ready for? Are they telling themselves that they'll never be any good at yoga? Students who have such thoughts during their practice are likely to have similar ones at other times, and these thoughts may be limiting their lives. The habit of self-study you help them cultivate on their yoga mats can spread to a broader awareness of mental habits—allowing them, for example, to bring greater precision to the work they do with a psychotherapist.

While it is not always possible for people with psychological problems to meditate, meditation is, ultimately, probably the most powerful yogic tool for studying the mind, and in the long run it often proves to be the most useful tool for dealing with psychological problems. But trying to get people who are seriously depressed or panicking to sit and meditate can be next to impossible, and potentially even counterproductive. The more sattvic they become from other practices, however, the more likely they will be to eventually tackle a sitting practice successfully, and reap its many benefits.

Dr. Timothy McCall is a board-certified internist, *Yoga Journal's* Medical Editor, and the author of the forthcoming book *Yoga as Medicine: The Yogic Prescription for Health and Healing* (Bantam Dell, summer 2007). He can be found on the Web at www.DrMcCall.com.

January 2007

This article can be found online at http://www.yogajournal.com/teacher/2345_1.cfm



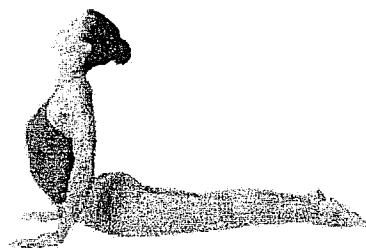
Asanas for Anxiety

So many poses, so little time: It's easy to get overwhelmed just trying to figure out which asanas might calm you down. Here's help:

By Melanie Haiken

Breathe Easy

If you suffer from acute anxiety, try a gentle restorative class with plenty of focus on breathing, suggests San Francisco Bay Area yoga teacher and physician Baxter Bell. Viniyoga, in which poses are synchronized with the breath, is a good option; even better would be to find a teacher who stresses pranayama, the science of yogic breathing. One breath pattern Bell recommends calls for adding one second to each exhalation, so your exhalations grow increasingly longer than your inhalations. "This is a quieting, calming breath pattern that combats stress," Bell says.



MARTY SCODUTO

Open Up

My favorite poses are backbends and chest openers such as Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose), Matsyasana (Fish Pose), and Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose), simply because they make me feel free and open. And these are among the poses yoga teachers most often recommend.

Go Upside Down

Other favorites are supported inversions because they give you the relaxation benefits of going upside down without the hard work—and stress—of a challenging pose such as Handstand. "When the blood rushes to your head, your body interprets it as a rise in blood pressure and reacts to calm you down," Bell says. Your heart rate and breathing slow and your blood vessels dilate. However, if inversions scare you, they may trigger the fight-or-flight response, which in turn boosts anxiety. If that's the case, you should practice Salamba Sarvangasana (Supported Shoulderstand) or Viparita Karani (Legs-up-the-Wall Pose) as the perfect compromise. Lastly, Bell recommends sitting and standing twists to release emotional tension.

Melanie Haiken is a freelance writer in San Rafael, California.

March 2006

This article can be found online at http://www.yogajournal.com/health/2085_1.cfm



Antidotes to Anxiety

The practice of yoga offers solutions to all types of stress, including social anxiety. Here are three poses that can be especially helpful.

Crocodile Pose: This is a deceptively simple posture that can deliver dramatic benefits. Relax on your stomach with arms folded on the floor above your head. Similar to Savasana (Corpse Pose), in which you lie face-up, Crocodile Pose allows you to release all of your tension, but because it puts your belly and face to the ground, it can make a socially anxious person feel less exposed and vulnerable. In Crocodile Pose, you can practice yogic breathing (consciously using your diaphragm), which feels both calming and empowering.

Seated Twists: Seated twists of all kinds are powerful anxiety relievers. They teach you to relax even when you find yourself in a tight spot. Once a deep twist has been achieved in the pose of your choice, focus on the breath. You'll soon discover that breathing relieves the anxiety and discomfort of the pose. Next, you can apply this insight to other life situations—going to a party, sitting in a meeting, or talking with people.

Headstand: More advanced yoga students can practice Sirsasana (Headstand), which is great for increasing balance and strength and can also stimulate mental clarity. Holding Headstand can be tough, but it's an effective way to calm anxious thoughts and build confidence.

March/April 2001

This article can be found online at http://www.yogajournal.com/health/123_1.cfm

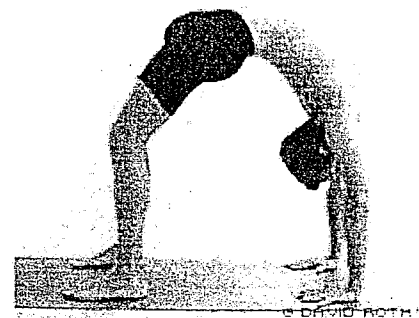


Asana Column: Urdhva Dhanurasana (Backbend)

Improve respiration, energize the nervous system, and counteract depression with a powerful back arch.

By John Schumacher

Descartes declared, "I think, therefore I am." But yogis say, "I think, therefore I am confused about who I am." In the second verse of his *Yoga Sutra*, Patanjali describes thoughts as *vrtti* (fluctuations) of *citta* (mind-stuff): waves in the mind. Just as a wave-tossed sea obscures your view of what's on the bottom, your turbulent mind clouds your ability to see what's at the bottom of yourself. Yoga, Patanjali says, is the dissolving of the waves so you can see to the bottom. And what underlies this sea of thoughts is your true Self—who you *really* are.



This is not to say that thoughts are necessarily bad. Who really wants to be thoughtless? It's nice to know your child's name, where your car keys are, whether the clerk in the store gave you the right change. You can't understand this article if you can't think. As many spiritual teachers have said, the mind is a wonderful servant. *But*, they add, it's a lousy master. The mind tends to be self-centered rather than Self-centered, and as such, it ultimately limits your experience of yourself and your Self.

[View Larger](#)

Since Patanjali defines yoga as the restraint of the fluctuations of the mind, a primary focus of practice is the reduction of activity in the frontal lobe of the brain—the part that is most involved in conscious thought. In fact, most of us live much of the time not just in the front of our brains but in the front part of our bodies as well. You perceive with your sense organs (*jnana-indriya*), which—with the exception of your skin and, to a lesser extent, your ears—are positioned toward the front of the body and are oriented toward what takes place before you. Your *karma-indriya*—your organs of action, which include your hands, feet, mouth, genitals, and anus—have developed to function primarily in front of you, too. What is in front of you is familiar. Behind you is the mystery of the unknown. In a very real sense, yoga is a process of moving from the known to the unknown, from the front of the brain into the back of the brain, from the front of your body into the back of your body.

You've never seen your back, you know. Not really. You've seen pictures or reflections in a mirror, but that's not the same. Your back is unknown territory. Maybe that is part of the reason that bending over backwards seems frightening and extreme—and more than a little exciting. To do backbends skillfully and deeply, you must move your attention into the back of your body and move *from* the back of the body. Staying in the front of the body will create hardness in your organs, strain your breath, and heat your brain.

In some ways, Urdhva Dhanurasana (Upward Bow Pose) is the most important and fundamental backbend. (By the way, it's pronounced oord-va DAHN-oor-a-sa-na, not ERD-va DAN-yer-a-sa-na.) This pose is the culmination of the work done in introductory backbending poses, such as Ustrasana (Camel Pose), Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog), Salabhasana (Locust Pose), Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose), and Dhanurasana (Bow Pose). Urdhva Dhanurasana is also preparation for the more advanced backbends, such as Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana (Two-Legged Inverted Staff Pose), Kapotasana (Pigeon Pose), Vrschikasana (Scorpion Pose), and others.

I wouldn't suggest popping right out of bed and hoisting yourself up into Urdhva Dhanurasana. Your body needs some preparation to do backbends without straining your muscles, skeleton, and nervous system. Standing poses, Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog), Adho Mukha Vrksasana (Downward-Facing Tree Pose, a.k.a. Handstand), and Pincha Mayurasana (Tail Feather of the Peacock Pose, a.k.a. Forearm or Elbow Balance) are all effective for warming and opening your body for backbends. Follow these poses with some of the introductory backbends listed in the previous paragraph to create heat and mobility in your spine and open your chest and groins; then Urdhva Dhanurasana will come more readily.

To incrementally create the backbending action of Urdhva Dhanurasana, practice a supported backbend. Although the final version of Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana is a more advanced pose than Urdhva Dhanurasana, an easier variation using the support of a chair gives the front of the body the opportunity to open gradually and without strain.

To practice supported Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana, sit with your legs through the back of a chair 2 to 3 feet away from the wall. (For padding, you may want to place a folded blanket on the chair seat so that you are sitting on one end of the blanket and the other end hangs over the front edge of the seat.)

Sit well toward the back edge of the seat with your knees bent and feet on the floor, hip-width apart. Hold the top outer edge of the chair back with your hands, press down on the chair back, and pull it toward you to lift your rib cage. Draw your inner shoulder blades down your back. Maintaining the lift of the chest, arch your back and, with an exhalation, slide your upper buttocks toward the wall and lie back on the chair seat. The front edge of the seat should be near the base of your shoulder blades; the back edge should support your pelvis near the base of the sacrum. (If you're very short or tall, these reference points will vary.) Then stretch your legs and place the balls of your feet 3 to 4 inches up the wall, hip-width apart, with your heels on the floor a couple of inches from the wall.

You may need to adjust your chair's distance from the wall to stretch your legs fully. If your heels don't reach the floor, place a block under them. If you have pain in your lower back, place a rolled blanket under the lumbar spine for support and/or try a block under your heels. If you have discomfort in your neck, support your head with blankets or a bolster.

Once you're set up, press your upper legs firmly toward the floor, emphasizing the downward movement of your inner thighs. Press the inner balls of your feet into the wall and extend your inner calves and ankles toward the wall. Still lying back over the chair, pull on the chair back with your hands and stretch your elbows toward the floor. Use this leverage to curl your upper back more deeply over the front edge of the chair. This will intensify the opening of your chest. Even though your belly is stretched, relax your abdominal muscles and breathe comfortably.

When you are familiar with this variation, you can let go of the chair back and reach your arms under the chair seat, holding the back legs of the chair to deepen your back arch. Stay for 30 seconds to three minutes, depending on your capacity. You should feel no strain in your neck or back.

To come up, bend your knees, place your feet on the floor, and hold the chair back with your hands. Keeping your chest lifted, pull on the chair back, and with an exhalation, sit up. Don't collapse your chest as you lift, or you may compress your lumbar spine. (At first, you may need to press your elbows into the chair seat, then your hands, to lift yourself up.) Rest your chest over the chair back to relieve any tightness in your back.

In the freestanding backbends, the actions that lengthen the spine and open the chest require muscular effort. When you work on a chair, its support frees you from needing to rely on these efforts. This support gives you the opportunity to learn to soften your front body so that it can open fully and to relax your facial muscles and sense organs so that the front brain can be focused, yet passive.

Bridge Pose

Practicing setu bandha (Bridge Pose) can help you learn to perform some of the supporting actions of the back body that were taken care of by the chair in Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana. These actions will be essential for you to do Urdhva Dhanurasana correctly.

Lie on your back and place your feet flat on the floor parallel to one another, hip-width apart and 4 to 6 inches from your buttocks. (If you experience discomfort in your neck in Bridge Pose, lie on a firm, folded blanket so that your shoulders are supported and your head is off the blanket.) Place your arms alongside your body, palms down. Exhale and press the inner and outer edges of your feet into the floor and move your tailbone (coccyx) upward into your body. The bottom buttocks will lift along with the tailbone; as they do, roll your top buttocks toward your knees so that your sacrum is lengthening away from your lumbar spine. Continually taking the tailbone into your body, lift your hips as high as they'll go and lift your chest as well.

To lift your chest fully, tilt slightly onto your left shoulder. Pull your right shoulder blade toward your spine, draw your right shoulder toward the center line of your body, and roll the outer edge of your right shoulder down onto the floor. Then tilt onto your right shoulder and go through the same series of adjustments with your left shoulder blade and shoulder. Take care not to pull your shoulders away from your ears; move them toward one another instead. You should now be up on the tops of your shoulders, shoulder blades close to the spine. In this position, you'll find that you can lift your chest much farther.

Maintaining the lift of your hips and your chest, walk your feet toward your hands and grasp your ankles. (If you can't firmly hold your ankles or keep your heels down when you hold your ankles, use a strap, placing it across the fronts of your ankles before you come into Bridge Pose. If you experience pain in your back or knees when you hold your ankles, walk in less or not at all and use the strap.)

Holding your ankles or the strap firmly, press your feet into the floor and lift your hips. Then, by pulling against the strap or your ankles, draw your shoulder blades firmly into your back ribs and lift your chest still closer to your chin—but avoid pressing your chin into your throat. To get still more height, press your outer shoulders into the blanket and lift the side ribs near your armpits straight up toward the ceiling. Relax your belly, throat, facial muscles, and breath. Lift from the back of your body: your hamstrings, buttocks, and shoulder blades. After 30 to 60 seconds, lower yourself with an exhalation.

An Uplifting Experience

A little rush of excitement (and a little fear and dread) always runs through the room when I say that we're going to do Urdhva Dhanurasana. No matter how imposing any journey into the unknown seems, you always begin by taking the first step. The preparatory work you've already done constitutes more than just a step or two toward Urdhva Dhanurasana; you are already well on your way.

Lie on your back with your feet parallel, hip-width apart, and near your buttocks. Bend your elbows and place your hands near your shoulders, slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, fingers pointing toward your feet. Don't allow your elbows to splay out to the sides; keep them aligned with your hands or your arms won't be in line to support you when the time comes.

With an exhalation, lift your hips as you did in Setu Bandha and then lift your chest and head just off the floor. Let your head drop back and rest the crown of your head lightly on the floor. Press your palms, keeping the base of the thumb and the root of the index finger grounded, and lift your inner shoulder blades away from the back of your neck. You should not feel any compression in your neck.

With your head on the floor, press your feet into the floor and lengthen your sacrum away from your lumbar spine. Stretch your outer thighs from your hips to your knees, keeping your knees hip-width apart. At the same time, draw your triceps into your armpits, dig your shoulder blades deeply into your back ribs, and curl your chest open. With an exhalation, lift simultaneously from your tailbone and from your shoulder blades to push up into Urdhva Dhanurasana. Balance and synchronize the movement of your hips and chest. Observe those places that are dull or slow to move. If your hips are reluctant to lift, you can work with your feet on blocks against the wall to open the groins more. If your chest is slow or difficult to lift, you can work with your hands on blocks placed squarely on the floor against the wall.

If you are unable to push up from the floor, the use of some props may help you have a more uplifting experience. Place a sticky mat perpendicular to the wall. Set two blocks on the sticky mat, slightly more than shoulder-width apart, so they form a 45 to 60 degree angle between the wall and the floor. (Along with helping you get up, the angle should ease some of the strain you may feel on your wrists.) After placing the blocks, press firmly against them. You don't want them to slip. (If you can't position them securely, place them flat, long side against the wall.) Put blankets or bolsters on your sticky mat to support your back from your head to your hips.

Sit on the bolsters and loop a strap around your legs at midthigh so they are held hip-width apart. Lie back on the bolsters and loop a second strap around your arms just above your elbows, so that your arms are held slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Place your hands on the blocks, take a breath and, with an exhalation, press your feet into the floor and your hands into the blocks—and up you go.

Or not. Students who can't lift into the pose often think it's because they aren't strong enough. That's not usually the case. More often, tightness in the upper back and/or shoulders is the culprit. If you can't lift up, continue to work on preparatory poses for a couple of weeks.

A common mistake people make in lifting the body is to turn out the feet. This is a mistake because in addition to putting pressure on the knee joints, the outward movement of the legs narrows the sacral area and can jam the sacroiliac joints as well. If keeping your feet parallel is difficult for you, place a block or two between your feet at hip-width distance and keep the inner edges of your heels and the balls of your feet in contact with the block throughout the pose.

Into the Unknown

Once you've lifted up, don't be too quick to try to stretch your arms straight. First maintain and increase the extension of your spine. Keeping your feet parallel, roll your shins and front thighs inward. Spread your sacral muscles away from your spine and take your coccyx deeply into the pelvis, moving your top buttocks away from your lumbar spine.

To intensify the inward movement of your coccyx and the upward lift of your hips, draw the backs of

your thighs toward your buttocks and lift your bottom buttocks as if to bring them higher than your top buttocks.

Without allowing your hips to drop, press the inner edges of your hands into the floor and rotate your upper arms so that your triceps roll in toward the center line of the body. Draw your inner shoulder blades upward away from your neck and press them firmly into your back ribs, spreading the front ribs away from your sternum.

This may be as much as (or even more than) you can do on your first Urdhva Dhanurasana. Come down and rest for several breaths, and then go up again. If you want to make progress in this pose, you'll have to do it more than once or twice. The first couple of Urdhva Dhanurasanas are usually like the first couple of pancakes that come off the griddle—not quite the way you'd like them to be. It takes a few repetitions of Urdhva Dhanurasana for the body to get warm inside and open up. Then the resistances begin to melt away and the pose actually becomes easier. Don't rest for too long between repetitions or you'll cool down, lose energy, and stiffen up.

When you go up into your second Urdhva Dhanurasana, repeat all the actions of the first one. With your spine extended and supported by the actions of your limbs, now stretch your arms to lift your rib cage still higher. When you eventually try to move your chest forward, it is important to have height in the ribs to avoid jamming your shoulder joints or compressing your mid-thoracic spine.

If it's difficult for you to stretch your arms and lift your back ribs, try lifting your heels. The extra height this action gives to your hips may allow you to find the extra extension you need in your upper back. Do enough repetitions so that you discover this openness. Once you feel that openness (which will give you a sense of lightness in your chest and exhilaration in your mind), lower your heels toward the floor, *making sure you don't let your hips drop*. Initiate this action from the tops of your calves. If you truly maintain the lift of your hips, it will be difficult for you to reach the floor. Be suspicious if your heels descend quickly and easily. You may have simply collapsed somewhere. As you stretch your heels toward the floor, stretch your arms and go on lifting the back ribs higher. If you feel the back ribs or mid-thoracic spine dropping in spite of your best efforts, come down without bringing your heels to the floor and then try again.

As your chest opens and your spine becomes more pliable, you may find that after you lift your heels you can walk your feet in toward your hands. This will deepen your pose. With the additional extension in your upper back that lifting your heels brings, take your back ribs into your body and bring your chest forward so that your shoulders come more nearly over your wrists. (There should be no compression or pain in your shoulder joints; if there is, you haven't created enough lift.) As you did earlier, lower your heels without collapsing your hips or your upper back. With practice you may be able to walk in several steps. The more you can bring your feet and arms under you, the better the support you'll have to create height. But it is important to bear in mind that you must maintain maximum extension of the spinal vertebrae and openness of the shoulders and groins to avoid stressing or injuring your joints.

Each time you do Urdhva Dhanurasana, keep the front of your body relaxed. Don't harden your groins or push with the pubis. Although your abdomen receives a tremendous stretch, keep the muscles there passive. Then your breath can move without restriction and provide you with the energy to repeat and stay in the pose. (Work up to staying a minute or more.) Utilizing your breath will not only provide energy; it will help you avoid unnecessary and unwanted tension.

Although Urdhva Dhanurasana and the other backbending asanas strengthen and stretch your muscles and create mobility in the spine and the hip and shoulder joints, the real power of the poses is more

subtle. They work on your nervous system, which is one of the reasons they are helpful in cases of depression.

The physical presence of your bones and muscles is evident. Your nervous system, however, is essentially unseen—like the back of your body. Since both your back and your nervous system cannot be seen, they must be perceived from within, sensed rather than thought about. And since most of the actions of the backbends occur in the unseeable back of your body, developing the power to perceive what is happening and what to do draws you from the front of your brain and your externally oriented organs of perception into the deep recesses of the back brain and the unknown corners of the intuitive mind. The flow of awareness in the practice of yoga is from the external toward the internal, from the periphery to the core, from the objective to the subjective. You must depart eventually from the familiarity and solidity of the known and embark on the great, perennial adventure into the unknown. As with the practice of Urdhva Dhanurasana, effort is required on this journey; mistakes are inevitable; obstacles will arise. As with the practice of Urdhva Dhanurasana, you must persist. If the words of the sages are true, when your spiritual travels bring you to that mysterious place where you embrace and transcend the duality of the known and unknown, you will find your Self waiting there.

John Schumacher is a certified senior Iyengar teacher and longtime student of B.K.S. Iyengar. Schumacher directs the three studios of the Unity Woods Yoga Center, which serves over 2,000 students each week in the greater Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

May/June 2000

This article can be found online at http://www.yogajournal.com/practice/175_1.cfm

SEQUENCE FOR YOUR TEACHING

easing depression



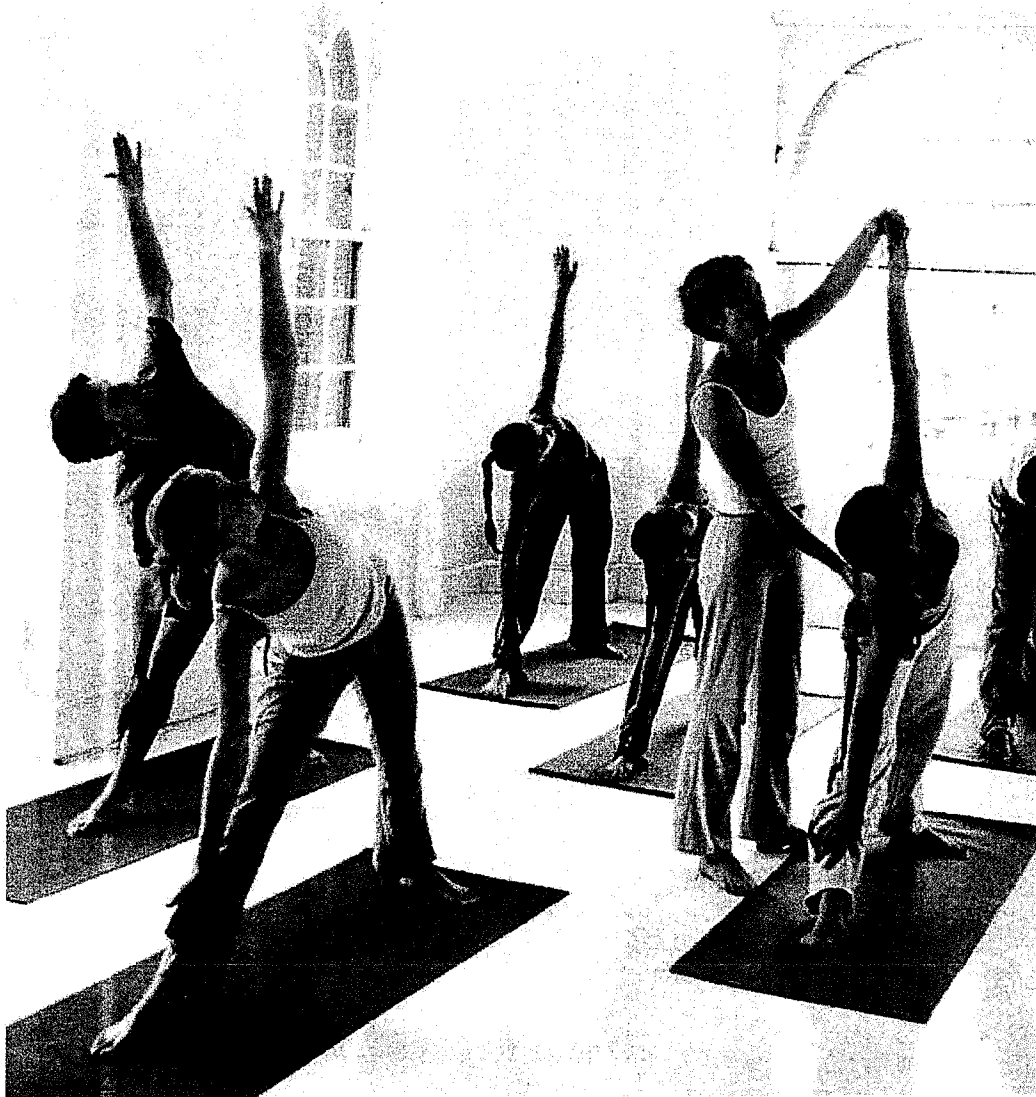
yoga
JOURNAL

Benefits**Plus**⁺
for Teachers

SEQUENCE FOR YOUR TEACHING

We asked how we could support your teaching, and you requested sequences you could use in the studio. So here's a primer on sequencing a class, followed by a routine created to help your students ease depression.

By Richard Rosen



easing depression

Yoga class sequences come in different shapes and sizes.

Every contemporary school, such as Iyengar, Viniyoga, Bikram, Ashtanga, and Vinyasa to name a few, has its own ideas about how to sequence a practice, so you may have already been trained to sequence your classes in a particular way. Most sequences are linear, that is one posture follows another in a logical step-by-step direction, moving from less challenging to more challenging and back to less challenging. In general, a sequence like this opens with simple warm-ups that set a theme for the practice, intensifies to more challenging postures, slows to cooling postures and ends with relaxation, Savasana, (Corpse Pose).

But this is just one way to sequence. Typically each posture in the sequence is performed just once but you could also have your students perform each posture two to three times, focusing on a different aspect of the posture each time. Take, for example, Trikonasana (Triangle Pose) – you can first teach the pose focusing on the feet or legs, then repeat it while focusing on the spine or arms.

You can also build the entire sequence around just one posture, like Triangle, returning to it again and again, and use the other postures in the sequence to teach aspects of the main posture.

DEPRESSION

The word “depression” covers a wide range of conditions, from long-standing and severe clinical or major depression to shorter-term and episodic mild depression, also called dysthymic disorder, to situational depression brought on by a major life change, such as the death of a spouse, job loss, divorce.

Many different therapies are available for depression, including anti-depressants and psychotherapy. Studies indicate that regular exercise too, including yoga asanas and breathing, can help some people ease the symptoms of mild to moderate forms of depression. Here is a sequence you can try with students suffering from this condition.

easing depression

5

Sirsasana

(Headstand)

Intermediate students should perform the full pose for a total time of 3 to 5 minutes. Ask them to bring their feet back to the floor slowly together if possible, either with straight knees or bent, with an exhalation, and stand in Standing Forward Bend for 30 seconds before coming up.

Total time 3 minutes.



6

Urdhva Dhanurasana

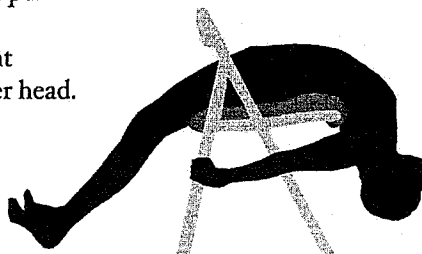
(Upward Bow Pose)

Supported on a chair. Pad the chair seat either with a sticky mat or folded blanket. Then ask her to slide her legs through the space between the chair back and seat, and sit on the back edge of the seat facing the chair back. Instruct her to grip the chair legs just below the chair back and, with an exhalation, lean into a backbend.

The front edge of the seat should cross her back torso just under her shoulder blades. Have her keep her knees bent and feet on the floor. Support the back of her head, either on a bolster or a block. She can continue to hold the chair legs, stretch her arms overhead, or slip her arms underneath the seat between the chair legs and grip the back rung. Make sure she is breathing smoothly.

To come up, ask her to grip the chair legs just below the chair back, and pull herself up with an exhalation. Make sure she leads the movement of her torso with her chest, not her head.

Total time 3 to 5 minutes.



SEQUENCE FOR YOUR TEACHING

Depression Sequence

(minimum time 40 minutes, maximum time 70 minutes)

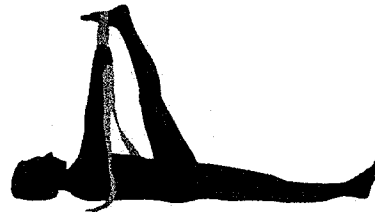
- ① **Supta Baddha Konasana**
(Reclining Bound Angle Pose)
with her back torso supported on
a rolled blanket positioned below
and parallel to her spine.

Total time 3 to 5 minutes.



- ② **Supta Padangusthasana**
(Reclining Big Toe Pose)
Ask her to use a strap to hold the
raised leg in place.

**Hold each side for 1 to 2 minutes;
total time 2 to 4 minutes.**



- ③ **Adho Mukha Svanasan**
(Downward Facing Dog)
Use a bolster or block to
support the head.

Total time 1 to 2 minutes.



- ④ **Uttanasana**
(Standing Forward Bend)
Support her head and crossed
forearms on a padded chair seat.

Total time 1 to 3 minutes.



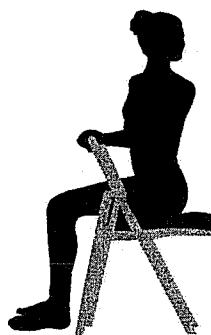
SEQUENCE FOR YOUR TEACHING

7

Seated twist

Continue to sit reversed through the chair, then ask her to twist to the right with an exhalation, hold for 30 seconds, then twist to the left for 30 seconds. Repeat three times to each side, each time holding for 30 seconds.

Total time 3 minutes.



8

Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose)

Place a blanket under the shoulders for support. Repeat three times, each time for 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Total time 2 to 3 minutes.



9

Salamba Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand)

Total time 3 to 5 minutes.

Follow Shoulderstand with

Halasana

(Plow Pose)

Intermediate students should do full Plow with their feet on the floor, beginners can do Plow with their feet resting on a chair seat.

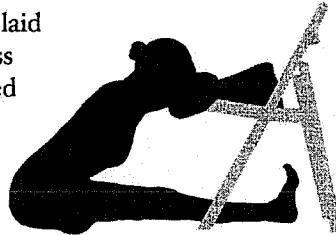
Total time 1 to 2 minutes.



easing depression

- 10** Janu Sirsasana
(Head-to-Knee Forward Bend)
Support the head either on a bolster laid across her extended leg, or if she's less flexible, on the front edge of a padded chair seat. Hold each side for 1 to 3 minutes.

Total time 2 to 6 minutes.



- 11** Setu Bandha Sarvangasana
(Supported Bridge Pose)
Allow her torso to be supported on a bolster, and shoulders and head to rest lightly on the floor. Ask her to keep her knees bent and feet on the floor.

Total time 3 to 5 minutes.



- 12** Viparita Karani
(Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose)
Pelvis is supported on a bolster or rolled blanket.

Total time 3 to 5 minutes.

Ask her to slide off the support before she turns to her side.



SEQUENCE FOR YOUR TEACHING

13

Reclining Conqueror Ujjayi

Instruct her to lie on a blanket support to open her chest, with long, smooth, full inhalations and exhalations.

(Total time 3 to 5 minutes.)



14

Savasana

(Corpse Pose)

Instruct her to come off her blanket support and lay her back torso flat on the floor. Support her bent knees on a bolster.

Total time 8 to 10 minutes.



For more information on many of these poses,
please go to Yoga Journal's Pose Finder at
<http://www.yogajournal.com/poses>

Richard Rosen, who teaches in Oakland and Berkeley, California, has been writing for Yoga Journal since the 1970s.



Yoga Philosophy

8 Limbs of Yoga

By Maggie Anderson (an excerpt from Divine Embrace)

If you participate in the Sacred Energy Awakening Ceremony in-person with me, you may experience some forms of Yoga Asanas to remove blockages from your joints and open up the flow of Kundalini. We may move through various Kundalini Yoga Asanas (postures) and Prana Yoga techniques. In ancient Yoga traditions they were aware of the transformation of the body as inevitable and set up a beautiful complete practice of yoga called the 8 limbs of yoga. This book will not be complete if I don't explain in brief the 8 limbs of yoga. By following these 8 limbs of yoga you are consciously preparing your body for the Kundalini awakening process that follows. This builds up your physical body, your mental body and spiritual body's with prana and the necessary energy to withstand and go through the inevitable changes that will occur once Kundalini awakens. Yoga provides mental, physical and spiritual benefits. It's an all-around balanced practice (sadhana).

The eight limbs of yoga are described in short as follows:

1. **Yama:** Universal morality or restraint (outside ourselves with others). Both the Yama's and Niyama's have five characteristics, rules or laws that are considered the ten disciplines of yoga. Yama's five characteristics of moral behaviors towards others are as follows:
 - Ahimsa – Compassion for all living things
 - Satya – Commitment to Truthfulness
 - Asteya – Non-stealing
 - Brahmacharya – Sense control
 - Aparigraha – Neutralizing the desire to acquire and hoard wealth
2. **Niyama:** Personal observances or discipline (inside ourselves). Nyama's five inner moral guidelines for oneself are:
 - Sauca – Purity
 - Santosa – Contentment
 - Tapas – Disciplines use of our energy
 - Svadhyaya – Self study
 - Isvarapranidhana – Celebration of the Spiritual
3. **Asanas:** Body postures
4. **Pranayama:** Practice of breathing exercises and control of prana
5. **Pratyahara:** Control of the senses or withdrawal. A non-attachment so that the world is not a distraction to the inner self.
6. **Dharana:** Concentration and cultivating inner perceptual awareness. The ability to focus on something uninterrupted by external or internal distractions.
7. **Dhyana:** Devotion, Meditation on the Divine. Building upon Dharana so that the focus is no longer on one thing but all-encompassing.
8. **Samadhi:** Ecstasy, bliss, Union with the Divine. This builds upon Dhyana to transcendence or enlightenment.

I find it intriguing that what I have included in my books (Book One *How I Found My True Inner Peace* and Book Two *Divine Embrace*), as guidelines that have worked for me and as my offering to assist you in a smooth transition to awakening to full self-realization, is very much in line and similar with the 8 limbs of yoga. Of course I frame it in a more modern way. It is after all my expression that I offer. I am rather happy to have found this out after having written this book series. It is true testament that we are One with the Divine and connections are happening at deep levels. When you start to connect within yourself, and may have already, you will see and feel the deep connection deep inside. You will receive those synchronicities and signs to help you along.

This ancient wisdom offers us the knowledge that may have seemed hidden but has been here all along. The ancient yogi's came to this knowledge. As have I, you too will come to this wisdom from within even if you don't have the guidance of the 8 limbs themselves. Suddenly, it all makes sense and you are there. The guidance, however, is a beautiful offering that allows your path to feel more secure, more stable and smooth, even in the throes of some tumultuous symptoms. They help you through and allow you to realize it does balance out and you will naturally evolve as we all will.

Body Awareness & Detoxification

Listen to your body. Talk to your body. Honor your physical and energy bodies. Our bodies never lie and always send us messages of how it is feeling. We are in tune with what our body needs and all we need to do is realize this and talk with it. Most illness is due to our disconnection with our spiritual/energy and physical bodies.

We have been conditioned to listen only to logic and mind conditioning instead of hearing what our spiritual self and energy bodies are trying to say to us. If we ignore a subtle message it will become stronger. Remember, listen to the whispers or hear the screams of your body. Check in with your body every day. Ask your body what it needs and you will get answers. Illness and nature comes into our lives as a way to let us know when we are not listening to our guidance system. So thank the illness, bacteria and even insects for showing you the misalignment that you've manifested. Let them know you've got the message now and tune in to your body.

If you feel you are not able to listen quite yet, call on your Angels for assistance and clarity. They will send you signs and messages to assist you and empower you to heal. When you honor its messages you feel energized and at ease. Staying conscious of what's happening within our body will allow us to take active steps in remaining healthy rather than waiting till it's too late and has manifested in the body.

I am starting to listen to my physical body this week and have included more corn, spinach and carrots to my diet and (oh no!) less chocolate! ☺ I feel so much better and at least right now am not craving more than what I have because I've replaced those chocolate binges with eating veggies and I still allow myself a snack at night too (of a Healthy Choice chocolate ice-cream bar). What you bring in to your physical body flows into your energy bodies and vice versa. Pay attention to the subtle energy shifts within your body. You will feel certain twinges, aches and pains; some physical and some energetic. Ask your body for the message and honor the truth and wisdom the body gives you. Your body never lies, so listen up. Body awareness is not only very healing to the self on all levels but is also a great grounding method. By being in touch with how you are feeling right now it truly brings you back to the present moment and all of the gifts it holds.

Body detoxification is eradicating your physical body of all those elements that are no longer serving your highest and best, good. As you rid your physical body of unnecessary toxins you also raise your vibrations and assist your ascension symptoms in feeling more balanced and harmonious. As you are clear your surroundings will feel clear and you will more easily face issues in your life in more balanced peaceful ways. Each person's diet will be different. Each person has a body that is unique to them. But something that remains consistent is to drink as much water as you can; at least and even more than eight glasses of water a day. You really are releasing much in this ascension process and water greatly assists your body, heals your body, and releases many toxins just by drinking water. I try to drink at least eight glasses of water a day and some days even more. If you are feeling thirsty, then you are already dehydrated, so get a glass of water. You can do something fun with the water and visualize beautiful energy being infused in the water and that same beautiful sparkling water (of any color you choose) is then infusing YOU with new rejuvenating life force energy. You *will* feel the results.

Another tip (that I received from Chrism of www.KundaliniAwakeningSystems1.com) is to eat watermelon every day. This is filled with water and is also a beautiful cleanser of the kidneys. The kidneys are commonly hit hard during some Kundalini ascension symptoms stages and eating

the watermelon will greatly alleviate the strain on the kidneys and keep them running strong. What a great tip! I love watermelon so this suggestion will be easy to follow.

We cannot say that one person must go into an all raw fruit and vegetable diet if their particular body requires certain proteins found in meat. We cannot say that all persons require a fasting. Each person will follow this divine path to detoxify their body the way they are drawn to. Remember, you can also ask your Higher Self and your Angels to assist you in clearing your body of toxins. They are working with you and by doing this, if you so choose, this allows them to more easily channel through you. A stronger connection ensues. Your Angels and Higher Self know specifically what you need to do and what you can handle. You will receive many signs and synchronicities along the way that will tell you and help you figure out what you need to do. A lot of you will gradually get to a good place within yourself and your body. Just follow the signs and you will get there. Find your way.

Generally, a rule of thumb is to rid yourself of all intake of: caffeine, chocolate, wine, sugars, processed food (pretty much everything in a box), alcohol and drugs. Over time I've found that I have limited my intake of caffeine and just recently stopped entirely. This was over the span of 4-5 years. I did not go cold turkey. I prefer to do things when I feel ready and it just happened. I saw signs from the Angels and the Divine that led me to stop coffee intake as much as possible. (I occasionally still have a cup, but rarely.) As your Kundalini symptoms persist you may notice that it is helpful to have high protein intake every two to three hours during waking hours. Some weeks I am eating more than I usually do and others I am back to what I consider "normal". And some weeks I am big on buying all kinds of nuts for their wonderful nutrients and protein. I am doing my best to go with the flow and follow the messages from my body and the signs that are presented to me. Again it is what feels best for you. We are each experiencing ascension in our own unique ways.

I have had at least one diet Dr. Pepper a day for, at least, three years. And only recently have I stopped for good now. It's actually been about a year now! I remembered just this weekend when I unconsciously ordered the usual Diet Coke from Wendy's Restaurant only to sit down at the table and clearly see a sprite in front of me. I took the hint. I must admit I am still a regular chocolate eater but it is slowly dwindling to a more balanced intake! I do believe that if you do things in moderation, you should be okay. Just listen to your body. If you know that when you eat certain foods, you don't feel so well afterwards, stop eating them. If you haven't figured those things out yet, ask your body. Talk to your body and it will answer you. A knowing, a feel, or a thought just comes to you. Remember, to ask your Higher Self, your body and your Angels for guidance and assistance in shedding yourself of the foods that no longer serve you. You will find yourself feeling more energized and lighter.

Remember our thoughts and emotions can uplift our bodies' energies or cause detriment and illness. So be aware of your thoughts and always remain in the highest vibration possible. A great book that goes into great depth about this and physical immortality is *How to be Chic, Fab and Live Forever* by Sondra Ray. You can change your body to be and stay in a healthy state of being. You can remain younger than mass consciousness leads you to believe. We've fallen into the trap that our bodies must die in order for ascension to occur. Now we can work on ridding ourselves of the conditioned thoughts and stay out of negative mass consciousness thinking. You can train your thoughts. You can shine your light bright within and beam health and vitality.

A major part of our body that we must bring our awareness to is our skin. Our skin is one of the largest detoxing organs of our body. So it's very important to keep our skin clean and breathing freely to work properly. One of the best ways to do this is practicing dry brushing. This is exactly what it sounds like. Taking a hard bristled brush made for dry brushing and brushing the skin, every inch of our body. This assists the lymph system and removes dead skin as well as toxins that have naturally risen to the surface of the skin for release. It has also been known to reduce cellulite build-up. This is a wonderful positive. Another positive is dry skin brushing reduced dry skin! How wonderful is that. For someone with bouts of eczema I am happy to have a new method to leave the itchy dry skin issues behind!

I first heard of dry skin brushing from Denise Linn in 2008 when I attended her Soul Coaching Training at her home in San Luis Obispo, California. From there this has been popping up into my awareness from time to time. So I'm going to listen to the signs that have been coming and finally begin a regular dry skin brushing practice.

How to perform dry skin brushing: It's recommended we do this every day. But do it as often as you can. Don't beat yourself up and give up. Keep up the good practice for yourself. We take the dry brush (that is found inexpensive at local health stores) and begin brushing the skin. There are several methods of brushing found online. You can research this to see what resonates with you. But mostly you just brush every inch of your body till you've covered it all. Then it's helpful to jump right into the shower and wash away all that has been removed from the dry brushing.

So let's recap all the positives for doing something that only take a few minutes a day. *Dry skin brushing:*

1. is great for the immunity by allowing the lymph to flow properly.
2. assists the body to absorb vitamins, more specifically vitamins A, D, E and K, where our body needs them most.
3. assists the lymphatic system to detox from the inside out. And as I mentioned removing dead skin cells from the body rejuvenates the skin and allows it to move more toxins out of the body.
4. is exfoliating, removing all the dead skin off the surface so the naturally moisturized skin is on the surface.
5. breaks through cellulite buildup and tightens up the skin with regular dry skin brushing over time (3-6 months to see a difference.) This also triggers nerve endings at the surface of the skin which tones the associated muscles.
6. is invigorating to the skin and refreshing the body for a more aliveness feel
7. prevents Cancer. As the author (name unknown) of the blog dryskinbrush.blogspot.com states, "We have cancerous cells in our bodies all the time. A tumor grows when our body is unable to detect and kill these cells that have started to become poisonous to our bodies. A big function of the lymphatic system is to show foreign materials to the immune system. This includes parts of cancer cells. If the lymph is flowing the immune system can detect cancers early and clear them."
8. stimulates the hormone producing glands which largely maintain metabolism and levels of chemicals in the blood.

Eight Limbs

Yamas: self restraint, vows of abstention, control

Ahimsa: Non-violence

Satya: Truthfulness, Honesty

Asteya: Non-stealing or Non-misappropriating

Brahmacharya: Chastity, Continence

Aparigraha: Without possessions,

Niyamas: fixed observation, rules, precepts established orders

Saucha Cleanliness, Purity

Santosha Contentment, Peaceful

Tapah: Fire of Ordeal, A Burning Desire

Svadhyaya: Study leading to knowledge of the self

Ishwara-Pranidhana: God or Higher Self the target of concentration, Surrender

Asana: posture comfortably held, seat

Pranayama: regulation of breath, restraint of breath

Pratyahara: withdrawal of senses

Dharana: concentration, fixing of the mind

Dhyana: meditation, contemplation, reflection

Samadhi: profound meditation, putting it all together

PATANJALI'S EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA

YAMA - Personal Restraints-How we relate towards others.

Ahimsa: non-violence

Satya: truthfulness

Asteya: non-stealing

Brahmacharya: channeling of energy & emotions

Aparigraha: non-possesiveness

NIYAMA - Personal Observances-How we relate towards ourselves.

Saucha: purity, cleanliness

Santosa: contentment

Tapas: austerity, discipline

Svadhyaya: self-study

Isvara pranidhana: Surrender to Infinite/God

ASANA - Physical Postures

Through the practice of asana we develop the habit of discipline and the ability to concentrate. Both of which are necessary for meditation.

PRANAYAMA - Control or freeing of Life Energy

Techniques to strengthen the connection between the breath, the mind, and the emotions.

PRATYAHARA - Sense Withdrawal

Ability to draw our awareness away from the external world and outside stimuli. Detaching from our senses and directing our attention internally we can take a step back and look at ourselves.

DHARANA - Concentration

After relieving ourselves of outside distractions, we can now deal with the distractions of the mind. We learn to slow down the thinking process and focus on a single point.

DHYANA - Meditation

Where dharana practices one-pointed attention, dhyana is ultimately a state of being keenly aware without focus. The mind is in stillness.

SAMADHI - Oneness

At this stage the meditator merges with the point of focus and transcends the self altogether. There is a profound realization of the connection to the "Divine" and interconnectedness with all living things.

YAMA

(How we relate toward others)

AHIMSA: Non-Violence

Awareness and gentleness in action, thought and speech. Violence rises out of fear, anger, ignorance, restlessness, selfishness. Practice: compassion, love, understanding, patience, self-love, worthiness.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Physical level: | -letting go of self-destructive acts
-reduce stress levels |
| Emotional level: | -boost self-esteem and self-respect
-heal the past
-learn to say no
-set conscious boundaries |
| Mental level: | -give up impossible goals/simplify
-let go of shame and feelings of being useless |
| In relationship: | -maintain self-respect and respect of others |

SATYA: Truthfulness

Truthfulness of speech, thoughts, deeds. Practice: honesty, owning feelings, loving communications, assertiveness, giving constructive feedback, forgiveness, non-judging, letting go of masks. "The elf of the tongue needs the giant to control it."

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Physical level: | -being in integrity, honoring own limits
-actions being physical manifestation of truth
"Walk your talk" |
| Emotional level: | -observe full range of emotions
-do not suppress negative emotions or cling to positive |
| Mental level: | -practice using truthful thoughts and words
-notice if thoughts or words come from ego
-search for the eternal/universal truth underlying all
-practice seeing the "both/and" qualities rather than the "either/or" |
| In relationship: | -before speaking ask, "Will what I say be of benefit?"
-staying in your truth while allowing others to be in theirs |

ASTEYA: Non-Stealing

Not coveting, not being jealous. Practice: use of object in the right way, proper time management, cultivate sense of completeness, self-sufficiency, letting go of cravings.

- Physical level: -refraining from taking anything that is not mine
 -honoring copyright laws
 -abstaining from unauthorized feeding-off of someone else's energy or talents.
- Emotional level: -refraining from overindulging desires
 -practice being content with what you have
 -reduce cravings for what you don't have.
- Mental level: -stilling the thought about taking what is not ours
 -taming the wanting creature inside
- In relationship: -not taking advantage of someone who has confided in me.

BRAHMACHARYA: Moderation, Channeling Emotions & Energies

No overindulgence of mind, intellect, speech, body; moderation on all levels concerning sex, food, all aspect of daily life including the environment. Practice: not repression but control of sensual cravings.

- Physical level: -conscious in sexual activities
 -conscious in use of all energies (water, electricity, money)
- Emotional level: -do not feed off any aspect of emotional connection with sexual partner
- Mental level: -taming the wanting creature inside
- In relationship: -Do I use sexual relationship to fulfill a sense of incompleteness within myself?

APARIGRAHA: Non-Possessiveness

Fulfilling needs rather than wants. Cultivate: non-attachment to possessions, relationships.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Physical level: | -take only what is needed
-engage in acts of charity |
| Emotional level: | -not clinging to pleasant emotions
-not rebuking the unpleasant |
| Mental level: | shifting covetous thoughts to charitable ones |
| In relationship: | -not taking advantage of a situation or exploiting someone else by taking for from them then we need. |

NIYAMA

(How we relate towards ourselves)

SAUCHA: Purity

Purity of body, cleanliness, good health habits. Cultivate: evenness of mind, thought, speech, discriminations.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Physical level: | -external cleanliness
-daily exercise
-actions performed consciously |
| Emotional Mental Level: | -think positive thoughts
-practice virtuous conduct
-playing and laughing promotes mental purity |
| In relationship: | -practice being an authentic and caring person
-establish a supportive community with other spiritual seekers. |

SANTOSHA: Contentment

Accept what is, make the best out of everything. Cultivate: gratitude and joyfulness, remain, calm with success or failure. This state of mind does not depend on any external status.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Physical level: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-become skill in action-satisfy oneself and then others through actions-right livelihood-finding the good in the job we have |
| Emotional/Mental level: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-developing gratitude for what we have-accepting what happens and learning from the experience |
| In relationship: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-accepting the other for who they are, not who we want them to be-remembering that everyone has their own definition of contentment |

TAPAS: Austerity (to generate light and heat)

The willingness to do what is necessary to reach a goal with discipline. Cultivate: determination to pursue daily practices, enthusiasm for the spiritual path. Joyfulness with outer discipline will lead to inner discipline.

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Physical level: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-purity, chastity, non harming-practice of yoga asanas-practice loving-kindness |
| Mental level: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-serenity, gentleness-control of the tongue by controlling the mind-voluntary self-discipline-dedication, fervor or zeal |

SWADHYAYA: Self-Education, Study

Expanding knowledge through reading, pondering to understand the scriptures for observation of self in relation to all life. Cultivate: reflection, meditation, wanting to know the Truth.

- Contemplating questions such as: Who / What is the Self?
Who am I?
Who is asking the questions?
Noticing why and what you are doing.

ISHWARA-PRANIDHANA: Surrender to God

Cultivating faith, dedication, sincerity, patience to transcend the ego which is so resistant to surrender. Count your blessings.

Devotion to God. To place all actions at the feet of God.
To make every act an offering to God.

Offering the fruits of our actions to the Supreme Teacher.
Intertwining of love, dedication and service as vehicles to move into this practice.

"A sense of devotion and surrender opens us to experiences of being nurtured. We also learn that we have the capacity to become instruments of higher consciousness, serving and giving what we can to help others in their own awakening." Swami Ajaya

"You can't, just at the end of your life, start thinking about God. You have to practice. Consciousness and self-realization is not something you stumble upon. You have to work at it!"
-George Harrison

Take Yoga Into Life

How I show up on my mat will very often show me how I show up in life. Competitiveness comes up, goal self comes up, coming out of pose means failure (not true) but where did that come from and more importantly where does it show up in life.

“If uncomfortable with pose, might try to go deeper when not ready, or distract yourself fidgeting with clothes look around room, instead explore it. NOTICE where your mind wanders. Notice if you start to project. Be really aware of your reaction to the experience. Just get out of the pose...what would happen. It's all about beginning to explore who you are and how you react. How you respond in life. An opportunity to witness depth of thought process and learn more about reactivity, begin more to breathe, stay centered. stay absolutely present aligned with breathe, doesn't matter how poses look, only matter how you feel.” ~ Sean Corne



“We don't teach yoga because we are masters at life, master at peace, master at this or that, but rather because we need daily reminders to stay centered and be more peaceful. We teach yoga to master the ultimate concepts of yoga as a lifelong dedicated practice.” ~ Maggie Anderson

My schedule has changed a lot this year with classes and teaching yoga. I no longer teach yoga during my lunchtime hours at my corporate job. So my personal practice has changed. For a while it became more physical than taking in all that yoga usually brings me.

Yoga is not just a physical practice. Yoga is a mind, body and SOUL way of life. **The magic of yoga is really utilizing the full potential of yoga which is: mind, body & soul connection.** Yoga heals physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

Sean Corne is one of my favorite yoga teachers. She is constantly reminding us that yoga has the potential to uncover truths with the self that may otherwise lay hidden. Yoga reveals the peace that dwells within. Yoga is a practice of self-reflection and holds a mirror to our truest self. This knowing can bring us into a harmoniousness nature with ourselves, others and spirit. Asks us to witness all aspects of humanity, darkness and light. Deep reflection cultivates awareness and helps us transcend. Non-reactive and present in our life, make wise choices in life. Every once in a while our mind opens wide and creates space.

Watching how you flow through your yoga practice can give you insights into your life. Such as, when you are holding a challenging pose, what are you thinking? Are you deep into your monkey mind? Are you thinking about your grocery list? Worrying about the past or the future? Or are you breathing deeply? Sinking deeply into the pose. Enjoy the stretch and presence it provides? Do you take the time to truly sit with your feelings?

EGO

Are you allowing yourself to be in the pose wherever you are, rather than competing with others or yourself to be the “best” at this pose. There is no right or wrong. Often our ego gets in the way of our yoga practice and that is truly what yoga reveals for us. Truth. Through our practice we can reveal what our ego is doing and feeling and work through it to heal and remove it. Sometimes we want to be the best and be as amazing at a pose as other students are. So we may push too hard, cause injury. Remember: Sweet discomfort in yoga, no pain. Can you sit with

wherever you are in a pose? Sometimes we simply want to “feel the burn” and therefore blocking the amazing spiritual benefits and connections that arise from truly being present in our practice. We are human and it’s normal. Yoga is not a sport. There are no levels to achieve. It is simply being as present as we can, allowing the healing to occur, doing whatever it is the wisdom of our body is feeling in any given moment. We are ever evolving and growing.

So take these lessons to life. Can you sit with a level you are at in your work life and still enjoy being present right now. It’s possible. You can strive for more, but you don’t have to allow your present moment to suffer while you are constantly reaching for the next “better” thing. Can you sit with a challenge and allow it to fill you up. To really sink deeper into it and therefore allowing space within yourself for a possible solution to arise. Perhaps no solution arises, BUT the lesson could be again, that challenges will be there but that doesn’t have to take away from peaceful moments in life. Other times it’s finding the solution and working through the issue, rather than stuffing it down.

THE JOURNEY

Transitions from one pose next. are you being more mindful of one pose to the next? So it’s not just about the “finish line” but the journey. Flowing into each pose, how you align each pose, breathing into the pose, sinking deeper into the pose. Enjoying this process. Can you deal with life’s challenges or can you allow yourself to breathe and enjoy and be present? Yes there are times when we need to satiate our relaxation, our getting away from it all; allowing our mind to just let go and not think. Enjoying yoga for it’s relaxation healing benefits. This is an amazing benefit of a gentle yoga practice. And other times it’s about getting mindful and enjoying that practice. Or that IS the “getaway”. Can you feel the bliss and flow of each moment?

Yoga holds so much magic. It’s a life long dedication to Self and ReConnection to Source/All That Is/God/Goddess/Universe. Whatever you call it. It’s magical and amazing! May YOU feel the magic of Yoga and dive into life.

Namaste,
~ Maggie

Choices & Reactions

Choice

You choose in every moment how you’re going to feel. You can let that moment take your power away or you can keep your power and be grateful and happy for every moment. No matter what is happening around you, you have choice. We have free will. We can choose to be happy, blissful, peaceful or the opposite. The two base options here are we can simply choose love or fear. It’s your choice.

For example, my husband wanted to take a peaceful shower but our one-and-a-half year old kept opening the door and playing, which kept interrupting his mode of feeling and also got the room colder. Instead of getting angry or frustrated, he chose in that moment to think of how cute she was being and be grateful for her and her presence. That is a very simple yet profound example of how in every moment no matter what is happening we have the choice in how we feel!

Likewise you can wake up every day and say, “YES!” to the day. You can choose that today (and everyday) are beautiful wonderful days and you can make it work out that way just be setting the tone in your own energy. Just feel wonderful, even if you’re waking up tired. Forget about all that other stuff from lack of sleep to the prior night or prior days that may have weighed heavy on you. Just forget it all. When you wake up, shift your energy. Jump up and say, “YES!” to life right now! As you do this you **will** see positive profound results.

I am doing little things to come back to my center and no longer multi-task as much as possible. Multi-tasking does have its benefits when necessary but for the most part I am working on living in the Now. I am working on no longer doing more than one thing at a time, but enjoying the juiciness of the present moment of one activity at a time. For instance, I am doing my best not to use my cell phone while driving. Not only a dangerous distraction, but if it’s not an emergency it can wait. I have a 15-20 minutes driving time till I pick up my kids. So I am choosing those few minutes of blissfully driving and breathing, while listening to good music when I am drawn to it. I don’t listen to the news either. That takes me away from the experience and also since most of it is negative it is a useless pull on our vibration. So I blissfully drive. You can do this while doing the dishes, the laundry, and bath time with the kids, etc. Simply enjoy the moment as it is. I am choosing to stay true to my spiritual center. I am choosing these new ways of being to bring me back to my true divine connection.

In every moment there is a choice. You choose the joyful circumstances that surround you now. And you choose the not-so-happy circumstances that may surround you in every moment. Every time you start to believe or feel something you are making a choice. You are choosing a vibration. You can choose to let that person who cut you off in line make you upset and lower your vibration. Or you can choose to let it go. You can choose to come up with a story within yourself about that person that will keep your vibration high, like maybe they were in a rush to get to work as they are late. Or maybe that person cut you off on the road because their wife is about to have a baby. Or maybe that person’s clothes you judged as dirty and old are the only clothes that person can afford to wear. You choose how you view a situation. And most importantly you choose when NOT to view aka judge a situation in any form. This is the highest level of being. Choose not to know. Choose to simply be in your higher vibration no matter what. It’s not good. It’s not bad. It just is.

The dominating vibration will be the “winning” vibration. That means if you are totally within your peace and bliss and vibrating at one with this, any outside source will not move you from this frequency. In fact, you will affect the other frequency that was there in either the person or place. This means if you see someone come into a room and they are flippant and angry and want to lash out at anyone in their path, and if you are not holding strong in your peace state, you may become susceptible to their shift in frequency and also become angry. In every moment there is a choice. Hold strong to your peaceful vibration.

Reactions

I’d like to address negativity and our reactions to it now. Believe it or not, most negativity does not come from malicious conscious intent by another. Most negativity comes from our reactions whether conscious or unconscious to another’s actions (be it self-centered actions or simply obliviousness). Eckhart Tolle has this one licked when he said, “Every time you react to something there is a strengthening of your form identity; the psychological sense of me.” Even when you hear something said and think ‘no you’re wrong and I am right’, there is a self seeking there and it is your ego speaking. Eckhart Tolle explains further, “Whatever form arises, it could be a thought that comes in or an emotion that goes through you. See that it is not resisted but it is allowed. It’s allowed... mmm and there it is. Allowed means that you are no longer a reactive entity. It doesn’t mean that you can’t respond but response is action that arises that is totally right for this situation but it doesn’t come unless you first say yes [allow] and then there it is.” Many of us are too attached to what others are doing and saying. It’s time to let go. Our truth does not have to rely upon another and what they

have to say. It's time to feel the divine from within and emulate that out to the world no matter what another is doing or saying.

Sometimes our reactions are towards another's simply living in their truth. Someone else's truth might not match our own and that might cause us to resist them or the lesson it is reflecting to us. Sometimes someone is simply acting as they always would but when we see it our reaction to it is very negative. We might lash out at them in a negative way. To them they don't see the reasons why. They don't see it because they are not being negative. And if they are unaware they will also react poorly back and a negative spiral occurs because we reacted badly to a situation. A situation that could have been resolved with our own INTERNAL work. A situation that could have been worked through with kindness no matter what the other person was doing or saying.

Sometimes we can communicate and work through the issues while remaining in our blissful state. Sometimes by putting ourselves in another's shoes we can see how and why they could do whatever it is they did. Sometimes understanding doesn't come so easily. What if I don't understand or comprehend why they are doing something? What if I never do? It doesn't matter. We must strive to come to a place of not knowing and not caring. Not caring is meant in a state of neutrality. And it is a great practice to trick yourself and think the best of someone and know that whatever their reasons they are divine. We each are experiencing this life in our own unique way and we each have our own trials and tribulations to work through as our lessons in life. And we each will express this differently. Tell yourself it's okay. Take a step back from reacting unconsciously and start to first check in with the Self. Breathe deeply before reacting. And remain in a grounding, centered state of Being. Your reaction is yours, not theirs, to deal with. Don't play the game of drama anymore and contribute negatively. The karma (action of reacting positively or negatively) keeps you going in circles. (That is until we transcend karma; realizing our Divine Self.)

A fun example is the road rage example. Such as reacting to another's slow driving or another person cutting us off. Maybe they didn't see us. But that option doesn't stop us from honking our horn and yelling our heads off. Not that they can hear us. Sometimes the reaction stems from the fear of a possible accident. Other times we are in a rush and are impatient due to our own ineffective scheduling to drive in peace. And sometimes we are already angry or upset over another issue and this one thing compounds the issue and suddenly a mega fume of heat and negativity is released.

We can do something about this. We can coherently drive in peace and harmony. We can live amongst others in peace. We can do our best to stick to a schedule, not booking things we definitely cannot make or living in our truth and telling others there's no way you can make it there in time without driving unsafely and not in harmony and peace. If we have all the time in the world and we're still getting angry and out of our peaceful place while driving, then check in with yourself. Ask yourself, why are you in a rush now? Why are you getting angry at everyone else when you don't need to? Check in and see if there is something else that is bothering you. And if you already know what it is, pull over. Take a deep breath and let out the emotions you have been repressing and are now spewing all over the road at all the innocent passers by. Let it go. It's time to feel good. You are allowed to feel good. It is your RIGHT in this life now to feel good about yourself and your life. If there is something that needs to be done, make a note to go do it in divine timing. Make a promise to yourself that you can be in this world happy, that you will consciously check in and always release your emotions as immediately as they come to you in healthy ways. So as not to spread your unconscious negativity to others.

It is helpful to give you another example here. Let's say you're a parent and your child is acting up big time. You've done all you can do: timeouts, grounding, and it still occurs. What are you to do? Yell? Get angry inside yourself causing much internal turmoil? Or simply know you are being consistent and staying your center. And, let's say, after all this your child goes to bed almost every night upset, whining and crying because you turned the TV off at their bedtime. You have to tell them it's bedtime and to go to sleep. It upsets you dearly that you have to say good night to your child upset every night instead of happy and lovingly. During some of these occasions you might be able to easily handle the situation and let it roll off your back. Other times it upsets you to no end and you

angrily yell at them about how you'd like them to go to bed happy and for both of you to hug and kiss goodnight in harmony. Now, the yelling only compounded the issue making it worse and you are blaming the child for their feelings. It's true, discipline shall still occur but we can do it as kindly, but sternly in our power, as possible.

We're here to guide them, not persecute them for their wrong doings. All the while remembering our children are also our mirrors for ourselves, so keep watch as to what it means to you and what is inside of you. As their guide we can discipline in harmony. You can tell them your feelings but do it in a compassionate way and stick with your rules. They may still get upset but you've discharged your poor reaction. You still have to deal with the fact that you are upset about how they are going to bed, but they do not need to receive your angry yelling. It's a negativity fueled charge that you aim at them. Instead walk away and talk with your partner, your friend or your guides. Breathe. Let it out. Scream into a pillow and cry your head off till it is released. This is your own private release that doesn't send negativity to the child. Instead it dissolves within you. Anger begets anger. And harmony begets harmony. It's a strong lesson for me over and over again. So we must strive to be in harmony and awareness with ourselves and our children. Your peaceful vibration will win if it is the dominating vibration.

They are allowed their reactions. Each person is allowed their reaction. Let's say you have something unpleasant to say to someone but it is within your truth and you do it with kindness. They react in a way that is unexpected by you. But you remain in your center. You remain in your peace. You ALLOW that person their divine reaction, no matter what it is. And you walk away both living in your truths. And remember it is always OUR CHOICE to react or not react to a situation. It is always our Free Will to live in peace now.

Some days more than others we may be feeling more low on the totem pole than usually and other days we are flying high. So there are some days where we truly need to make a conscious effort big time to surround ourselves with positive affirmations, positive people, uplifting meditations, inspirational exercise, positive awareness of our thoughts and being. Rejuvenating our energies can happen with visualizations of positive experiences to visualizations of golden beautiful energy beaming down to you and to the depths of your soul. You can feel rejuvenated, refreshed and invigorated as you keep on it!

Mike George founder of www.Relax7.com shares a beautiful way to transform negativity, "First, do not absorb it - don't be an emotional sponge. Second do not reflect it back. Otherwise you begin a cycle of emotional exchanges which may last a long time. And third, do the one thing which marks us as intelligent human beings - transform it. Even if the scene is a disaster there is some benefit somewhere in it. Even if you are watching two peoples beliefs or opinions slug it out to the edge of violence, don't take sides. Instead offer a solution then stand well back. Even if the person hates you, accept their state of being and return the light of love. In time, with patience, it will illuminate their darkness, and return to you by the bucketful! Just wait."

As told in the *Bhagavad Gita: A Walkthrough for Westerners* by Jack Hawley, "The serene person who is absorbed in God, living thus in peace, is the true renunciate. Maintaining an even mind in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, honor and disgrace marks the spiritually mature. Maintaining physical, mental, and intellectual balance no matter how difficult the challenge leads to permanent cheerfulness, which is the sure sign of a yogi." We will all get there in our own time. We can live life consciously. We can strive to become conscious of our reactions. Be the witness. Simply observe as if outside of yourself. Come back to yourself with peace being your constant state of awareness. We can re-act with kindness when we remain in our center knowing that we are ALL divine light beings of God. We are each living in our truths. We are each expressing our divine selves. Our dance in this life is our unique expression of the divine through us. It is all Divine. And remember my favorite mantra: It's not good. It's not bad. It just is.

Law of Karma

The Law of Karma plays an integral and deeply embedded part in our lives. So what is karma to me and what have I felt from it to this point? The inner workings of Karma is something that is often debated. It seems to be one of those things that evolves in its true meaning as we ascend. Karma is the recording of service or action taken. And by action taken I am meaning that action taken out of desire. If there is action taken out of selfless service this is a divine higher way of taking action that is karma-less; pure; Divine. Karma is recorded for actions of love, caring, compassion, generosity, sincerity and kindness, as well as for killing, harming for advantages, taking more than is needed, acting on desires. Simply having desires creates karma. Or rather, it's having the attachments to those desires that create karma. You are in the realm of creating and therefore create karma and staying in the recycling of lives. When you become pure of mind and desireless, then you are free of attachments and free of karma. Here you ascend.

When we act on desires we also attract its opposite. As said in the Bhagavad Gita: A Walkthrough for Westerners by Jack Hawley, the opposite of our desires is anger. With every action out of desire suffering ensues. Even simply eating for the pure pleasure of it is a desire that will bring suffering. A lesson I have and continue to learn. Having been 90 pounds overweight with an overeating issue, I can attest to this particular example. But when we come back to only eating what our body needs we are in balance with life.

You can take action and not create Karma. That action is the desireless selfless action. When there is nothing desired as a gain from an action, this is selfless service. Giving it all up to the Divine is vitally important. Simply acting with selfless service, always giving it up to the Divine wipes out karmic debt and allows you to stop the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Knowing who you truly are is key here. Your true essence, the Divine, is not in the positive or negative of life. It is beyond all of that and it does not create life nor is affected by it. It simply is. It's the true essence that which you are and the goal of which you are to know. Our highest goal in life is to learn who we truly are, to move beyond attachments, desires, positive and negative experiences, and to simply know who we are from within and come back to that Source connection.

Samskara's are deeply stored imprints from actions and desires asleep in the unconscious. Once they are active, they produce the desires and result in actions creating more karma. So here you know the goal is to not accumulate more karma but to release those unconscious actions and desires before they become active and to stay in a neutral non-dual state of being. In a non-dual state of being you are in pure bliss and peace. You are in the in-between, the middle path, or void. Nothing that occurs is good or bad. It simply Is. You do not attach yourself to the experience or the outcome. You simply observe in your beautiful true state of being. You get out of attracting more karma to you while you complete the process of releasing the old karma already accumulated. Once it is integrated and transmuted a beautiful Oneness state of being is your result. Remember as you are in a higher, peaceful, uplifted state of being only higher, peaceful, uplifting experiences are naturally attracted to you anyway.

So an example of karma would be if you deliberately did something bad or negative to someone, like knowingly cutting someone off in traffic just to get ahead, you will in turn receive that same level of negative or malicious back to you and not necessarily from the same person or the same exact event. Likewise, if you did something positive for someone else, like helping someone carry their groceries into their house, you have created and will receive a like positive experience to that nature. Timing is not always immediate and it can take a while to receive things especially if you feel you are undeserving and thereby using the law of attraction to receive nothing positive your way. But it is law so when you move your being into a more positive state and know you are deserving the positive karma has room to express itself to you. However, remember that if you are doing these acts simply as a way to be self-serving and receive more good in your life then you are still caught in the cycle of Karma; birth, death and rebirth. However, if you doing these wonderful acts of assisting others without a desired outcome and giving it all up to the Divine, not attaching to the outcome, then

you will stay in a state of your true connection to Source and out of the karmic cycle. Give it all up to the Divine and know your True self.

Another thought came to me when chatting about Karma with a guest our radio show (my Husband and I). I wondered of examples such as what if the person did something that inadvertently affected another but it was not their intent to do any harm. For example, if a person was driving the speed limit and another person behind them came out of know where in a rush and aimed their negative thoughts their way. Or if someone was the target of venom even though they never did anything to that other person. Such as if a boy broke up with a girl and the boy got a new girlfriend. The old girlfriend may aim venom towards the new girlfriend even though she had nothing to do with the break up. These examples seem to be the person who is aiming the venom creating new karma, negative karma, that will come back to bite them later and they will be the target of venom later on. And since things tend to come full circle, it's also possible these people that have obviously become targets have in times past (even past or other lives) had started a karmic circle that was then coming back to bite *them* even if they didn't really do anything this time. It was what they did in times past that caused this to come back to them. You never can tell. Which is why it's so healthy to step back and remember: It's not good. It's not bad. It just is. Then take yourself out of further Karma cycles. By removing yourself from creating more Karma you end that cycle. When you stay free of creating positive or negative cycles of Karma you finish off whatever is left of what was created and live in more peace. This is said to also remove you from further being incarnated into future lives as well. We can't help what someone else is doing or feeling but we **can** help how we feel or react.

Karma cleansing is to clean the bad karma. There are some folks that can go to the Akashic record of the soul to transform the karma. A master, like Master Dr. Sha (quoted below), gives people the power to enlighten themselves; to help the souls. A Master can move away the suffering of the soul. To clear only the body is not enough. It is the body, mind **and** soul. Some Masters will use shaktipat, which is an energetic transmission performed by an enlightened master (this is like one powerful source of Divine energy charging another with a cleansing affect) and some will cut karma cords with visualizations and energy and many others will use a variety of other methods. A shaktipat assists in spiritual awakening. This is an infusion of energy from the spiritual master to the seeker. Shaktipat brings about the awakening of the seeker's own inherent spiritual power, called Kundalini.

Karma cleansing can happen through consciously working on your blockages and patterns and removing them from your life for a better way. Karma cleansing can occur via Shaktipat as well. Gurumayi Chidvilasananda of www.siddhayoga.org talks of this, "Shaktipat is described by the yogic texts as an initiation that activates an inner unfolding of awareness that leads to progressively higher states of consciousness. Over time, through grace and our efforts in spiritual practice, the sense of separation from divinity drops away. We come to recognize the presence of God in ourselves and in the world around us. We experience the world as a play of God's energy."

What we are doing here in this book is a way of starting the cleansing process or working through the process if you've already started. Depending on where you are in your evolvment will depend on what profound changes will occur within you.

Dr. Zhi Gang Sha of www.soulmastersmovie.com talks of his beliefs on the subject, "People talk about mind over matter, the power of the mind. But I think the power of the mind is not enough. The next step is soul over matter, the power of the soul. Everyone and everything has a soul. The soul can heal. Heart touch heart, soul touch soul."

Release. We seem to release in layers. And a little more gets shaved off the top. More blockages are removed. Something that comes up might come up again in a new way. You go deeper. It is simply allowing you to release slowly and at your pace so you have a balanced awakening. If you removed it all at once you might go crazy. Take time. It's a balanced progression to awaken. Even with awakening there must be moderation and balance. Heaven is always within you now. There's nowhere to go but here. So enjoy the ride as you get "there" or rather here.

Soften and See the Light

by Maggie Anderson

During my Core Strength Vinyasa Yoga Teacher Training with Sadie Nardini there was a very enlightening discussion going on about interacting with others. How do you view and interact with others who are difficult or challenging to deal with? Or, say, someone who has immediately come up to you in some fashion in anger or makes your juices boil (so to speak)?

So do you immediately react to that challenging person with their same energy and more in a negative way? Are you reacting instead of breathing and taking a moment? Or can you more easily take the back seat or witness state and watch what is happening to not react? Taking that moment to feel the neutral course of action that will benefit everyone.



Here's what comes to me. Try your very best to remember that we are **all** light beings. As you are standing there, remember that person is a light being (helping us grow and vice versa). We must align with that light within ourselves in order to see it in others as well.

In the words of Maureen Moss, World Puja Network:
"We are Supreme, courageous, beings of Light!
I AM a Supreme, Courageous, Being of Light!"

Also, know that this person is also coming at us with a reaction themselves and are acting the very best they know how in that very moment in time for them. This is only their perspective whether it's right or wrong. But know, too, that everyone is right. We do not need to push and push to be "right".

Stay out of the "story". In essence, we are learning how to love each other.

Something to remember is that people are inherently good. Look past the form to the formless. Even when they are in a fight with someone, they are a light being. Proactively look for the good and you will find it. Look for the light inside, that's Namaste.

Even if our outer body doesn't feel it or is acting like it... Or I see something and begin to judge or think something about that other person, even then I am going to see the goodness - hope for the goodness and relate to the goodness.

As Sadie Nardini said, "It's not being naïve to do that. It's being wise and universal to do that."

Zen proverb: Trust everyone, but lock your doors at night.

Don't hide behind the surface ego stuff. If you come across someone hard for you to deal with, soften, see that whatever they are doing they actually think it might actually help, they are moving towards what they think is gonna be best in that situation. Even if they aren't that skilled at it or doing it in the best way.

So soften and ask this person, "what is it that I can do to help you get your goal. If I can do it, I'll tell you and if I can't..." Remember to honor your inner light and your truth as well. Coming to this person from this approach changes the situation. Sadie Nardini went on to say, "Even if you don't feel like they deserve it. You deserve to act with that integrity, you deserve to be that compassionate wise incredible person. You deserve it." And she's right! I believe. :)

We don't need to be "right" right now. Knowing this releases you from having to take on situations or fights in that moment. Don't worry about proving your point as valid. Know inside you **are** VALID. Your very existence is valid.

So look at this other person, soften, stop trying to prove, and instead try to understand them, ask questions such as: You know you seem really upset right now and it's not my intention to do that. How can I help you right now? What are you saying? Say it to me again so I can understand more. And watch that person apologize. Tell them it's okay. They want to feel understood, they are cared about or whatever else the situation is about. Do your best to understand it. Step in, move from the heart. Just tell them right away that you were being moody just then and what can you do for them? Watch people just crumble back into the love. Breathe, soften, Namaste.

I experience this challenge quite often with others and how I view others. Sometimes it's very easy for me to see the light being inside. Other times it takes all my effort, if I so choose to make that effort. We do have free will and it is a choice. I choose to soften. I admit, I am not always a princess but when I finally take a breath and become conscious of my actions and how I am viewing others, I do my very best to climb out of that dark place and soften. See the light.

I wish you loving interactions with all the light beings of the world.

Namaste,
~ Maggie Anderson, Spiritual Cheerleader

3 LESSONS FROM A YOGA INJURY

By Anton Brandt



If you're reading this, chances are you're already riding the yoga train or you're about to jump on. The first few stops on my yoga journey resembled one of those Japanese high-speed bullet trains: top-speed, buckle your junk, there's no turning back. You see, I was **in India** at the time, indulging in months of trainings, retreats and ashrams. If it involved late-night chanting and ice-cold showers, or was the kind of place where water buffalo and barefoot boys roam the streets, I was probably nearby on my mat.

In the middle of an intensive yoga class one day, I pushed myself a little too far, a little too fast. The pain hit me like electricity, surging up my spine. It was a herniated disk in my neck, sometimes called a slipped or ruptured disk. (I found out later that this particular one, C5–C6, is the most commonly injured in the cervical spine.) Over the months that passed, questions

and conversations cleared a new path for me to explore. Here are the three things I learned:

SLOW DOWN, STEP BACK

We all talk about slowing down from our daily lives on our mats. But the reality is, our mindset doesn't suddenly shift when we get on our mat. **Ego-based thought patterns**, deeply ingrained into our culture, like *Do more, achieve more, go further*, don't just disappear the moment we start practicing. The body is an extraordinary and articulate conversationalist. But all too often, we're not listening. An injury is the loudest and clearest way for our body to tell us to stop. And for some of us, it's the only way we change deeply ingrained habits and actually start listening.

MODIFY

Pre-injury, I was unstoppable. My practice had been shaped by a blend of youth, vigor and ego. All this allowed me to achieve many advanced strength-based yoga poses very quickly. When teachers offered modifications in class, I never tried them. Deep down, I scoffed, knowing that modifications were for those not strong enough, not advanced enough. This mindset was reinforced by my **traditional Ashtanga Vinyasa** background, where props are about as popular as toilet paper is in India. In my early foray into Ashtanga, one well-established teacher repeatedly guided me during a seated forward fold to bring my forehead to touch my legs. For months, under his guidance, I curled my spine, craned my neck, just trying to get there. Years later, my head still nowhere near touching my legs, I now happily (and safely) use a strap.

What's the point? I learned to modify because I had to. I learned every modification I could, and then I started creating my own. I began actively exploring my own body for the first time, listening to the intelligence that

was waiting for me the whole time. The full expression of a yoga posture is not one size fits all. And sometimes we have to be humbled by our very own body before we come to understand that.

EXPAND

That day I woke up writhing in pain, tears pouring down my face, I was living with friends in a small Indian fishing village. My housemates had heard of a well-regarded healer, who specialized in craniosacral therapy. At the time, I didn't know what that modality was. In any case, he arrived at our home within minutes, and with the subtlest movements of his hands on my skull, the searing pain melted away, and pure release surged through my bloodstream. For the months that followed, I received treatment from him, and my **neck began to heal**, strengthen and regain movement. I began to learn about this modality, and many others, leading me to explore energetic anatomy. Sometimes it takes something severe, something debilitating, for us to be receptive to experiences outside of our current understanding.

As a young athletic yogi, I still came to class, but now I sat in the back of the room, with a neck brace on. But this time around, I left my ego at the door. Perhaps that's exactly the whole point.



*Anton Brandt has been exploring the world ever since he could stand on his own two skinny legs. Having lived everywhere from Shanghai to San Sebastian, he currently splits his time between New York & Bali. He sold his business in 2011, and has been standing on his hands ever since. He teaches yoga, as well as helps brands build & engage their communities. He enjoys flying kites & growing tomatoes. Check out his **website** or connect with him on **Facebook**.*

<http://www.gaiamtv.com/article/3-lessons-yoga-injury>

Count on Yoga: 38 Ways Yoga Keeps You Fit

By Timothy McCall, M.D.



Are you looking for reasons to start practicing? Here are ways yoga improves your health—reasons enough to roll out the mat and get started.

If you're a passionate yoga practitioner, you've probably noticed the ways yoga works—maybe you're sleeping better or getting fewer colds or just feeling more relaxed and at ease. But if you've ever tried telling a newbie how it works, you might find that explanations like "It increases the flow of prana" or "It brings energy up your spine" fall on deaf or skeptical ears.

As it happens, Western science is starting to provide some concrete clues as to how yoga works to improve health, heal aches and pains, and keep sickness at bay. Once you understand them, you'll have even more motivation to step onto your mat, and you probably won't feel so tongue-tied the next time someone wants Western proof.

I myself have experienced yoga's healing power in a very real way. Weeks before a trip to India in 2002 to investigate [rjd#khuds](#), I developed numbness and tingling in my right hand. After first considering scary things like a brain tumor and multiple sclerosis, I figured out that the cause of the symptoms was thoracic outlet syndrome, a nerve blockage in my neck and chest.

Despite the uncomfortable symptoms, I realized how useful my condition could be during my trip. While visiting various yoga therapy centers, I would submit myself for evaluation and treatment by the various experts I'd arranged to observe. I could try their suggestions and see what worked for me. While this wasn't exactly a controlled scientific experiment, I knew that such hands-on learning could teach me things I might not otherwise understand.

My experiment proved illuminating. At the Vivekananda ashram just outside of Bangalore, S. Nagarathna, M.D., recommended breathing exercises in which I imagined bringing prana (vital energy) into my right upper chest. Other therapy included asana, pPranayama, [p hg lwdwlrq](#), chanting, lectures on philosophy, and various kriya (internal cleansing practices). At the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram in Chennai and from A.G. Mohan and his wife, Indra, who practice just outside of Chennai, I was told to stop practicing [K h d g v w d q g](#) and Shoulderstand in favor of gentle asana coordinated with the breath. In Pune, S.V. Karandikar, a medical doctor, recommended practices with ropes and belts to put traction on my spine and exercises that taught me to use my shoulder blades to open my upper back.

Thanks to the techniques I learned in India, advice from teachers in the United States, and my own exploration, my chest is more flexible than it was, my posture has improved, and for more than a year, I've been free of symptoms.

My experience inspired me to pore over the scientific studies I'd collected in India as well as the West to identify and explain how yoga can both prevent disease and help you recover from it. Here is what I found.

Flex Time

1 Improved flexibility is one of the first and most obvious benefits of yoga. During your first class, you probably won't be able to touch your toes, never mind do a backbend. But if you stick with it, you'll notice a gradual loosening, and eventually, seemingly impossible poses will become possible. You'll also probably notice that aches and pains start to disappear. That's no coincidence. Tight hips can strain the knee joint due to improper alignment of the thigh and shinbones. Tight hamstrings can lead to a flattening of the lumbar spine, which can cause back pain. And inflexibility in muscles and connective tissue, such as fascia and ligaments, can cause poor posture.

Strength Test

2 Strong muscles do more than look good. They also protect us from conditions like arthritis and back pain, and help prevent falls in elderly people. And when you build strength through yoga, you balance it with flexibility. If you just went to the gym and lifted weights, you might build strength at the expense of flexibility.

Standing Orders

3 Your head is like a bowling ball—big, round, and heavy. When it's balanced directly over an erect spine, it takes much less work for your neck and back muscles to support it. Move it several inches forward, however, and you start to strain those muscles. Hold up that forward-leaning bowling ball for eight or 12 hours a day and it's no wonder you're tired. And fatigue might not be your only problem. Poor posture can cause back, neck, and other muscle and joint problems. As you slump, your body may compensate by flattening the normal inward curves in your neck and lower back. This can cause pain and degenerative arthritis of the spine.

Joint Account

4 Each time you practice yoga, you take your joints through their full range of motion. This can help prevent degenerative arthritis or mitigate disability by "squeezing and soaking" areas of cartilage that normally aren't used. Joint cartilage is like a sponge; it receives fresh nutrients only when its fluid is squeezed out and a new supply can be soaked up. Without proper sustenance, neglected areas of cartilage can eventually wear out, exposing the underlying bone like worn-out brake pads.

Spinal Rap

5 Spinal disks—the shock absorbers between the vertebrae that can herniate and compress nerves—crave movement. That's the only way they get their nutrients. If you've got a well-balanced asana practice with plenty of backbends, forward bends, and twists, you'll help keep your disks supple.

Bone Zone

6 It's well documented that weight-bearing exercise strengthens bones and helps ward off osteoporosis. Many postures in yoga require that you lift your own weight. And some, like Downward- and Upward-Facing Dog, help strengthen the arm bones, which are particularly vulnerable to osteoporotic fractures. In an unpublished study conducted at California State University, Los Angeles, yoga practice increased bone density in the vertebrae. Yoga's ability to lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol (see [Qxp ehv#4](#)) may help keep calcium in the bones.

Flow Chart

7 Yoga gets your blood flowing. More specifically, the relaxation exercises you learn in yoga can help your circulation, especially in your hands and feet. Yoga also gets more oxygen to your cells, which function better as a result. Twisting poses are thought to wring out venous blood from internal organs and allow oxygenated blood to flow in once the twist is released. Inverted poses, such as Headstand, Handstand, and Shoulderstand, encourage venous blood from the legs and pelvis to flow back to the heart, where it can be pumped to the lungs to be freshly oxygenated. This can help if you have swelling in your legs from heart or kidney problems. Yoga also boosts levels of hemoglobin and red blood cells, which carry oxygen to the tissues. And it thins the blood by making platelets less sticky and by cutting the level of clot-promoting proteins in the blood. This can lead to a decrease in heart attacks and strokes since blood clots are often the cause of these killers.

Lymph Lesson

8 When you contract and stretch muscles, move organs around, and come in and out of yoga postures, you increase the drainage of

lymph (a viscous fluid rich in immune cells). This helps the lymphatic system fight infection, destroy cancerous cells, and dispose of the toxic waste products of cellular functioning.

Heart Start

9 When you regularly get your heart rate into the aerobic range, you lower your risk of heart attack and can relieve depression. While not all yoga is aerobic, if you do it vigorously or take flow or Ashtanga classes, it can boost your heart rate into the aerobic range. But even yoga exercises that don't get your heart rate up that high can improve cardiovascular conditioning. Studies have found that [Vinyasa](#) lowers the resting heart rate, increases endurance, and can improve your maximum uptake of oxygen during exercise—all reflections of improved aerobic conditioning. One study found that subjects who were taught only [Vinyasa](#) could do more exercise with less oxygen.

Pressure Drop

10 If you've got high blood pressure, you might benefit from yoga. Two studies of people with hypertension, published in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, compared the effects of Savasana (Corpse Pose) with simply lying on a couch. After three months, Savasana was associated with a 26-point drop in systolic blood pressure (the top number) and a 15-point drop in diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number—and the higher the initial blood pressure, the bigger the drop).

Worry Thwarts

11 Yoga lowers cortisol levels. If that doesn't sound like much, consider this. Normally, the adrenal glands secrete cortisol in response to an acute crisis, which temporarily boosts immune function. If your cortisol levels stay high even after the crisis, they can compromise the immune system. Temporary boosts of cortisol help with long-term memory, but chronically high levels undermine memory and may lead to permanent changes in the brain. Additionally, excessive cortisol has been linked with major depression, osteoporosis (it extracts calcium and other minerals from bones and interferes with the laying down of new bone), high blood pressure, and insulin resistance. In rats, high cortisol levels lead to what researchers call "food-seeking behavior" (the kind that drives you to eat when you're upset, angry, or stressed). The body takes those extra calories and distributes them as fat in the abdomen, contributing to weight gain and the risk of diabetes and heart attack.

Happy Hour

12 Feeling sad? Sit in Lotus. Better yet, rise up into a backbend or soar royally into King Dancer Pose. While it's not as simple as that, one study found that a consistent yoga practice improved depression and led to a significant increase in serotonin levels and a decrease in the levels of monoamine oxidase (an enzyme that breaks down neurotransmitters) and cortisol. At the University of Wisconsin, Richard Davidson, Ph.D., found that the left prefrontal cortex showed heightened activity in meditators, a finding that has been correlated with greater levels of happiness and better immune function. More dramatic left-sided activation was found in dedicated, long-term practitioners.

Weighty Matters

13 Move more, eat less—that's the adage of many a dieter. Yoga can help on both fronts. A regular practice gets you moving and burns calories, and the spiritual and emotional dimensions of your practice may encourage you to address any eating and weight problems on a deeper level. Yoga may also inspire you to become a more conscious eater.

Low Show

14 Yoga lowers blood sugar and LDL ("bad") cholesterol and boosts HDL ("good") cholesterol. In people with diabetes, yoga has been found to lower blood sugar in several ways: by lowering cortisol and adrenaline levels, encouraging weight loss, and improving

sensitivity to the effects of insulin. Get your blood sugar levels down, and you decrease your risk of diabetic complications such as heart attack, kidney failure, and blindness.

Brain Waves

15 An important component of yoga is focusing on the present. Studies have found that regular [transcendental meditation](#) improves coordination, reaction time, memory, and even IQ scores. People who practice Transcendental Meditation demonstrate the ability to solve problems and acquire and recall information better—probably because they're less distracted by their thoughts, which can play over and over like an endless tape loop.

Nerve Center

16 Yoga encourages you to relax, slow your breath, and focus on the present, shifting the balance from the sympathetic nervous system (or the fight-or-flight response) to the parasympathetic nervous system. The latter is calming and restorative; it lowers breathing and heart rates, decreases blood pressure, and increases blood flow to the intestines and reproductive organs—comprising what Herbert Benson, M.D., calls the relaxation response.

Space Place

17 Regularly practicing yoga increases proprioception (the ability to feel what your body is doing and where it is in space) and improves balance. People with bad posture or dysfunctional movement patterns usually have poor proprioception, which has been linked to knee problems and back pain. Better balance could mean fewer falls. For the elderly, this translates into more independence and delayed admission to a nursing home or never entering one at all. For the rest of us, postures like Tree Pose can make us feel less wobbly on and off the mat.

Control Center

18 Some advanced yogis can control their bodies in extraordinary ways, many of which are mediated by the nervous system. Scientists have monitored yogis who could induce unusual heart rhythms, generate specific brain-wave patterns, and, using a meditation technique, raise the temperature of their hands by 15 degrees Fahrenheit. If they can use yoga to do that, perhaps you could learn to improve blood flow to your pelvis if you're trying to get pregnant or induce relaxation when you're having trouble falling asleep.

Loose Limbs

19 Do you ever notice yourself holding the telephone or a steering wheel with a death grip or scrunching your face when staring at a computer screen? These unconscious habits can lead to chronic tension, muscle fatigue, and soreness in the wrists, arms, shoulders, neck, and face, which can increase stress and worsen your mood. As you [become more aware of your body](#), you begin to notice where you hold tension: It might be in your tongue, your eyes, or the muscles of your face and neck. If you simply tune in, you may be able to release some tension in the tongue and eyes. With bigger muscles like the quadriceps, trapezius, and buttocks, it may take years of practice to learn how to relax them.

Chill Pill

20 Stimulation is good, but too much of it taxes the nervous system. Yoga can provide relief from the hustle and bustle of modern life. Restorative asana, [transcendental meditation](#) (a form of guided relaxation), Savasana, [transcendental meditation](#), and meditation encourage [transcendental meditation](#), a turning inward of the senses, which provides downtime for the nervous system. Another by-product of a regular yoga practice, studies suggest, is better sleep—which means you'll be less tired and stressed and less likely to have accidents.

Immune Boon

21 Asana and pranayama probably improve immune function, but, so far, meditation has the strongest scientific support in this area. It appears to have a beneficial effect on the functioning of the immune system, boosting it when needed (for example, raising antibody levels in response to a vaccine) and lowering it when needed (for instance, mitigating an inappropriately aggressive immune function in an autoimmune disease like psoriasis).

Breathing Room

22 Yogis tend to take fewer breaths of greater volume, which is both calming and more efficient. A 1998 study published in *The Lancet* taught a yogic technique known as "complete breathing" to people with lung problems due to congestive heart failure. After one month, their average respiratory rate decreased from 13.4 breaths per minute to 7.6. Meanwhile, their exercise capacity increased significantly, as did the oxygen saturation of their blood. In addition, yoga has been shown to improve various measures of lung function, including the maximum volume of the breath and the efficiency of the exhalation.

Yoga also promotes breathing through the nose, which filters the air, warms it (cold, dry air is more likely to trigger an asthma attack in people who are sensitive), and humidifies it, removing pollen and dirt and other things you'd rather not take into your lungs.

Poop Scoop

23 Ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation—all of these can be exacerbated by stress. So if you stress less, you'll suffer less. Yoga, like any physical exercise, can ease constipation—and theoretically lower the risk of colon cancer—because moving the body facilitates more rapid transport of food and waste products through the bowels. And, although it has not been studied scientifically, yogis suspect that twisting poses may be beneficial in getting waste to move through the system.

Peace of Mind

24 Yoga quiets the fluctuations of the mind, according to [Sādhanaśāstra](#). In other words, it slows down the mental loops of frustration, regret, anger, fear, and desire that can cause stress. And since stress is implicated in so many health problems—from migraines and insomnia to lupus, MS, eczema, high blood pressure, and heart attacks—if you learn to quiet your mind, you'll be likely to live longer and healthier.

Divine Sign

25 Many of us suffer from chronic low self-esteem. If you handle this negatively—take drugs, overeat, work too hard, sleep around—you may pay the price in poorer health physically, mentally, and spiritually. If you take a positive approach and practice yoga, you'll sense, initially in brief glimpses and later in more sustained views, that you're worthwhile or, as yogic philosophy teaches, that you are a manifestation of the Divine. If you practice regularly with an intention of self-examination and betterment—not just as a substitute for an aerobics class—you can access a different side of yourself. You'll experience feelings of gratitude, empathy, and forgiveness, as well as a sense that you're part of something bigger. While better health is not the goal of spirituality, it's often a by-product, as documented by repeated scientific studies.

Pain Drain

26 Yoga can ease your pain. According to several studies, asana, meditation, or a combination of the two, reduced pain in people with arthritis, back pain, fibromyalgia, carpal tunnel syndrome, and other chronic conditions. When you relieve your pain, your mood improves, you're more inclined to be active, and you don't need as much medication.

Heat Treatment

27 Yoga can help you make changes in your life. In fact, that might be its greatest strength. Tapas, the Sanskrit word for "heat," is the fire, the discipline that fuels yoga practice and that regular practice builds. The tapas you develop can be extended to the rest of your life to overcome inertia and change dysfunctional habits. You may find that without making a particular effort to change things, you start to eat better, exercise more, or finally quit smoking after years of failed attempts.

Guru Gifts

28 Good [teachers](#) can do wonders for your health. Exceptional ones do more than guide you through the postures. They can adjust your posture, gauge when you should go deeper in poses or back off, deliver hard truths with compassion, help you relax, and enhance and personalize your practice. A respectful relationship with a teacher goes a long way toward promoting your health.

Drug Free

29 If your medicine cabinet looks like a pharmacy, maybe it's time to try yoga. Studies of people with asthma, high blood pressure, Type II diabetes (formerly called adult-onset diabetes), and obsessive-compulsive disorder have shown that yoga helped them lower their dosage of medications and sometimes get off them entirely. The benefits of taking fewer drugs? You'll spend less money, and you're less likely to suffer side effects and risk dangerous drug interactions.

Hostile Makeover

30 Yoga and meditation build awareness. And the more aware you are, the easier it is to break free of destructive emotions like anger. Studies suggest that chronic anger and hostility are as strongly linked to heart attacks as are smoking, diabetes, and elevated cholesterol. Yoga appears to reduce anger by increasing feelings of compassion and interconnection and by calming the nervous system and the mind. It also increases your ability to step back from the drama of your own life, to remain steady in the face of bad news or unsettling events. You can still react quickly when you need to—and there's evidence that yoga speeds reaction time—but you can take that split second to choose a more thoughtful approach, reducing suffering for yourself and others.

Good Relations

31 Love may not conquer all, but it certainly can aid in healing. Cultivating the emotional support of friends, family, and community has been demonstrated repeatedly to improve health and healing. A regular yoga practice helps develop friendliness, compassion, and greater equanimity. Along with yogic philosophy's emphasis on avoiding harm to others, telling the truth, and taking only what you need, this may improve many of your relationships.

Sound System

32 The basics of yoga—*asana*, [sūtra](#), and meditation—all work to improve your health, but there's more in the yoga toolbox. Consider chanting. It tends to prolong exhalation, which shifts the balance toward the parasympathetic nervous system. When done in a group, chanting can be a particularly powerful physical and emotional experience. A recent study from Sweden's Karolinska Institute suggests that humming sounds—like those made while chanting *Om*—open the sinuses and facilitate drainage.

Vision Quest

33 If you contemplate an image in your mind's eye, as you do in yoga nidra and other practices, you can effect change in your body. Several studies have found that guided imagery reduced postoperative pain, decreased the frequency of headaches, and improved the quality of life for people with cancer and HIV.

Clean Machine

34 Kriyas, or cleansing practices, are another element of yoga. They include everything from rapid breathing exercises to elaborate internal cleansings of the intestines. Jala neti, which entails a gentle lavage of the nasal passages with salt water, removes pollen and viruses from the nose, keeps mucus from building up, and helps drain the sinuses.

Karma Concept

35 *Seva* (service to others) is integral to yogic philosophy. And while you may not be inclined to serve others, your health might improve if you do. A study at the University of Michigan found that older people who volunteered a little less than an hour per week were three times as likely to be alive seven years later. Serving others can give meaning to your life, and your problems may not seem so daunting when you see what other people are dealing with.

Healing Hope

36 In much of conventional medicine, most patients are passive recipients of care. In yoga, it's what you do for yourself that matters. Yoga gives you the tools to help you change, and you might start to feel better the first time you try practicing. You may also notice that the more you commit to practice, the more you benefit. This results in three things: You get involved in your own care, you discover that your involvement gives you the power to effect change, and seeing that you can effect change gives you hope. And hope itself can be healing.

Connective Tissue

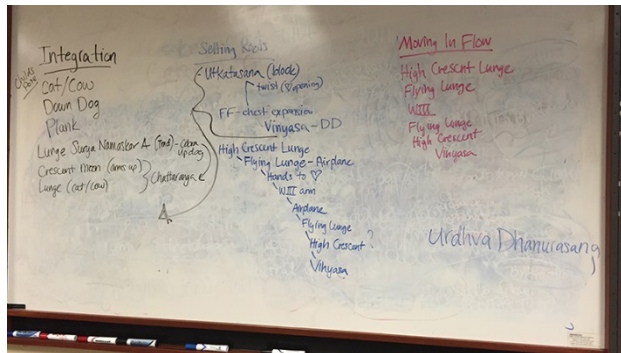
37 As you read all the ways yoga improves your health, you probably noticed a lot of overlap. That's because they're intensely interwoven. Change your posture and you change the way you breathe. Change your breathing and you change your nervous system. This is one of the great lessons of yoga: Everything is connected—your hipbone to your anklebone, you to your community, your community to the world. This interconnection is vital to understanding yoga. This holistic system simultaneously taps into many mechanisms that have additive and even multiplicative effects. This synergy may be the most important way of all that yoga heals.

Placebo Power

38 Just believing you will get better can make you better. Unfortunately, many conventional scientists believe that if something works by eliciting the placebo effect, it doesn't count. But most patients just want to get better, so if chanting a mantra—like you might do at the beginning or end of yoga class or throughout a meditation or in the course of your day—facilitates healing, even if it's just a placebo effect, why not do it?

Inside YJ's YTT: 5 Things to Know Before You Teach a Yoga Class

BY AMANDA TUST | FEB 18, 2016



Yoga Journal senior editor Amanda Tust shares five key tips from yoga teacher training that she plans to keep in her back pocket in case she ever actually ends up in front of a class.

It's mid-February, and we're now five weeks into our four-month-long, 200-hour [Yoga Pod YTT](#). So far we've practiced lots of [vinyasa](#) and [pranayama](#), geeked out on yoga anatomy and history, chanted mantras in unison to the emotive sounds of a harmonium, and

completed workshops on [Sun Salutations](#), binds, [inversions](#), and more. The training has been an amazing opportunity to bond as a team and to roll out our mats together during YTT on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as an inspiration to more regularly make it to yoga classes outside of training.

I've already learned so many things that will help me be a better editor for the magazine and a better spotter at photo shoots. Even though I don't have any plans at present to teach in a studio, I now feel empowered that should I ever chose to do so, I will have a successful first class—if I remember these five key things from YTT.

1. Embrace the awkward.

One of our YTT leaders, Amy Harris, speaks often about how she's a natural introvert and how it took her a long time to feel comfortable interacting with students. Another leader, Steph Schwartz, mentioned that she almost walked out the first day of her own teacher training because the thought of speaking in front of a group terrified her. But I would never have guessed that teaching was initially something totally out of their comfort zones. They exude a poised, calm confidence when leading us, and I'm so thankful to have the opportunity to learn from them. It's reassuring to know that the unease I sometimes feel when speaking before the group or demonstrating a pose in the middle of room is totally OK—normal, even. If you feel awkward and uncomfortable teaching your first class, it doesn't mean you won't eventually find your rhythm as a teacher; it just means you're human.

2. Do your homework.

In a recent YTT session, we collectively created a sequence that YTT leader Nafisa Ramos wrote out on a whiteboard. It moves toward Urdhva Dhanurasana (Wheel Pose) as its peak, and our homework is to practice the sequence and take notes on what works and what doesn't work. Soon we'll come back together as a group to discuss the practice and refine it. While we won't exactly have the support of more than a dozen people when creating sequences in the future, it helps to get in the habit of thinking critically about a sequence before you teach it. Once you're a veteran teacher, you'll be able to come up with sequences on the fly. Until then, prepare before every class. Write out your sequence, practice it, time it, take notes, and tweak it as needed. After your first class, take notes on what went well and what felt a little off. If you didn't like something, change it up the next time.

3. Be vulnerable, but not *too* vulnerable.

Many beloved teachers open their classes by sharing personal stories (and some do so because they believe if you show vulnerability, it empowers those around you). If storytelling appeals to you, be sure to connect your story with a theme or intention for the class so that your words serve a greater purpose—as opposed to just a “download” from you to your students. For example, if your sequence includes a lot of heart openers, you may share a short story about struggling to open your heart to someone in your life. Not interested in revealing personal stuff? That’s OK, too, Harris told us. Vulnerability is an inherent part of being a yoga teacher. You stand in front of students, many of whom are strangers, and share a sacred, often deeply personal practice with them. This level of vulnerability is probably enough, especially for your first class.

4. If you mix up left and right, don’t apologize.

You’re leading your first class. You’re in a groove; your voice is steady; your students seem to be breathing well and responding to your cues... And then, oops, you say, “Step your right foot forward,” when you meant to move to the left side. First, don’t sweat it. Knowing when to say left versus right is one of the hardest things to keep straight as a teacher, says Nancy Kate Rau, a YTT teacher who recently led our inversions workshop. The first time you accidentally say the wrong side (and if it doesn’t happen during your first class, it will happen eventually), consider it a rite of passage. And resist the urge to launch into an apology (“So sorry, guys”) or any sort of self-deprecating language (“Oh, man, I can’t believe I messed that up”). Instead, say, “Rather, left,” and then just keep going, recommends Harris. Adjusting your language from “sorry” to “rather” will help you make quick, confident recoveries that are much less disruptive to the group.

5. Speak and move in a way that supports students.

In YTT, I’ve learned to always give active instructions (“Step to the top of your mat”) instead of passive instructions (“Stepping to the top of your mat...”) and to limit cues to three to five per pose, both for easier mental processing. After five cues, students are likely tuning you out—or feeling anxious about pulling it all off on their mat. I’ve also learned that it’s a good idea to make pose modifications sound just as appealing as the full expression. If you do this, students may be less likely to push beyond their abilities. For example, when leading students through [Chaturanga](#), you could say, “If you’ve had enough of gravity today, lower to your knees,” which is funny and relatable, versus, “If your triceps are weak, lower to your knees,” which could feel like admitting defeat. And whenever you’re demonstrating poses at the front of the room, be sure to also demo the modified versions, too. If you tell your students to use a strap for [Natarajasana](#) (Lord of the Dance Pose) or a block for [Ardha Chandrasana](#) (Half Moon Pose), for instance, show your students the pose with the prop to encourage them to practice the modified versions.

How Eagle Pose Healed Old Wounds

By [Jessica Quiroli](#) • February 27th, 2014



I hadn't consistently practiced yoga in a few years, and returned to a devoted practice mostly for the health and stress relief benefits. But, of course, when the body is pushed and challenged, you naturally start to feel physical change as well. It's all connected, and when that hit me, I was incredibly happy I'd felt drawn to practice again. It was something I needed. I tend to believe in everything as a calling (whether the calling is where to go on a Friday night or a change in careers, you follow the feeling), so feeling called back to yoga, I began to search for what was best for me. [What was I looking for?](#)

I knew that healing fear, getting more centered, and feeling stronger, mentally and physically, were all reasons to do yoga. Relieving stress and releasing

anxiety and worry were driving forces, and with each session, I experienced release. I felt stretched beyond my limits inside and out, more so than when I first began practicing. I knew it the good stuff was at work: prana, circulation, the blood flowing, stronger legs, a sense of weightlessness, and letting go of worry and [expectation](#).

I had no idea that something more was...calling me.

Reflecting now, I can see that the unexpected discovery makes perfect sense. In November, I began a series on my blog—which exclusively covers minor league baseball—featuring stories by guest writers of personal and emotional experiences that connected them to baseball. I'd been thinking a lot about finding new meaning in my writing and I heard my own calling to write something about my life to kick off the series. I couldn't explain the inspiration, I hadn't thought about doing that before, but I sat down, feeling guided, and a personal story flowed. I'd always been extreme in not sharing too much of myself. Partially for professional reasons, but I just never felt comfortable with oversharing. I still don't. I knew this was different. It was right.

I shared my story of physical abuse at the hands of a past boyfriend and how that experience shaped my life in baseball. I went into a lot of graphic detail, though omitted many more. I couldn't share everything comfortably, but I felt the flow through my fingers with every word. I don't think I edited more than five words. The words naturally poured freely onto the page. The reaction after I published was incredible. I felt lifted by the love and support, knowing I'd given something of myself for a purpose. I also felt unburdened in many ways. Writing wasn't just supposed to be one thing or another (income, career-oriented, one specific beat), but whatever inspired, scared, or made me feel I was stretching creatively. This was one of those moments and I hadn't felt that in awhile.

I didn't know there was more until I tried [Eagle Pose](#). Then I realized the extent.

For whatever reason, I'd actually never tried the pose. My first yoga go-around, I seemed to stick with mostly lying-down and only a few standing poses. So when I tried [Ashley Turner's classes](#), I was doing a lot of standing. When I heard her say to prepare for Eagle Pose, I knew what was coming. I would have to lean all my weight on one leg.

What I didn't explain in the story on my blog, was that as a result of the abuse I suffered, I have permanent nerve damage in my right leg. I'm unable to lean much weight on that side. When I stand, I shift to the left. When I sit, I cross my legs right over left and I sleep on my left side. If I don't do those things, I feel pressure and tingling, soon followed by stiffness and pain if I don't pay attention.

The injury has become part of me. It's not something I think about or feel upset about. It just is. I hadn't thought about how I was imposing my own limits, and that, if I tried, I could overcome them, even a little bit.. I was scared because I knew going there would hurt. What I hadn't expected was how much I would release emotionally just by trying.

I started with the left leg, because it was easier, and, fortunately, it was where she started. I felt the anticipation building when I came out of the pose. It was time to shift weight to the right. It was time to try. "Concentrate on one point...with each exhale, lower yourself a little deeper..."

I focused on the tops of the barren trees in the distance outside my window, the bird fluttering about. I lowered myself deeper, [scared](#), feeling pain and discomfort. I kept going. I took a last inhale and released.

When I came out of the pose, I paused and sobbed.

First of all, I was glad I wasn't in a group class! But joking aside, it was a transformative moment. I had spent so much time saying that the wound didn't bother me. People were always horrified when I explained what had happened, but I would wave that away. I was good at waving away my real feelings. Truthfully, I sometimes couldn't find a way to express my real feelings or even understand them. I struggle with that still. And I have my coping mechanisms, and that can lead to confusion. I had confused strength with fear. I was afraid to say, 'You know what? This bothers me a lot. I'm angry that this is with me. That, in some way, HE is still with me. This isn't fair, it sucks, and I want to sleep on my left side.' But it was more than that.

A deeper truth dawned on me. I had set the limit in my mind, making it bigger. By allowing myself to put all my weight on the right in the pose, I let go of something. I faced a difficulty, and pushed through the pain, and felt stronger for it. I also felt something lift from my chest when I stood. That experience had weighed me down in ways I hadn't recognized. Suddenly, years of pain came into the light, and a simple yoga pose helped me look at it straight on and face the challenge.

I now practice that pose everyday. Even if Eagle Pose is the only yoga-centric thing I do all day, I do that. Because I'd rather think of myself as one of those free birds outside my window, or an eagle, than a wounded bird that can't get her damn wing to work.

Jessica Quiroli is a baseball and high school sports reporter for Minor League Ball and the Durham Herald-Sun, as well as the creator of her own baseball blog 'Heels On The Field'. Jessica has been published in the Binghamton Bulletin, The Trentonian, The Worcester Telegram, and on MLB.com. She practices yoga and meditation most days of the week.

Losing it

The key to teaching those who approach yoga for weight loss is opening them up to the mind and spirit benefits of the practice as well.

By Liz Yokubison

http://www.yogajournal.com/for_teachers/2727?utm_source=myyogamentor&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=bullet

It's a new year and every yoga instructor knows what that means. Classes packed with those recommitting to their practice and new students, many of whom come to yoga to shed unwanted pounds (holiday or otherwise.) While this might seem to contradict the yogic goal of acceptance, it actually provides teachers the opportunity to share yoga's far-reaching benefits. But first, you have to meet students where they are.

Over the years, Edurq#Edswlvwh, founder of Srz hu#rj d, has worked with many students who have sought out yoga to aid in weight loss. "I tell them they've come to the right place," he says. "But, I also tell them that they will come out of this with so much more than their initial expectation." Baptiste believes that a large part of yoga is personal transformation, both on and off the mat. Weight loss is just the beginning.

Enough of a Burn?

Before you can help your students meet their goals—and learn other lessons yoga can teach—you have to know a little about the science of weight loss. To lose weight, you have to burn more calories than you take in. But since yoga is gentle compared to other forms of exercise, can it really burn enough calories to lose weight?

According to a 2005 study published in *Alternative Therapies* by Alan R. Kristal, associate head of the Cancer Prevention Program at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle yoga may help individuals trying to lose weight. The study found that overweight participants who practiced yoga regularly over four years shed pounds with yoga. During the same time period, normal weight men and women who practiced yoga were able to more effectively maintain their weight over time.

Sarah Fazendin, who began doing yoga two years ago, is an example of how yoga can change the number on the scale. The marketing executive started an energetic vinyasa |rj d#sudfwfwh to shed post-pregnancy weight and lost 15 pounds by committing to a daily practice. "I used to run and go to the gym," Fazendin says. "I hated it and never felt particularly good while I was exercising. Since I started doing yoga, I stopped all of that. Yoga is seriously the best thing that has ever happened to me."

Baptiste agrees that a strong vinyasa practice can accomplish weight loss, but cautions that yoga is only one part of the equation. "If you just look at yoga as cardio fitness to lose weight, it may or may not accomplish results," he says. "The desired result is to come into balance. Yoga is a wonderful way to strengthen the body. Placing healthy demands and healthy stress on the body sparks the metabolism since more muscle burns more calories." He recommends supplementing yoga with exercise that increases a person's heart rate such as walking, cross country skiing or cycling.

Mindful Eating

Because of yoga's holistic nature, the key to helping students achieve their weight loss goals is not merely teaching the asanas but guiding novices toward mindfulness. The focus on breath, p hg lwdlwrq and the ability to be in the present moment, translate off the mat as well.

Another study by Kristal, published in *The Journal of the American Dietetic Association* in August of 2009, concludes that yoga increases mindfulness during eating. This leads to less weight gain over time, independent of the physical practice of yoga itself.

"Teaching people to sit still and recognize their thoughts, emotions and perceptions around food is part of it," says Kristal. "You need to give yourself enough time to figure out if you're eating because you're hungry or because [the food] looks good."

Traditionally, losing weight has been one dimensional: the combination of diet and exercise. Yoga, on the other hand, provides increased core strength, flexibility, and lean muscle while cleansing and strengthening the digestive system. Rebecca Brenner, nutritionist and owner of Park City Holistic Health in Park City, Utah says, "Digestive health is essential to all health. It will affect the way you break down and assimilate food, vitamins and minerals. If you are not digesting properly, your body will trick you into cravings that can affect your weight loss." If you're going to give your students nutrition advice, suggest eliminating as much processed food as possible and replacing it with whole foods such as fish, chicken, fruit and vegetables, says Brenner.

Fazendin acknowledges that yoga changed her digestion and eating habits as well as her weight. "I noticed my digestion was greatly improved immediately, and then about six months ago I became a vegetarian," she says.

While [rjd#ndfkhu#udlqlqj](#) discusses proper nutrition as one of the five points of holistic health, Brenner suggests that instructors stay within their range of professional expertise. "If a student was coming to yoga to lose weight, I would encourage them to speak to someone who is nutrition professional," she says. "Nutrition is such a huge part of weight loss and you don't want to give out wrong advice."

Achieving Results

So what are the specific steps that you, as a yoga instructor, can recommend to students looking for a more holistic approach to weight loss? Baptiste suggests that students must first commit to a regular practice, three to six days a week. His ideal combination is three days of classes supplemented at home with an instructional DVD. Next, students need to organize the rest of their lives around that commitment, including their practices off the mat. This means cleaning up their diet and ensuring they get enough sleep.

Finally, Baptiste suggests that his students begin a regular meditation practice for 10 to 20 minutes each day. This can be a guided audio meditation or simply sitting quietly to calm the mind. "These steps all affect each other: meditation, diet and practice," Baptiste says. "They all go hand in hand as a triangle and will have a great impact on how you're relating to stress by creating more of it or less of it."

To help students make these transformational changes, it's helpful to consider yourself as more of a mentor than a teacher. Demonstrate to students how yoga naturally creates balance by reducing stress, calming the mind, and connecting spiritually. Allow ample time for meditation at the beginning of each class and guide students as they settle into this reflective state. Throughout the practice remind students how pPranayama translates into daily life, reducing stress and maintaining focus, just as it does in each asana. Lastly, encourage students to accept themselves (and their bodies) just the way they are. By modeling these behaviors you can help novices fully embrace the practice instead of viewing it as simply a means to achieve weight loss.

The most important thing for any new yogi is not just focusing on the immediate goals. "Yoga is really a process of learning about your body, being comfortable in your own skin, and knowing it is a process that you can be in for a whole lifetime," Brenner says.

That means giving it your all and seeing where the practice takes you.

Liz Yokubison is a freelance writer who lives in Park City, Utah. She loves to write about her passions: yoga, mountain living, health and wellness.

NASA Confirms – Super Human Abilities Gained

by [Stasia Bliss](#)



Ever wanted to be in more than one place at a time? That's right, I'm talking about the super-human abilities that can be gained by those who follow the protocol for what's known as sun-gazing, a valid practice recently confirmed by NASA. Many proponents of this ancient technique, used by many cultures such as Mayan, Egyptian, Aztec, Tibetan and Indian yoga, report not only healing benefits to common illnesses, but obtaining super-human abilities such as advanced telepathy and going completely without the need for food.

What is Sun Gazing?

Sun gazing (also known as sun-eating) is a strict practice of gradually introducing sunlight into your eyes at the lowest ultraviolet-index times of day – sunrise and sunset. Those who teach the practice say there are several rules to the practice. First,

it must be done within the hour after sunrise or before sunset to avoid damaging the eyes. Second, you must be barefoot, in contact with the actual earth – sand, dirt or mud; and finally, you must begin with only 10 seconds the first day, increasing by 10 second intervals each day you practice. Following these rules make the practice safe, says sources.

Nikolai Dolgoruky of the Ukraine calls himself a 'sun-eater'. He has been practicing sun gazing for the past 12 years and has largely subsisted off solar energy since he began. Others have reported losing the need for food after only 9 months of sun gazing (by which time the practitioner has worked up to a maximum of 44 minutes). After 9 months of practice, you need only walk barefoot on the earth for 45 minutes per day, 6 days in a row to further the process of what has been initiated by sun gazing.

Sun-gazing is a practice also called the HRM phenomenon, coined as such after Hira Ratan Manek, the man who submitted himself to NASA for scientific testing to confirm that he does indeed possess the almost 'super-human' ability of not eating, gained through his dedication to this interesting marvel. Funded by NASA, a team of medical doctors at the University of Pennsylvania observed Hira 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for 100 days. NASA confirmed that he was indeed able to survive largely on light with occasionally a small amount of buttermilk or water during this time.

What happens to the body during Sun Gazing?

During your first 3 months of practice, the sun's energy is moving through the eyes and charging the hypothalamus tract, says those who have studied this technique and used it. The hypothalamus tract is the pathway to the rear of the retina which leads to the brain. The brain then, over time, becomes activated by the energy supply being received by the sun. You will first experience a relief of mental tension and worry, since most worry is fueled by the energy received by the foods we eat. Since food gets its energy from the sun, it is said to be readily available to sun-eaters without the trouble of digestion. Though hunger is said to eventually cease, it is fine to continue eating regularly during initial stages, until appetite disappears naturally.

Another benefit early on is said to be an increase in confidence and an ability to easily solve your problems, as you are without tension. Everyone has at least a bit of psychosis, but during the first few months of sun gazing practice, it is reported that these attitudes go away and a positive nature gracefully replaces the old persona full of fears. By the end of 3 months, the gazing time will have increased to 15 minutes per day.

Reports on sun gazing say that the bad qualities normally associated with any person will gradually disappear and good qualities will remain, explaining that 'bad qualities' only develop in the absence of sunlight. Bad qualities like anger, fear, jealousy, lust – are said to disappear – and be replaced by a certain confidence and 'spiritual knowing' that senses more purely the heart of an issue.

At 3-6 months of gazing, the studies show that physical diseases start to disappear. They say that by the time one is gazing 30 minutes per day (building up 10 seconds per day) all the colors of the sun will have reached the brain. Color therapists attribute their healing of certain diseases to flooding the body and brain with the particular color that is lacking – depending on the ailment. For example, in liver disease, the color green is deficient. The kidneys need red, and the heart, yellow. All of the organs and all of the systems are said to respond to different colors of the rainbow, which is why it is also recommended to eat a diet rich in a variety of colors. It is recommended during the 3-4 month period that you use autosuggestion to see your body already healed of any perceived weakness or disease. This action will facilitate the process of returning to wholeness.

As you continue the process, it is reported that after 6 months, the energy stored from the technique is no longer being used for repairing the body or the mind and can move now into supporting you in gaining more super-human abilities.

What's Beyond Healing?

By seven and a half months of gazing, now at 35 minutes, need and desire for food is dwindling. According to sun gazing experts, food is not actually needed to maintain the body, only energy – and 'sun-eating' provides that energy. By 9 months, all taste for food, including aroma, all hunger pains and cravings disappear. Those who make it this far say that they report a noticeable 'change' in the way their brain feels – like it's "charged up." After 9 months of sun-gazing – reaching a maximum of 44 minutes – it is advised that you give up sun-gazing and redirect your attention now to the Earth.

For 6 days straight, one is to walk barefoot on the earth, 45 minutes per day. During this barefoot walking, the pineal gland is said to become activated. Professional sun gazers and those

researching the science say that each toe is connected to a specific gland, and by walking barefoot on the Earth, you activate these glands. The big toe is thought to be aligned with the pineal gland, the second toe with the pituitary, then the hypothalamus, thalamus and finally the pinky toe correlates to the amygdala. Walking barefoot, with the sun now falling on the top of your head, practitioners claim to create a sort of magnetic field in and around your body that recharges you and your brain.

Apparently this walking barefoot part is the most important aspect of the practice. As you continue walking on the Earth, this is when the magic really begins. The pineal gland is activated more and more by this walking procedure. Intellect is said to increase, along with memory. The pineal gland has navigational and psychic capabilities, meaning telepathy, the possibility of flight... now we are getting somewhere! Have you ever thought you would like to have your body in more than one place at a time? Well, sun-gazing is said to be the magical key to such abilities.

If you can barefoot walk 45 minutes every day for a year – you are golden. At that point, only a maintenance of 3-4 days a week is necessary to maintain the capabilities you have acquired.

Are there any dangers?

Doctors and eye care professionals caution against looking directly at the sun, saying that it will damage the retina. However, if done correctly, sun-gazing at the correct times of day, studies show there is no risk of damaging the eyes. Those who have been sun gazing for many years have had their eyes checked to show no damage, though it is advised that you have your eyes checked in the first few weeks of your practice, so you can know for yourself.

To sum it all up...

Remember, it's 10 seconds the first day, at sunrise or sunset, adding 10 seconds per day each day thereafter. After 90 days of accumulative gazing equaling 44 minutes, you cease the gazing and start the barefoot walking 45 minutes per day for 6 days. At this point, I could imagine, hey – if you made it this far, what's a year of barefoot walking an hour per day to keep it all? You will have to try it out and see for yourself.

If you are really interested in gaining super-human abilities, confirmed by reputable organizations like NASA, as the ones mentioned above, sun gazing sounds like a fairly straightforward path to enlightenment. To find out more about sun-gazing and how others have done it, visit the website on [Sun-Gazing](#). For part one of the amazing Sun-Gazing documentary, check out the video below.

Gaze directly at the Sun

by Maggie Anderson

Please note that this is an excerpt from my book, [Divine Embrace](#), which also explains Kundalini & Ascension in further detail and how you can work through your symptoms and more.



Sunrises and Sunsets have a beautiful power over me as I bask in their glow. I am reminded and overflowing with the Divine right then and there.

Trees hold a luminosity I never knew existed until recent years. Their energy and Prana is amazing and revitalizing to the mind, body and Soul. Flowers remind us of the blossoming enlightenment that is our destiny through the evolution of all of mankind. Not to mention they are extremely and uniquely stunning and filled with enjoyment in their exquisite beauty.

Since the Sun sends Prana to the food we eat and the air we breathe, it is not a stretch to know we directly receive Prana from the Sun. We can receive pure Prana straight from the Sun by simply sitting out in the sun or by also using a technique called sungazing. Sungazing is an amazing ancient process that brings solar and healing energies to the body, mind and Soul. I've recently picked up this practice again and I feel amazing throughout the entire day. Not just for a few minutes or hours but the entire day!

The practice of Sungazing is where you will gaze at the sun with your eyes (no glasses or sunglasses), during safe hours, barefoot on the Earth. These safe hours are anytime within the 1-hour window after sunrise or anytime within the 1-hour window before sunset. As Hira Ratan Manek of SolarHealing.com/Sungazing, states: "It is scientifically proven beyond a reasonable doubt that during these times, one is free from UV and IR rays exposure, which is harmful to your eyes. To determine the timings of sunrise or sunset, you can check the local newspaper, which also lists the UV Index as 0 during these times." On your first day you will start gazing for 10 seconds. On the second day you will add 10 seconds, on the third day you will add 10 more seconds, and so on. Hira Ratan Manek further states: "When you reach 30 minutes duration of continuously looking at sun, you will slowly be liberated from physical disease since by then all the colors of the sun will have reached the brain through the eye. Brain regulates the flow of color Prana appropriately to the respective organs." An obvious question is what happens when it rains or is cloudy for several days straight. I asked this question to Hira Ratan Manek who kindly and speedily responded back to my email query with: "Don't worry of missing days. They can be any number in row. Just continue from where you left. Need not restart at all. Practice when possible and just increase every time you do it as suggested. After sungazing close the eyes till the inner image goes away and then look elsewhere."

Usually by the end of 9 months or 44 minutes your practice will be complete, your body solarized. From then you will walk barefoot on the Earth for 45 minutes for six days or if you desire to no longer hunger food you can walk barefoot for 45 minutes a day for a full year. It is the conclusion of Hira Ratan manek that, "if you are fortunate to activate the brain optimally you surely will reach enlightenment". I have not fully completed this practice so I cannot give an official account of my own yet. However, Yogananda shares in his book *Autobiography of a Yogi* of his interviews with many saints and mystics regarding no

longer desiring food that their “common reply was that the sun energy entered through a secret door and reached the medulla oblongata in the brain”. They did not share further what the secret was at that time. If you desire learning more you can check out Hira Ratan Manek’s website at solarhealing.com/sgprocess.htm to view the full description of how to safely practice sungazing. As for me, I continue to sungaze sporadically and love the effects. So I know it is something I plan to continue throughout my life.

Take notice of the high quantity of Prana near trees, plants and flowers, as they receive Prana from the Sun and produce more of it. The Sun feeds and brings everything to life with its Prana force. The sharing of the trees and our divine course in life with them becomes more genuine. The trees are feeding us more life force as we live with them. We need the trees oh so dearly. We can also send them loving energy right back in thanks. The sharing is divine.

Working with nature and becoming more in tune with nature, as the animals do automatically, we become more energized, joyful, and in tune with the natural rhythms of life. We are more in tune with Mother Earth and intuition is more natural and innate. Just as animals are more in tune with catastrophic events of the earth, and other subtle disturbances and rhythms, so too, would we be if we only take the time to breathe in the essence of Mother Nature every day. Every day take time to walk in Nature, go outside and breathe the air (and prana), feel the sun and moon on your face and feel the essence of being a part of Mother Earth (and Shakti). We are a part of Mother Earth and she is a part of us. We can easily tune in to the inner yearnings of Mother Earth and our Divine purpose follows suit. It’s an amazing connection.

Neuroscience and the True Purpose of Yoga

By Jonathan Davis



We all know it is good for you, but is the true purpose of Yoga being revealed by science?

For some time, whenever I went to a yoga class, I'd get that feeling you get when you come in part way through a television series. I got the gist of the story and was able to go along with what was happening but it wasn't until yoga teacher and human movement specialist [Simon Thakur](#) explained some details around what I'm choosing to see as 'the beginning' of the story that things really started to make sense.

The Foundations Of Yoga

The foundation stone I discovered I had been missing was the *purpose* behind all of the postures. Simon Thakur shared that one of the core functions of yoga is about increasing awareness throughout the body with a particularly important focus around the central axis of the body, between the spine and the organs. From here, a fundamental aspect of yoga practice can start with the awakening of our ability for the spine to undulate backwards and forwards, undulate side-to-side and to twist – and awakening this ability in each individual vertebrae. This was the foundation stone I was looking for.

Like going back to the beginning of the television series I'd started watching in the middle, I suddenly saw new depth and had a more complete understanding of everything I'd already seen so far. For example, it suddenly occurred to me that this opening of spinal flexibility and increase in strength helps one to sit for extended periods of time with the spine in a state of alignment, for connection to higher awareness in meditation.



“A fundamental aspect of yoga is the awakening of the spine’s ability to undulate and twist”

It didn’t take long to realise that this was the tip of an iceberg of knowledge that Simon Thakur tends to keep below the surface. Thakur draws from his experience spending extended periods of time studying ancient practices in their home cultures, including traditional [Svastha Yoga](#) in India and [Xingyi](#) in Taiwan. His philosophy of 90% practice, 10% talking about practice has thawed a little in recent years and I was fortunate enough to see him present a public talk earlier this year which shared some of the pillars of the practice he has developed known as [Ancestral Movement](#). It’s a combination of ancient traditional practices, cutting edge developments in neurobiology and evolutionary theory as well as a deep respect for... well... playing like a monkey. Here’s a quick summary of what I learned at Simon’s talk, in February 2015.

By Feeling Our Own Body We Feel The World

Inside my own body, I can feel my own breath, if I really still myself I can feel my heartbeat, and maybe even the pulse at my carotid artery. Beyond that, I can’t feel much – and this is common for most people living in the modern world. The foundation of yoga may be about waking up sensitivity to feel each individual vertebrae independently, but it also extends to building increased sensitivity to all parts of the body, both internally and externally. What science is discovering is that through our increased ability to feel our own bodies, we increase our ability to empathically feel the world around us. To understand how this works, we need to first get our head around bodymaps and mirror neurons.

“The current human disconnection from the natural world starts with our disconnection from our own bodies, which we as a culture inherited – to a degree that most of us generally don’t

quite acknowledge the extent of our inability to feel our own bodies.”

– Simon Thakur



“Waking up sensitivity to feel each individual vertebrae independently”

Bodymaps and Mirror Neurons

Known to neuroscience, psychology and cognitive science, [bodymaps](#) (such as those found in the [somatosensory cortex](#)) are the parts of our brain that electrically light up when we physically feel something, or when we think about feeling something. They’re called maps because the part that lights up for our hand is right next to the part that lights up for our arm and so on. If a scientist was to stimulate one of these parts of our brain with electricity, we’d feel sensation in our body part, even though nothing was touching it.

“If we can accept that [our] awareness of my body is not a fixed thing, it can change, it can change hugely... and I can change it, and the what I have inherited from my culture is not necessarily the best way it could be then I take that on, and I can use any practice from any tradition or I can make up my own, anything that will involve stimulating, whether through movement or awareness, every single little part of my body – maybe starting with the spine.”

– Simon Thakur

[Neuroplasticity](#) is our brain and nervous system’s ability to rewire itself according to what we focus our attention on. For example, as we practice a particular posture, the repetition creates more neural connections from the brain’s associated parts of your bodymaps. More nerve fibers are also created along the connection through the nervous system to that part of the body. As we

do something more, our ability to receive more information about the subtlety of what we are doing increases. [Mirror Neurons](#) give us the ability to feel what it feels like to be doing something, simply by observing another person doing it. For example if someone waves their hand, [around 15%](#) of the neurons in our own bodymaps in our brain around our hand and arm of that area in our brain light up. The study of Mirror Neurons has widely been referred to as the science of human empathy.



“Sitting in a chair every day, we lose flexibility and awareness in our spine as well as the majority of our body”

Yoga and the Biology of Compassion

When we sit in a chair at school or in an office all day, every day, we lose flexibility and awareness in our spine as well as the majority of our body. On the other hand, when we do a practice like yoga, we increase the amount of neurological detail in our body maps and our nervous system. We can feel more subtle detail within ourselves. Because there is a larger volume of wiring that has been built up in our nervous system, so we can feel more information. This also means that as we increase the volume of neuronal detail in our bodymaps, the 15% that behave as mirror neurons increase and 15% of a larger volume of neurons is a larger 15%. By feeling more detail within ourselves we increase our ability to feel empathy for others.

‘The more awareness we have developed of our internal processes is, the more we will feel and notice whatever signs –changing complexion, changes to the rib cage posture, the more we can tell if something is wrong or ok in another person.’

– Simon Thakur

We are Animals

Perhaps the most profound element of Simon Thakur’s Ancestral Movement practice is the recognition that humans have been exploring physical movement as a necessity for survival since long before recorded history. He theorises that the more we participated in practices like animal mimicry, the more we were able to understand our environment through our internal mirror neuron response, feeding us vital information about food, hunting and the natural world.

“If we take the spine as an example, and we practice movements that open up every segment of the spine, so the spine is free to undulate, rather than the spine moving as a rigid block, you’re going to experience empathy in the sense that you feel in your body as if you are doing the movement yourself whenever we see a moving spine.

Humans aren’t the only creatures that have spines. Lizards have spines, fish have spines. If we don’t have full awareness of every little bit of our spine and it’s potential for wave-like movement then when we see a lizard, our spine parts of our brain aren’t going to be very active. Whereas if you have a practice that involves spinal undulations and involves opening up every little bit of you central axis and your spine, then when you see the lizard moving, your spinal bits [in your brain] go crazy and you feel how much of you is in the lizard, how much of the lizard is in you.”

– Simon Thakur

The realisation I walked out of Simon’s talk with was that all of the indigenous cultures that speak of being part of nature and not separate, now have a biological basis for this very real animistic belief.

No Self, No Problem

By Mark Van Buren



Whenever there is [suffering in one's life](#) there is always a sense that someone—an unchanging, individual self—is experiencing that suffering. In fact, all suffering is born out of this concept of “self.” When there is belief in a self naturally attachments and aversions are created, allowing our likes and dislikes to start governing our thoughts, actions, and speech. We end up wanting what we don't have or having what we don't want, leaving us constantly dissatisfied. Even when we finally get what we want we are still in an anxious state, fearing the inevitable

loss of our impermanent attainment. We protect this sense of self at all costs, living a life constantly chasing pleasure and security, while desperately avoiding discomfort and insecurity. Living our lives in this way allows no room for [peace, joy, and contentment](#).

2,500 years ago the Buddha investigated this problem of suffering and found the solution: *anatman*. *Anatman* typically translates as “no-self” and is the understanding that we are not as solid or separate as we may think. Don't agree? Well, where is this self which we believe ourselves to be? Most would say they are their body, but this can't be true because our body is constantly changing and most of its functions are not even under our control. We are not the ones consciously growing our nails or digesting our food, and we sure as hell don't ask to be sick or feel pain, yet these things are constantly happening to our body. Furthermore, many people have lost limbs, had organ transplants, and cut their hair without any loss of self. We may then think we are our thoughts and emotions, yet upon deeper investigation of this we find we have no more control over them than we do the weather. The mind constantly moves around out of our control with fantasies, daydreams, cravings, judgments, aversions etc., all coming with a juicy set of emotions making them seem all the more real. All our lives seems to be happening to a single, separate self, yet upon searching for it, it becomes more and more mysterious and elusive.

It's important to understand that having no solid, separate self doesn't mean there's a void or that nothing exists. Clearly, here we are experiencing life. The understanding of *anatman* is not meant to be nihilistic, or turn us into a lifeless rock, but rather used as a sign pointing to our liberation from suffering. One common [Buddhist](#) analogy illustrates this well. Imagine a man walks into a dark shed and sees a snake. Frozen with fear his mind fills with thoughts about the snake attacking him, and how he needs to kill the snake or escape before being bit. In this moment his fear is very real, as is the snake, but when he turns the light on in the shed he discovers the snake is only an old rope curled up on the floor. Immediately his suffering is relieved with the realization that there never was a snake. Now, every time he goes into the shed he knows the rope is only a rope, not a snake, and has no fear. When his friends enter the shed and become frozen with fear he has compassion and simply explains how it's only a rope. Some

believe him and extinguish their fear, while others still aren't sure and continue to suffer every time they enter the shed. In the same way, our sense of self seems so real with its thoughts and emotions, yet when we realize there is no self our suffering is extinguished.

Another common example of this is going to the movies. For the hour or two in which we are watching the movie we are heavily involved with the emotions of the characters. We may get angry or even cry, losing ourselves in the drama. But at the end of the day we all know it's not real. Leonardo DiCaprio doesn't really die in the ocean after the Titanic sinks, but for that short period of time we believe it enough to shed some tears (Don't judge me, you know you cried too!).

Of course, realizing there is no self is much easier said than done! We are very much attached to this idea of a self. We don't just hear the teaching of *anatman* and magically understand. It takes many years of meditation and mindfully observing our attachment to our thoughts, sensations, and emotions before we start to loosen the grip of this deeply rooted belief in a self; but it's worth the journey. Don't just take my words and believe or not believe, investigate your suffering thoroughly and come to your own conclusion. I wish you all well on your inward path.

Mark Van Buren, a yoga/meditation instructor, personal trainer, and musician, has been promoting health and wellness for over 10 years. He has run dozens of workshops and retreats all over the tri-state area, and has been asked to speak at numerous colleges including Columbia, Montclair State, and Bergen Community. He has also worked with autistic children and adults, and released two solo albums, based on his inward journey through meditation, under the band name "Seeking the Seeker." He is currently the owner and head instructor of Live Free Yoga Studio in Northern New Jersey, and recently published his first book, *Be Your Sh*tty Self: An Honest Approach to a More Peaceful Life*.



Yoga Business Tips

Forever the Student & Guiding Others

As you progress it is helpful, and you may feel drawn, to pass on what you know to those who haven't come to the knowing you have come to. Sometimes we are the student and sometimes we are the teacher. We play both roles throughout our entire lives. You may be in a position to offer some insights, guidance and a way for others to contemplate their connection to Source. If you are guided to do this always know that even the student is the teacher of the teacher. We are all students and are all teachers. You will be guided further by all who cross your path. Choose to see those lessons and walk away enriched and further awakened.

It is a trap of many teachers (not all but a good amount of teachers) that they become jealous of their students success in taking what that teacher has so successfully taught them and surpassed the teacher. Instead of celebrating the success of the student their ego rears its ugly head. I've been on the receiving end of this a couple of times. It's not a good feeling especially when you respected and honored the teacher and their teachings so much that they helped you advance further; and especially if the teacher then puts blame on you with lies and venom that is not rightfully yours but rather theirs. When you see this you know you've got a teacher who is caught spewing what they need to actually be listening to. This is a great reminder that they too are also human.

Not to mention, there is a way to relay your opinion or guidance and the way is not through hatred, jealousy and cruel remarks. It is always through kindness and compassion; honoring the position of the student and where they are at in the present while guiding them to see a new way, if they so choose. As a teacher you must realize you are a student too. You must also take on the responsibility of a guide; such as using your integrity, kindness, compassion, wisdom and presence.

A wise woman, Akira Dawn from SpiritSpace.wordpress.com, gave me great advice when this happened to me. I was in a dark place after the teacher I respected put me down and even claimed I was in spiritual psychosis. For a short time I thought she may be right or that I should at least be open to that possibility. I pondered, cried, and cried some more. I fell into the trap of putting someone on a pedestal and saw them as "above" me rather than my equal. And now I know better. They are, after all, human. I received wonderful love from my Husband and truthful spiritual wisdom as well. And Akira Dawn, who also went through this, said that she has learned to steer clear of people who say they have no ego and are a pure vessel. Through her kind guidance she has helped me realize what I couldn't see. She helped me realize that this person's ego was hurt and she had to fight to keep it alive.

This teacher was talking out of fear (false evidence appearing real) not truth. Instead of being a true teacher who would guide a student they felt was "lost" this "teacher" sent me packing. That seems to say a lot right there. It really was fear, not truth, backing what she was saying to me. What I did was give an essay as a part of this "teachers" course that, as Akira Dawn states, "scared the teacher so bad with your radiant soul that she has been reduced to pointing a finger". Although this may be what that teacher felt was her truth, it is simply her opinion. I did not need to give away my power to her. It is always a choice. We have free will. When we work together we guide and notice that sometimes the student can teach the teacher. I have had many students that have shown me so much and I praise and honor them!!! They are my teachers. So we may teach or guide but are always students.

We need to work together, not separate. We need to communicate and work as a group effort. We need to strip down the silos once and for all and collaborate as a whole. When we do this the energy is that much more powerful and more effective for the ascension of the masses. We are ALL One: the good, the bad and the ugly. All learning's merge to One. One unique perspective for us all. There are more than 6 billion of us on the planet, so that is 6 billion unique perspectives and unique awakening experiences. So as we work together and merge our teachings we can provide the highest service to the Divine. We can advance together as One. There have been so many teachers, books,

workshops and people in my life that have ALL contributed to where I am. There are many paths and all lead to the same.

Teachers can only guide you and give guide posts along the way. They can't tell you what to do, as they are not you. They can only shine a light on the experience they have gone through and show you some areas that you may or may not go through yourself. Each of us are experiencing this life uniquely, so I strongly suggest you do what feels right to you and only take from the teacher what feels right always. And as a teacher you may give this same advice to others. As they say, if you want to learn something take a workshop, if you want to master it, teach it. So go forth and guide as you are divinely pulled to do so. As I always say, it's all Divine.

Be Authentic

No More Masks - Be Authentic

Whatever you are doing, whether its teaching a yoga class, taking a yoga class or anything else in life, it's important to live and be in your truth. Your soul always knows the truth. Tap into your throat chakra and express from the heart center always. Being authentic brings you back to presence and when living in presence you can only see your authentic self. Stay present and you are always going to come from an authentic way of living. Living authentically is so pivotal to living an enlightened, happy, joy-filled life. It's key!

Get on with your life now! Stop wasting your time pretending to be something you're not. Be who you are! And live. Stand in your integrity and be the grace that you are. Speaking and living in your truth isn't always going to be easy for many. It can be hard to be conscious of your truth and not go along with mass consciousness as well as social standards. We spend so much time and effort avoiding who we truly are and masking our authentic selves from others and even worse from ourselves. Speaking your truth will not make every one happy but it is your divine course to always be true to yourself first. To be real, that is living life with truth and meaning. ... to be the real and true YOU is an internal quest. We must rid ourselves of conditions of years past and social expectations. We must listen to our INTERNAL voice and not that of someone else's. It can take lifetimes to conquer this. It is a challenge to remain in our authentic self while still living peacefully with others. We may push a few buttons if another is resisting our true self but we must honor our true selves while remaining as kind and compassionate as we can to those around us.

What's comforting to know is that as you practice being conscious more of being your true authentic self, it becomes easier. An inner glow comes from within and you simply are being authentic no matter what others opinions are. It's as if you have no choice but to show who you truly are. It's liberating and illuminating!

And then we have Zero Point. Zero Point is named differently depending upon who you're talking to. In the Hawaiian clearing method called Ho'oponopono it's getting to Zero or that zero point. Some more quantum folks will use this name as well. It's known as a state of presence by Eckhart Tolle...being in that present moment...bliss...peace...getting to a frame of no-thought by others or a connection to total consciousness – Self-realization. The goal is usually to get to Zero point and stick around. Or, for some, go to Zero point and hang out for a bit but be able to still live life here and straddle the line. I like that option. Awakening to the self realized but being in that state of presence that takes away from simple awakening to complete awareness of the self. Mmmm I'm sure you now know it's kind of all one in the same and up to you how you filter it into

your system and your way of being. Being authentic is becoming aware of your truest self to the core. A natural progression can get you to your true self.

My heart tells me what I need to do. I share with you that we must stop listening to what others think about us. Stop getting validation from the outside and look within. Every time I look within, I truly feel more validation from Self...mmm... even beyond validation to truth and bliss and surrender. And things I don't like are there, but I am doing my best to be truthful about those things too. I know I ignore and resist at times. And as I get these reminders over and over I resist less and less and become more aware, more mindful. Even now I wonder of what you, who are reading this, might think of my inner process and writings. Will it be felt as my truth? It feels like truth at this moment. More surrendering, breathing and being reminds me that it's all divine. No matter what. And so, I breathe.

It's time to live in your truth, integrity and bliss. Be your authentic self. Not what anyone else wants you to be. It's all about your bliss barometer! What makes you feel good is your path to your authentic blissful self. Just because social conditionings have said certain actions or ways of living aren't "normal" doesn't mean it's not a part of YOUR path. You could be one of the few that brings out a better way of living simply by following your bliss barometer. Be open to new possibilities that truly awaken your path to live life to your fullest! Shine your inner light now!

I desire living a life that is spiritual, meaningful, authentic and blissful. One that brings me to the depths of the divine soul itself; a deep spiritual connection.

The things that are most painful to face or hear from another are the very things that are blocking your flow of energy to awakening. Our emotions and body never lie. Become conscious of those feelings and ask what you need to release to be true to yourself. Not listening to your divine self or truth when you hear it, no matter how painful is holding you back from the greatness you are. It's so easy to stay in your own world and only hear what you want to hear. But our shadow side must be faced, processed, embraced and integrated. Beliefs, behaviors, old fears and patterns are so easily rationalized away. You can try to justify it with this excuse and that excuse. But they are just excuses. They are only delaying the inevitable and making it harder for you to come back to yourself.

Don't wait for a certain time period in life. The time is only now. Make it happen, if only a little at a time. I've learned that we have to stay happy with ourselves no matter what we are "waiting" for or whom we are waiting for. But rather simply live as much as we can while processing a challenging experience. And then simply live in our truth, no matter what is going on around us. As you honor your authentic self, your truth, your integrity from within and show it to the world you align more fully to your divine purpose and passions. You see more fully your true essence and what you are meant to offer as your contribution to this reality. And it is simply that: living your authentic true self always while allowing others to do the same thing for themselves and their lives.

For example, some people are living their lives and their careers by what they think their parents or other people expect of them. Following someone else's guidelines of who they should be out of fear of how they might react. So instead of following their passion they are repressing a huge part of themselves in order to follow someone else's expectations of them and make others happy. But are they happy? Many find themselves in deep depression, anger and resentment when following this destructive path. When you wake up to realize you aren't where you want to be anymore or possibly never were, start taking steps to bring yourself back to who you desire being. One step at a time and you will get there. If you don't know who that is, a journal is a great way to

get your thoughts down and really see the experiences that led you to where you are and why. This will assist you in moving forward to where you desire being. Be patient with yourself.

Even in writing this book I have been constantly tested to be authentic and truthful in my writing. This book is my learning ground. I have caught myself many times writing what I thought people would like to hear rather than writing from MY HEART and MY AUTHENTIC SELF. So I have deleted a lot of text throughout the writing process of this book, simply because I realized it wasn't me.

Many of us live in a world of gossip, victimhood and drama. And if you're like me, you just don't want to play that part anymore! It's a wise person to start taking responsibility for all actions in their lives that have happened around them. Nothing is happening TO you. You are not a victim. Things simply Are. The art of forgiving yourself and others for experiences you've had may be of benefit when taking back your power. So as much as I can help it, I remove myself from those types of conversations that enable the victim stance and gossiping. If asked my opinion I may nod my head and shrug my shoulders as if to say 'I don't want to share or don't have an opinion'. Or I will simply state my truest opinion of a positive outcome and stating that it's all divine (rare in most circles but I feel each situation out). It's a work in progress even now!

If you can come to a stance of "It's not good. It's not bad. It just is." Then you are in a state of neutrality and allowing the world to work its wonders. Now, if your authentic self is still telling you that you must play a part in whatever drama is happening, that is divine as well. Allow it to flow but always check in with your soul, your truest heart. Ask if this is truly the authentic being you are striving to bring out to the world. If the answer is a resounding NO, then take that strong message from your true self. Do something about it next time the situation comes up or whenever it seems right for you now. Maybe it's simply doing nothing and that is perfectly divine.

Being authentic means no more artificial smiles or self-centered purposes. Pay attention to inner qualities. That is being authentic. Being authentic will not make everyone happy. Those people are feeling uncomfortable in their own skin watching your authentic self. This is their issue. They will get angry and mean or spiteful. Again, stay within your true divine self. It's time. You do not need another's approval in order to follow your dreams and live in your truth. Denise Linn says it best here, "I'm examining ways, within myself, to speak straight from the heart as much as possible in every situation (but in a way that is kind). I have found that when I communicate my truth with joy, clarity and focus (and the willingness to allow folks the opportunity to respond in whatever way feels right to them without judging them for their reaction) my relationships flourish."

Another example is telling the truth. I'm not simply talking about your obvious truths, but the "white lies" people tend to tell themselves and others in order to not be put into a situation they aren't comfortable with. Another mask covers you up. Let's say someone has a gift of service to offer. If the other person doesn't want their services but have a hard time saying no thank you, it gets uncomfortable. They may lead you on and say, "Yes, I'm interested. I'll get back to you" or "Yes, that sounds great. We'll talk soon." This causes negative attachments. When the service is offered again but there is no response back, the person must eventually come to the conclusion that they were blown off. Instead the other person could have spoken their truth and said, "No thank you". Their truth. It is simply what **is**. There is no need to spare feelings, even if the other person would be upset at first. **Your truth can be shared kindly**. It's simply a matter of logistics and the energies not being right for you in that space. It's divine!

Here again music plays a part in giving me a message. A song played in my mind over and over again. Just the chorus: "Say what you need to say" by John Mayer.

It is as simple as what the chorus states. Say what you mean to say. Say what you need to say. Now is the time to say everything that you need to say and what you truly mean to say. It is not the time to beat around the bush or use round-about ways to hopefully say what you mean to say. Speak your truth with kindness; be in your integrity and faith. It is okay to be vulnerable.

In your vulnerability is also your strength. We show that we are human. Humans have weaknesses as you are willing to work on and ask for assistance there is innocence, wisdom and purity. In your vulnerability you are seen as the truest light form you are and others will relate in new levels with your genuine openness. Not to mention that as you embrace your vulnerability you are opening up to know yourself and one another at a greater depth, to realize your true Oneness connection. Thus surrendering to the Divine occurs more easily.

To be in your truth is to be aware of your thoughts and emotions in every moment. Letting them flow in and out. Not repressing them with thoughts of saving them for later. Release these thoughts and emotions in whatever healthy means possible. If you need to write them down, do that. If you need to wait just a few hours for privacy and know then that you will give yourself and your soul time to heal and release.

Even when an answer comes that is uncomfortable, at first, it then turns into a blessing down the road. Even if you never see the blessing in your face, it's still there! So for the person who thought they were being kind by skirting around not wanting to offer an opportunity to another, they were really not listening or operating in their truth and they were then further adding more negative energy by allowing you to feel there was a chance at this opportunity. Instead, speak your truth, state the facts as kindly and compassionately as you can and allow the person to sever those cords and look for more opportunities elsewhere.

I am reminded of the movie *Liar Liar* starring Jim Carey. A hilarious movie that tells it like it is. A little boy makes a birthday wish that for one day his father couldn't tell a lie. The power of the Universe happens and magically this wish comes true. His father, played by Jim Carey, is a lawyer. So you can see the fun that happens here! The lawyer wakes up to the big lies and the little lies he's been telling people for years! Although this is colorfully expressed in the movie there are truths to what is shared. The judgments he internally made of other people come out. He realized the negativity he was spewing in his mind aimed at others. But then a light bulb goes off and he suddenly sees the truth and wants the truth and sees others in an even higher seemingly divine place. Granted this is my viewpoint here so that I can share the point of how being authentic truly is beneficial from the inside out! You notice the mirrors that people have been showing you for years and you realize the nature of being authentic brings you to a higher place of viewing everything as truth and every as divine. A magical landscape is opened up to you as you cross that veil. You cause a shift in your soul when you listen from within and act from your true self.

Being authentic and true to yourself doesn't mean you can't be genuinely kind and take another's feelings into consideration. Remember what you see in another is truly what you are seeing or judging within yourself. So if you see something you don't like, ask yourself what it is in you that you don't like or are judging. See the lessons that are shown. Sometimes there really is no benefit from talking of your beliefs about something. Sometimes the only thing that may occur is more hurt by stating something, so choose non action as your truth. Be the witness. See what lessons this reveals within yourself. Choose wisely while always living in your truth. Sometimes hurt

does happen but a truth was to be shared and that is divine. The person or persons hurting will grow from the experiences. It's all in perfect order.

Some people allow peer pressure or what someone else believes to decide for them what they will do or believe. When you listen to the majority or peer pressure and do something you aren't feeling called to do, you are not following your truest path. You will eventually get into a funk, a downward spiral and your resistance to your divine self will eventually manifest as illness in the body! So stay the path.

Yet another example is the desire to move your body. Aside from your responsibilities, if time allows DANCE! Dance like nobodies watching! Simply allow your spirit to unfold naturally. It's so easy to hear the whispers of the few who say that person is "strange" or "weird". But why is it weird to dance or smile while walking down the street. If you're happy why can't you show it!? Why has that become a "weird" trait. I guarantee you, if you start smiling down the street you'll eventually see many people lighting up from the smile you shared with them. Whether you see the shift in them or not, you have played a part in boosting another's demeanor simply by BEING AUTHENTIC!

Live your life as you wish it. Be alive in life. Share your authentic unique self with the world. Really emerge from the cocoon you may be sleeping in and feel the grandeur that you hold within you and allow it to shine out into the world now.

Part of living your authentic self is to allow others the same courtesy. Someone else's truth may not necessarily align with your truth, but that doesn't make them wrong. In that moment this is what they align with and is perfectly "right" for them. Just as with whatever it is that you are BEING in any moment is perfectly right and just for you. It's so easy to go off on a tangent and spout how right you are but sometimes the person listening isn't there in your vibrational space yet. If that is the case their vibration is not going to allow them to see what you are saying or where you are coming from. They simply will not hear you. Or the person listening might actually be on a higher rung than you and you can't see it from your perspective just yet. When you do, you'll say "ah-haa, now I know..." As Odo on the television show *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* says, "They are trapped in a single perspective. They cannot see what's really going on". And this is especially challenging with those you hold dear and as a parent. A divine balance beam is finely walked as much as possible here. There is teaching and there is preaching. You can offer your truth by simply living it and offering kindness along your path. But you don't have to force another to be in your space or your beliefs. They are right with wherever they are.

Be authentic and out yourself. Have a coming out party for yourself! Whether you are eat meat or not; whether you are a Christian, Buddhist or an atheist; whether you are a corporate 9-5'er, musician or gypsy; gay or straight; no matter the path all are divine. All lead paths lead to the same. All paths lead to Source.

We are living in multiple dimensions and ascending at different rates. Someone else might not quite be where you are yet and what they believe in is working for them right now. And again, another may be even more in alignment with a higher way that you aren't quite resonating with yet and that's perfectly divine as well. It's okay to allow others to be right where they are. When it comes time for another to learn something new, to ascend on the ladder of ascension and raise their vibrations, they will come to a new learning or truth. The teacher will be ready for them because they are ready to hear the teacher. When they come asking for your thoughts, then you

can share from a neutral peaceful place. As Shiva Rae so gracefully puts it, “The Goddess is my agent. I go where I am invited.”

Try to be the witness and simply see each path as divine. Mohandas Gandhi was right when he said if you want positive change, “Be the Change you wish to see in the world.” Occasionally a change that you take from an internal yearning feels uncomfortable. This is only temporary. It’s a new adventure. You need to give yourself a little time to give it a chance. Don’t let the majority be right by law of attraction simply because you don’t feel quite comfortable in a new endeavor you thought you wanted. Whatever you believe, the universe will provide you the proof. So believe the highest and best, good of yourself! Give it a little time to adjust in your body, mind and soul. It’s can be a little like a bumpy road getting smoother the more you practice this new idea or action. So enjoy aliveness, living and change as long as it is your truth!

When you are authentic, you are in vibrational alignment with your soul! Abraham-Hicks further states, “When you find vibrational alignment with You, you personally thrive. You feel good; you look good; you have stamina; you have energy; you have balance; you have clarity; you have wit; you have abundance of all things that you consider to be good. You thrive in all ways when you come into Energy Balance with You. Vibrational Relativity - that's what it's all about.”

Breathing techniques, meditation, exercise and being with nature are profound methods for connecting with your authentic self. These are helpful options to assist in releasing old patterns and reconnecting with the Divine. In your truth with how you feel about situations there is tact involved. But do speak your truth in the moment you feel it as best you can. If the moment is asking you to only speak this truth to yourself that is okay. As you do you will be surprised at the beautiful revelations that flow through you to others and from them to you. As you release with non-judgment you are in the flow. Amazing things open up more easily than before. You feel more at peace with yourself and your life as a whole. You are living in the moment. Breathe and be at peace!

Remember to always check in with yourself to know when your actions are coming from your true authentic being or from your ego. Consistently be conscious of your true self. Your ego is brass, abrupt, impatient, drama-filled, jealous, self-centered, spiteful, and filled with me, me, me, and I, I, I’s. Your authentic self is patient, trusting, loving, blissful, and joy-filled! You will feel the difference when you stop, breathe, check in and feel the inner knowing. There is peace in trusting the process. You can gain that deeper connection to that sacred and powerful place inside of you. In truth, integrity and authentic passion your inner fire emerges and shines forth for the world to see.

I Choose Me

Soul Mates in Ascension – I Choose Me

As a part of living authentically we must start with ourselves and stop chasing someone else to make us “complete”. Since we already ARE complete. So it’s important to dedicate a little time talking about soul mates.

Would you like to find your Soul Mate? Your one true love? Twin Flame? Whatever name you go by, it still boils down to first being your true self. Love yourself FIRST! Sounds simple, yet we humans tend to get it all mixed up and complicated. I was right there with a lot of people who had this same feeling. That maybe I will feel complete if I had my soul mate by my side. Someone

special to share everything with and someone that loves me and shares everything with me as well. Don't get me wrong, this is actually a great thing to desire and also gets us closer to the Divine by being in that vibration. Being open to love in this realm opens our heart to God even more, which is why we have these experiences. However, in combination with this desire we must be sure we are going along our merry little way following our very own passions and joys. Find your soul mate? Sure! Do something YOU love and as you go along your way you will naturally attract that person to you. God provides that which you are beaming out to the world. Surrender to ever finding that special someone. Surrender ever needing them. We don't need them. What we desire is a love connection found only within.

Susyn with www.kajama.com encapsulates this thought, "Master the art of keeping your focus on yourself, it will be easier to manifest fulfillment. The more you focus on yourself, the more you'll glow with spiritual light, and then you'll attract a soul mate like a moth to a flame. Good luck on your search for true love!"

Now, do Soul Mates exist? You bet. But it may or may not be in the meaning that you give the name. I used to believe in the notion of the one and only special partner that was only meant for me and me for them. This still may be true for some or some on different levels of reality. And now I believe all relationships are divine and progress into more beautiful expressions each time. I may be with my one and only Soul Mate now under this new belief. However, I know that the Universe is funny and constantly changing and evolving. So I am simply embracing the present living in the moment with my beloved Husband.

This need or desire for a Soul Mate may stem from before birth. Prior to incarnating we had an unconditionally loving connection to the Divine beyond all that we can comprehend in our 3D reality. This connection was then stripped from our memories when we incarnated so that we can go through the lessons that we are required to process in this lifetime. However, we still strive for that ultimate connection. Oneness. We look for it with our soul mates, friends and family. It is a built in desire beyond words. This love we strive to share and feel is the ultimate radiance. And for brief moments of time in relationships we will feel something that comes close to that connected feeling. But this is surface satisfaction. It then dissipates and we again search out the next "high" to get us to that beautiful feeling again. It is not wrong. It simply is.

Knowing this we can start a process of wisely diving deeper within. Now, we can feel our divine connection from within and someday upon full enlightenment we can embody the All That Is. We are not separate, it is just an illusion we are born into. As we remember this truth from deep within our soul we will stop looking for love outside of ourselves and feel that which was always there from within. We are Source and Source is us.

I'm embracing more the belief that a "Soul Mate" is not just your one and only truly devoted other half, at least not in this dimension. That name goes to your Twin Flame. It is believed by many that your Twin Flame is not someone that is incarnated here in the same life with you. Instead, they are lovingly supporting you always from the Other Side (Heaven if you will). They are your perfect match and reside by your side in the realms of spirit. You reunite once you have completed your mission here on Earth. Now Soul Mates fall under a new definition. I believe it is possible that we have many Soul Mates in one lifetime. Now this is **not** true for everyone. We each have our own individual lessons and karma that runs its course in our lives. Some people are lucky to have only one and others are lucky to have maybe up to five truly devoted other halves in this incarnation. That is to say that at the time you are with this person they are your match vibrationally and are with you for certain lessons. You may or may not, by the law of free will, choose to be with this person for a long period of time. Sometimes you are meant to go your separate ways and meet another who is even more your match now as your vibrations have naturally evolved into something new. A natural progression may ensue for some of us. Where you are with one soul mate in a certain pattern and then when you have released that old past pattern with this soul mate you are able to move forward away from said soul mate and be with yourself. Then sooner or later a new soul mate comes to you with new lessons to learn and evolve from.

These soul mates can be past life partners as well. So a strong connection can be felt from the cellular level as you remember in your soul knowing this person before. You may remember the agreement made in spirit to be with this person for a time to learn a few lessons and then move on. There is no one way to believe; no one way to go with this scenario. We are each unique and have our unique challenges to go through. My advice would be to enjoy the person you are with immensely as they are and enjoy expressing your authentic self with them and everyone you come in contact with.

I used to have my desires in the wrong order. I thought number one: Find Soul Mate, number two: Be Happy. In my evolvment I've learned that it's 100% the other way around!! BE HAPPY FIRST! Then you will attract all you desire and more. Because you are a vibrational match for what you receive it makes sense that if you are happy and love yourself you will receive a relationship that is happy and loving at that deep level.

What had to happen for me was I had to start turning down the first person who showed interest. I had to find and follow my joys and passions first and foremost. (And still do!) I started doing things I enjoy more and more and really enjoy spending time with MYSELF. I love my alone time!! I would read, go out to restaurants that I enjoyed, take classes I love, watch movies I like, order take out, whatever! Outside of loving spending time with my son, I enjoyed reading and going to the beach at night by myself, meditating, energy healing, teaching metaphysical classes. I found out that I really love ME! I love what I love, I love who I became and I still love who I am becoming. I forgave myself for many things I continuously guilted over for many years. I found out that in loving myself, I loved the world! I enjoy JOY!

Remember you do not have to first give to others and then to yourself. That's backwards. You must first be in balance with giving to yourself. There must be balance in giving and receiving. If you are giving too much of yourself to others, you do not have time to give to yourself. Suddenly your life will not only be NOT what you want, but you will notice depression kicking in, health problems and negative experiences continuously creeping in. But you can change that and you can do it right now. You can make that decision to follow YOUR true soul's path. Your destiny is to be happy now for yourself and show others how it's done. They will learn by your example. We all deserve to be happy now, not later. We only have right now.

We're not meant to suffer until we meet that special someone. Or to suffer until we get that perfect job or experience. We're meant to live the life we have now and enjoy it, while creating the best out of what more we desire to enjoy. To follow our excitement and passion!! Only then do we let go enough for things to just easily flow into our lives, like that special someone.

Do what YOU love and enjoy now. If, that is at first, starting small, do that. Sign yourself up for that sewing class, yoga class or night out with your friends that you've been holding off on. Just GO FOR IT. Change your routine and do something you love. Give yourself a new affirmation today: "I am willing to change." Say it daily or many times a day! Change is ever constant, so enjoy it!

If you are already with your Soul Mate, that's awesome! Remember to always be true to you no matter what. Whether you are with your soul mate or not. Always follow your true path. Sometimes it will take you and your soul mate apart and sometimes you grow together. Sometimes the relationship ends sooner than you think, but it doesn't mean that it wasn't meant to be for that time you had with them. There will be gem's you will always take with you from the relationship. You two grew together, even if it took you apart from each other. But always following your true self is prudent. If you are meant to be together for the long haul then you should have no issues being and feeling true to yourself always. If you can't do this, communicate with each other truthfully. See if there is common ground. If there is not, you two can be happy and content with yourselves knowing it is time to depart and start a new journey elsewhere. But know even if that happens, you will always be happy as long as you follow your inner joy.

It's important that when you have found your Soul Mate that you do your best not to get caught up in them. Don't expect them to bring you happiness and fulfillment. If they do that is

always nice. But when they don't and you get disappointed you've suddenly given away all your power to those expectations from another. Remember, they are human too and will not be perfect. The idea is to grow together in a strong relationship built on love, trust, happiness and honesty. There will be challenges but you have the core of your being from within that brings you true fulfillment. This can be shared once reached from within. Never rely on another for happiness.

In times past, I have caught myself. I sometimes catch myself doing it again and then "sever" another negative ego cord that I kept expecting something more from another when it's only within ME to make me the HAPPIEST person ever. We don't have to bare THEIR crosses either. Whatever is their stuff is THEIRS and we can be there as a support (but separate from their lessons none-the-less). We only have what is "ours" and can assist when we feel drawn in a detached yet compassionate way with the love we have for them. PHEW! From here it is nice to remember that what we see in them is within us too. So choose wisely how you view your partner, your children, your family, you co-workers and the world.

First and foremost, listen to **your** heart. Honor your desires. Your inner being pulls you to the thing that drives you most. Whatever feels exciting truly IS the path for you. Your soul will give you a "yes" or a "no" feeling towards what you love most. And a lovely woman just told me a few days ago: "If it's not a HELL YES, then it's a 'Hell no'!" If you don't feel it to the core of your being, then don't do it. But if every fiber of your being is screaming with excitement, joy and love it's safe to say you can run in that wonderful direction!

"...When you have the courage to share your vulnerabilities with others, you create a more intimate connection. Being vulnerable allows others to see the real you that lies beneath any masks you may wear. By letting someone see your weaknesses, as well as your strengths, you allow them to see who you really are. Rather than making you defenseless, your vulnerability demonstrates a courage and openness that can help your relationships flourish."

~ Madisyn Taylor, www.DailyOm.com

Now on to the fun stuff:

- Let people see the REAL you! For if you are not truthful with yourself and others then you are hiding something and it will eventually reveal itself. Be true and open. This goes back to being authentic.
- Life is a mirror. All that is around you is a reflection of what you are thinking, being and vibrating at. We receive a matching frequency of what we are in vibrational alignment with. So send out those vibes of LOVE for yourself and others. See the wonderful beauty in YOU and reflect that goodness to everything you come in contact with.
- Manifest the partner you desire! Make a list of all the things you'd love to enjoy in your perfect mate. Leave room for the Universe to work its magic in the details. Then sit back and visualize this love. You can visualize away! See yourself happy, content, filled with love and compassion for your partner and that person for you! Visualize feeling the highest love. Visualize good times, vacations, family, etc. Enjoy it! Truly FEEL these emotions. In our emotions is the magic to bring miracles. Feel positive love and bring it to you.
- Yes, you should still live in the moment and follow your inner joys NOW! Living in the now and putting desires out for the future are definitely okay as long as you aren't dwelling or falling into self-pity if it doesn't happen in the time you'd prefer.
- Make these manifesting moments your happy moments a few minutes a day.
- Then let go and let God as they say! Just let it go, surrender to the outcome completely and know the Universe is working out the magical kinks and delivering your package at just the right time.

Your very asking tells you it's in the works. So manifest away! We attract that which we align with. So align with feeling LOVE in every moment. Align with true positive uplifting energy and it comes to you easily. You desire the perfect love, so feel it NOW for yourself and those around you. Put it out there for that matching vibration to come back as you FEEL it and it will be so in the right time for the highest and best, good! ☺

Suddenly, one day while enjoying life my soul mate came to me. All while I wasn't even looking. I knew the moment I met him we'd be married. All because he and I had followed our truest paths, grew into ourselves first and were then and now in vibrational alignment with each other to have an awesome life we create together!

Start with yourself! Do what I did. Know you deserve complete happiness, love and joy! I chose me and I still choose me!

Find Your Balance

Balance is key. In these times, it's so easy to overdo it because of what you notice in your outer world. That reality does not have to be yours, unless you believe it does. You will get whatever it is you believe. When you have a belief, you attract all experiences that will confirm your belief. This is Universal Law. Whether it is a negative belief or a positive belief, you will attract it. So it is helpful to get to the core of your beliefs and be sure you are attracting what you truly want and not what some very old belief that is not serving you brings to you.

For example, you have a goal and it's a great goal too. You want so much for it to be done. However, are you enjoying the ride while it happens? Are you reaching for this goal a bit too hard? I am not about the destination so much anymore but rather the Journey. It's all about enjoying the here and now because that's all we have.

I heard an example from, I believe, Abraham-Hicks that says it best. There is a man who works long hours to achieve a goal of completing a project (and, who knows, maybe get promoted). He works "to the bone", barely sleeps, is grumpy with his friends and family more than usual. It takes him a year, maybe two, to reach his goals. He's finally there. But what did he give up? He gave up his free time. He gave up his well-being. He gave up feeling good along the way. We must enjoy the ride.

What did this man just manifest by the Universal Law of Attraction? He just attracted more experiences that will attract this same feeling he has been feeling during the past year or two while reaching his goal. He attracted more exhaustion, more projects that require long hours, more time away from family and friends and most importantly his well-being. His soul is suffering. Balance is the key.

In the wise words of Abraham-Hicks, "You can never have a happy ending at the end of an unhappy journey; it just doesn't work out that way. The way you're feeling, along the way, is the way you're continuing to pre-pave your journey, and it's the way it's going to continue to turn out until you do something about the way you are feeling."

Another example: I have a goal for my new web site design. However, I have a day job, a part-time job in the Spiritual Realm, a family and the requirement for balance in my life. So in the right time I will achieve my new web design goals, but I will not suffer in the process. I will not give up the sleep my body requires or the exercise and walks it needs to rejuvenate. I will not give up my wonderful family time. So I will balance my daily work responsibilities with my family and free time. And when there is time the web design happens naturally. It somehow works out perfectly and I am in balance.

"Yes, there are many things that need to get done, but in this moment I have to do nothing."
~ Oprah Winfrey

Now back to the example of the hardworking man who gave up his soul to get a project done. There must be a core belief somewhere in his being that told him in order to be happy he must work, or in order to make money he must work hard and suffer along the way, or there could be any number of reasons why this man is working hard. But to figure that out, it's an individual process. He himself must work on finding those answers within him, as he is the only one who truly knows. He can work with a spiritual hypnotherapist if he chooses or start with working by himself. Again, it's an individual process and no way is wrong.

EXERCISE:

Try this inner dialogue with yourself every day. Start now. Ask yourself questions in every moment for every thought and especially when you receive an experience that is not pleasing to you. This may or may not be serving your highest good. So for the highest good, you will ask to rid yourself of the core beliefs that attracted this situation. Ask your Angels for guidance and assistance in ridding yourself of old negative beliefs. You will notice patterns that will assist you in figuring out what you are attracting. I dive deeper into core beliefs in Book Two: *Divine Embrace*.

Take a few moments in privacy and meditation to dig deeper into yourself. The idea here is to rid yourself of more of your ego. To peel another layer off and find the true 100% perfect, whole, and complete self you already are. In meditation or in a space where you will not be interrupted start the questioning process.

If you have a specific experience in mind, hold that experience in your mind as you ask. Ask yourself: **"What must I believe in order for this experience to exist in my reality?"** Don't dig for the answer. It will just come to you.

Then ask yourself to go deeper. As you get deeper into the questions you may come up with a surface belief. Don't stop there. Only stop when you really feel it in your core. You may even feel a twinge in your solar plexus or deep in your belly. Go as far as you can and ask for this belief that no longer serves you to be removed.

Then ask that the Angels and the Divine/God/Goddess to fill this (now hole) with pure Divine light. Visualize pure white light filling you up and rejuvenating you for a fresh start. Pure intention is enough and will flow through you. I wish you a balanced life always!

Hear Your Soul's Call

Hear Your Soul's Call – Follow Your Passion

As you follow your bliss you connect more with your Divine self. You are meant to do what makes YOU happy. You are meant to follow your joy, your passion, whatever drives you in your happiness. This is what you will emulate out into the world. The Divine is you and you are the Divine. As you follow your true calling in life you are experiencing your unique self. And as you do this the Divine is always experiencing itself as you. Dance your dance. Each of us has a unique ability (or gift) that is what we are meant to do in life. For some it's clothing design, others it's farming the land for food and others still have a calling for entertainment in dancing or acting, etc. Each gift is ours to share with the community and the world. Do not be afraid to show who you truly are in all ways. As you allow yourself to be who you truly are you surrender to bliss and self. You align with the Divine.

It is said that in the new world in the days to come we will each live and offer our unique gifts in the community and there will be no money exchange. Each person's offering is in exchange for another person's offering. So we are all taken care of within the community and there is a sense of sharing and love. Some cultures around the world already follow this way of living. By some, they are seen as poverty stricken, but really they are living in peace and bliss. They are happy offering their gift to the community and enjoying life. In time we will all get there. Follow your bliss; it's your Spiritual Compass.

How do we tune in to our Spiritual Compass? We all have a guidance system from within. It's our intuition. As we awaken and ascend our intuition becomes more open and easily attainable. You know that pull you get when you really feel you should go a certain direction or take a certain path. That's our guidance system. Some like to call it gut instincts.

Take steps to hear your intuition or your soul's call everyday. For example, take a time to get quiet with yourself. You can meditate if you choose to, or simply take away all distractions to really hear the messages from within. When you turn off the TV, radio, ipod, computer and phone, as well as remove yourself from an active environment, you hear what's really screaming at you from within.

Hear your soul's call. Your soul is calling but many are misinterpreting it and many others are running to various distractions. Such as: to the refrigerator to fill up your belly, or to the television, or the store to buy one more thing, or having meaningless conversation/gossip. Basically any distraction your ego can think up. But you're not hungry. You don't need that extra item from the store. Will you remember that show you watched on TV tomorrow? Talking about others is a mirror on yourself. All of these distractions are taking you away from what you truly desire most, what you are really hungry for. Your Soul is hungry for Love, Compassion, Acceptance and Purpose.

Follow your Soul's call. Stop before your next distraction. Take three deep breaths. Then ask yourself, are you really hungry? Ask yourself do you really need that item you were about to go

buy? Do you really want to hear or talk nasty about your soul siblings? (Who are just growing with their own fears and doubts, wants and desires, just as you, only in their own way.) Do you really want to distract yourself from your Soul's Calling. It's calling to you now. When the answer to these questions are honestly and truthfully answered by your inner self, you can then ask a new question. What does my Soul desire? Immediately thoughts, feelings and happy ideas will FLOW to you! LISTEN! Hear the call.

Passion, Joy and Love are common feelings for you to feel in EVERY moment now. And these are the feelings that will come up when you hear your Souls' desires. What feels exciting truly is your next step. If there are many things, choose the most exciting. The one that feels the most passion, joy and love! That is your next adventure. There is no need to go back to the old ego ways of stifling down your soul's call with distractions. Now you can tell your ego enough is enough and hear your inner Souls' truth.

Live in the mystery and magic of creation. Feel the magic of all your of your power. You are part of the all-knowing and all-loving power. There is so much more to you than you know. Truly start to connect with the aliveness within you. See the unlimited potential and unlimited possibilities you have to share with the Self and with the world. You truly CAN do anything! You are powerful and transcendent. Show it off! Follow your heart and enjoy hearing your souls' call in every moment!

Divinely Inspired Action

Taking divinely inspired action is the next logical necessary step once you've heard your soul's call. We are living on this planet in this dimension for many reasons. One is to really live and enjoy life. We all receive divine guidance from within; from our hearts, from our Higher Selves, from our Angels. Sometimes it is a bang on our heads and many times it's very soft and gentle. When you receive inspired action to do something, don't hesitate. Go. Do it! Inspired action is **not** something you feel you should do for someone else. It is not something you do if you feel pressured. This is not inspired action. Inspired action feels very divine and very true to your nature. You will know when you receive this action as it speaks to your very core. And it feels familiar at times and like you can do nothing but whatever this action speaks to. At other times, a lot of the times, it feels subtle because it's so familiar. It is a small still voice within you saying, "You should do this. You should try this. See what happens." It's not always going to be a huge, strong, in-your-face message to take action. It will be small at first and then may get larger if you choose to ignore the tiny messages coming to you.

This is the same with manifesting. You will do the fun positive thoughts and energy flowing steps but you must follow through. You must take action. You can't simply sit there and expect it to come to you without you actually doing something when the divine action comes to you of what you should do. For example, your dream is to be a doctor. You manifest by visualizing yourself as a doctor, you think positive. But if you don't fill out the college applications and actually go to the school that resonates then you may never get to be the doctor you visualized. There are action steps that will come to you to naturally take for the results to occur.

Remember: follow your bliss; it's your spiritual compass. Imagine the blissful feeling you feel when you are following inspired action! It feels amazing. Whatever you are drawn to, go do it! If it feels good within then that is your bliss. Your heart guides you to the right path always. This inner pull is divine guidance for a job, for a creative task, for an experience you are meant to have, for a person you are meant to meet by following this guidance. The Divine knows more than we do. There is a mask over our eyes of the future blueprint. But the Divine knows more. So the Divine Source will send you inner pulls, blissful feelings and synchronistic events that guide you on your path. It is always there pulling you along. It is our ever constant assurance. This is true freedom and peace, as all you need to do is live in every moment following what pulls at your bliss!

Every time you take inspired action you are saying YES to the Universe. You are saying, 'Yes give me more of this!' And by the Laws of Attraction you receive more! And a positive spiraling affect and beautiful experiences flow into your life, as if by magic. All because you listened and took action. By taking action you also give others permission to do the same. You give permission to your kids, your siblings, your parents, your friends, your co-workers, and people you don't know to take action themselves! Likewise, when you don't, you also send that frequency out into the world and that flows back to you as well. It's your choice whether you take action or not. But observe. See how it feels when you don't. See the not-so-wonderful experiences that occur when you don't. Then take action from divine inspired action and see the amazing synchronicities and miracles that flood your life when you do! Taking inspired action is powerful.

Live Your Destiny of Service

Each of us are at different stages in our awakening process. As we awaken we will be guided to find out or rather may question what it is we are to do here on this planet as a way to contribute. Our destiny of service. Each of us has a divine role to express. Shine forth your true self. It's time. We each have an inner purpose and an outer purpose. Your inner purpose is always to remember and awaken the Divine being that you already are. This section is dedicated to your outer purpose. Your outer purpose is what you decide you will Be in this life in any given moment while holding on to your inner purpose as primary. You'll have questions as to what truly is your unique offering. Truly following your bliss is your spiritual compass. I've laid out some steps that surround learning your destiny of service. Many follow the inner guidance within them and are doing their divine service now. And for those that have questions or would like further guidance as to what that may be for them in this moment, this section is for you. Following are steps to living your destiny of service:

- Step 1. Find Your Truest Passion – Your Bliss
- Step 2. Cultivating Your craft
- Step 3. Taking Divine Action

Step 1: Find Your Truest Passion – Your Bliss

Your Divine destiny is also known as your passion. Whatever your passion is in life is also what you are meant to do in life as your self-expression to service the Divine. Whatever brings you joy and happiness, whatever feels good to you, IS your Destiny. There is something that is innate and organic within each of us. It is that which drives us to bring fulfillment and uplifting experiences to us. It is our Divine destiny to find and follow our truest passion. Because our truest passion is also our expression of Divinity. And that is our bliss. Whatever brings you joy, peace and bliss is your

driving force and expression in life. As I like to say follow your bliss, it's your spiritual compass. If you don't already know what it is you'd like to do in life there are some great questions you can ask yourself:

- What do I like to do?
- What is the driving goal of my life?
- What would I do even if I wasn't getting paid to do it?
- When I think of a time when I totally got lost in what I was doing, what was I doing?
- Does this job idea(s) feel right?

I've found many more questions for you to ask yourself like this and many valuable exercises that I find truly helpful in Karen Bishop's book, *Remembering your Soul's Purpose*. You may find this book quite helpful.

We all have a talent or gift we are called to do. This is your divine service that feels good to your Soul and anyone else who benefits is a definite perk. It might not be something you do full time but only part-time. We are each unique in how and what we will offer. Whatever it may be, it is worth pursuing. The more we follow our true passions and are in a state of allowing, the more those wonderful doors will open.

What excites you? You'll know because you'll feel it inside. When you have something in mind that you like doing or would like to do, you feel happy, free and excited! This is your higher self sending you and your body a signal to say that you are right on track. This is it! Follow this path and you **will** be 100% fully supported.

How do you know if you are close to your divine calling? If you are feeling stressed, worried, anxious or fearful, you are not in your divine self. If you feel good, happy, enthusiastic about where you are and what you are doing or not doing, then you are in the right place!!! It's that simple. Your feelings ARE your spiritual divine compass. Always check in with yourself and ask yourself how you feel within. Truly listen to your heart.

You may say that what you are truly passionate about seems far-fetched. What part of you is making you feel this way? Is there an embedded, even subconscious, belief that may have even come from childhood? These are some great questions to become more aware of and ask yourself. What part of you must believe that this is farfetched? Is it possibly a way to hold you back through a fear from your ego? Here is where we need to decipher between your Divine guidance and your Ego. Your ego has a purpose and that's usually to protect you. However, it gets off the wall a LOT! If you hear a thought and it doesn't feel good to you, more than likely it's your ego trying to instill a base fear in you to keep you from expanding i.e., for fear that you won't succeed, fear that you won't be supported, fear that you even will succeed, etc. Again, fear equals "False Evidence Appearing Real".

In the hypnosis training I received we were taught techniques in getting the participant to their core belief. (Core beliefs are also discussed in more depth in Book Two *Divine Embrace*). We all have core beliefs that we received either in past lives or in this life, say as a child. You can look back at your childhood, your parents and wonder about their dynamic and see how that ties in to you thinking that your passion is farfetched or beyond your reach. There may be some insights that come to you. When you have a base fear, just ask yourself what part of you makes you have this fear. Then when you have that answer, ask again, what part of you believes this and why. Take the **first** answer that comes each time and eventually you'll find something that rings true from within. Then work on transmuting that core belief. Just start to become aware that if it isn't something on the surface that is easy to crush like a bug, it could be a more embedded belief that you will pull from the archives of your brain and re-program yourself to think and feel positive about your new ventures.

Something to remember: Just by wondering and asking about your passion, you are manifesting it. And just by becoming more awake and aware of any fears that hinder the growth into those passions, you shine a light on them and start to transmute them into pure light. In essence, you squash them like a bug. Your core belief will decide what you bring into your life. The Universe

sends us exactly what we request. So what you see is what you are asking for, what your vibration matches. The good and the not-so-good. Change your core belief into a positive and believe you deserve all you desire. Then you start to emanate that frequency and receive more positive results.

Remember: "Your strongest fear is your strongest belief!" (Bashar). So change your fear (your core belief) and become a new higher vibration and attract more of positive higher vibrational experiences. I am repeating myself, but only because it's true and the more we hear something the more it embeds itself into our brains for our subconscious to listen.

And when one door closes another opens. Even if you believed you were heading in the right direction, remember that a new door will be provided. Maybe even a new path that you are more aligned with. And most important of all, when that door closes you must then trust that another door truly will open. And then...it will. You are always supported. The Universe supports you in all ways, always.

Remember that we can still be in our bliss even while we are *on the way to our passion of service*. It's the journey that is to be enjoyed always. Striving for something better without having attachments to the outcomes is a challenge for some. What is living in "The Way" is to simply serve in however you are intuitively guided to serve with joy in every step, withOUT attachments to the results. When you have an attachment to the result, you are bringing your ego into it and producing more unnecessary karma. Simply allow yourself to emerge naturally. Simply do your service, whatever that is, wherever you are in the process, with joy and happiness in the moment, in every moment. And as you ride the natural waves of life, intuitive Divine guidance flows to you and you move in joy always.

Law of Attraction and allowing

When you've decided you know what it is you'd like to pursue as your passion, you must start putting it out there. The Universe answers EVERYTHING we think and FEEL about. There is no question that we are 100% responsible for all things that come to us. So the jobs you've gotten thus far are everything that has been inside of you already and are there as stepping stone points for your own purposes. Each job has taught you many things about yourself thus far. So start to FEEL good about your passion. What you are doing is simply aligning with your divine calling. Your vibrations are a match as it is your purpose. As Wayne Dyer said in his fantastic movie *Ambition to Meaning*, you are not attracting something to you, but simply aligning with what is already yours. Start to visualize yourself doing your passion. Feel how fantastic you will---ARE feeling living your passion NOW. Remember, as your vibrations matches what you desire, it automatically comes to you by Law of Attraction. So as you feel what you desire, this is you resonating with your passion and drawing it to you. Your feeling is your vibration. As you match your frequency aka how you feel to your desire, you will receive it as you are matching the like frequency of that desire. As you FEEL it as if it is RIGHT NOW, then it truly happens RIGHT NOW.

There is a 17 second gauge of feeling to practice. Feel and visualize this for 17 seconds. All you need to do is 17 seconds of feeling something without an opposite feeling whatsoever and you've then manifested it!!! And if you can do it for that long, do it for another 17 seconds and another. If you get up to 68 seconds, you have done what's equal to 2000 "normal" 3D waking life working hours!!! That's a FULL year's work in a straight 68 seconds. This is explained in much more depth in an article by Abraham at Abraham-Hicks.com. AWESOME! Try it. Again, all you need to do is 17 seconds of feeling something without an opposite feeling whatsoever and you've then manifested it!!! Remember that even after your 17 seconds are up, NOT to feel the opposite or you bring THAT to you instead. If you notice negative feelings come up, CHANGE them. Think positive and BE the new passion you desire.

Another thing is that you can draw what you desire. Draw it and use it as a Vision/Dream board. This can be a drawing or cut-outs from a magazine. The visuals will be the job you desire. So, for example, if it is becoming a yoga teacher, you may place a picture of a woman teaching yoga

poses to students. You get the idea. Whatever way draws in the energy to you the most is the best way for you to do it. We are all unique and must do it the way we resonate with. There are seven different ways to learn something and it's helpful to have a balance of all of them to integrate the result. Some of us are visual, some tactile, some a little of both, etc. Again, as they say, thought, word, deed and action are potent when utilized simultaneously. Stimulate your senses. Put this on a board and hang it up in your office or place where you will see it often. Every time you see this visual think happy thoughts about it and FEEL it as if you are living it. You are a manifesting machine! ☺

How you feel about yourself matches what you will attract to you in life. How you see yourself from deep inside is how others will see you and is exactly what you will manifest in the present and future moments. And what you do for yourself is exactly what you will receive from others. So when you start to expect more from another that you don't even give to yourself, then you will be disappointed. Don't give your power away to that frame of being. Give to yourself as if giving to a child you love. Give the same to others. And watch magic happen in your life. See yourself as a magical being and see others the same. Watch the magical realm of life open up before your eyes just by opening up and surrendering to this new vantage point. The advantage is that when you see more beauty, expect more beauty, and give more beauty, you receive more beauty.

For example, I was extremely overweight. At 225 pounds I had given up. I surrendered to my state as a "chubby" person. It was then that I realized what I had done in my earlier years. When I was at a respectable weight for my body, I felt fat. I saw myself as a fat person and over the course of that thinking and ultimately that way of being, I did grow into the vision I saw myself as. I became overweight because I felt overweight. Low self-esteem was a contributing factor to my inner belief as well. Even though I was not overweight at the time, I manifested it into being, simply because on the inside that is how I saw myself. So when I looked into the mirror and realized what I had done, I woke up. I realized I needed to now see myself healthy and thin. I needed to gain that same perception of myself on the inside but as a healthy and thin person.

Over the course of some other life enhancing changes and emotional transformations, I started to really feel myself as a thin person. As I did this I also made smarter choices. I started a beautiful workout routine with Denise Austin (who exposed me to yoga as well) and started eating much less and much healthier than I had in years. The key is the combination of the *healing visualizations*, *law of attraction* and *never eating unconsciously or emotionally*. In eleven months I shed 90 pounds and I felt great! At 29 years old I felt better than I had in high school when I was thin. A transformation occurred within me with a simple intention of viewing myself healthy and thin from within. You can take this example and use it to work for you in living in the state of being you desire.

Now start asking yourself: What Does the perfect divine job feel like? Continue asking yourself that question and get yourself to the feeling of it and you're there. Stay there and if you lose that feeling, keep asking. What does it feel like to do (such and such) _____? Feel it, see it, live it, BE it. Enjoy!

One avenue for you to do what you love now is if there is a way that you can volunteer yourself in some fashion (at least to begin with); this will align you with those energies. You will start to match your vibration to what drives you and your excitement. Your passion. You will attract more of those situations to you the more you expose yourself to what you would like to do. The more you do this, the more you will believe it's possible for you to do that. Then you will attract people and experiences that tell you just that and you will be presented by the Universe with ways you can pursue your passion for the long-term. It's amazing how energy works!

Now, each of us is unique in our process to our passions. Some of us may have a couple of core things we'd like to do on a consistent basis and some of us have just one. We each will do it in our own time. Some will take on their passion part-time and keep a full time job. Some will start part-time and then go full time thereafter. No way is wrong. All are right. Some make a huge leap into their passion and take off. Some take the route of a slow progression. It's all in how you feel is

best for you. There are stepping stones you can take that will get you there in a wonderful divinely timed way. Maybe there is schooling needed for certain talents or gifts that is required before starting or required while you follow that passion. (More on this under step 2 to follow.) Either way, as long as you are doing even one thing towards your goal daily you will start to feel more and more fulfilled deep in your soul. You are always 100% supported. So I say go for it!

"It usually takes about 30 days to change a habit. Not because you need 30 days. You could do it in 68 seconds if you could hold your vibration there, but you have to consciously make that decision.The Universe does not know whether the vibration that you're offering is because of something you're observing or something you're remembering or something that you are imagining. It just receives the vibration and answers it with things that match it. And every part of the Universe including the cells of your body begin to respond to that vibration." ~ Abraham-Hicks.com

Step 2: Cultivating Your Craft

We are now highlighting the cultivating stage. When you've come to the stage of having awakened and you know what it is you desire doing as your passion, your joy, your hat for society, there is usually a step where you will cultivate that passion. Whatever requires developing will take place within this step. If you know what you'd like to do but feel more schooling is in store for you to master this skill--then go for it. You may feel a lot of practice is involved to fine tune this wonderful talent of yours. It is all you, so your essence will go into whatever it is you are doing. Someone doing the same thing will have a different essence to the skill. We are each unique and even in doing the same thing there are unique differences. Add your special touch to whatever it is you are cultivating as your craft or Divine Destiny of Service.

This step is perfect for you to really see what it is you want to do. It really helps you get to the nitty gritty of your passion and the actual steps you will take. Rather than wasting time in areas you wouldn't need to or that would really make life more challenging or difficult. (Note here that having a difficult time is not part of our path in Ascension, the end result is about enjoying our passions.) This time helps you to really embrace your truest passion and not allow things that are NOT in-line with your truest passion to "accidentally" sneak in there anymore. This is why the cultivating step is sometimes a necessary step. Here you are sure to mold yourself and your truest passions together. Really feel your inner yearnings and again continue to ask yourself the questions from *Step 1: Find Your Truest Passion – Your Bliss*, when you are unclear.

This step takes much patience and sometimes tolerance of doing something that isn't quite in-line with your passion just yet. For instance, my Husband, Don, is very into drumming and creating music. It's his bliss. He is in a few bands, one of which is a rock band for kids called *Character Rising* (found at www.characterrising.com if you are intrigued). Don and the band continue to cultivate their practice by working together, creating new songs, practicing over and over and building a fan-base by marketing their band and playing at shows (sometimes for free). While doing the cultivating stage Don is also a financial advisor full time in order to have the means to pursue his truest passion. Once the music takes off at a better rate he may be able to cut back on the other business. He will play it out and see how the chips fall while he stays in his passion as often as possible. Don is able to continue to cultivate his craft by modifying his full time business to something that better caters to his passion in music. He is still making ends meet and thriving in his passion.

So in this stage your juices are flowing. Your seeds are sprouting and you are taking daily action towards your truest passion. This is a time for building your energies.

In this process you might ask yourself if you are insane. Things like: "What makes me think I can do something that I like doing and make a decent living? I should be doing a "real" job!? I don't deserve to take it easy. I have to work hard to make money. What would people say? I don't think I can do this? It's a pipe dream and I have to get back to "reality", etcetera, etcetera."

These questions are your ego working overtime! These questions come from years and lives of conditioning you've been put through as well as limiting beliefs from this life and past lives. As Julie Meggles-Brenner from Kajama.com states, "We're at a tricky point where we identify more and more with our higher selves, yet we're not totally free of the lower vibrations that could make us vulnerable to undesirable experiences. For example, we may be full of faith and trust, but if there is karma to be resolved with someone or some buried wound, fear or issue at work in our subconscious mind, we can still attract the sort of experience."

It's time to un-condition those thoughts and create better thoughts. As you create better thoughts, you create better emotions that create better energy patterns. The more you do this, the more THIS becomes a habit and you attract only positive results of being in your passion. You can and do deserve to be happy NOW, not later.

In this cultivating stage you are able to really take the time to get clear about what you desire. As the path becomes clearer it is easier to manifest wonderful results. This cultivating stage is congruent to the progress you have made and are about to make. You are in-line with your desires and this is the Universe's way of giving you the perfect opportunity to craft your passion for living. This is a way to really sink your teeth into what you desire by reading about it, taking in any more knowledge that may assist you with your craft, setting the stage for when you will start this craft in a more full-time capacity.

Part of the cultivating stage is manifesting from within. Truly think about and visualize you doing your craft. See it, feel it and be it. As you do this more experiences and opportunities will come to you that may be big steps or are seemingly small but worth doing. Take the small and big hints from the Universe and your Angels. You can always ask God or the Angels to help you with clarity as they love to shine the light stronger for you where they can for your highest and best, good.

Where something may not seem clear and may even seem cloudy, even after you ask for guidance, step back. Take a breather and live in some of the joyful moments in your life. As you become more neutral you are able to see more clearer what steps need to happen. Remember, it is not about pushing or forcing yourself; as this will only make this harder on yourself. It is about going with the flow of what will be and what already is. Just be in every present moment and you will see what matters now is only Now.

For those already in step 3 and taking action, you are there. You've already spent the time and energy into finding your passion and have really worked wonders in just being in your happy blissful state as often as possible no matter what you are doing. One thing you will notice in the taking action stage is that you will still transform your passions and even change them completely. You continuously evolve, fine-tune and transform as you ascend. So you may be coming back to the *Cultivating Your Craft Step* a number of times for a new passion or fine-tuning a current one as it evolves. The core essence is that you are always staying true to your wants and desires; your joy. You will each be at different levels and that is okay. It is not possible to be at the same level as everyone else. We each evolve in our own way, in our own time. This all integrates together in a beautiful process.

Sometimes the funnest part of the cultivating stage is doing nothing! There are times when you will just have nothing to do and all you can see for some time is peace and living in whatever situation you are in now. This need not be a boring or worry-filled stage. Enjoy relaxation, because soon you'll be entrenched deep in your passion. These moments of bliss are perfect for you to build, create and just be with your desires. There is balance in rest and action. This is a time for both. Dream your dream as you move through the Cultivating step. Know you are always on the right path and everything is always in Divine order.

Step 3: Taking Divine Action

Okay, it's time! You're awakened. You know what your service or passion in life is! You've taken the time to cultivate your craft. Now, it's time you go out there and DO IT! It's not enough to

figure out what you'd like to do in life. It's not enough to percolate those passions and cultivate that craft. You must then take that leap of faith and be in your bliss. Take divine action. For some, you're beyond the first two steps and are already here in the *Take Divine Action* mode. This is the last piece I have written with good reason. I've cultivated till I was blue in the face and had to face facts that I'm there. It's time. My time to show the Universe that I am taking what gifts, learning's, and abilities they've given me and am willing to take action and show the world in whatever fashion is right for ME.

Taking action on showing who you truly are to the world and most importantly to yourself is the path to bliss. As you are true to yourself, to who you are and taking those steps to always remain in that state of true divine nature within yourself, you become the divine being you decided you would be while living this Earthly life. You'll feel bliss in all moments, even the uncomfortable ones; but none-the-less bliss. As you realize you are always a Divine Being of light! And expressing that light within you is your divine right, your divine power and your divine calling. Whatever that is for you is truly your bliss.

So what do you do when taking action? This can be the easy part, as long as you've done your homework. You simply put yourself out there. You've taken the required schooling, learnings, and practiced your skill and know you are ready. So now, as you follow your intuition on just where you should go, you will put your offerings out there to the world. This may be looking for that right job in that right place and posting your resume, taking the interviews that are offered and accepting the job offer that feels like the best fit for you.

Or this may be you putting your own business out there to the world. So when in the *Cultivating Your Craft* stage you would have already come up with marketing ideas and creations to let people know you're in business. So now you can put these ideas out there to the world. This may require some capital to begin with but with the right research you are well-prepared and working your way towards following these action steps. You will be guided on what space is right for your type of business and will check out possibilities with a realtor or by yourself and move into the right space for you. Then comes the fun creating-your-space part. It's your business so create the look and feel that fits, not only your business but, YOU! It's YOU that is drawing in the clients, so it is you they want to see. Check in with your budget and see what you can do as your business grows. As it grows you will be able to do more of the things you like to make the space feel more aligned with you.

In this stage of the game you would have already began noticing that things were falling into place before you even began to think about taking action. Just by your prior steps of deciding upon a passion that fits you and cultivating your craft, you've built up the energy and the Universe is already providing you with things, people and situations that will assist you in getting there synchronistically! This is a wonderful sign that you've been on the right track! Take these serendipitous events and allow them to work their magic for you. It doesn't have to always be hard or challenging. Sometimes it's rather simple and easy to fall into your rightful place! You've probably noticed these signs in ALL of these stages. That is how energy works. Enjoy working in a new reality! It's not really work when it's FUN!

You will notice that as you get into the *Taking Divine Action* step that there are some "starts" and "stops". These are meant to happen to guide you in the right direction if you have veered off track or to simply allow a little more time to go by so that things happen in the right Divine timing. These "starts" and "stops" are stepping stones to ready you for getting out there full speed ahead, full throttle, no turning back. These are seemingly part of the *Cultivating Your Craft* stage, as you need these starts and stops in order to better prepare. To know what's out there for you and how you should go about different situations as they arise. You'll also notice as you reach this stage that there may be a few moments that I like to call "Breath of fresh air" time. Where you are there, you know what you are to do, but the "take action" time isn't quite there yet. Timing is everything. Sometimes you have to wait a bit for people to catch up to you in order to go full throttle on your strategy for

taking action. And that is perfect. You get to breathe, rejuvenate and relax. We all need that balance in our life.

Here are some law of attraction affirmations you can choose to keep you on track. These can assist you in knowing what your passion is, following that passion, cultivating that passion, keeping up with the evolving of this passion (through new learning's, networking, etc.). Please do modify these to fit you. There are many varieties of affirmations out there. So take these as a small example of what you can do. Repeat this many times a day. Believe them and believe in yourself:

- I give myself permission to be fulfilled and follow my passion.
- Clarity and focus comes easily to me.
- I exceed my expectations and am recognized for my services.
- Money flows to me easily and effortlessly.
- I am compensated well for my contributions.
- New opportunities are coming my way easily and effortlessly.

Remember, at the core of you, you are more than what you see in the mirror. You are more than your job. You are more than your desires. You are Source energy and anything is possible. You are the creator of your life and everything you see in it. So create something that feels good! Follow your bliss. It's your spiritual compass.

YOGA BUSINESS TIPS

1. **Yoga business begins with you and your energy.** Intention and dedication to your dreams. Define your vision for what you truly desire and want from your business. Try not to overload yourself with all the things you need to do in order to make money. Do it because you love it and get support for the other things you do not enjoy doing and merely make a cut from it. It will keep the students come back to you and your space if you are offering it. This takes the workload off of you as well. The crystalized your vision, the better your results will be in manifesting your dreams.

2. **Social media...**boost posts, ads and support others online and add your link back... helping others helps you energetically too. When others are successful, you are successful.

3. **Location and timing** for opening a business. Can be fruitful. If you want to own a chain, be sure you love their teaching style and keep in mind that there will be restrictions to what you can and can't do. Consider your market before opening a studio. If you want more freedom, opening your own place is doable and can work, depending upon your location. If you have low overhead in a market that's not the A market, it could work. It can be harder in big cities, where rents are higher and people want more of a spa-like environment and to focus on getting a workout, rather than the other aspects of yoga. Be certain it's what you are passionate about or finding students will be more of a challenge. There are still plenty of locations that need a good yoga studio to fill the gap for those people traveling all around trying to find that perfect fit for them. And often the Universe is going to place you in the right place at the right time for the right people when you intend it to be so. Put it out there and do the work while surrendering.

4. **Burnout happens. Stay on top of Your practice!** Group classes keeps you in the community and brings business your way by exposure and showing you practice what your preach.

5. **Too many yoga classes and not enough students.** Get into intentions, manifesting and ritual. Get clear about what you really want! Write it out as a part of your ritual to keep the energy moving in the direction of your goals. Energy. Intend for bigger classes and less teaching time.

6. **Public classes** do not, all on their own, usually pay the bills. But **it's your gateway in.** This draws in the crowd for some of your other more lucrative yummy offerings, like workshops, retreats, private classes, etc.

7. **Then find your niche in the business.** Yoga & massage workshops, unique workshops for yoga, yoga workshops for arms, wrist-free, heavy metal, yoga for depression and anxiety, yoga meditation, ASL Yoga (sign language), pregnancy yoga, pre- and post-natal for mothers, Family Yoga, Mother's and kids yoga, travel to exotic locations and teach yoga workshops, etc. You can offer unique Yoga Retreats, workshops, conferences and online and in-person classes.

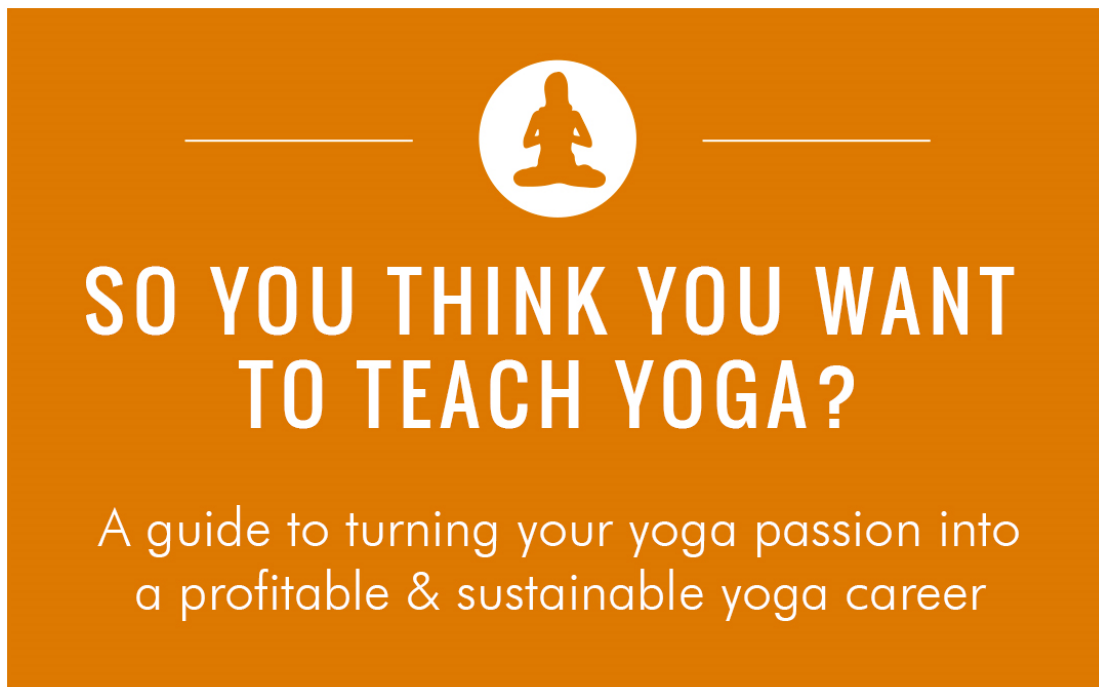
8. **Offer in unique locations:** Yoga & doctors' offices, yoga and hiking, on the lake or beaches are popular, yoga & beer night, yoga for the grieving, yoga for losing weight, yoga for addicts, yoga and magic, not just studios and gyms.

9. **Offer them online annnd in person** for wider audience. Just as I've done with my trainings and online offerings. You can offer classes and set up the password protection so that you can send your students to your videos. Online streaming for yoga and other education continues to grow. There's still the need for in-person practice and alignment in yoga for sure as well. Do both!

10. **Offering one-on-ones** will bring in more money and less burnout.
11. **Set up home studio** to travel less if possible.
12. **Put free videos on YouTube and Facebook and Instagram** to show off your skill, and draw in new students online and in person!
13. **Dedicate yourself to marketing and building your clientele** over time. Begin part time and go full time when you've had time to build.
14. **Yoga studios business**, Mindbody is great (still needs work but is wonderful for the business owner and the student). They have a good App for business owners and students. Can use payment info, sell classes, workshops and products, etc.
15. **Get support.** Ask for help from the right people who can focus on the business end for you so you can focus on doing the parts of the job you love! Yoga! Of course, be smart and have contracts set up so you guys can focus on enjoying the business with proper boundaries and protocols.
16. **Networking.** Yoga is all about unity and to grow a business you'll have to connect. Partner with companies selling products, other teachers and other professional, as well as your students are powerful ways to grow your business. The goal is to create a network of people and businesses you align with that can also help increase your visibility.

So, you think you want to teach yoga? A guide to turning your yoga passion into a profitable & sustainable yoga career.

<http://theyogipreneur.com/>



This article is Part 1 of my Your Sweet Yoga Career series, a series of detailed articles, interviews, + resources to help you build a profitable + sustainable yoga teaching career beyond the studio.

You started a yoga practice to reduce stress, reconnect with yourself, or maybe even get back that pre-baby body. Somewhere between your first down-dog to mastering handstand, a transformation took place.

You became addicted... to the calming feeling that carries through your day. To the new love and respect you have for yourself and your body. To the yoga class after-glow. Suddenly, your new passion for yoga is the main topic of conversation everywhere you go {and your friends are wondering what got into you!}.

This seems to be how many yoga teachers seem to discover their career path. A passion for practicing yoga turns into a passion for sharing yoga. You become a “yoga junkie” – seeking out classes, workshops, even retreats to deepen your practice and discover more about yourself.

Maybe you start to dream of turning this passion into more than just a hobby... after all, life as a yoga teacher seems idyllic! Finally getting to wear comfortable clothing all day {buh-bye suits!}... flexible schedules {with lots of time for your own practice, surely!}... a constant state of zen + calm {no more feeling frazzled and exhausted from being in the “rat race” right?}.

Not to mention that most yoga teachers seem to have found the fountain of youth {that glow is wayyyy better than anything you’ll find in a bottle!}.

So what does a career teaching yoga *really* look like? How do you get started? Can you earn enough to support yourself {and not just scrape by}?

After talking to thousands of yoga teachers and helping hundreds to create a profitable + sustainable career sharing this beautiful practice, I can tell you that there is a LOT more to a thriving yoga career + business than just teaching a few classes a week!

7 Things Nobody Tells You About Becoming A Yoga Teacher

#1:: Say buh-bye to the 9-5.

There seems to be this myth that yoga teachers have an amazing work-life balance... after all, you’re no longer in the rat race for 40 hours a week in a poorly lit cubicle! Now you create your OWN hours!

The truth? Many teachers struggle with working too much. When you’re piecing together a living with a class here and a private there, you often forget all the other time that goes into creating a living teaching yoga (including prepping for classes, driving time between classes + clients, answering emails, promoting your classes). It adds up!

You may also find yourself working opposite hours from your family + friends. Consider this – the most popular classes are often early morning (before people head off to work) and in the evenings (the coveted 5:30 and 7:00 time spots) after work. Maybe not a huge deal at first... but I've heard from many yogis that:

1. It's challenging to find childcare during those hours so they can teach.
2. It's stressful to feel like you're sacrificing family/friend/fun time for teaching.

Sweet Success Tip:: Map out your ideal weekly calendar. Give yourself at least 1 day a week OFF (seriously – too many of us are working 24/7/365) so you can decompress and connect with yourself + loved ones. Consider what you really desire for your lifestyle + work/life balance. Block out teaching times, prepping times, and marketing + admin times. Stop checking your email a million times a day!

#2:: You'll be tempted to back-burner your own practice.

It sounds crazy... but so many teachers I've talked to over the years have struggled to find time to get in their own practice. Actually getting out to a class? Who has the time?

This is the biggest downside of teaching yoga – when you've been teaching all day, getting on the mat again might feel like the last thing you want to do (after a long day, the sofa + Scandal is sooo appealing). But the quickest way to lose your inspiration + passion for yoga is to STOP practicing!

Sweet Success Tip:: Prioritize your practice! Create sacred time for your practice that you can really commit to every day. If the idea of coming home and practicing after a long day isn't working – do your practice in the morning. Can't get to the studio every day? Put on a yoga podcast or stream a class (I love [YogaGlo](#) and [Elsie's Yoga Class Podcast](#)).

Remember, even a 20 minute yoga practice will help you stay connected to your passion.

Mamas – I know how challenging it is to get in a practice with little ones around. My strategy – my twins have a morning routine and rituals too. I make breakfast for them, then they eat, pick

out their clothes, and get dressed on their own. My littlest one joins me during my practice – before preschool – and copies poses from Babar’s Yoga for Elephants.

Just a little mama inspiration

BONUS – get out once a week for a local class. Not only will you get inspired, but you’ll be supporting other amazing local teachers, building relationships with local studios, and getting your face out in your community. Win-win-win.

#3:: Group classes are just the beginning.

Now for a HUGE dose of reality...

Most yoga teachers are simply not able to eek out a living on group classes alone. We could crunch numbers in many different scenarios but all lead to the same conclusion – you can only teach so many classes in a week. Every studio/gym/wellness center approaches compensation differently (some pay a flat fee, some pay per head, some a combination). Even if you fill every class and have 25 classes a week, you may still struggle to earn a liveable income (especially if you live in a more expensive city).

Sweet Success Tip:: Get crystal clear on your baseline required income – the amount you need to cover your essential expenses (make sure to include not just living expenses, but savings, healthcare, etc.). Add 30% on top to account for random expenses and taxes.

Then think about your DESIRED income. This isn’t about being greedy peeps! This is about getting YOUR NEEDS met and living a full vibrant life you love! Where do you want to upgrade your life? Do you want a nicer apartment? Ability to pay for a vacation each year? Extra cash to feed your yoga education habit (’cause if you’re anything like me... you can’t walk into a bookstore without grabbing 4-5 books at a time!)?

Once you can see what your baseline + desired income is, you can actually start to figure out if teaching classes will be enough to achieve that income level (not sure? ASK! Become friends

with local teachers and ask them what they get paid... that is wayyy more accurate than what you'll find on the Google. Seriously, those reported yoga teacher salary numbers are off base).

Numbers not lining up? Then *it's time to look into alternative streams of income*. Classes can be a great foundational income stream, but getting closer to your desired income will be much easier if you can add in higher price offerings such as workshops, retreats, events, special class series, privates, or even more passive income streams (like selling an ebook or [YogaRecipe](#) online) into the mix. If you're a more advanced teacher or have a specialty you can bring to yoga – one of the BIGGEST opportunities in the yoga industry today is simply offering mentorship to newer teachers and specialty trainings + certifications.

#4:: Keep your day job.

Just because you graduate teacher training, doesn't mean you should quit your day job just yet!

A sustainable yoga career doesn't happen overnight. Seriously. DOES. NOT. HAPPEN. OVERNIGHT.

Unfortunately, I see so many yogis get blinded by all the glitter and unicorns and love and light that they make these huge decisions to leave a stable paying job and hope the universe will provide for them.

I'm all about trusting the universe... but I'm also practical. And unless you wanna be another broke yogi, you should be too!

Sweet Success Tip:: Consider your day job a blessing. It's allowing you to build up your yoga career on the side without the stress of wondering how you're gonna pay the rent + put food on the table.

EASE OUT of your job and EASE INTO your yoga career. Know what your baseline required income is and build up your yoga income to that point. This allows you to make a much smoother transition because you can take the financial pressure off yourself while you're getting more teaching experience, building your student base, and learning the ropes of the biz side of yoga.

#5:: There are UNLIMITED opportunities to teach *{when you create them}*.

There are hundreds {thousands even} of new yoga teachers graduating from teacher trainings around the world. And while there is all sorts of research letting us know the demand for yoga is going up the employment opportunities aren't quite keeping pace.

So each time you go into a studio to inquire about teaching and drop off a resume... know that it's likely going on a pile of dozens of other resumes. Because the studios and gyms are flooded with people wanting to teach – and not enough classes to go around.

Many new teachers, especially in yoga-lovin' NYC or Cali, feel completely disheartened when they discover that many studios require not only an RYT 200, but also 3-5 years minimum teaching experience and advanced training.

How the heck are you supposed to get experience when you can't even find a studio to teach in?

Sweet Success Tip:: Get creative!

Studios + gyms aren't the only places to teach. Not by a long-shot!

There are literally unlimited opportunities for you to teach yoga when you get creative and commit to starting up a class on your own. Does it take more work to get a class rolling on your own – yup! You're not only taking on finding a location, but also promoting it, taking payments, and keeping super organized to keep everything running smoothly.

Where else can you teach? Local parks. Art museums. Community centers. Personal homes. Offices. Churches. Schools. Holistic health centers. Retreat centers. Rec centers. Local meet-ups. Support groups. Private homes. Grab a local paper and see where people are doing things in your community!

If you happen to have the space at home – consider creating an in-home yoga studio! In fact, my first real yoga class in college (as in, not a DVD + with a real teacher) was in my teachers

HOME. She and her husband converted their two car-garage into a gorgeous studio where she taught yoga, bellydance, + other movement classes. Ah-maz-ing!

A HUGE perk of creating your own classes? You get to keep 100% of the profits (after expenses) — which can often be dramatically more than you'd get paid to teach at a studio or gym — and you often can save 10+ hours a week by eliminating the need to drive all over town!

#6:: You gotta be a BOSS.

The biggest challenge you'll face as a self-employed Yogi? *Your own resistance.*

When you've got a job, you're held accountable. When you work for yourself, you've gotta hold yourself accountable. This is HARD. You will come up with a million excuses why you aren't doing what you KNOW you really need to do.

YOUR DREAMS DON'T WORK UNLESS YOU DO! And that means you only make a living when you're makin' it happen. Your paycheck depends on YOU.

Sweet Success Tip:: Commit to being a PRO! The minute you commit to being a PRO — something shifts inside you. You don't allow yourself to fly by the seat of your pants. You show up. You do the WORK that needs to happen so you can share MORE of what you love.

A professional musician KNOWS that if she's gonna be the best, if she's gonna stay at the top of her game, if she's gonna keep growing and playing her edge — she's gotta get her booty in a practice room and get to work.

A professional athlete KNOWS that if she's gonna stake her claim, she's gotta commit to her workout, her nutrition, and her mindset. Every. Single. Day.

A professional writer KNOWS that waiting for “inspiration to hit” results in zero books! She sits down every day and writes. She tells inspiration “I'm HERE! I'm READY for you!”.

Show up. Be awesome. Do the work.

Ready to dive into becoming a Yogi CEO? Make sure you check out the 100% FREE Fired Up & Focused Challenge!

#7:: It's NOT just about teaching yoga.

If you really wanna be a successful yoga teacher – you MUST EMBRACE MINDFUL MARKETING!

Look, I know you wanna just eat, breathe, and sleep yoga. But the minute you decide to TEACH... *this practice isn't just about you. It's about sharing yoga with the world!*

And sharing (ie marketing) yoga is the difference between an expensive hobby and a profitable + sustainable career.

Sweet Success Tip:: Discover Your Mindful Marketing Sweet Spot! Not all marketing is created equal. Yup – there is gross, icky, sleezy, NLP marketing that give any heart-centered soul the heebie jeebies. We've all experienced it. And hated it.

The good news – you DON'T have to do marketing that way! Where gross marketing is pushy and smarmy... mindful marketing is warm and inviting. Where gross marketing is one-size-fits-all shouting at the masses... mindful marketing is personalized conversations with YOUR peeps.

The best part? You can find the style + flavor that feels natural and effortless for you.

:: Are you a people person who loves meeting new people at big events? Your Mindful Marketing Sweet Spot may be attending events and connecting face to face.

:: Are you a more introspective soul who finds solace in your journals? Your Mindful Marketing Sweet Spot could be sharing your pearls of wisdom via a blog.

:: Are you someone who secretly wanted to be the next Oprah and interview inspiring peeps? Your Mindful Marketing Sweet Spot could be an online interview show.

Don't buy into the belief that you have to do what everyone else is doing if you know it's not a fit. Discover what works for YOU!

30 ways yoga teachers can make more money

<http://theyogipreneur.com/>



So you want to turn your yoga passion into a successful + sustainable yoga career.

Is it even possible? And if it is possible... is it profitable? Yes and yes.

But here's the honest reality check that many people seem to completely forget when it comes to making a living as a yogipreneur – you have to create your OWN opportunities.

A yoga business has the same inherent risks of any other business. It takes time {sometimes years} to really develop your yoga skill set and become an amazing teacher.

Learning the business side of things? That takes time too!

While the vast majority of yoga teachers focus on teaching regular group yoga classes in yoga studios or fitness centers, if you want to create livable income teaching yoga, ***it's all about diversifying and creating multiple streams of income.***

The good news is you CAN do it! **And now is the perfect time** to begin mapping out your yoga business based on your personal strengths as a yoga teacher + entrepreneur.

Here's 30 ways you can turn your yoga passion into a launchpad for a successful + sustainable yoga career::

I love working 1×1.

Teach private yoga lessons. There is a **real art behind teaching private yoga lessons...** it takes skills that you simply don't get straight out of teacher training! But a handful of long-term private yoga students you can meet with regularly can be a solid foundation for your yoga business as you develop additional yoga offerings.

Teach private yoga lessons... online! Do you have a unique yoga specialty that's not available everywhere? Or do your students travel frequently, making it challenging to meet in person? With technology like Skype + Google Hangouts, it's easier than ever to offer a private yoga lesson via streaming video chat.

I love teaching group yoga classes.

Create a signature workshop. Developing a signature workshop is a great way to dive deep into a specific topic with your students. As a higher priced offering, workshops are a great way to quickly boost your yoga income. Even smarter? Create a signature workshop that you can rinse and repeat across multiple studios/locations.

Create a class series. This is one of my favorite secret high-value yoga offerings. Students love class series because there is a start date, an end date, and a curriculum to follow. Teachers love it because when your students register for 6-8 classes at a time, your income stabilizes. Many studios offer a yoga for beginners class series... but what about yoga for brides to be {did it!} or pregnant mamas {it was awesome!} or essentials of restorative yoga {all time fav!}.

Host a local retreat. Who says a retreat has to involve thousands of dollars and a plane ticket around the world? While international yoga retreats are more popular than ever, they are often very expensive with an itty-bitty profit margin {as in – most teachers are getting a paid vacation.

Except they're working the entire time...}. Seek out a smaller scale retreat location – it could be a B&B or beach house – with just a handful of students to test the waters. It could become your favorite event!

Host an international retreat. If you've got a great following {or can partner with another yoga teacher}, an international retreat can be amazingly fun. Pro tip – run the numbers again and again before you commit to anything and give yourself lots of time to not only plan, but give your students a chance to save up!

Teach at a local school or university. Did you know that most universities require students to have a physical education class to get their degree? Yup – you can be a university level yoga teacher! You might also be able to teach at the student recreation center or work with the trainers in the athletic departments.

I am super organized.

Manage a yoga studio or fitness center. Depending on the size of the yoga studio or fitness center, the manager position could actually be a full time gig on it's own! Even if it's not – many yoga studios owners find themselves spread super-thin across managing the day to day, teaching classes themselves, and planning out the coming months. If your studio doesn't have someone managing teacher schedules, organizing events, and running the daily studio operations, you may be able to create a job for yourself.

Become a health + wellness director. From corporations to retirement communities, there are plenty of organizations that offer health + wellness programming to their clients. Seriously – Google offerings mindfulness + meditation classes! If you enjoy planning and organizing events, you could be perfect for this role.

Become a yoga advisor for yoga studios. Are you a social butterfly who loves making sure everyone is well taken care of? This role is the secret to many successful yoga studios. Part customer concierge and part salesman, a yoga advisor is responsible for following up with new students and helping them find the right teacher + yoga classes.

Become a tech goddess for yoga studios. Are you super comfortable on the computer, navigate studio software with ease, and love digging into spreadsheets and metrics? You could be a perfect virtual assistant for yoga studio owners {and if this is you – seriously let me know. I’ve got at least 5 studios looking for you!}

I love creating new sequences + classes.

Sell your sequences + playlists to other teachers. One of the #1 challenges many yoga teachers face week in and week out? Getting enough time to plan out their classes in advance. If you love the creative aspect of planning classes + playlists, [set up a shop on The Yoga Recipe!](#)

Create a podcast or downloadable MP3 yoga classes. Did you know many yoga students prefer to practice AT HOME? [By recording your own audio yoga classes and selling them through a platform like Audible Yoga](#), you can reach even more students around the world!

Create a video or streaming yoga classes. Are you comfortable on video? There are now dozens of platforms where you can become a virtual yoga instructor. Check out [YogaVibes.com](#), [Udemy.com](#), or [Grokker.com](#).

I love to write about yoga.

Start a yoga blog. A blog on it’s own isn’t a business – but [it is a fantastic way to build your platform + an audience of followers who are interested in your unique flavor of yoga!](#) There are many ways to monetize a popular blog – from advertising to affiliates to creating your own offerings – but remember, this is a long term strategy!

Write for yoga studios. Studios are ALWAYS looking for ways to generate more interest in their business and getting students to come back for more... but writing newsletters and blogs is time consuming! Combining a passion for yoga with great writing could score you some great freelance writing gigs.

Write for local newspapers or magazines. Are you in the know about your local yoga + wellness community? Local newspapers + magazines are always looking for new content to talk

about what's happening in the community. If you ever had a dream of becoming a reporter, this could be your chance to see your byline in print!

I love working with businesses + organizations.

Host client appreciation events/workshops. Many high-end service providers host regular client appreciation or client bring a friend events to increase loyalty + increase referrals. Think high-end realtors, lawyers, and financial planners.

Host team building events + retreats. Team building is moving off the golf-course to include lots of different activities. Create a special package for team building to pitch to businesses big + small.

Partner with other like-hearted professionals. Know an amazing health coach? Or aromatherapist? Your dream clients are probably working with multiple health + wellness providers {personally – I have a chiropractor, massage therapist, naturapathic doctor... the list goes on!} who they see regularly. A co-hosted seminar or workshop can be a great way to cross promote.

Teach at non-yoga businesses. Bring yoga to the local business park. Host a class at the library. Your chiropractor may have an unused room that's perfect for privates. Get creative and open up to the unlimited places you can teach!

I'm multi-passionate.

Create a unique niche offering. There are so many niche yoga opportunities! Curvy yoga. Broga. Yoga for runners. What other passions could you bring together to create a unique yoga class, workshop, or even certification for other yoga teachers?

Blend other health + wellness modalities. Raise your hand if you're a yoga teacher AND a reiki master/massage therapist/doula/health coach/etc etc? Often these modalities are all complimentary tools that can be blended together to help your clients reach their goals in a more holistic way.

I love helping new teachers.

Become a Yoga Teacher Mentor. Yes – there are more teachers than ever before graduating 200 hour teacher trainings. But this actually creates a HUGE opportunity for experienced yoga teachers to provide mentorship and coaching to help new yoga teachers solidify their new skill set.

Host a yoga teacher networking/mastermind group. If you want to be a leader in your local yoga teacher community, organize a regular yoga teacher meetup in person or online {[check out #yogateacherchat on Twitter](#)}.

Create a new certification or teacher training program. Caveat – only for experienced + talented teachers of teachers! It's no secret that training other yoga teachers is a lucrative option. At over \$2K per 200 hour trainee, there is a LOT of money to be made. But one of my favorite options for experienced teachers? Creating a 20-30 hour niche certification program based on your unique specialty.

I'm a Yogipreneur!

Organize your own yoga classes. You don't have to have a brick + mortar studio to host your own classes... you just need a location + super organized systems to track your students. You can often find unique venues to rent on an hourly basis – think about art galleries, unique co-working spaces, even community centers. The best part? Because you only need the space for an hour at a time, you can build the following of a studio without the expenses of the studio {yay for mo' money in your pocket!}.

Take your workshops + class series on the road {or online}. Have you hosted an amazing workshop locally? Gather up your testimonials and put together your pitch! There are studios outside of your city that are looking for guest teachers to come in for workshops + trainings. All you've gotta do is start spreading the word that you're available. Even better – record your entire workshop and make it available as a home-study/on-demand workshop.

Create a virtual yoga studio. Are you comfortable in front of a camera? Thanks to **Namastream**, you can create your OWN virtual yoga studio for a fraction of the cost of a brick + mortar studio {yep – even including the cost of a new video camera + microphone} without the hassle of piecing together all the technology by yourself!

Take your yoga business online. It's easier than ever to take your yoga business 100% online {and if you didn't know already – this is my specialty here at The Yogipreneur!}. You can offer a range of yoga classes, workshops, private lessons, coaching, on-demand programs, e-books, podcasts, streaming video, and more thanks to easy to use technology.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

<http://theyogipreneur.com/the-ultimate-yogipreneurs-guide-to-designing-your-sweet-yoga-career/>

Facebook Highlight

Watch the helpful videos

<http://theyogipreneur.com/yogeeking-out-on-facebook/>

Should All Yoga Teachers Be Employees? One Studio Sets a New Standard

JENNIFER D'ANGELO FRIEDMAN, JUN 12, 2017

A successful Boston-area yoga studio has set a new standard for how yoga studios compensate their teachers. Last month, [Down Under School of Yoga](#) announced its decision to forego the more typical “independent contractor” model and make every teacher on their staff an employee—even those who only teach a few classes per week. This means that all teachers are now eligible for sick days and retirement funds, and full-time teachers (who teach 12 classes or more per week) are offered health insurance.

“The reason most yoga teachers are independent contractors is because they’re being exploited,” says Justine Wiltshire Cohen, director of Down Under, which has three locations in the Boston area. “If you teach one class for me you are an employee, and the only benefit that is tied to the number of classes you teach is health care.”

Wiltshire Cohen argues that the current American paradigm of hiring most yoga teachers as independent contractors is antithetical to [the principles of yoga](#).

“Yoga’s dirty little secret is the vast majority of yoga studios are still calling employees independent contractors, so they don’t have to give security and benefits,” she says. “It is almost impossible to make a living as a yoga teacher this way. The practice is meant to cultivate single focus, but 99 percent of teachers are traveling all over the city (from studio to studio). Very few have weekends, let alone two days off in a row.”

Wiltshire Cohen believes the onus is on studio owners to break this cycle and put teachers first. “You can’t teach if you’re exhausted,” she says. “It’s a marvelously complex thing to plan a yoga class. No human being on earth could do that 30 times a week. It becomes rote, and teachers can’t keep it up longer than a couple of years. Then they give up, go back to their ‘real’ (corporate) job.”

Down Under’s decision is in line with the Massachusetts Independent Contractor Law, which suggests that in most cases, when a yoga teacher regularly teaches yoga on site, it is indicative of that person being an employee, rather than an independent contractor. While some teachers may actually be independent contractors (depending

on the facts of their arrangement with the company), it is likely that many are actually employees, according to the law. (Every state has different interpretations of independent contractor law and employee law, notes Andrew Tanner, chief ambassador for [Yoga Alliance](#).)

The Cost of “Doing the Right Thing”

Wiltshire Cohen concedes that making every teacher an employee was an expensive and “daring” decision for Down Under, which is currently celebrating its 12th year in business.

“It has taken me 10 years to get to this point to undertake such an ambitious thing,” she says. “I’m getting calls from studios across the country wondering, ‘How are you doing this? This would bankrupt us.’”

After three and a half years of careful planning, and at a cost of more than \$100,000, Down Under was able to make the shift, without raising the price of classes.

“We did not have \$100,000-plus sitting around, and our team has overcome many hurdles, dips, and phases of fragility to pull this off,” Wiltshire Cohen says. “But my team has an unwavering commitment to the people who choose to make Down Under their home, to leading the way in the way in the American yoga dialogue, and to steadfast, intelligent planning for ambitious goals. These three qualities are the reasons we were able to afford this latest move. We also decided to open a third studio in Cambridge to help pay for this development and to ensure we can hold up roof. Stay tuned for a fourth location as we aim to get every teacher who wants health care to full-time.”

Why the Independent Contractor Model Will Persist

[Nicki Doane](#), co-owner and director of [Maya Yoga Studio](#) in Maui, says she applauds Down Under’s decision to make every single yoga teacher on staff an employee, but personally doesn’t see it as something the industry can aspire to. “If I were required to employ each teacher [as an employee] and provide health benefits, sick days, etc., I

could not operate my business,” she says. “I think it would be nice if the bigger, more successful studios did do the employee thing for their teachers if they could sustain it financially.”

Tanner also admires Down Under’s decision, but agrees that it might not be realistic or desirable for every studio or every teacher. “Certainly we think what Down Under is doing is amazing; they’re a leader and we want to applaud them. On the same token, every studio and teacher has to make those decisions on an independent basis. For teachers teaching a lot of classes, benefits like retirement and sick leave are amazing. For teachers teaching one class a week, they might just rather have all the money in their paycheck. If you’re an independent contractor, you can write off your expenses, e.g., your website, the classes you take.” Not to mention health insurance premiums.

Tanner credits Down Under’s hard-earned success with affording them the ability to make this pioneering decision, but says such a move would put other studios out of business.

“Certainly not every studio could do this. Paying all teachers as employees amounts to an 8–12 percent increase in payroll. When statistics tell us the average studio has a profit margin of 13 percent, that kind of increase is huge,” he says. “Some studios don’t have a classroom that can fit more than 12 people in it, so they’re limited as far as the amount of income they can make. It may have been impossible for Down Under to do this when they were renting a church.” (Down Under began in 2004 in a church hall.)

But since Down Under can afford to make such a shift, the fact that they are supporting teachers over profits is “incredibly admirable,” Tanner says. “This is an example of a very successful studio doing the right thing. I think they are showing the community something to aspire to. We’re excited about this model that they’re putting forward.”

8 Tips for New Yoga Teacher Training Graduates

By Gabrielle DeFusco



Congratulations! You've completed your yoga **teacher** training and are ready to teach. Here are some tips as you begin your next journey, from finding your first teaching job to everything else in between.

1. Getting your first teaching job may not happen right away. Take yoga classes at a studio you would like to teach at. Get a feel of the studio, the energy, students, and teachers. Then honestly ask yourself if this is a space you can envision yourself teaching in. If yes, then after taking some classes, introduce yourself to the owner and have your yoga resume on hand. If they are not hiring, ask to be added to their sub list.

2. Don't live near a yoga studio? Explore non-yoga spaces to teach. Gyms, dance, **Pilates**, and martial arts studios are

worth checking into. Always reach out to owners in person rather than email. You'll make a much more memorable and positive impression. Put your best foot forward!

3. Don't panic! Once you start teaching classes, sometime or another, a **yoga teacher** will come to take your class. They are not there to judge you, but rather, to have a yoga experience. Feel honored that they chose your class and to be led by you.

4. At times, you may stumble, or get tongue tied on your words – I did! In fact, it was my very first time teaching a yoga class at a studio. I was so nervous that I said, "Fill the air with lungs." Then there was a pause. I giggled, and my students started to giggle, too! **Laugh at yourself and then let it go.** Your students will not be as hard on you as you may feel toward yourself and they'll probably laugh along with you, just as they did with me.

5. Attendance will fluctuate. One week you may have 10 students, then 12, and then six. Things happen – students get sick, have to work late, or changes in schedule. Never take it personally. Smile, be present, and serve the students who do show up to your class.

6. New teachers will need to build a following. Building up a yoga class may require some time, but also honor yourself and value... your time. If months pass by and only one or two students show up, it may be time to let that class go. Again, don't take it personally, it could be the wrong time of day that the class is being offered. Sometimes it's about finding just the right time slot!

7. You may feel very inspired to enroll in a 500 hour yoga teacher training program shortly after completing your 200 hour program. **Get some teaching experience first.** Get comfortable in your own "teacher's skin". You will also continue to grow not only as person, but as a yoga teacher, too. Your teaching area of interest may shift as well after you've been teaching awhile. Once you feel comfortable as a yoga teacher and you are certain where you see yourself taking the next step in your teaching career, then reconsider advancing your yoga training. In the meantime, take workshops and special yoga classes to broaden and enhance your studies.

8. The worst punishment a yoga teacher can inflict upon themselves is abandoning their own yoga practice. **Teaching is not a substitute for a personal practice.** Whether taking classes at a studio, online, or on your own at home, make time for your personal practice. Yoga teachers do a lot of giving (we love what we do!), but give back to yourself. Remember why you fell in love with yoga in the first place.

Gabrielle is an Experienced Registered Yoga Teacher (E-RYT) with the Yoga Alliance and has been teaching yoga since 2003. Having a degree in psychology, she fuses together both her academic and yoga studies in creating yoga classes that are accessible to all with an emphasis on stress relief, health, and healing.

Connect with Gabrielle DeFusco:

Website: www.yogawithgabrielle.com

5 Habits of Highly Effective Yoga Teachers

by Amy Ippoliti

Local yoga teachers and studio owners are truly the heroes of the yoga community when you consider all that goes into teaching and offering yoga. Daily through their offerings they inspire students to be more present, healthier, kinder, and vibrant. A highly effective yoga teacher is also a successful one. Yet too often, yoga teachers struggle with making ends meet. I'd love to make sure our local heroes thrive, not just survive. Success will mean different things to different yoga teachers; it might mean being content with your career exactly as it is now, or happy with how it unfolds organically. Success might be broadening your student base or earning a living that enables you to pay the bills, afford continuing education, pay for a child's education, care for a loved one, or contribute to the causes you are most passionate about. But common to any vision of success is knowing what you want, setting goals, and achieving them. After querying [90 Monkeys](#) graduates who were finding success in their careers as yoga teachers, based on the teachings they had applied from taking [90 Minutes to Change the World](#) we discovered that there are five common habits of successful yoga teachers—and the best part is, they're totally doable!



Presenting the 5 Habits of Highly Effective Yoga Teachers (in order of increasing importance):



5) They have a forum or consistently gather to get support from fellow teachers.

Successful yoga teachers find ways to connect with their local peers! From getting together for a potluck or walk in the woods to practicing together at a set time every week, forging relationships with your fellow teachers can help you to derive inspiration for your classes, sound out new ideas, share resources, network, collaborate and even find new professional

opportunities.

4) They take their finances and savings seriously.

A teacher who takes her/his finances and savings seriously is confident, collected, and calm, rather than frazzled and stressed out in the classroom.

They are less likely to get upset when “not enough students” show up to class, which means that no matter how many students attend, they can be truly present for their students.

Set goals for how much income you would like to earn and WHY—knowing the “why” will help you stay motivated and inspired to reach your goal. Are you saving up for a college education for a child, your retirement, or a contingency account for your family in the event of an emergency? Are there other sources of income, independent of your yoga teaching that would help you reach those goals?



Successful teachers stay on top of their finances by paying attention to their bank accounts on a regular basis.

One tip: consider ‘paying yourself first’ by saving 10% of your income every month. This can seem daunting when there are bills to pay, but we’ve found that when teachers prioritize saving a portion of their income, they find new ways to earn that 10% (or more!) to cover their expenses.

3) They practice more consistently and therefore offer more variety and enthusiasm in their class.

Make time for your own practice and self-study! Schedule your practice and study time as though it is a paying gig. Use asana picture books, magazines, and other technologies like Yogaglo.com to inspire you to try new poses.

That said, be sure to approach your practice as something enjoyable that you want to do, not as an obligation. Give yourself 10 minutes only to do a practice so there is no looming pressure to get in a full hour.

Use the [Yoga Timer App](#) to encourage yourself to hold poses and/or practice for a set time without fail. Practice the sequence that you plan on teaching your students before class to see how it flows.

2) They view their yoga teaching as a profession rather than a hobby.

Never forget that teaching yoga is a great honor. People are paying you for the education you provide. They want to trust you and look up to you as a mentor and leader.

So, say this out loud, right now: “*I am a yoga professional.*” Own it! Make sure you stay current with all of your studies, trainings, market trends and be prepared to teach at your very best!

And the number one habit is...

1) They consciously give more attention to their relationships with their students, studio staff, colleagues, and other teachers.

Students come to yoga for all kinds of reasons, but one thing they all have in common is a desire for community and connection. One of the great services you can offer as a yoga teacher is to facilitate that sense of connection.

Extend the conversation with your students both in the classroom and beyond—make yourself available to them before and after class, and take the time to converse with them and find out about their lives.

Continue the conversation between classes on social media or with a newsletter.

Go the extra mile and do the “unexpected” with your students—write them a thank you card, or give them a poem or handout they can take with them after class.

And don’t forget the folks you work with! Be helpful around the studio as well as be extra warm and appreciative towards support staff. They are the ones that will refer people to you when students ask them whom they recommend on the schedule!

What have you done that has helped you boost your career as a yoga teacher? Leave me a comment below. I’d love to hear from you!

~[Amy Ippoliti](#), prAna Ambassador & Co-Founder of [90Monkeys.com](#)

Learn more about Amy at <http://www.prana.com/life/ambassadors>

A Yoga Studio

Joschi Body Bodega (Manhattan)

By [Arianne Cohen](#) Published Jun 3, 2007

How It Works: The most-profitable yoga studios are efficient: They fill four to five classes daily, plus private classes. Joschi, which opened in October, aims for the broadest client base by offering 25 varied weekly classes (\$17) rather than specializing in one branch of yoga. Joschi Schwarz teaches 75 percent of the classes himself, which saves on teacher costs and helps brand him as a guru. Most studios hope to be profitable within two years.

"We aimed for six months," says business manager and co-owner Monika Werner. "We're not quite there yet. Joschi and I work for free." The studio needs roughly 530 students a month to break even; they've recently had closer to 450.



Employees: Seven freelance teachers, plus Schwarz and Werner.

Annual Revenue: \$77,940 (with \$24,000 in losses) projecting from earnings thus far.

Monthly Overhead Costs: Rent: \$4,000; teacher payments for eight weekly classes: \$1,400; insurance: \$90 ("It's low—that was a surprise," says Werner); loan payments: \$900 (Joschi took out a \$100,000 loan; he spent \$50,000 on studio and shower renovations).



Best Ways to Make Money: Private classes (\$95 per hour), Joschi's bread-and-butter. Members (\$140 for one-month unlimited). "It's the same principle as a gym membership," says Michele Campaniello, a former studio owner. "You count on people not showing up."

Best Ways to Lose Money: Paying teachers more than class revenue. "Yoga studios generally pay a \$50 to \$75 flat rate per class, sometimes with a bonus fee per student over a dozen," says longtime teacher Matthew Seidman. Joschi pays \$40 to \$50 per class, needing four students to turn a profit.

Other Ways to Cash In: Teacher training (\$2,000 to \$3,000 per student): three-month, 225-hour classes for a few dozen enrollees. Studio rental (\$45 to \$70 per hour): Joschi's studios are rented to other teachers, theater and dance auditions, and for social events.

THE BEST WAY TO MAKE MONEY: Ten-class packs "You'd rather sell a twenty-pack, because people will let them expire," says Campaniello. "People have big eyes."

Added Value: Few studios in Manhattan survive three years, and fewer turn more than a 10 percent profit. “Honestly, I would do private lessons in people’s homes instead,” says Campaniello. “You make \$100 a session with no overhead.”

New Yorkonomics: *Money isn’t all there is to a job. Economists also consider “compensating differentials,” nonmonetary pros and cons. A meth dealer needs high returns to take on the risk of arrest, and apparently people are willing to earn much less for the pleasures of being a yoga guru.*

Success Story

Bring a yogic attitude to your work and find satisfaction in your job, no matter what it is.

By Sally Kempton



In her 30s, my neighbor Gretchen staked her life on the mantra, "Do what you love and the money will follow." She left a corporate job to try making her living as a writer, something that felt more in line with her creative aspirations. Then the downturn hit, and the assignments dried up. After nearly a year of searching for work, she got a job running a social welfare agency in a nearby city. The agency has almost no money, which means that there are many people it can't help. That means that she is barraged all day by the suffering of the clients and the frustration of the staff. She often feels powerless and overwhelmed. She's gained 20 pounds, and her garden is dying. But she needs the job, and she believes in the cause. Like a lot of people, Gretchen is struggling to find meaning in an increasingly difficult work situation. She knows that she needs some kind of attitude makeover—but what?

Work is where the rubber of yoga meets the road of life. Most of us need to work in order to earn a living. As adults, we'll spend a big part of our lives working to support ourselves and our families. Work pressure isn't just economic: Society largely defines us by the work we do. Moreover, you may have been brought up to believe that you can achieve anything and that finding work you love is the path to a satisfying life. Yet the state of the economy means that you might be lucky to have a job at all. The result can be a state of restless dissatisfaction with your working life. How do you deal with the gap that often exists between what you love and how you make a living? What do you do when your work is frustrating, overwhelming, uninspiring, underpaid? Or when you work for a corporation that focuses on the bottom line at the expense of its workers' creativity and their feeling of making a difference?

The yoga tradition offers a great deal of wisdom on this subject. From a yogic perspective, what matters most is not what work you do, but how you do it. The yogic teachings on livelihood and vocation offer a blueprint for making your daily work a practice—for getting clear on your values and then bringing an attitude to your work that allows all your actions to reflect and serve those values. These are practices that give meaning even to frustrating tasks. More than that, they open a path to freedom that you can follow right down the middle of your daily life. There are five guiding principles for lining up your actions at work with your yoga practice. They are taken from the Bhagavad Gita, the great yogic text in which Krishna teaches Prince Arjuna how to live a life of yoga as he fulfills his duty as a warrior. They define what is often called karma yoga, the yoga of action. Putting these principles into practice at work might not make you rich. But it will definitely help you line up your on-the-job life with your on-the-mat one.

Do Work That Suits Your Nature

Better your natural duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged.

—Bhagavad Gita 3-35

his key teaching from the Bhagavad Gita is the bottom line for making work into yoga. If your job seems like a constant struggle, one question to ask yourself is whether you are suited for it. Work that fits your nature (in Sanskrit, your *swadharma*) is, ideally, work that you are good at, but it is also work that feels right, natural, and aligned with your higher values. I discovered this in my 30s when I spent a period being press secretary and publicist for my teacher. I have a natural gift for persuasive communication, so in some ways it was a good fit. But publicists have to be sociable, outgoing, and "on." As an introvert, I found it exhausting to be with people for extended periods of time. So, though I was a good communicator and fairly "good" with people, the work forced me to push beyond my limits in a

way that created constant low-level stress. I finally realized I was a square peg trying to shave off my corners to fit into a round hole, and I let go of the job.

Sometimes, the work you feel most drawn to won't support you financially. Many artists, yogis, writers, and social activists find themselves in this situation. Then you have to figure out a way to make a living that aligns with both your skills and your core values—and also pays the rent. When Gretchen could no longer make a living as a writer, she was able to figure out how to use her other natural skills to get a job that contributes something to society. She's good at managing people; she's always been the person who jumps in to organize volunteers to clean up her local yoga studio, or to organize the food for a party. In other words, she is actually well-suited to the work she does—if she can re-frame her attitude about it. The next four principles are the key to achieving this.

Practice Skill in Action

Yoga is skill in action.

—Bhagavad Gita 2-50

Krishna tells his disciple Arjuna that the yoga of action—essentially, the yoga of work—is the best path to liberation. He even describes yoga as "skill in action." The skill Krishna refers to is not just doing your tasks well. He's talking about something deeper: the yogic ability to throw yourself completely into a task. To exercise the yoga of action is to do whatever you do impeccably, with full attention, and for its own sake.

Chances are, you're accustomed to bringing your best self to the mat. But in your daily life, whether you're working at the office or making dinner, you may give yourself permission to be scattered, distracted, or influenced by negative talk.

Approaching your work with your full presence and with your highest quality of attention helps you overcome your resistance and manage distraction. It lets you do the best job you're capable of. When you're paying complete attention, you're less likely to make careless mistakes. You're also less likely to get lost in unconscious behaviors like complaining or partaking in office gossip.

My favorite shortcut to this level of presence is to ask myself a simple question. When I feel bored, distracted, or resistant to a task, I say to myself, "Suppose this were the last act of my life. Suppose I dropped dead 10 minutes from now. How would I have wanted to perform this task?" It always centers me. Carlos Castaneda's Don Juan used to say that a warrior keeps the thought of death at his left shoulder. While it might seem extreme, the thought of death can instantly kindle the desire to act impeccably and to bring your full presence to the job at hand.

Surrender the Outcome

You have a right to the work alone, not to its fruits.

—Bhagavad Gita 2-47

This is perhaps the most radical, mysterious, and ultimately liberating teaching about the yoga of work. It also happens to be the essence of Krishna's wisdom on the subject of action. "You have a right to the work alone, not to its fruits," Krishna says. "Therefore, do not set your heart on the results of your actions." When I first read this teaching, it stopped me cold. How is it possible, I wondered, to do something you care about without feeling attached to the results?

Having spent many years trying to apply these two sentences to my life, I can give you two reasons why they amount to the most powerful teaching on the yoga of work. First, you never know how things will turn out. You simply can't know if anyone will buy your screenplay or whether you'll have any students at your five o'clock yoga class. Your startup, where everyone is so collegial and creative, could be bought by a venture capital company, leaving you jobless or facing the need to make the company's bottom line your priority.

But when you're doing the work for the sake of the work itself, rather than for a desired result, you're much less likely to suffer from anxiety about outcomes. You're also less likely to feel crippling disappointment if things don't go the way you hoped or planned.

Second, when you're too concerned about success or failure, you trigger all the negative aspects of the ego. You run scared, which can lead you to make bad decisions or even to feel paralyzed about what to do. Or, you become so goal-oriented that you forget to maintain integrity in the task itself. To consciously surrender your attachment to the fruits of your work is to detach yourself from the ego's need to claim success or the negative ego's fear of failure.

Of course, practicing this teaching is a lot easier said than done. It's not something you do just once. You do it day by day, sometimes hour by hour, over a lifetime. Begin by trying to deeply understand this teaching. Ask yourself what it would really mean in your life if you believed it and applied it. Consider, for instance, what it would look like to act for the sake of the work alone. Figure out the difference between giving up the fruits of your actions and being careless or lackadaisical in what you do. Discover how you can, moment by moment, release your attachment to outcomes without turning into a fatalist or a pessimist. Consider how you can live your passion and yet detach yourself from how things turn out.

T.S. Eliot described this balance in a wonderful line from his Four Quartets: "Teach us to care and not to care." As you internalize this piece of wisdom, you'll see that it doesn't necessarily mean you don't get bummed when things go wrong on the job. Of course you get bummed; you're not a robot. But when you remember that your contract with life doesn't specify that you'll always get what you want, you'll find that even in the midst of mourning a loss or trying to repair the damage from a mistake, you won't feel like a victim.

Do Your Work as Service

Consider yourself a servant, think of all others as being...the one to be served.

—Commentary on Bhagavad Gita, verses 18-65, by Jnaneshwar

For a person living in a consumer society, learning how to do your work as service can be life changing. Service is not so much about the type of work you do but the attitude you bring to it. To serve means that you do something not just for your own profit or self-esteem but for the sake of being helpful.

The sense of service can be applied anywhere, and it makes even unpleasant tasks meaningful. Some of us need our service to be personal. Our heart opens when we serve one-on-one—a client, a friend, a family member. Others need to feel that they are serving something larger—the community, the planet, God. Service—learning to see yourself as a servant—has one enormous payoff: It's a fast track to spiritual growth. When you feel underappreciated, discontented, or bored at work, that inner attitude shift from "What am I not getting?" to "What can I give?" can instantly elevate your mood. So can shifting from "Something's wrong with this situation" to "How can I help make it better?" Having service as a core value can help you discern not only what work you should be doing but also whether you are doing the right thing in any given moment.

Before taking action at work, ask yourself, "Who or what does this serve?" To be in alignment with the values of yoga, the answer needs to be that it serves something larger than your own or others' egotistical needs—including, paradoxically, the egotistical need to be of service! True service includes a sense that you serve the evolution of consciousness—that your work is at least incrementally helping to create a better world. Perhaps you are serving the values of kindness, compassion, and human dignity. Perhaps you are serving the preservation of the Earth. Perhaps your service is in being willing to listen to your co-workers. If you're a manager, guiding those who work for you is your service. The true karma yogi learns to look at how she can serve, even in unlikely circumstances.

Lori, an accountant who works for a large financial company in Zurich, sits in a cubicle and adds figures all day. She serves by doing the work with as much presence and integrity as possible. Because of this, she's sought after as a cubicle mate, which last year meant that she

was assigned to sit at a desk next to the most disliked man in the company. He was so unpleasant to people that no one wanted to be near him.

Lori didn't want to sit by him either. But she made a decision to approach the situation with an attitude of service. She bought a flower for his desk, greeted him kindly every morning, and offered him the seat by the window. She says that the challenge turned out to be fun. And after a month of sharing her cubicle, she reports, her co-worker has become a much more pleasant presence around the office.

Being of service is not the same thing as martyring yourself for a cause or letting yourself be exploited. When you're working in a situation where the problems are big and your efforts are needed, it's not hard to get sucked into believing that you should give until you drop. This was part of Gretchen's problem when she began working for the social service agency. She threw away any semblance of a personal life in order to satisfy the demands of her job—and felt both angry and guilt-stricken if she didn't serve 150 percent.

The best answer to this dilemma is to consider yourself in the equation. You can't do sustainable service when you aren't taking care of your own needs. So, think about what you need in order to serve at your best. This could be anything from more time off to asking for help, and it usually requires that you closely examine your own attitudes.

One student of mine discovered that she was enacting her ideal of service by working for a demanding boss who took her efforts as his due and never gave her credit for her contributions. She had to ask herself not only whom she was really serving in her apparent selflessness but also what it was in her that confused serving with not standing up for herself!

Make Your Work an Offering

He who does actions, offering them to the Absolute and abandoning attachment, is free from error.

—Bhagavad Gita 5-11

The final teaching that Krishna gives to Arjuna in his great discourse on the yoga of action takes the practice of service a step further. Whatever you do, Krishna tells Arjuna, make it an offering, and then the work itself will be a path to liberation. Making your work an offering essentially means bringing an attitude of devotion to your actions. Your devotion doesn't have to be directed to a particular deity. It might be a wish for the well-being of the planet or a commitment to truth or to the evolution of consciousness. The important thing is that you are bringing a prayerful feeling to your actions and imbuing them with a significance that goes far beyond your small self. It can make even the simplest task seem worth doing for its own sake. You might do this by making a formal prayer: "I offer this day asking that my actions be beneficial for all beings," or "I offer this task to God," or "I offer this day for the evolution of consciousness," or "I offer this task for the health of my sick friend." At the end of a task, you can formally dedicate what you've done.

Even if you begin this as a purely formal practice, you'll find that it subtly influences your experience. It's the key to surrendering the fruits of your actions because it can take you past the egotistical need to claim a reward for what you do. On a more mysterious level, offering your work creates within you a feeling of connection with something larger; this can make everything you do feel intrinsically more meaningful. The practice of offering can even unleash your natural capacity for love and devotion.

For Gretchen, this practice turned out to be key. When she feels the frustration of not being able to meet the needs of everyone who comes to her office or when she feels sad that she's not writing, she reminds herself to take a moment to ask that the work she does be of benefit to all beings. She tells me that when she remembers to do that, she stops worrying about whether she did the right thing. She knows she did her best, and, having offered the action, she can recognize that the outcome is beyond her control.

Like all the very greatest teachings, it sounds simple, and it is. When you do your work as an offering, it can take you beyond worrying about success or failure. Whatever you are doing, whether it is "important" or "unimportant," you can offer it. And by offering your

work, your practice, and even your small everyday actions like making the bed or washing the dishes, you align yourself with the universe, and your work becomes yoga—the natural path to union with the whole.

Vdø| Nhp swrq is an internationally recognized teacher of meditation and yoga philosophy and the author of P hgldwlrq iru wkh Oryh ri lw

http://www.vogajournal.com/wisdom/2654?utm_source=mvvogajournal&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=bullet&wcsid=55408191FCF9BA179A67BB74CAB7735C4A58351BE3A32CBD

Blossom at Work

Tough days at the office? Learn to meet difficult situations with honesty and passion.

By Megan Francis



When Rachel French headed to work, she often felt a gnawing dread in the pit of her stomach. The funding for her job and those of other aides in the Michigan legislature came under scrutiny anytime the state passed a new budget or held an election, and that fueled anxiety and tension among her co-workers. Plus, she spent plenty of time on the phone with constituents who called to complain about her boss's voting record. "Between the abusive phone calls and wondering if my job would last, I was constantly stressed out," she says. Even worse than the stress was the disconnect French, 39, experienced between the person she felt she could be during her daily Kripalu [\rj d sudfwlfh](#) and the one she became at the office.

It's an unsettling revelation many of us have had. You can feel so open-hearted on the mat, then head into a meeting and find your impulse to speak squelched by fear that your boss won't listen. Or a heated disagreement with a colleague leaves you feeling so distressed that instead of the light, easy presence you emanated during practice, you've adopted a heavy shield and are avoiding everyone. Or maybe your team has fallen into a dysfunctional group dynamic, in which gossiping about who's to blame for what creates an almost unbreakable resistance to finding the solutions that would bring success and happiness all around.

Maintaining a sense of presence in the workplace—where your buttons often get pushed—is challenging. But given the consequences of acting in ways that may cause others pain and you regret, it's undoubtedly worth the effort to tap into that underlying sense of connection and let it inform your communication. One tool that's helping many yogis do just that is Marshall Rosenberg's system of Nonviolent Communication (NVC). Designed to inspire compassion, Nonviolent Communication offers a model for honest, effective, and peaceful dialogue. It prompts you to stop and notice what's going on under the surface of your communication and to tap into the deeper needs and feelings that may not have been expressed—both your own and those of the people you're talking with. The process short-circuits the tendency to judge the person with whom you're communicating. And the resulting interactions become, in Rosenberg's words, "a flow between ourselves and others based on a mutual giving from the heart."

After attending a Nonviolent Communication workshop, French tapped into that flow. She found it easy to feel compassion for her colleagues, with whom she shared the stress of job uncertainty, and even to connect with the constituents, who just needed to be heard. The whole mood of the office seemed to change once French started applying the NVC method to her communications. "I don't know if other people are actually acting differently, but I feel a lot lighter," she says.

A Peaceful Activist

Rosenberg, a clinical psychologist who left private practice in the early 1960s to promote peace and compassion on a wide scale, created the NVC technique while helping to integrate schools during the civil rights movement. In 1984 he founded the Center for Nonviolent Communication, a global organization based in Southern California; his model is now taught in weekend workshops and longer trainings all over the world. (You can connect with one of 200 certified NVC trainers in the United States through the center's website ([z z z Ifqyfruj2wdlqkwp](#)). And in the past few years, Nonviolent Communication has gained a foothold in the American yoga community; courses are often offered at yoga studios.

Some yogis see the technique as an application of [|rj d sklrvrsk|](#) that helps them practice the kind of nonattachment championed in the Bhagavad Gita or the tenet of *satya* (truthfulness) promoted in the [\rj d Vxwd](#). "It's like a tool box for living a yogic life," says Gail Carroll, a Watertown, Massachusetts, yogi who practices vinyasa and [L|hqjdu\rj d](#) and is now studying to be a certified NVC trainer. "One of my yogic principles is 'to see God in one another.' NVC is the practice of that. It helps me see that I can have my feelings and needs, and so can you, and they can be different and equal."

The approach breaks communications down into four parts: *observing* (stopping to recognize what is actually happening in the moment, rather than voicing your opinion about it); *feeling* (identifying the feelings arising in you and your sense of the feelings arising in others); *needing* (getting clear about what needs you and others might have in the situation); and *requesting* (asking to have those needs met).

If you're a salesperson nervously trying to close a deal, and you've studied NVC, you might stop and observe that in this moment you are sitting with a client who has valid concerns about how your product will benefit her. Rather than judge yourself for not getting the sale or your client for being difficult, you might identify feelings of fear—that you won't close the deal, won't make your quota, won't succeed—and empathize with the client, who has her own fears about spending more money than she planned or not getting the desired results.

You could check in with your needs: You need to meet your quota, to build long-term relationships with clients, and to feel good about yourself. The client needs to get a certain result from the product and to trust you before spending a lot of money on it. She might request more time or information, and you might request that she consider making a smaller commitment that would enable you to work with her toward her goals and yours. In the end, you get a modest sale, but it's a sale that meets everyone's needs and sets you up for more sales and success over time.

The four-step NVC process for communication encourages you, just as yoga does, to let go of your emotional reaction to some imagined outcome and simply watch the situation. And if you're really practicing Nonviolent Communication, you learn to be honest with yourself and others about the feelings and needs that a situation evokes.

A Different Approach to Disagreement

"I see NVC as a very yogic presence," says Laura Cornell, founder and director of the Green Yoga Association, a nonprofit based in Oakland, California. The association uses the principles of Nonviolent Communication to help further its mission of fostering ecological consciousness in the yoga community. "It's learning to separate our judgments from pure observation, learning to separate our opinions from what we're needing and feeling."

Cornell took several NVC courses and attended a weekend retreat led by Rosenberg before starting the Green Yoga Association. At its first meeting, she gave each board member a copy of Rosenberg's CD *Speaking Peace*. By helping the association's members stay connected with their sense of compassion, NVC has helped them encourage change in the yoga industry without being judgmental.

"We'd look at the person or company we wanted to criticize [for environmentally harmful behaviors] and see what beautiful needs they were trying to meet. For example, maybe the manufacturers of yoga mats that contain toxic ingredients are trying to meet the need of feeding their families and intending to provide a product the yoga community wants," says Cornell. "So we ask, How can we meet the needs of our planet and the needs of the company, and have products to use in a sustainable way?"

It's a very different approach to environmental activism than the "us against them" attitude that has led some groups to acts of violence and vandalism. To learn to listen empathically to those with whom you disagree takes real strength and courage, of course, and Cornell says it's not always easy.

"Sometimes it happens that right away, in that moment, I'm able to understand and come from the heart space, connecting with my heart in order to connect with the other person. But sometimes it's something I have to reflect on for days, a week, or even months," she says. Even when the process isn't smooth, she finds NVC is worth the effort. "If you're able to connect from the heart 10 or 20 percent of the time, that's better than nothing," Cornell says. "If you have moments of connection and breakthrough, it's worth it."

A Frustrated Meditator

Ike Lasater, a lawyer by training and a cofounder (with his wife Judith Hanson Lasater and several others) of *Yoga Journal*, practiced yoga and [practiced yoga](#) for decades before discovering Nonviolent Communication. Sitting on the meditation cushion, he would experience "how the world could be, and how I wanted to be in relation to the world," he says.

But Lasater would often feel a contradiction between those experiences and how he found himself reacting to other people. Once, he says, he attended a five-day meditation course that left him feeling peaceful and grounded. But within hours of leaving, he noticed that he was already feeling judgmental and reactive. "In a stressful moment, I would forget and go into my habitual patterns. NVC is a cognitive way of reminding myself to act in line with my values."

Lasater is now an NVC trainer and a co-founder of Words at Work, an organization that offers workplace coaching and mediation based on the principles of Nonviolent Communication. "Our culture teaches us to analyze a situation, to extract ourselves from it, and then decide who's to blame: the other person or myself," he says. None of which is very helpful if you're interested in living in harmony with the Self you find on the mat or with your co-workers. Lasater finds that NVC allows people to get out of a battlefield mentality at the office and, eventually, to get good at recognizing the needs that must be met in order for everyone to feel good about a situation. The outcome can't help but be positive both for workplace relationships and for the success of the organization.

And, importantly, you don't have to sign your whole office up for an NVC training for everyone to benefit. "Over and over, clients tell me, 'My workplace has changed so much, and the only thing that's different is me,'" Lasater says. "They see people differently. They see their own actions differently. They create a space where compassion can arise."

The business philosophy and mission statement of the company you work at may not align seamlessly with NVC and yogic values. But if you commit to a practice like Nonviolent Communication, your focus becomes changing the way you relate to the world rather than trying to get others on board.

An Honest Doctor

This has certainly been the case for Jody Scheer, who works as a pediatrician in a newborn intensive care unit in Portland, Oregon. She often finds herself coping with the difficult behaviors of distraught parents as well as the needs of fragile or sick babies. On the recommendation of a friend, Scheer went to hear Marshall Rosenberg speak. "I was really taken by NVC and the way it gets to the heart of connection," says Scheer, who went on to take several NVC courses.

Scheer began using the four-step model at work and found that often, the technique gave her a way to see past combative or difficult behavior, empathize with the fear or sadness or anger the person was feeling, and connect with that person's needs in a compassionate way. "Once I was called in to speak with a father whose baby had been born with a cleft palate, a condition that is treatable, but which can cause problems with breathing and eating," Scheer recalls. When she approached the baby's father—who towered over her at well over 6 feet and 200 pounds—he began to yell at her.

"My first response was to puff up and try to get on his level, which, of course, didn't work," she admits. "I stopped for a moment and thought, This is a perfect NVC moment! So I said, 'Are you scared because you need your baby to be safe?' That completely deflated him." The father and Scheer went on to have an intimate conversation in which she learned that in his native country, babies with cleft palates are often left to die. "When I found that out, it was so much easier to have compassion for him," Scheer says.

Incorporating NVC into her medical practice has had a tremendous impact on Scheer's life. "I can't fix every infant under my care, but I've learned to be present with the feelings and needs of their families. This has truly met my own need to nurture, to contribute to life, to

be honest, and to have integrity," she says. Of course, it's made her work experience better, too: "The lovely side effect is that my job is easier and more rewarding."

But that's just part of what Scheer gets from practicing Nonviolent Communication. "You can use it superficially, just for more effective communication, but for me, it's a spiritual way of looking at the world—seeing the good in all people, seeing the Divine. It's really hard to be connected with somebody if they're yelling at you, but the uglier the behavior, the bigger the unmet need. NVC gives me a pathway to access the heart energy instead of all the stuff that goes on in my brain."

Ultimately, she adds, "it's about being in the world the way I want to be, regardless of the other person's behavior. NVC gives me a way to line up with my spiritual path in every moment."

Meagan Francis is a freelance writer and the mother of four, who practices NVC in her own relationships at work and at home.

Five Reasons why You Should not be a Yoga Teacher

By Dr. Paul Jerard, E-RYT 500



Truthfully, there are no reasons why any of us cannot be, or do, what we want, as long as you are not hurting anyone. You should always strive to be the **best** you can be. However, you may find that many people create obstacles, in front of themselves, to avoid success.

This is truly ironic that we hold ourselves back from making achievements, and teaching Yoga is just one of many goals that are not fully realized. Below is a list of common reasons why many good practitioners do not pursue their goal of becoming a Yoga instructor.

1. "I am too old to teach Yoga."

Actually, **age** is not a factor. The ability to teach is timeless. There are many Yogic styles; and the most common, outside of India, is Hatha and its many sub-styles. Although **Hatha** is the union of physical mastery, it has many gentle, therapeutic, and vigorous styles.

There is a need for mature, compassionate, safety conscious, and gentle instructors. The world's population is aging and students are living longer. Who would have thought that hospitals and **religious centers** would seek out Yoga teachers ten or twenty years ago?

Therefore, Yoga is becoming readily accepted by mainstream global society and does not have to apply to any one particular type of person or religious group. Many of the old barriers that prevented the masses from being exposed to Yogic methodology are gone.

2. "Dancers, martial artists, and gymnasts perform better asanas than I can."

Yoga is not dance, martial arts, or gymnastics. This is not to take away the importance of any of the above-mentioned arts. After all, I am a martial artist, and I was originally introduced to Yogic practices in a martial arts setting.

Being a little more flexible than the average person is a gift. However, it does not serve as a top priority for teaching Yoga. The best Yoga teachers are those who can communicate, and those teachers usually have to struggle to excel at asana practice. Yet, this type of teacher can explain how to master an asana to anyone. On the other hand, the extraordinarily flexible teacher may not understand how the skeletal body works.

Yoga instructors who are naturally flexible think that everyone else should be, as well. This is not always the case, as there are skeletal limitations within some students. This is not to say that they cannot increase, or improve, their **flexibility**, but each person's body is unique.

3. "Teaching Yoga costs too much money."

This is true in some cases; however, you can shop around for the best course at the most affordable price. Some onsite Yoga training facilities have seva programs, where you can work for partial tuition. This is much like a college, where there are scholarships for students who perform tasks around the campus. There are also a variety of Yoga correspondence courses, which allow flexible study hours, little or no travel, and no extra expenses.

Aura Wellness Center offers such a Yoga course, and we have interns and graduates worldwide. We also offer traditional onsite training to groups and individuals. The point to understand about teaching is that you are a student for life. Every teacher of Yogic methodology is immersed in continuing education for as long as we teach, and some of us will study to our last day.

4. "I only want to teach Yoga to a few students and I don't want to go into business."

Many practitioners feel this way and that's fine. This is not a problem because if you are teaching a few friends, as a hobby, it is not necessary to go through the certification process.

If your circle of friends starts to expand, it would be wise to get some type of liability coverage. There are a number of liability insurance programs to choose. You could purchase a sports, holistic, Yoga, or home liability policy to cover your specific needs.

You should also learn as much as you can about safety, anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology. The reason I mention this is so that you do not hurt your students. The compassion and knowledge to become a safe Yoga instructor is very important.

5. "I have a good paying job and teaching Yoga may not support my family."

Like all start up small businesses, teaching Yogic methodology cannot offer "instant bundles of cash." You would want to build your business as an independent contractor first. In our 240-hour Yoga teacher training course, you will find 16 ways to grow your business, with little or no overhead. When you build up enough accounts, the decision, as to whether or not to open your own independent studio, will be clear.

This has been a radical job change for all of us, who go into teaching Yoga full time, but you do not have to take any sudden or financial risks. Growing your own teaching practice can start on a part time basis and later develop into full time, if you get the right guidance and take the proper steps.

Bear in mind that the business and marketing information in our Yoga certification courses is current and "field tested." This information is specific to Yoga instructors and contains successful methods used, with regard to return on investment.

Right now, there are a lot of studios that “flounder” economically, because the economy is tough and owners have insufficient business or marketing skills. Within this kind of climate, it is not hard to get your market share of students within your geographic area.

Lastly, there are so many reasons to avoid progress, you could create a book of excuses, but the reason to succeed at anything is your **passion**. If you are passionate, safe, and knowledgeable about Yoga, this is an excellent starting point for anyone who wants to become a Yoga teacher.

© Copyright 2005 – Aura Wellness Center – Publications Division

Why an Empty Yoga Class Might Be the Best Thing to Ever Happen to You!

By Amy Ippoliti

We've all reached tough points in our time as yoga teachers. You might know this scenario well: You've prepared your class, your teaching notes are ready, maybe you have a music play mix all picked out and perhaps you've even chosen a theme for the night. You commute to the studio ready to serve.



When you get to the studio, the parking lot is empty and you think, "Well, it's early still." But the lot never fills up, the bike rack is empty and the front desk looks like a ghost town. You go inside to the studio and wait. It's start time and...

No. One. Shows.

So many feelings can arise – loneliness, feelings of rejection, inadequacy, relief that you have the night off, anxiety about paying your bills, and even anger at the time slot you have allocated. It's hard not to take it personally – even if it's because of the weather or circumstances beyond your control.

And what if only one person shows up? Now you must put all those feelings aside and be there 100% for the kind soul who made the effort to be there. This is not an easy thing to do when you've been thinking all day about how you'll meet your rent or mortgage payment and you rely on teaching to help pay your bills. If you parked outside at a meter, you will pay to teach yoga tonight.

What is the best way to handle these situations?

It's normal to feel sad and anxious about this state of affairs but, being good yogis, most of us quickly look for the silver lining, give our situation a positive spin and make good use of the time.

But how can you truly make the most out of these circumstances and get a new lease on teaching?

If no one shows up

- It's a great time to do a much needed yoga practice which will improve your teaching in the long run.
- You could also interact on social media with students to help keep the conversation going outside of class.
- If you brought your laptop, you could work on your newsletter to help ramp up your communication efforts to ensure better attendance in the future.

- Go home! Schedule an impromptu date night with your significant other, or play time with your children. You'll be amazed at how much inspiration you'll gain from personal time.



If one or two students show up

-Now is not the time to lament the situation or let your disappointment show. Your attitude toward these students is going to be paramount to the future success of that class!

-Remember, the students might feel as badly as you do that no one else came and many are aware that you made just as much effort as they did to be there in exchange for very little or in

some cases no compensation.

-You'll want to reassure them that you love the intimate setting and depth that can come from a small session – and let them know they will get a private lesson (or a semi-private if more than one comes) which is a great perk!

Although we rely on our classes as part of our income as professionals, the highest reason we teach yoga is to help others and we chose this because we love what we do. Even if you're worrying inside about your income, get in touch with that higher aim because it's still true.

More than ever, now will be the time to be on your A game – those few students who do show up are the ones who will tell all their friends to come to your class next time!

Now, this is all well and good, but it is still vital that you look at the underlying issues that might be causing low turn out in the first place. Don't let yourself go into denial!

Low turn out (if not intentional) is not a good use of time for anyone except the student who gets to have a private lesson with you – but even that might make them feel uncomfortable if they were expecting to practice in community! The studio does not benefit, nor do you. Therefore, take these considerations to heart:

1. Consider how long you have been in that teaching at that time with low turnout.

Is the class slow because you started teaching at that hour fairly recently? It's normal for a new class to take 3-6 months to attract a turn out. Or have you been in that slot for over 3-6 months with no luck?

If you've been at it for a while in this slot with no luck it could be that the time is not convenient for students, the class takes place opposite a more desired class or fitness activity,



or your teaching and interaction skills need improvement.

Look into the most popular times that people in the neighborhood do their exercise, and make a note of what else is offered nearby that could be pulling students away.

Seek out honest feedback from another teacher in your community and be open to what your studio manager has to say about your teaching if they have received feedback about you. Sometimes the smallest change based on feedback can make all the difference.

2. Are you filling your classes better in other time slots?

If you are filling your classes well in your other teaching slots, then this time slot is probably not a great time for your students! However if all of your classes are getting the same low number results, it's time to look at what you can do to improve in the following areas:

- **Your “model teaching container”.** Are you keeping up your practice and self care? Do you manage your time well? Are you managing your personal finances well? Have you analyzed your teaching schedule to make sure it is optimal and sustainable? Do you have a mission statement about why you teach yoga? Are you contributing to your community or to the causes that matter to you the most? When these areas of your life are “dialed in” you can show up as a teacher who is inspired, rested, calm, and organized.
- **Your teaching and interaction skills.** Are you personable, friendly and conversational with your students? Do you learn their names and attempt to get to know them? Perhaps it's time to take a teacher training or go on retreat to brush up your skills.
- **Your marketing, promotion and personal brand.** Do you rarely if ever email your subscribers about where and when you teach? Are you lurking on Facebook but never posting? Is your personal brand unclear? [Are you conflicted or confused about teaching yoga in exchange for money? Are you conflicted about self-promotion?](#)
- **Your belief and visualization skills.** Are you visualizing your classes filling with a lovely community of yogis? Or do you unconsciously expect low numbers? Where do you see room for improvement?

By all means, keep your attitude in check and make good use of the time when you experience a yoga no-show or low-show, but get to the bottom of the low turnout as soon and take action to change course. Otherwise you risk yoga teacher burnout which I do not wish on any yoga teacher (or their students)!

Now it's your turn to join the conversation. Have you experienced the Yoga No-Shows? What have you done in that situation? Leave a comment below and let's talk!

~ Amy Ippoliti, prAna Ambassador, yogi & E-RYT500

The “Blue Ocean” Opportunities for Yoga Teachers and Studios: A Panel Discussion at Wanderlust

The yoga community is growing. More teachers are graduating from teacher training, and more studios and yoga schools are opening all over the world. So, where can one find “blue ocean” opportunities -- untapped market opportunities that are still expanding? This past weekend, Katie Desmond, Yoga Alliance's public affairs manager, took part in a panel discussion on this topic. Panelists included Nicole Chetaud, consultant at MINDBODY; Amy Ippoliti, longtime teacher and co-founder of 90 Monkeys; and Taro Smith, PhD, co-founder of 90 Monkeys. The group discussed what new or under-served market segments yogis can capitalize on to build or grow their businesses.

Review some tips below that our staff compiled from the discussion.

Tip 1: Focus on beginner students

One of the key market segments identified was the beginner population. As the 2012 Yoga in America Study suggests, there are over 44.4% of the U.S. population who call themselves “aspirational yogis”, but are not yet practicing, compared to just 8.7% of U.S. adults with a regular yoga practice. This presents an enormous opportunity for teachers and studios to learn how to market to, serve, and retain new students. It's not an easy skill to do so. When surveying the room, few panel attendees expressed a desire to serve beginning students, as doing so is certainly challenging from the teacher's perspective. However, given the opportunity this presents, panelists suggested that teachers and studios pay more attention to this segment, crafting beginner or new student packages that entice and help cultivate yoga practice as a habit. Nicole of MINDBODY discovered, through her experiences with yoga studios, that a 30-day new student pass is the most effective type of new student package. Allowing a new student to be a part of your studio for an entire month helps them build the habit of coming to yoga class, and allows them to experience and engage with your studio and teachers enough to entice them to come back, even after their new student pass expires. Panelists also recommended offering workshops and series for newer students.



Tip 2: Email marketing works

Self-promotion is often something yoga teachers and studios shy away from, but panelists all encourage cultivating connections via social media and email newsletters. Aside from marketing your upcoming events, Amy Ippoliti suggests sharing information that your community, specifically, would find useful, whether that be recipes, philosophy tidbits, or something else. Amy and Taro started 90 Monkeys, a professional development school for yoga teachers and studios, after recognizing that yoga teachers could expand upon their business and organization skills to better serve their students.

Tip 3: Working collaboratively might open new opportunities

Yoga teachers and studios often feel an enormous amount of competition with other teachers and studios in their community, and as a result insular communities may develop within the studio environment. While, it may not be realistic for studios to giveaway all of their trade secrets, what kind of business opportunities might be available by collaborating on an initiative? Public Affairs Manager Katie Desmond reported on successful collaborations of yoga teachers and schools across the country who are working on marketing initiatives such as regional yoga weeks, community events festivals and conferences designed to bring new students and populations to the mat.



Maggie's Bliss YTT Written Final

Required final for your certification in this Online YTT program is to fill out the following written portion with your answers and to also either write or film yourself teaching a one-hour Yoga class. If writing, please email the following written final and your written one-hour yoga class to maggieanderson7@yahoo.com. If filming your yoga class, you may upload your filmed version to Youtube.com or to our private YTT facebook group.

Hello Magical Beings,

This Final is meant to show me that you have a strong grasp on a few aspects of yoga practice: alignment, anatomy, energetics. It is also a teaching tool, so if you do not answer to my satisfaction, I will fill in the gaps for you so you can benefit from the additional knowledge.

Should there be too much information that is poorly understood, I will communicate why to you and send you an alternate Final to complete after more study.

Also, please remember as a part of your required final exam you will either send me a full written description of a one-hour yoga class or send me a video of you teaching a one-hour class.

Please email the completed Final back to me at your convenience!

Namaste,
Maggie

Maggie's Bliss Yoga Teacher Training: Final Exam

Please provide your full name as you want it on your Certificate:

What does “yoga” mean to you?

Why is Mountain Pose the “template” for all other poses?

What are the three main aspects of every pose, and in what order should you teach them?

What is the purpose of teaching students to engage Mula Bandha?

Why focus on the core as part of the yoga practice?

Teach me the Triangle from the ground up.

What is the difference in foot, hip and torso placement in Crescent Lunge, Warrior 1 and Warrior 2?

What are you passionate about and how will you communicate it and honor your authentic truth through your teaching?

Why is it important to focus on the transitions as well as the poses themselves?

Teach me any transition.

Teach me the Ujjayi breath.

Give me a sample theme for a class, and then write a sequence of poses that might exemplify your theme, as in sequencing an entire class from start to finish generally [you don't have to write all instructions, just give the main pose names].

What does “advanced” mean in the yoga classes? Who is advanced?

List the order of the Sun Salutation as you'd teach it.

Teach me the Pigeon Pose:

What keeps the knee safe in standing poses?

List 4 adjustments you'll often do on your students.

How will you open and close your classes?

A final note from me...

I'm so excited for you to begin this journey! As you process through all the yoga, magical, and healing, knowledge, wisdom and concepts contained in this manual, your teaching will be most effective if it comes from a deeply authentic sense of truth. Honor the wisdom of the soul.

If you can use YOUR truth to open a safe space, one that does not presume that your truth is their truth, and leaves the questions there for them to each answer, each in their own way, you will have done your job as a spiritual leader.

If you can point them in the direction and then trust that whatever they find it will be exactly right for them. You will become a true teacher.

We are all stardust ascending to a beautiful magical way of being. All paths lead to the same. Empower your students to remember the light they already are...and then free them to be honestly and powerfully who they need to be from there.

When you are ready for a life changing transformation, it will happen.

Teach your students how we show up on the mat will very often show us how we show up in life. Energetic releases will happen. Emotions will rise up for release. Mind thoughts will interfere with peace. Competitiveness comes up, goal self comes up, coming out of pose means failure (not true) but where did that come from and more importantly where does it show up in life.

If we're uncomfortable with a pose, we might try to go deeper. Or when not ready we might distract ourselves fidgeting with clothes or looking around room. Instead explore it. NOTICE where your mind wanders. Notice if you start to project. Be really aware of your reaction to the experience. If you just get out of the pose...what would happen. It's all about beginning to explore who YOU are and how you react. How you respond in life. This is an opportunity to witness depth of thought process and learn more about reactivity and/or neutrality. Begin to breathe, stay centered. Stay absolutely present and aligned with breathe. It doesn't matter how the poses look. It only matters how you feel.

May You See the Sacred, Hear the Invisible and Know the Divine.

*Namaste.
Maggie*

