

BODHIYOGA TEACHER TRAINING MANUAL



FOUNDATION MODULE

WWW.BODHIYOGA.ES



Contents

1.0 Introduction to Bodhiyoga International Mindfulness Yoga Teacher Training approach to yoga	4
2.0 Hatha yoga	15
2.1 Asana sequences	21
2.2 Restorative yoga	59
2.3 Structural alignment	67
3. Anatomy and physiology	74
4.0 Breathing and Pranayamas	103
5.0 Kriyas, theory and practice	107
6.0 Systematic relaxation	112
7.0 Teaching methods	117
7.1 Vinyasa Krama - development and sequencing	118
8.0 Foundation in Meditation	133
9.0 Critical study of key texts from Buddhist and yoga tradition	162
10.00 Exploring a Yogic lifestyle	166
11.00 Protocol for 300 hour and 500 hour students in training	168
Recommended reading list	170





- Suḍāka and Sadhita are the authors of this Manual
- The Manual is for the use only by those trained by us in the Bodhiyoga Mindfulness Yoga Teacher Training programme
- *Only* these teachers can copy sections of it for their students





1.0 Introduction to Bodhiyoga International Mindfulness Yoga Teacher Training approach to yoga

The aim of our teacher training is to provide an integrated approach to yoga as a vehicle of spiritual change. We refer to spiritual change as the development of the whole individual: intellectual, physical and emotional. A true spiritual practice includes the possibility of self transcendence through other means such as giving time and energy to the needs of others and working to transform one's unskilful mental states.

Ultimately, spiritual practice is about overcoming a rigid fixed self view and destructive states of mind. At best, yoga becomes a 'vehicle' for spiritual change and the development of a true individuality. By practicing in a context that sees the development of mind as more important than the body, for its own sake, we start to see that yoga is not just about postures and breathing.

Our model of yoga teaching is defined by:

- Aware and honest enquiry into who and what we are as human beings
- Enquiry through self questioning in practice
- The use of Hatha yoga postures
- The use of breathing methods and Pranayamas
- The use of Buddhist meditation practices
- The use of Buddhist teachings on mindfulness, awareness and kindness
- The use of systematic relaxation methods
- Honesty, directness and kindness in teaching, through applying skilful speech
- Using the teachings of Buddhism and yoga as means to an end i.e. self development of the individual.

To be an effective yoga teacher one must not only be teaching with the well being of the students in mind, but principally teaching what we know from our own





experience! We are offering, in the Bodhiyoga training, a system of methods for the development of the teacher.

We will present our training in the following way:

Firstly, there are hatha yoga postures. One can practice postures and breathing to different ends. One can do them for general health and well being; a sense of calm and ease in the body and mind. Yoga brings about innumerable benefits on a physical and psychological basis. Secondly, one can do postures and breathing etc. as a means of generating mindfulness, leading to a progressive deepening of self awareness and therefore integrating oneself more fully.

The whole context of the training is encapsulated in the approach of mindfulness which we take from the Buddhist tradition. This is taught both in meditation and in asana. Mindfulness is an attitude towards life that incorporates all of our emotional and mental energies in order to unify them and help integrate us. Integration means acting from the *totality* of our being, rather than from conflicting and disparate parts. Ultimately, this has an ethical dimension which means that our life starts to have more of a sense of meaning and purpose beyond the mundane.

In teaching yoga we remain within the sphere of our experience, communicating those things with which we have matured a degree of experience in. This then holds up to the practice of *Satya* in yoga; which is honesty in relation to others. Giving teachings we have no experience of, in practice, is not in-line with the general principles of yoga or Buddhism and could even be harmful.

Awareness is the key to spiritual change and if we bring this awareness into the context of our practice and really apply it, the potency of our yoga is increased. This awareness training will be brought out through meditation practice taught from the Buddhist tradition. In particular we'll use the text that is known as the Satipatthana. This text is the platform scripture of the practice of mindfulness and meditation within the Buddhist tradition. In this text, what is revealed to us, is a way of being that leads to awakening and transcendence through ongoing and deepening awareness. The





categories of this practice will involve the content of our yoga teacher training and define it in many ways. This is what makes the course especially unique and potentially far reaching.





What is Mindfulness Yoga?

Essentially we bring mindfulness to our yoga practice. Powerfully and wonderfully simple. The aim of yoga is to develop and cultivate energy “virīya” (Pali). Virīya is the continuous transformation of unskillful states of being marked by greed, hatred and confusion into creative states of mind based in love, generosity and wisdom.

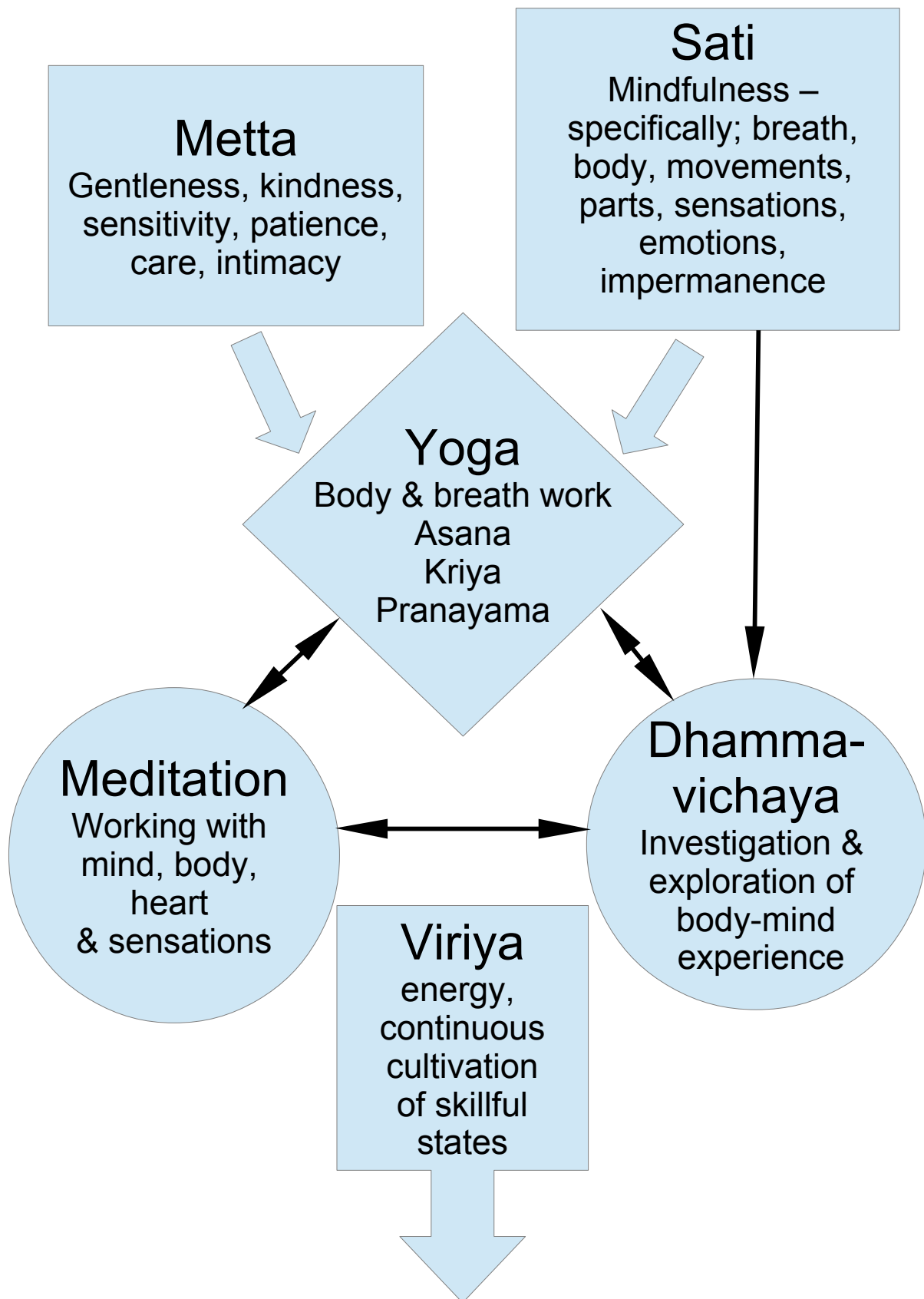
At the heart of the mandala is yoga and meditation. The qualities of metta, loving kindness and sati, mindfulness, inform our approach from the deeper level. We are mindful especially of the body, its parts and movements, sensations (vedana), emotions and mind-states (citta).

Closely related and following on from the practice of mindfulness is “dhammavichaya”. We encounter this in the teaching on the seven factors of Awakening. Dhammavichaya builds on mindfulness and leads on to energy (virīya). Dhammavichaya is an explorative, investigative quality that in meditation we use to determine if we are developing a skillful, more expansive awareness or a more hampered, claustrophobic unskillful mind. In our yoga practice we can bring this element in to explore how we are working on the body and the effect of our practice as we proceed enhancing our sensitivity and understanding.

This reflexive quality results in our yoga practice being more a practice done from “within” or from the “inside out” rather than the “outside in”. Postures are then not a discipline imposed on the body from potentially insensitive externally applied instructions from either an ambitious yoga teacher or an over zealous practitioner! We begin to explore our body through and from within our body. The overall atmosphere of the practice becomes more internalised and more meditative.

Employing mindfulness and metta we can really take responsibility for our body-work and meditation practice. Ultimately we take responsibility for our own spiritual lives.







The role of a yoga teacher

The role of the yoga teacher in today's world is an important one. We are aiming, in Bodhiyoga, to bring about an integral and whole approach to yoga teaching, one that especially incorporates meditation and a spirit of enquiry. As a yoga teacher, one is responsible for the students whilst they are with you in the class, course, or whatever setting you are teaching in. We cannot be responsible for what our students do at home. However, what we teach and how we teach may have far reaching effects in the lives of our students. We never really know the full extent of the effect our yoga teaching will have. Some students will stay with you for many years, devoted to practicing with you. Others will just be passing through, but nonetheless, they may still gain a lot through your classes.

As a yoga teacher develops experience they become more adept at designing classes that are appropriate for the groups they are teaching and therefore more beneficial. We move from the more generalised to the more specific. In ancient times, yoga would have been an oral tradition where one student studied with a teacher and received individualised teaching based on their needs. In modern times, classes are the more common teaching context. Therefore we have to adapt to the needs of the people in our environment.

The spirit of enquiry should always be there in yoga. Whether we are teaching or doing our own practice, it is always useful to have some questions that one is working on. Is this appropriate for the class? How can I take them safely a step forward in their practice? What is it that I am experiencing in this moment.? etc. In this way, we provide a basis for development. We won't always get answers to our questions in a rational, linear way. But nonetheless, the spirit of enquiry needs to be unfolding and developing in our practice in an ongoing way.





Hatha Yoga and Buddhism - setting the context

Somewhere, around 2.500 years ago, in a climate of great spiritual fervour and enquiry, a man was born who became known as “Siddhartha”. Later, he was more famously referred to as, “The Buddha” or “The Awakened One”. He was given other titles such as: “*Sugata*”, “*Tathagata*”, “*The well gone one*” and many other epithets. Essentially, these names refer to one who is spiritually matured at the highest level. We call this level in Buddhism, “*Enlightenment*”. However, this does not refer to an end point in spiritual evolution, at least not for Buddhists.

Buddhism has always started from the premise that all experience is preceded by mind. Therefore the main aim for Buddhists is to develop the wealth of potential buried in the human mind enabling us to realise that potential and gain awakening. This is in the reach of anyone that wishes to make the effort.

Buddhism classically has a threefold schema: *Ethics*, *Meditation* and *Wisdom* which encapsulate the path that is to unfold. Ethics is the keystone to spiritual development and it is here that we learn about our day to day, moment to moment behaviour and it is here that the Buddhist teaching applies itself right from the beginning. Meditation is the greater unfolding of that ethical process in bringing about direct change to the mind through applying various methods of meditation that help to gain Tranquillity (Samatha) and Insight (Vipassana). It is this basis of ethics and meditation that allows us to perceive reality and to break through the life denying, narrow confines of the ego. This aspect of the Buddhist path is referred to as Wisdom (Prajna).

Hatha yoga starts off from a similar but somewhat different footing. Hatha yoga, which grew out of the experience of Yogis practising in quite rarefied conditions, initially was practised as a path of austerity (Tapas). One can say that this path has gained refinement and clarity throughout the centuries as each successive generation of practitioners have further evolved and added to the development of what modern day yoga has now become. Yoga as an integrated path, as presented by Patanjali, the ‘father’ of modern day yoga, is the schema that we will be exploring in the context of our training. We shall be evaluating critically some aspects of these





teachings so that we can be clear as to what it is that we are presenting as yoga teachers.

Yoga, like Buddhism has its root in ethical discipline. The ethics of Yoga do vary slightly from those of Buddhism in that there are elements of physical training which include body and breathing techniques that Buddhism does not have as a part of its core teachings. However, overall we can say that Buddhist ethics are more comprehensive and are addressed to every aspect of our conduct on the level of body, speech and mind.

We need to be clear that Buddhism and Raja/Hatha Yoga are not the same schools of teaching. It is important that we understand the contexts of these traditions to avoid confusing either ourselves or our students. The essential difference in these teachings is, in a way, one of metaphysics. Buddhism does not hold that there is anything fixed or unchanging in the universe; like a soul or Atman. It does not hold that there is a God or a creator being that holds power over all beings. This belief is an anathema to the Buddhist teaching. Yoga *does* hold that there is a creator or a great 'source' that we unite with at the end of the yoga path. However, this can of course be seen as metaphor for higher and higher levels of integration.

In presenting this interconnected path of Buddhist teachings and yoga, we are not unifying the two schools of thought. The Buddha teaches that we can take for our Dharma practice (our practice that helps us to evolve) whatever helps us to gain the following:

- Helps us release grasping and self clinging
- Give rise to energy (for higher good) or *Virya*
- Helps purify the mind stream

In the Bodhiyoga school we are communicating the value of the Buddhist teachings especially as they are presented through meditation and working on the mind. Hatha yoga is a tool that one can use to develop the mind also, but in an indirect way. When we put together these two paths: Hatha yoga in its various manifestations





and Buddhism's general teaching along with meditation, we arrive at a system of practice that helps a wide variety of people to grow in a wide variety of ways. As there are many different types of people, it must stand that it is necessary to have the skill and knowledge to teach in a variety of different ways at different times.

Not everyone will be drawn to our approach of learning yoga, but many will. Many will find that they get something from your classes that they feel was lacking in their other yoga classes. Sometimes it will be appropriate to teach a group the Metta Bhavana practice and sometimes it will be better to teach them the Mindfulness of Breathing and more asanas. As the teacher, you have to take responsibility for the content of your classes, not the students.

There will be people who take a greater interest in Buddhism through doing yoga with you and there will be some who go more towards Hatha yoga and are less interested in the Buddhist teaching and meditation. We offer people an open hand and they take as much or as little from the teaching as they please. This is in keeping with the principles of Yoga and Buddhism which is that we do not force or coerce students to learn or take on anything. Ahimsa is the golden rule of spiritual life. We do not force our point of view, we instead offer it. Ultimately you can only influence people to the extent that you have done enough work on yourself to develop yourself. One's influence as a teacher is also to do with how we are in ourselves, not only the class content and what we teach.





Satipatthana as the basis for training

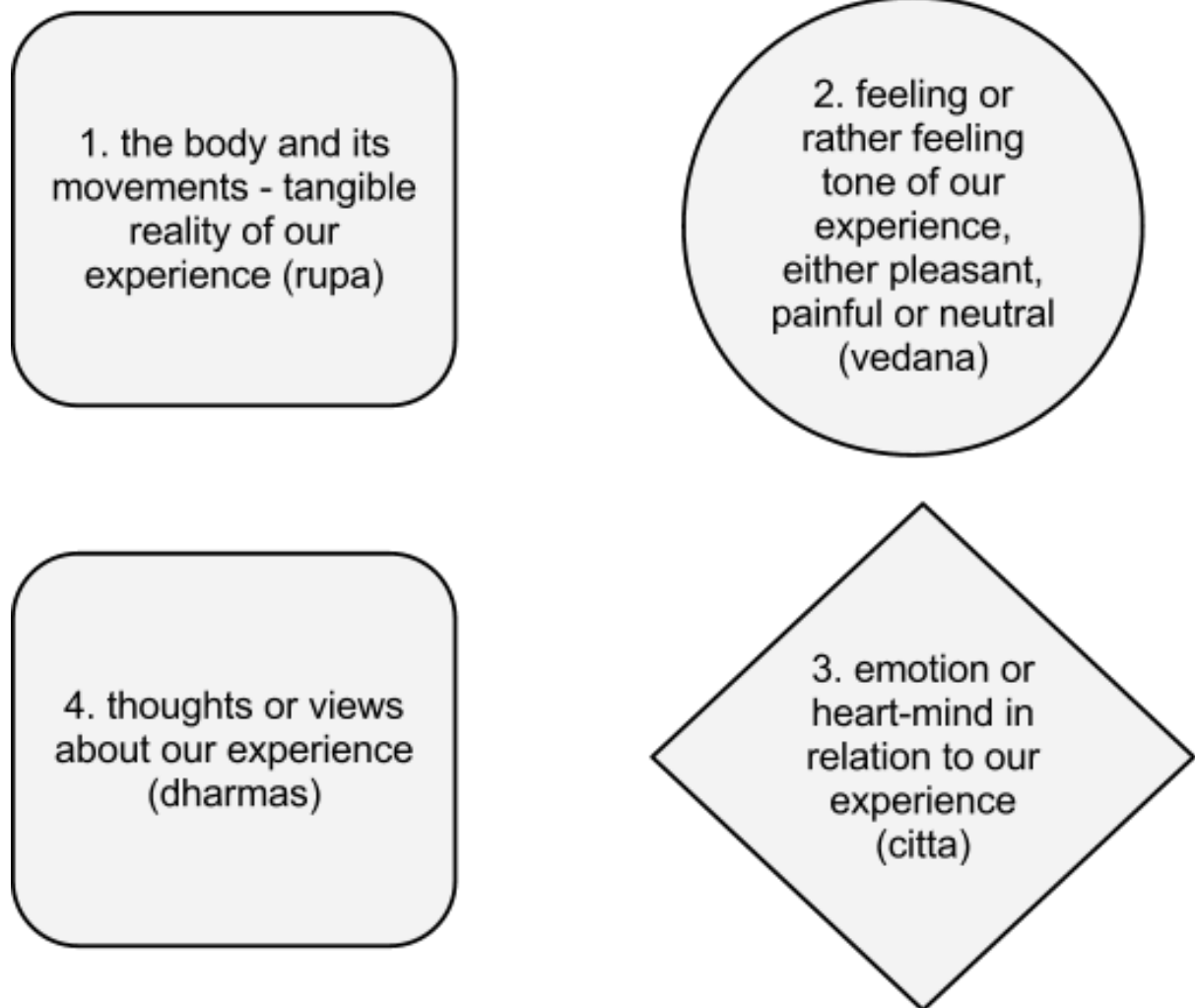
Satipatthana is a word that can be defined in the following ways: “Direct path to Awakening”, “Continuous application of mindfulness”, “A path found only in the teaching of Buddhism”. You should already get the sense that what this text is really pointing to is the on-going training of oneself through mindful attention to all that one is doing.

The Satipatthana presents itself in four different categories. Firstly there is the level of body awareness including the breathing, the movement of the body and other aspects of the physical dimension of our existence. Secondly, we have the level of sensation or “Hedonic feeling”, thirdly, the level of mental awareness (of our general states of mind) and then, in the last section, we get a bit more sophisticated with aspects of experience that are subtler and require greater levels of effort to remain concentrated and stable. The purpose of all of these aspects of training is to become more and more aware of our reality, our existence and how that essentially is always changing, evolving and developing.

When we can get to grips with these teachings experientially, we begin to feel free, open and expansive. They are ultimately teachings of liberation. During the course we will be exploring these teachings in some detail and integrating them into our yoga and meditation.

Below we tabulate a summary of the four Satipatthanas outlined in the Sutta.





Body (rupa)	Hedonic feeling (vedana)	Mind (citta)	Dharmas
1. Breathing 2. Postures 3. Anatomical parts 4. Four elements 5. Contemplation on death	1. Pleasant 2. Unpleasant 3. Neutral	Contracted mind.. Relaxed mind... concentrated mind.. Liberated mind or not etc.	1. Hindrances 2. 5 skandas 3. 6 sense spheres 4. 7 awakening factors 5. 4 noble truths.





2.0 Hatha yoga

Critical exploration of Classical Hatha yoga postures, sequencing and timing of postures. We will look at ways to modify and adapt poses to the needs of individual students.

Yoga as embodiment and the body/mind union

Yoga practice offers us a way to connect with our body, it gives us tools with which to “climb back into”, return to a more fully embodied state. On this level, yoga speaks to an essential quality or texture of what it is to be an awake, self-aware, living being, inhabiting a moving, breathing, body. It helps us to ground ourselves in our physical experience. We cultivate awareness and through that awareness we cultivate a stronger sense of being in this body, in this time, and in this state. Establishing awareness we can then explore and deepen our sense of embodiment. Crucial to this process is an intelligent, sensitive, yoga practice. After all, we are essentially embodied beings and more often than not we tend to define ourselves through our bodies.

Hatha yoga practice offers us a way, then, of feeling, expressing and exploring this embodiment. The word yoga is often talked of as union, yoking, the bringing together of the body and the mind. However, we can say the primary tool for initiating and cultivating this connection is awareness, which can be heightened in meditation and Hatha yoga practice.





Approaches to Hatha yoga practice

We could consider several approaches, which amount to ways or attitudes to practice in themselves:

1. Path of enquiry - how we move, what can we do, not do? How does this experience in the body relate to my heart, emotions, feelings, the mind?
2. Path of training - physical and mental culture. Also the development of spiritual qualities like: energy, generosity, sensitivity, patience etc.
3. Path of working with energy - unblocking, raising, refining.
4. Path of transformation or purification of the heart/mind - greed, hatred, delusion and fear into compassion and wisdom.

Broadly speaking, we are interested in a balanced practice which both strengthens and invigorates, as well as opens and softens the body. The overall context is awareness. Awareness is the vital ingredient. Are we awake to our experience? Are we waking up to our experience?

Hatha yoga practice involves first, relaxing the body and unblocking energy, then stimulating and raising our energy and finally, refining that energy and becoming more subtly aware of the play of body and mind, especially explored within the stillness of sitting meditation practice. Until we sit still, we cannot really go deeper into the subtlety and richness of what it is to be an embodied, living, breathing, human being.

We are not giving more importance to one stage or another, all stages are important and have their role and function, but there is a sense of progression. The body-work practice serves, on its own level, to calm and focus the body and mind, the stillness of meditation allows us to deepen and become more intimate with our states of mind and emotions and allows us to develop a more subtle awareness of the body as well as of the world that surrounds us.





The ethical context

Perhaps this is the most important element that links us with our yoga practice and the rest of our lives.

Actions have consequences and what we do is essentially driven by our quality of mind. Simple Buddhist analysis suggests we can act skilfully, acts of wisdom and love or unskilfully, acting out of our greed, aversion or confusion. This seems so simple but of course in reality life can be fast moving and issues are much more complicated. We are often not so clear and wise to the consequences of our actions, we are learning as we go along, and sometimes life can present hard and unpleasant choices.

The Buddhist teaching, as does Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, (the text traditionally associated with yoga), suggests a list of training precepts which help guide us toward more skilful living and lead us to more skilful consequences.

The five Buddhist precepts put in their positive form are

1. The practice of love (sensitivity),
2. Generosity,
3. Contentment, (simplicity, allowing for more time to focus on what really matters)
4. Honesty,
5. Clarity and precision.

What does that mean when on the mat practicing asana? I think we have to allow these attitudes to permeate and perfume our practice and likewise the rest of our life (lives). Their influence will begin to influence how we act, behave and conduct ourselves not only in our asana practice but how we eat, talk, walk, work. They will affect our relationships in general.





The posture practice

The postures are perhaps the most obvious outward aspect of what we are doing in Hatha yoga. We teach a mixture of classic yoga postures (asanas).

In terms of presenting the postures, the Vinyasa Krama approach is useful, that is to say, it is a step by step introduction of increasingly more difficult and complex movements and postures.

It helps to build strength and familiarity from the ground up.

For a broad look at the mechanics of working in Hatha yoga, the concept of the five elements are helpful. Hatha yoga can be said to be practised around the five techniques of:

1. Asana (posture),
2. Vinyasa (moving with the breath)
3. Pranayama (unhindered breathing)
4. Bandha (energetic alignment and integrity)
5. Drushti (gaze, focus, awareness)

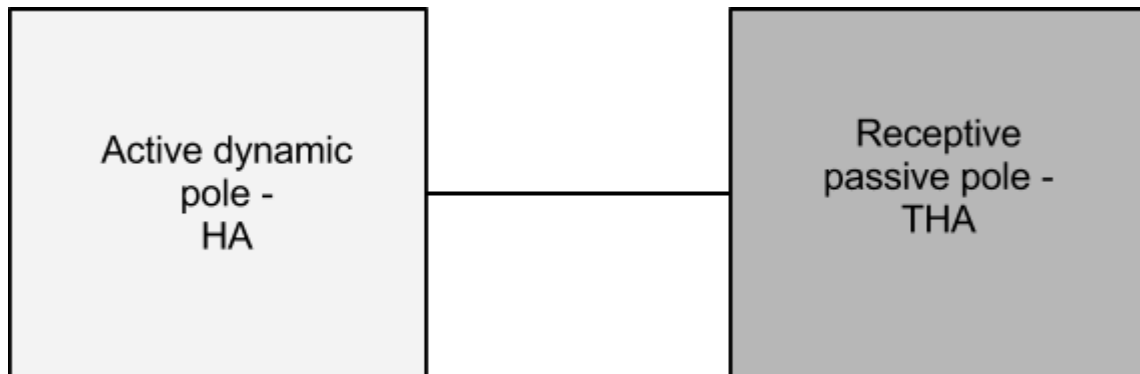
These correspond with the five elements:

1. Earth to posture;
2. Water to moving with the breath;
3. Fire to the internal energetic alignment and structural integrity of bandha;
4. Air to breathing freely;
5. Space/ether to awareness, the overall context in which Hatha yoga is practised.





Active / receptive emphasis in yoga practice



We are using this concept primarily to help differentiate two modes or approaches to the practice of Yoga. It is worth pointing out that, the Yoga tradition itself has a similar concept or image, that of Ha and Tha or Hatha. The psycho-physical technology of the yoga tradition which we are studying here; of asana, pranayama and meditation techniques and methods is sometimes called Hatha Yoga. This refers to a Yoga disciple who is interested in working with the body energy, prana, chi or ki. Primarily working with the bi-polar energies, ida and pingala associated with the central channel or nadi of sushumna, which runs up and down the spinal column. Though in our training we do not explore this energy system in any detail, it is worth pointing out.

From this image of the dual energies associated with the body we can draw out two approaches to practice in general. “Ha” is the solar, active principle, “tha” the lunar or receptive principle. Any given posture or approach to posture or any practice, for that matter, can emphasis one or both of these principles at a given moment. Hence we can understand them by looking at their opposing nature.

We can see this very clearly in the different styles of yoga. A fluid, fiery, dynamic yoga practice leads to a strengthening and toning of the body and could be considered an emphasis of the “Ha” pole. The passive more receptive approach of Restorative yoga could be likened to the softening and flexibility of the body.





In our teaching and practice we can emphasise a yoga which is more dynamic, emphasising strengthening poses and faster rhythms of practice, or a more receptive practice which is orientated towards relaxing, letting go, softening as well as resting and recuperation. The receptive quality also emphasises the inward oriented dimension of meditation which ideally all practices would embody to some extent.

On the next page, we have expanded the idea of working with the elements and energy, active “Ha” and receptive “Tha”, into sequencing a practice or class and into posture groups. There is a natural progression from the floor up and then back to the floor. From gentle floor work, through more intense work to the invitation of the stillness and spaciousness of meditation. Of course this sequencing is not fixed and individual practice sessions can follow a different structure, for example, if the weather is cold and damp in cool room maybe it would be more appropriate starting with a more intense dynamic practice, continuing like that and finishing intensively!

Sequencing - practice structure - Overall

- THA, HA, THA
- Soft, hard, soft
- Gentle, hard, gentle
- Slow, fast, slow
- Floor, on the feet, floor

In terms of energy and awareness

1. Connecting and arriving
2. Intensification and opening
3. Stabilisation
4. Integrating, deepening



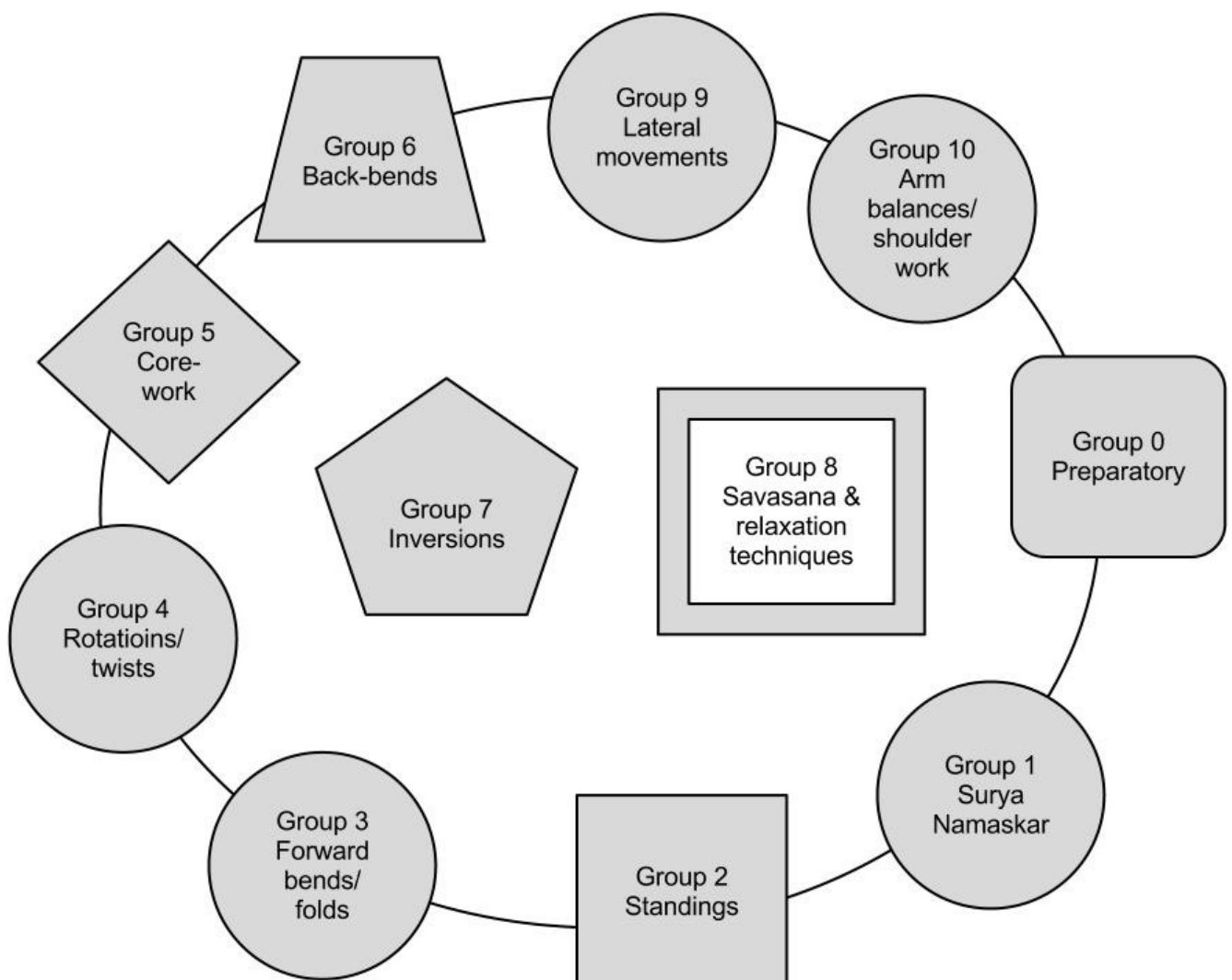


2.1 Asana sequences

Following are a set of photos depicting 11 main groups of poses. The groupings are not absolute distinctions and clearly some poses can be placed in more than one grouping. Over the course of the training we will explore the groups systematically building sequences drawing from the various groupings.

Group 0. gentle supine floor postures / leg stretches

- Warm up the body
- Soften and open
- Stimulate the major joints of the body; the hips and pelvis, spine, shoulders
- Preliminary awareness, letting go of external activity
- Arriving
- Dedicating and making intentions





Group 1. Surya Namaskar - heating sequences repeated

- Stronger and faster rhythm (can also be slow)
- One can build up to an elaborate and rich repetitive sequence
- Heats body
- Strengthens upper part of body - shoulders
- Cardiovascular (to a limited extent)
- Softens and strengthens musculature
- Liberates and frees static energy
- Less emphasis on details, just move
- Emphasis on superficial musculature
- Chakras - general, all

Group 2. Standing postures

- Sustained
- Held to build static strength
- Strengthens and opens legs and pelvis
- Work deeper muscles of pelvis and legs
- Chakra - pelvis (1 & 2)

Group 3. Forward bends / folds

- Seated leg work
- Hip openers
- Compensate / prepare for back bends
- Opens lower part of body pelvis legs
- Chakra - solar plexus (2)





Group 4. Core strengthening, abdominal work & "Fire" series

- Abdominals, strengthening the core, hip stabilisation
- Could be practiced at the beginning, middle or end of a sequence
- Chakra - solar plexus (3)

Group 5. Rotations, twists

- Softens spine
- Prepares body for back bends
- Compensates / prepares body for stronger back bending work.
- More depth and sensitivity
- Chakra - chest (4)

Group 6. Back bends

- Open hips, chest, thoracic area, shoulders.
- Extension of the spine (opening the internal face of the spine, contracting the dorsal face of the spine)
- Stimulating (care if doing late at night)
- Preparation for forward bends
- Usually the most demanding postures
- Chakra - chest/heart, throat (4 & 5)

Group 7. Inversions, shoulder stand and headstand

- Shoulder stand & headstand
- More receptive, rejuvenating
- Chakra - chest/heart, throat (4 & 5)
- Handstand
- Chakra - crown, head (7)
- Variations within these two fundamental postures can create more varied and complete practices in themselves





Group 8. Savasana - relaxation techniques

- Relaxes body
- Recuperation
- Integration and assimilation of the body work, energy shifts and manipulations
- Deepens and makes more subtle awareness generated in and of the psychophysical experience (body-mind)
- Chakra - total consciousness (6 & 7)

Group 9 Lateral bends

- Drawn from other groups

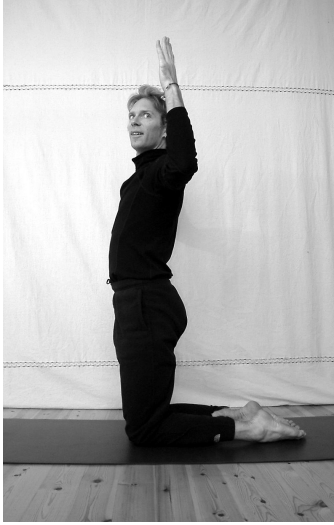
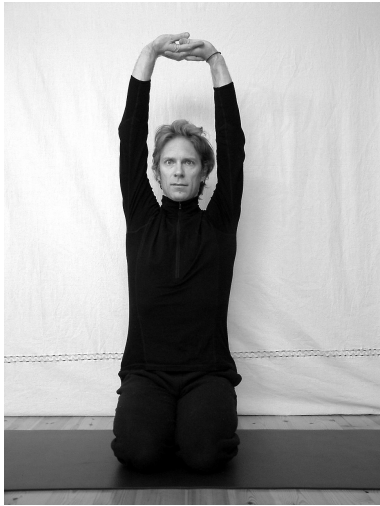
Group 10 Arm and shoulder work

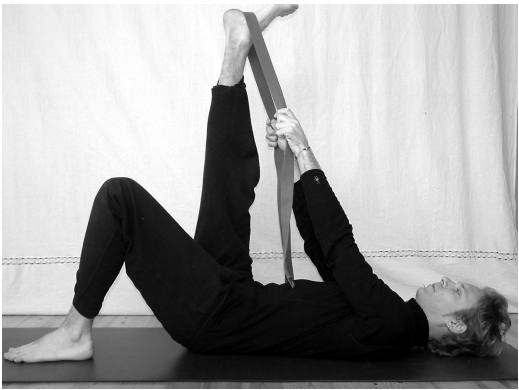
- Arms balances, hand stand etc.



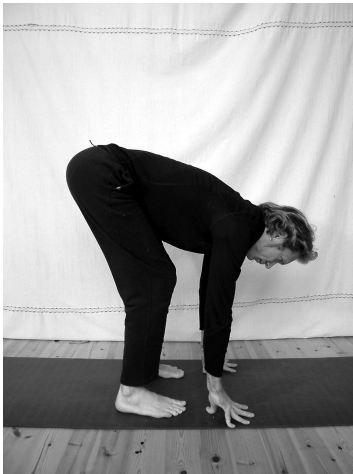
Group 0. Gentle floor postures / leg stretches

Poorvasana Crocodile, lying face down Physical Restful. Useful for connecting with the breath, relaxes and trains the diaphragm	
Semi supine Physical aspects Separate knees hip-width to help release hips/low back/sacral area Benefits Passive release of lower back, connect with breath, centring, "constructive rest"	
Supta Parivrttaasana Simple supine twist Physical aspects Knees together, can place cushion between knees to help release hips/sacral area Benefits Passive release of lower back, opens heart centre	
Supta Ardha Padmasana Supine half lotus Physical aspects Outer hip stretch Benefits Releases hips Contraindications Care with knee sensitivities	

Balasana Child's pose Physical aspects Flexion of the spine, restful Benefits Release of spine, introspective	
Vajraasana Dynamic movement - Lift up onto knees, return to child's pose Physical aspects Works thighs Benefits Mobilises/tones spine/pelvis/legs Contraindications Can protect knees using a blanket	
Parvasana Mountain pose Physical aspects Works upper back and arms Benefits Mild extension of spine and lengthens side body	

Virasana (variation) - strap work Hero's pose using belt Physical aspects Opens and works shoulders Benefits Opens thoracic area. Preparation for more classical poses.	
Gomukhasana in Virasana Hero's pose with arms bound Physical aspects Lengthens upper back, works shoulders Benefits Opens thoracic area	
Supta Padangustasana Supine leg stretch Physical aspects Works thigh and stretches back of leg Benefits Releases low spine. There are many variations of this pose.	

Group 1 Surya Namaskar

Tadasana Mountain pose Physical aspects Alignment of spine, finding centre of gravity over feet Benefits Centering, mindful moment	
Urdhva Hastasana Mountain pose arms up Physical aspects Mild extension of the spine Benefits Animates upper body energy. Can be done with greater extension of spine as well as lateral movements.	
Uttanasana Forward fold Physical aspects Flexion of the spine, can have the legs flexed or straight Benefits Gravity release of spine Contraindications Soften knees if there are low back problems	



Angasana Low Lunge Physical aspects Lengthens thigh muscles, opens groins Benefits Clarifies grounding of the front foot Contraindications Don't over-lunge, if there are sacral/lumbar problems	
8 Point Pose Used in Sun Salutation Physical aspects Strengthens upper body, arms, wrists Benefits Generates heat, learning grounding of the hands Contraindications Care with wrist sensitivities	
Bhujangasana Cobra (variations) Physical aspects Works the muscles along the spine, opens thoracic area Benefits Dynamic pose, stimulates movement of energy in the back of the body Contraindications Care with low back sensitivities	

Adho Mukha Svanasana

Downward Facing Dog

Physical aspects

Strengthens arms, lengthens back of legs, lengthens spine

Benefits

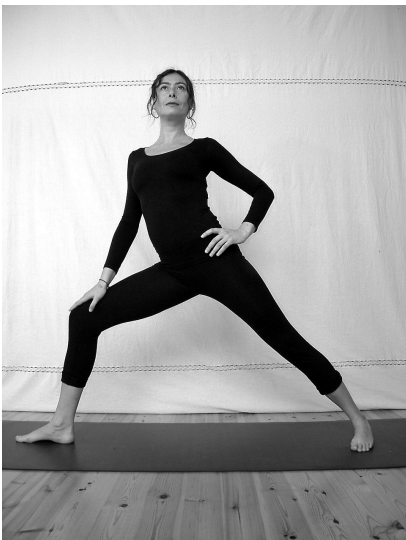
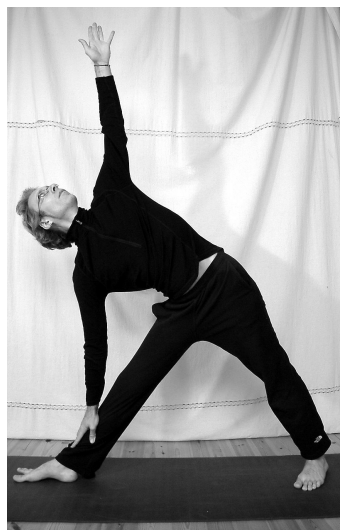
Easy to access mula bandha. With practice, restful

Contraindications

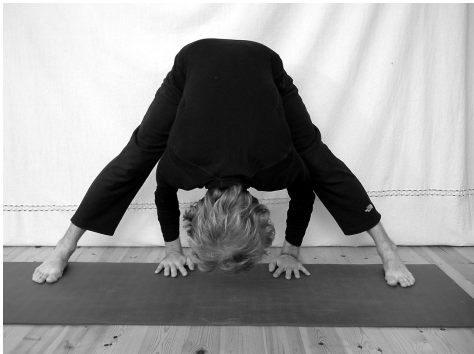
Can protect wrists by lifting heel of the hand on a slight raise (folded towel or blanket)



Group 2. Standing postures

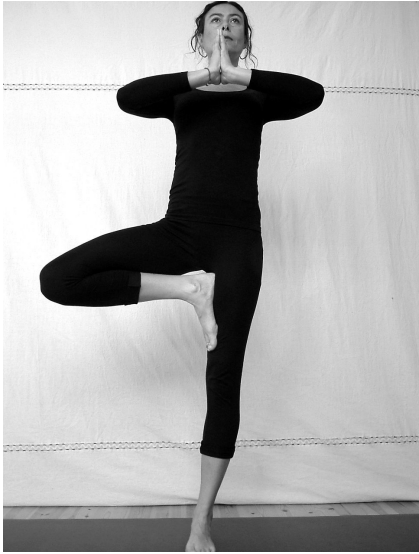
Trikonasana Triangle pose (preparation) Physical aspects Hips orientated forward Benefits Gentle preparation step by step towards the full pose (Vinyasa krama - Step 1) Contraindications Keep knee in line or behind the ankle	
Trikonasana II Triangle pose (preparation) Physical aspects Hip rotated externally, works back leg Benefits Opens pelvis, learn grounding in back foot (Step 2) Contraindications Do not force straight leg hip turn-out as can compress the sacral area	
Utthita Trikonasana Classic triangle pose Physical aspects Lateral stretch, strong hip opener, both legs worked Benefits Lateral opener for chest area (Step 3) Contraindications Do not lock the front leg	



Utkatasana Chair pose Physical aspects Strong for legs and back, keep feet especially heels well grounded Benefits Dynamic, heating pose, strengthens around knee area Contraindications Do not over arch lumbar	
Urdhva Prasarita Padottanasana Wide leg standing head up Physical aspects Legs can be bent, works legs, opens pelvis Benefits Lengthens the back legs, and spine	
Prasarita Padottanasana Wide leg standing Physical aspects Legs can be bent, works legs, opens pelvis, gravity lengthening of the spine Benefits Released spine, lengthens legs, strengthens pelvis, restful. Contraindications Care with lower back, can support body weight on hands	
Urdhva Parsvottanasana Standing forward fold, hands up on blocks Physical aspects Powerful leg work, can bend front leg Benefits Active lengthening of the spine Contraindications Care with low back sensitivities	



BodhiYoga

Parsvottanasana Standing forward fold Physical aspects Powerful leg work Benefits Restful for spine Contraindications Care with low back sensitivities. Don't lock front knee	
Vrksasana Tree pose Physical aspects Lengthening spine, balance Benefits Balance and integrity to length of the body, quietening inwardly, calming. Contraindications Can use wall if balance is very poor	
Natarajasana Lord of the dance pose Physical aspects Works front thigh, extension of spine, balance Benefits Centering, dynamic pose, gives confidence	





BodhiYoga

Salamba Parsvakanasana

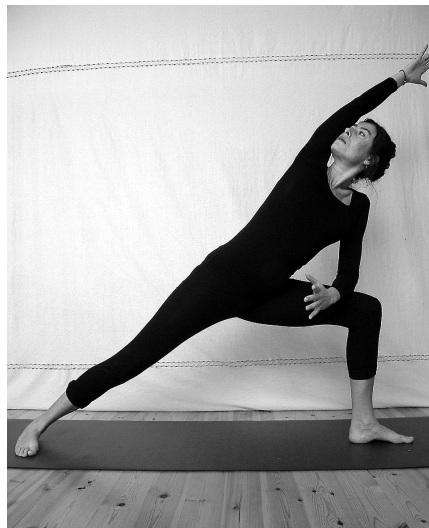
Supported angled lateral pose

Physical aspects

Opening of the thoracic area using forearm as support. Opens hip on bent leg side, lengthens one side of the body

Benefits

Ease as bent leg releases the pelvic area cf. triangle pose



Utthita Parsvakanasana

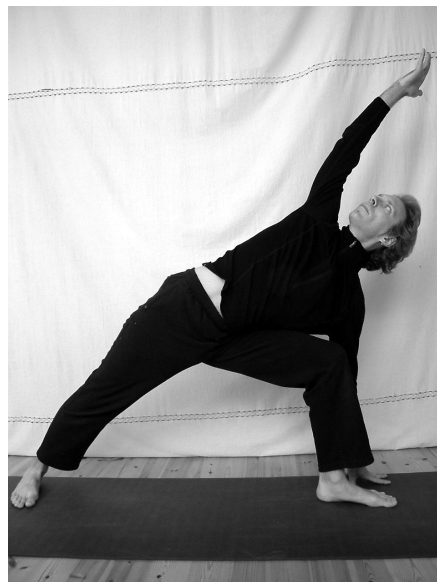
Classic angled lateral pose

Physical aspects

Opens hip on bent leg side, lengthens one side of the body

Benefits

Dynamic opening and lengthening of whole body



Virabhadrasana

Warrior 1 pose (arms in T form)

Physical aspects

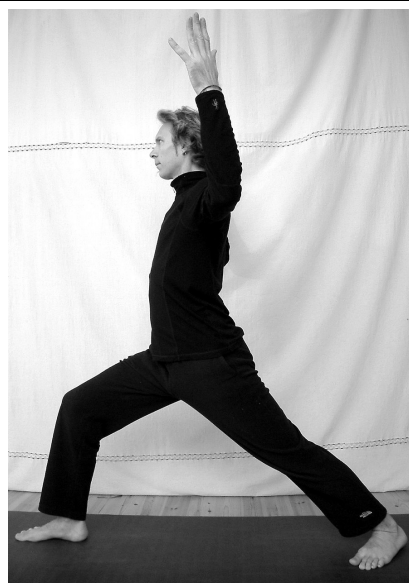
Extension of spine, back leg worked well, especially lower leg, opens chest

Benefits

Dynamic confidence giving pose

Contraindications

Care with low back sensitivities or injury



Parsva Virabhadrasana

Warrior 2 pose

Physical aspects

Opens front hip and chest, opens pelvis

Benefits

Centering, mindful moment

Contraindications

Align front knee over or behind line of ankle to protect the knee



Ardha Chandrasana

Half moon pose (crescent moon), hand on block

Physical aspects

Powerful leg work, external rotation of hip

Benefits

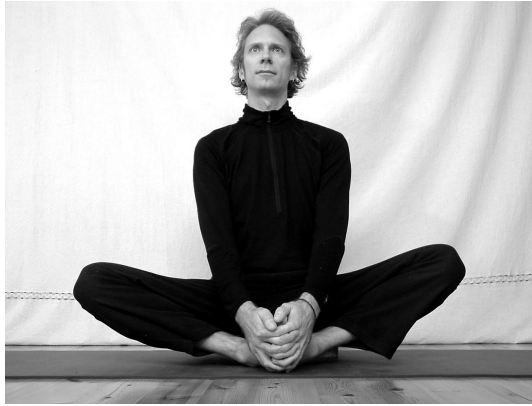
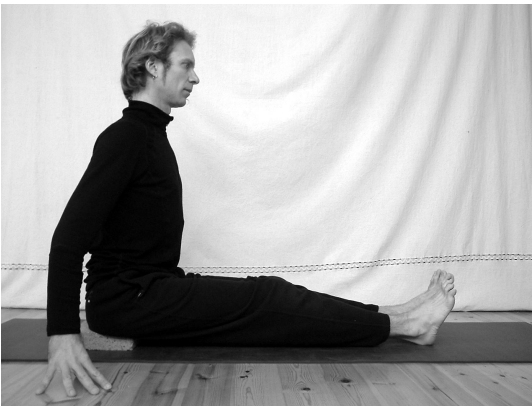
Centring, balance, opening hips and chest

Contraindications

Care with groin injuries



Group 3. Forward bends / folds

Baddha Konasana Bound legs pose, Cobbler's pose Physical aspects Opens pelvis, releases sacrum Benefits Mobilises energy in lower body Contraindications Care if there are knee problems	
Dandasana I Staff pose Physical aspects Can work with slightly bent legs Benefits Strengthens spine and legs Contraindications Can sit on blocks to facilitate lengthening the spine if flexibility restricted	
Dandasana II Staff pose with belt Physical aspects Strengthens and lengthens legs and back Benefits Assists lengthening the spine Contraindications Care with low back sensitivities	





BodhiYoga

Ardha Pashcimottanasana “Stretching the West” - Preparation Physical aspects Strengthens and lengthens legs and back Benefits Preparation for full pose Contraindications Care with low back sensitivities	
Pascimottanasana “Stretching the West” Physical aspects Deep flexion of spine Benefits Calming, inward guiding Contraindications Care with low back sensitivities	
Janu Sirsasana Head to knee pose Physical aspects Opens pelvis works straight leg Benefits Easier than working both legs at the same time Contraindications Care with low back and knee sensitivities	
Upavista Konasana Seated wide legs pose Physical aspects Opens pelvis and works legs Benefits Mobilises energy in lower body	



Triang Mukhaika Pada Pashcimottanasana I One leg folded back forward fold Physical aspects Lengthen spine from fingertips, works straight leg strongly Benefits Works front thigh Contraindications Avoid if there are knee problems	
Triang Mukhaika Pada Pascimottanasana II One leg folded back forward fold Physical aspects Release spine forwards, works straight leg strongly Benefits Works front thigh Contraindications Avoid if there are knee problems	
Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana Reverse head to knee pose Physical aspects Works lateral sides of body Benefits Opens pelvis. Lateral stretch, twist for spine Contraindications Care with lower back sensitivities	

Group 4. Core strengthening, abdominal work and “Fire” series

Pindasana (variation) Curl ups Physical aspects Strengthens abdominal area, stretches neck and thoracic spine Benefits Heating, grounding Contraindications Care to not pull from arms, neck passive	
Supta Padangasana (adaption) Leg raises Physical aspects Strengthens abdominal area, works hips Benefits Heating Contraindications Care with lower back, if doing double leg raise	
Ardha navasana (variation) Half boat Physical aspects Strengthens abdominal area, works leg and thigh Benefits Heating, strengthens hip flexor. Teaches how to lengthen actively through the spine	
Navasana Boat Physical aspects Strengthens abdominal area, works leg and thigh Benefits Heating, toning Contraindications Care with low back sensitivities	



Leg raises “Fire” series I

Physical aspects

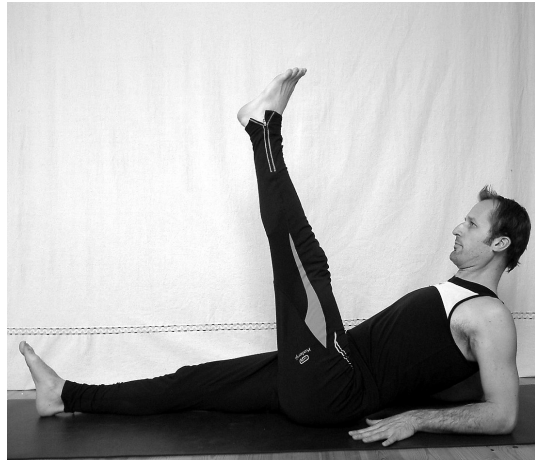
Stabilise upper body with arms. Strengthens abdominal area, works leg and thigh

Benefits

Heating, toning

Contraindications

Care with low back sensitivities



Leg raises “Fire” series II

Physical aspects

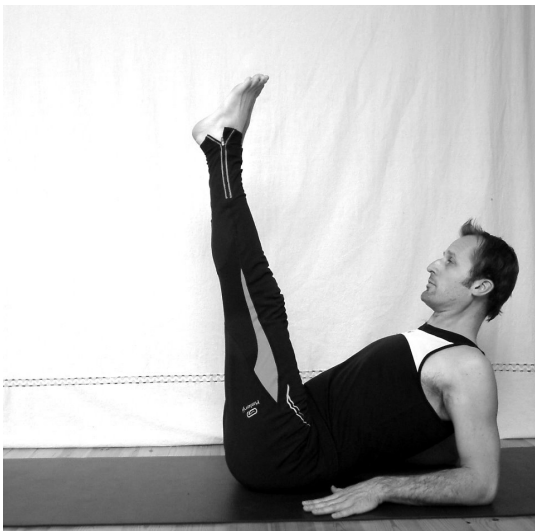
Stabilise upper body with arms. Strengthens abdominal area, works legs, hips and thighs

Benefits

Heating, toning

Contraindications

Care with low back sensitivities



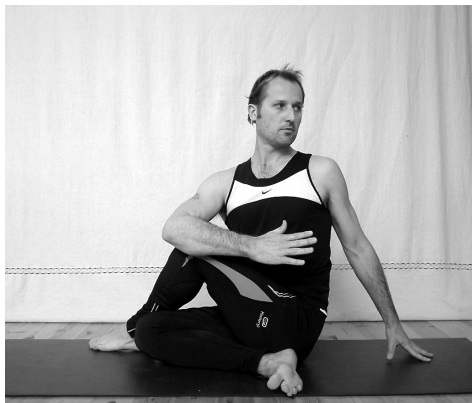
Group 5 Rotations and Twists

Supta Parivrttasana Simple supine twist Physical aspects Knees together, can place cushion between knees to help release hips/sacral area Benefits Passive release of lower back, opens heart centre	
Jathara Parivrtti variation One leg extended twist Physical aspects Can be active to work outer leg and hip Benefits Strengthens lower back, hip and sacral area	
Satangasana with twist All fours with twist Physical aspects Strong grounding of hand Benefits Lengthen and releases spine	





BodhiYoga

Virasana with twist Hero's pose with twist Physical aspects Simple twist Benefits Lengthen and releases lower spine Contraindications Knee problems, can sit up on blocks	
Sukha Marichyasana Half Marachi's pose Physical aspects Classic sitting twist Benefits Lengthen and releases upper spine	
Marichyasana Marachi's pose Physical aspects Works straight leg, pose therefore more strongly grounded Benefits Lengthen and releases upper spine Contraindications Can sit up on blocks to facilitate twist if poor flexibility in pelvic area	

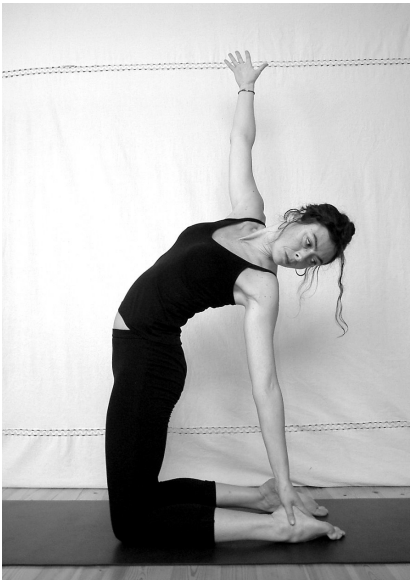


Angasana Low lunge twist Physical aspects Opens groins, lengthens thigh, arms support opening of thoracic area Benefits Simple twist Contraindications Can use a blanket or block under back knee. Don't go too deep with sacral area sensitivities	
Parivrtta Parsvakonasana (modified) High lunge twist Physical aspects Lengthen front thigh and spine. Opens thoracic region Benefits Dynamic but easily accessible adaptation of the classic pose	

Group 6 Backbends

Dvi Pada Pitham Simple bridge Physical aspects Gentle extension of spine Benefits Releases lower spine, mobilises shoulders	
Salabasana (variations) Locust Physical aspects Active strengthening of muscles along spine Benefits There are many variations possible	
Bhujangasana Cobra Physical aspects Stretches the lower spine Benefits Mobilises energy of spine and upper body Contraindications Care with lower back problems, don't straighten arms in these cases, stay low	
Ardha Dhanurasana Half Bow Physical aspects Opens shoulder, lengthens thigh Benefits Preparation for more intense back work	



Dhanurasana Full bow Physical aspects Works things as well as stretches front body Benefits Safe as spine stabilised with the belly on the floor	
Ardha Ustrasana Half Camel Physical aspects Works thighs and opens upper body Benefits Dynamic, challenging pose Contraindications Care with lower backs - work the legs well to support the movement	
Ustrasana Full Camel Physical aspects Works thighs and opens upper body Benefits Dynamic, challenging pose Contraindications Care with lower backs - work the legs well to support the movement	



BodhiYoga

Urdhva Dhanurasana Full bow Physical aspects Ground hands and feet well Benefits Dynamic, challenging pose, opening whole of the front body, stretches spine thoroughly Contraindications Care with lower backs - work the legs well to support the movement	
Poorvottanasana Upward plank Physical aspects Ground hands well, feet may not fully ground Benefits Strengthens upper body, arms and shoulders. Draws energy up strongly from core	
Virasana Hero's pose Physical aspects Works thighs, basis for many variations Benefits Lengthens ankles, thighs Contraindications Care with knee or ankle problems	
Ardha Supta Virasana Half Reclining Hero's pose Physical aspects Extension of the spine, less intense than full pose Benefits Lengthens ankles, thighs, front body Contraindications Care with low back, knee or ankle problems	





BodhiYoga

Supta Virasana

Reclining Hero's pose

Physical aspects

Lengthens ankles, opens front hip,
lengthens thighs, works sacral area

Benefits

Aids digestion, relieves tired legs

Contraindications

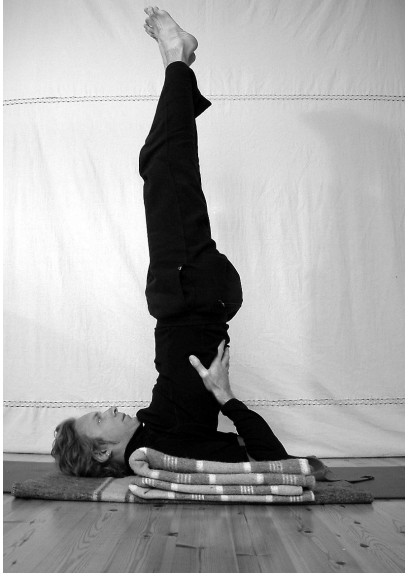
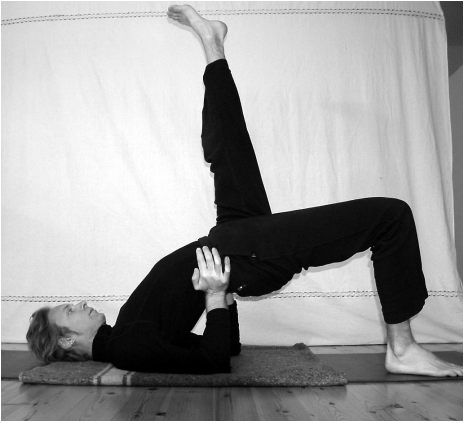
Care with low back, knee or ankle problems



Group 7 Inversions

Dvi Pada Pitham (supported) Bridge on blocks Physical aspects Restful accessible back-bend Benefits Releases lower back, releases diaphragm	
Ardha Pindasana Half Ball Pose Physical Stretches upper back Benefits Preparation for shoulder balances Contraindications Use folded blankets support under shoulders to open the angle at the neck and reduce any strain. Not during menstruation, high blood pressure, eye problems	
Ardha Sarvangasana (Viparita karani) Half Shoulder Balance Physical Strengthens and releases shoulders Benefits Circulatory system, lymph, restful, calming Contraindications As above	



Salamba Sarvangasana Full Shoulder Balance Physical aspects Strengthens and releases shoulders Benefits Circulation, strengthens spine Contraindications To protect the neck the use of blankets or blocks is recommended. See above	
Halasana Plough Physical aspects Deep flexion of spine Benefits Releases shoulders and thoracic area Contraindications Neck problems	
Eka Padasana in Ardha Salamba Sarvangasana One legged half-shoulder stand Physical aspects Opens front hip and works legs Benefits As a back-bend Contraindications As above	



Sirsasana Headstand Physical aspects Strengthens upper body Benefits Promotes circulatory system, stimulates and calms Contraindications High blood pressure, neck problems, see above	
Sirsasana (variation) Headstand Wide legs Physical Gravity assisted opening of the pelvis Benefits To extend the time in inversions, can “play” with variations Contraindications As above	
Sirsasana (variation) Headstand Bound Legs Physical Gravity assisted opening of the pelvis Benefits Challenge to balance Contraindications As above	



BodhiYoga

Viparita Karani

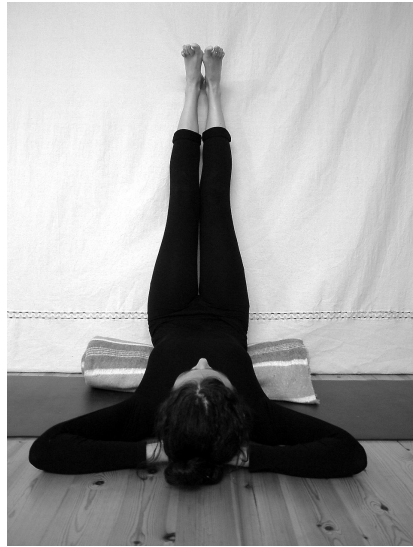
Legs up the wall

Physical

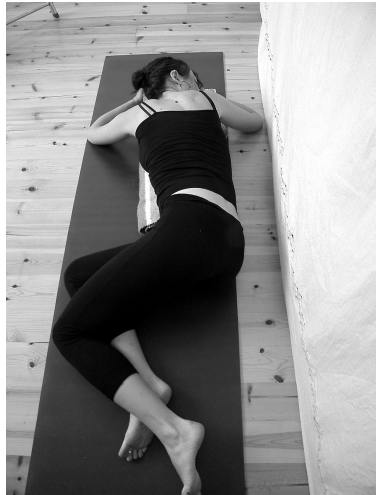
Use support under hips and small of the back. Restful

Benefits

Promotes Relaxation Response, drains lymph from legs and relieves tired legs



Group 8. Savasana - relaxation techniques

Balasana Child's pose wide legs supported Physical Use support under chest and abdomen. Works inner thighs and hips. Restful Benefits Promotes Relaxation Response	
Supine thoracic extension Lying over roll or bolster Physical Passive opening of thoracic area, gentle extension of the spine Benefits Opens heart centre	
Supine Twist Lying over roll or bolster Physical Passive rotation of the spine Benefits Softens front body, lower back release	
Poorvasana Crocodile, lying face down Physical Restful. Useful for connecting with the breath, relaxes the diaphragm	



Savasana

Corpse pose

Physical

Can use support under knees to release the backs of the legs and head. Restful

Benefits

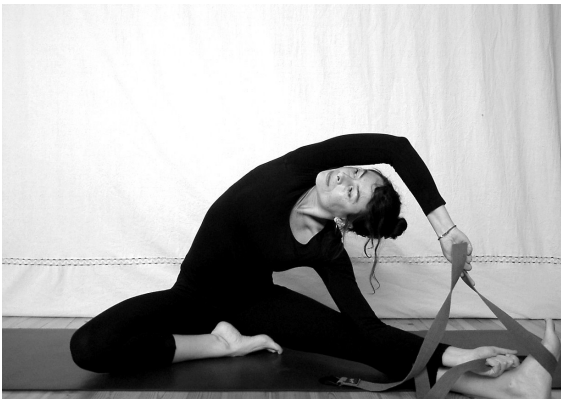
Promotes Relaxation Response, bridge to meditation practice



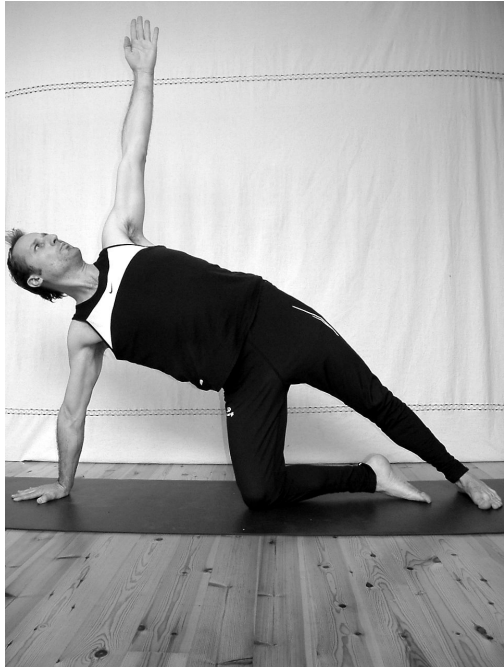
Group 9. Lateral movements

Lying lateral stretch Physical Opens side body Benefits Can use the floor to clarify alignment of hips, shoulders and feet	
Sukhasana (variation) Happy pose lateral adaptation Physical Can raise hips and/or hand on blocks Benefits Opens side of body	
Parighasana Gate pose Physical Can use support under knee. Works straight leg. Various hand/arm positions possible Benefits Opens side of body Contraindications Care with knee, can use block or blanket	



Salamba Parsvakanasana Supported lateral pose Physical Use forearm to open and revolve upper body Benefits Opens side of body	
Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana Reverse head to knee pose Physical Can use belt. Also support under hips. Benefits Opens side of body	
Parivrttata Upavista Konasana Wide legs lateral variation Physical Blocks and belts helpful. Various hand/arm positions possible. Benefits Works legs and pelvis, as well as side body Contraindications As with the above pose care with lower back sensitivities	

Group 10. Arm and shoulder work

Plank pose Physical aspects Strengthens along the length of the body. Benefits Promotes circulatory system, stimulates and calms Contraindications Can be done with knees on the floor, don't drop hips and compromise the lower back	
Chaturanga Dandasana Four limbed staff pose Physical aspects Strengthens along the length of the body, strengthens upper body Benefits Promotes tone and heat in the body Contraindications Care with wrists sensitivities	
Ardha Vasisthasana Adapted Vasistha's pose Physical aspects Strengthens upper body Benefits Balance, poise, chest opener	



BodhiYoga

Vasisthasana

Vasistha's pose

Physical aspects

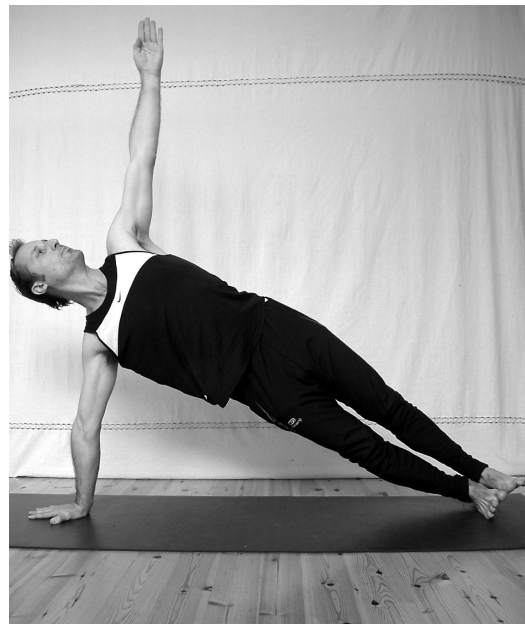
Strengthens upper body

Benefits

Strengthening and heating

Contraindications

Care with wrists



Pinchamayurasana - Dolphin

Fore-arm balance preparation

Physical aspects

Strengthens upper body, opens shoulders

Benefits

Grounds upper body energy, sense of confidence and well-being

Contraindications

High blood pressure, eye problems



Pinchamayurasana

Peacock pose

Physical aspects

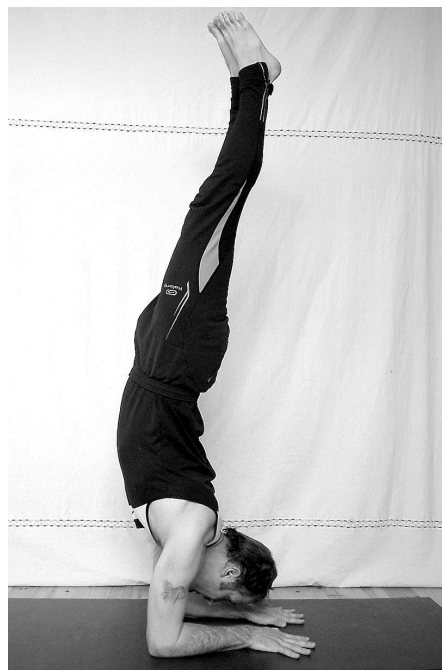
Strengthens upper body, balance and focus, also an inversion

Benefits

Promotes circulatory system, stimulating

Contraindications

High blood pressure, good alternative to headstand as no pressure on neck, can use a wall to train



Adho Mukha Vrksasana

Full Handstand

Physical aspects

Strengthens upper body, balance and focus, also an inversion

Benefits

Promotes circulatory system, stimulating

Contraindications

High blood pressure, care with wrists, can use a wall to train





2.2 Restorative yoga

In a yoga practice there will be times when it is desirable to move towards a quieter, slower rhythm. Some reasons could be;

- Tiredness
- Time of day; afternoon or evening practice
- Balancing a hectic day
- A more meditative practice
- Recovering from illness
- Working on flexibility and letting go (more than strengthening and toning)

This emphasis takes us towards the more receptive, yielding to gravity, relaxing and opening polarity of our practice. Many poses can be approached from a restorative yoga perspective however poses that do not need to be maintained through muscular effort are going to be favoured. For this reason the use of props is also likely so the practitioner can let go as much as possible in a pose.

Benefits of a restorative practice

- Restful for the body physically
- Restful for the nervous system
- Specifically working on the connective tissue matrix
- Improving flexibility
- Supporting a meditation pose in terms of creating more ease in the body
- Cultivation of a more meditative practice





How to do Restorative yoga

1. We adopt a particular pose - mostly floor poses - each pose offers a particular action and therefore texture and feel in the body.
2. Use the alignment of the body, positioning the limbs, joints, bones etc. and the downward momentum of gravity as the primary force to create the desired action in the body.
3. Finding an appropriate edge - not too deep - never forced.
4. Use support where necessary to "bring the floor up" for example to support a floating knee or the head or sometimes to enhance the pose or allow for a more sustained period in the pose.
5. Let go - relax - use the minimal, if any, muscular effort once established in the posture
6. Maintain "presence" of awareness throughout.
7. Generally we are not actively working in the poses though some postures may require it either to protect the body e.g. the abdominal cradle of support to protect the lumbar, or to access a pose in a particular way e.g. legs gently active into the wall in the supported bridge pose.
8. Generally we are following the path of least resistance in terms of alignment and positioning but it maybe appropriate to be active as described above.
9. Restorative yoga is a quiet practice i.e. useful to quieten the body, use when tired or low in energy or when one is in a quiet mood.
10. Longer periods in a pose allow the pose to work and penetrate the body more deeply working closer to the bones and connective tissues.





How to cultivate awareness in the Restorative yoga practice

In any yoga or meditation practice we are working in some way with the body experience, the body as a doorway to cultivating awareness. We are using the touch or tactile sense and sensations (of the 5 senses: taste, touch, smell, sight, and sound). In a more spacious, quieter practice the "sixth" sense of mind and mind objects; thoughts, images, memories, plans, fantasies etc. become more apparent and also workable with.

In our practice, especially in the quieter restorative yoga, we can follow one or all of the following approaches to cultivate our awareness.

In the relative spaciousness of the Restorative practice we can explore and inhabit the realm of sense experience and sense perception of the body. We can make a move away from the conceptual mode of being into a more perceptual mode.

1. Be aware of specific sensations around the area that the pose is working - this is a more focused awareness
2. Be generally, globally aware, sweeping your attention around the body exploring the sensation landscape of your body
3. Stay with the emotional tone of your experience with a spacious open awareness, be aware of reactions and responses to the pose and specific sensations in the pose.
4. Become aware of the ebb and flow and movement of energy in and around the body
5. Follow the breath rhythm





Sequencing in Restorative yoga

Sequencing in Restorative practice is really a question of where you want to go and what part of the body you want to work. It can also be said that the kind of postures you do will both reflect and affect the state of mind or mood you are in or want to be in. Forward folds are calming and quieting. Back bends more opening and stimulating. Twisting elicits a deepening sensitivity to sensations in the spine and the heart and chest areas.

We can emphasise an opening and softening in the connective tissue of the pelvic area. This area is an area of the powerful hip joints with a high density of connective tissue which responds well to the gently persistent work of a restorative practice.

Almost always it makes sense to design a relatively balanced practice, though you may wish to focus in a given session just on one set of poses or one part of the body. Apply sensitivity and intelligence to doing poses combined with counter-posing.

When first introducing Restorative yoga to newcomers, introduce some Restorative yoga poses in your regular practice, blending the two approaches weaving some restorative poses into a flow sequence. This can be a playful and rich practice format. With more experienced practitioners you may prefer separating out the Restorative yoga.

Restorative postures make good postures to begin a session with, allowing us to arrive into ourselves, the body and the heart. Also, they make effective “wind-down” poses to finish a session, allowing muscles to lengthen passively and quietly and giving us time to balance our energies.





Postures of Restorative Yoga

Here is a list of some of the basic postures we can use in the Restorative practice. This list is not exhaustive and please feel free to be creative and inventive with variations and new postures, bearing in mind the working principles of Restorative yoga, relax and let go!

Inversions and reclining poses

1. Legs-up-the-wall (Viparita Karani)
2. Snail (Halasana)
3. Supported bridge (feet into the wall) (Dvi Pada Pitham)
4. Reclining butterfly (Supta baddhakonasana)
5. Reclining heroes pose or saddle (Supta virasana)
6. Lying down with roll under upper back (Matsyendrasana)
7. Star pose (Savasana)

Hip openers

1. Box/Square pose (Sukhasana)
2. Sleeping swan (Rajakapotasana)
3. Shoe lace (Gomukhasana)
4. Butterfly (Baddha Konasana)

Backbends

1. Supported bridge (blocks under sacrum)
2. Swan (Rajakapotasana)
3. Seal (cobra) (Bhujangasana)
4. Quarter dog
5. Saddle or half saddle (Supta virasana)





Twists

1. Simple sitting twist (from box) (Sukhasana)
2. Marichy's pose (Sukha Maricyasana)
3. Shoe lace twist (Gomukhasana)
4. Lying twist (many variations) (Supta Parivrttasana)
5. Forward lying twist (with support under torso)
6. Half-dragonfly twist (Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana)
7. Outrigger pose
8. Wide child twist (Balasana)

Forward folds

1. Simple lying on belly (Poorvasana)
2. Wide leg child (Balasana)
3. Caterpillar (Pashcimottanasana)
4. Dragonfly (Upavista Konasana)
5. Butterfly (Baddha konasana)





Exploring our limits - our edge

In yoga circles we sometimes talk about working with our edge. Edge of what? Again, there needs to be some clarity here. We can think of edge as more like a border area rather than an exact line of demarcation, it gives more room for playfulness. In working with our edges we look for a challenge, i.e. not so comfortable we just space out and feel very little, neither is it too deep that the body and mind harden, tense and close up. Be playful, play with your edges.

We are taxing or stressing the body in a body-work practice. The idea here is to do this intelligently, gentle coaxing and training our body to fulfil its potential range of movements, challenge ourselves and strengthen and tone the body.

Likewise we want to grow spiritually and emotionally. Working with the mind too, challenging ourselves.

Edge in a dynamic practice

In a more active and dynamic practice we quickly encounter our body limitations in terms of strength, flexibility and stamina. "Oh no, not another sun salutation!". There are objective considerations here. We need to respect our body's natural limitations based around age, fitness and flexibility and this really does vary with every body. Be very careful in comparing yourself with others. With training, gentle and regular you can quickly see greater muscle tone and increased flexibility and freedom of movement in one's body. A more dynamic practice leads to greater stamina in terms of cardiovascular ability. We begin to wake up little used muscles and tissues. A varied and playful practice is useful as we will use a greater range and combination of muscles.

With regular practice our ability and strength grows. For this reason we can think in terms of development over time and have a more process-oriented approach to making progress, rather than achieving a particular pre-conceived goal right now, forcing the body insensitively and hurting ourselves, creating more tension and stress.





It is important to respect our body limits, move into these edges with sensitivity, awareness and honesty.

Edge in a Restorative practice

Here we encounter more directly our mind, our habits of mind, our psychology if you like. In the relative spaciousness of a slow rhythm and statically held posture practice as well as the stillness of sitting meditation, there is less physical movement to be concerned with and we can come into contact with and explore more subtlety the mind and the body-mind connections.

We are likely to encounter emotion here, sometimes strong emotions of aversion, boredom, blissful sensation and so on. Bring your mind in, cultivate presence. How much you can bear is a consideration in how long you spend in a given pose or meditation. We can explore gently our desire to move, get up. Explore the emotional landscape that is before you.





2.3 Structural alignment

By exploring the range of motion of joints and anatomical alignment, we build our confidence as teachers by knowing how to identify potential problem areas in our students. We are then in a better position to develop a practice more suited to those individuals.

Every joint within the body has a natural range of motion. When practising yoga asanas, we are often using this range of motion to a high degree. We must be careful that we do not overwork our joints through repeated misuse. Any extremes will bring their own problems with time. In this part of our training, we will look at the way anatomy feeds directly into what we are doing in the asanas. It will help in our teaching if we can learn to observe the body and to know how to adapt some postures for particular students. *Learn to look!*

It is too easy as a yoga teacher (in the beginning) to be overly concerned about the way we are coming across and not concerned enough about what the students' needs are in front of us. This is due to lack of experience as a teacher. We should always be working to develop our mindfulness of others, in our lives generally. In our yoga classes, we have express permission to look at people and observe them at close quarters. It is our job!

Below, we have a list of points in order to help us identify and look for areas of weakness and misalignment in students. Observe the list and see whether you recognise any of these things in your own body and those of friends. Start with people that you know!

The word posture, means (1) the position or carriage of the body in standing or sitting; bearing (2) an attitude of mind; frame of mind (3) the habitual or assumed disposition of the parts of the body in a standing, sitting, etc. What relationship does physical posture have on our overall health?





Developing how we see the body is one of the first steps in assessing posture. A comprehensive view of the body and how it moves as a result of the posture is needed to evaluate the body. Here are some key points to tune into when looking at posture.

Front View

1. Look at the feet. Are the arches falling? Are the toes clenched? Is the weight on the outside, inside of the feet or balanced over the ankles? Does each foot look the same or are they different? Are the feet pointed in or out?
2. Are the ankles falling in? Is one ankle falling in?
3. The knees. Do the knees point in the same direction? Does one point out or in more? Are they directly under the hips or closer together than the hips?
4. When the person is standing with feet hip width apart and asked to bring the knees forward as if they were going to sit, do the knees remain in the same plane or do they move outward or inward?
5. The hips. Is one hip bone higher than the other? Is one hip bone farther forward than the other or farther back?
6. Waistline. Is the waistline straight or is one side higher than the other? Is the navel off to one side or on the mid-line?
7. Shoulders. Is one shoulder higher than the other? Is one side more forward than the other?
8. Arms. Do the arms hang evenly? Are the height of the hands even or does one lie higher on the side of the body? How far away from the body do they hang? Is one farther away from the trunk than the other?
9. Neck/head. Does the head tilt to one side or the other? Does the neck go one way and the head the other way?
10. Can you draw a straight line from the top of the head through the nose, chin, navel to the midpoint between the feet?
11. If you have the person roll slowly forward to touch their toes (letting their hands hang) does the length of their hands vary as they roll down?
12. After having the person march in place, where do their feet fall naturally?





Side View

1. How does the weight look on the feet? Does it look like the person is going to spring off a diving board or fall over backwards?
2. Are the knees locked? Straight? Slightly bent?
3. Are the hips forward over the feet or behind the feet? If the pelvis were a bowl would the contents spill out the front or back or remain in the bowl?
4. Does the low back sway forward or is it straight as a board?
5. Is the upper back rounded forward or are the shoulder blades pulled back?
6. Is the head forward or right over the shoulders?

Back View

1. Are the achilles tendons straight or curved inward or outward? Are the heels closer together and toes pointed out more? How do the arches look? Are they high or falling?
2. Are the calf muscles equally developed?
3. Are the knees locked or slightly bent?
4. Are the iliac crests even or is one higher than the other?
5. How does the tissue on the back look? Is there more draping on one side than the other? Do the scapulas stick out or are they close to the back?
6. Do the arms hang closely to the sides? In which direction do the elbows point?
7. Are the shoulders even or is one higher than the other?
8. Is the head on straight or off to one side or the other?

The ideal alignment is to have the feet directly under the hips and knees and have the torso, shoulders and neck balanced over the hips with minimal muscular activity going on to hold this upright position. The knees should be straight ahead. The feet should not be turned out. The weight should be balanced over the feet evenly not with more weight on the heels or balls of the feet. From the side you should be able to draw a straight line through the ear, shoulder, hip, ankle perpendicular to the floor.





Misalignment and imbalance leads to more stress in certain areas of the body, just as in a case of tyres on a car that are not balanced. The areas involved will wear out faster especially under stress or trauma.

How do we get misaligned or imbalanced? Muscular tightness, muscular weakness, having a dominant side, moving in habitual patterns, emotional stress and trauma, birth, being in the womb, repetitive activities, lack of or decreasing awareness, food allergies or intolerances - you name it -it is all a part of who we are physically.

How to apply the above material, and how do we make use of it in the class? Some day (soon) you will get a student say to you “ I can’t do this posture” or “ This one really hurts”. It would be good for you to be able to have some practical knowledge as to how to deal with such a situation and at least be able to advise and refer, if you think that they need additional help.

Here in this manual, we will give some points for observation and then some general suggestions as to how to work with these in postures. Yoga is a highly practical and adaptable skill and we should be able to apply it to individuals’ needs, not only groups.

We are going to cover this material practically, by looking anatomically at each other in various ways. This work is very much a skill that needs to be acquired, through learning to observe the body in motion and learning how yoga postures work anatomically as well as energetically.

Look at the diagrams below and familiarise yourself with the basic patterns of misalignment.

We can use this knowledge to deepen our appreciation of the human form and our understanding of the patterns that can occur through the various stresses mentioned above.





Observe the diagrams then have someone take the standing position. Go through the list and see what you can identify as potential imbalance. Hardly anyone has a symmetrical frame. Even seasoned yogis will have some problems. The point of this exercise is to train you to be able to identify potential misalignment and then to be able to build experience in helping the person to develop a more balanced structure.

NOTE* Here are a few examples of some of the main misalignment areas

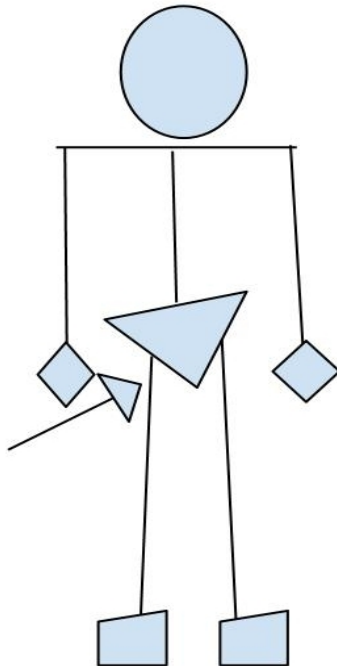




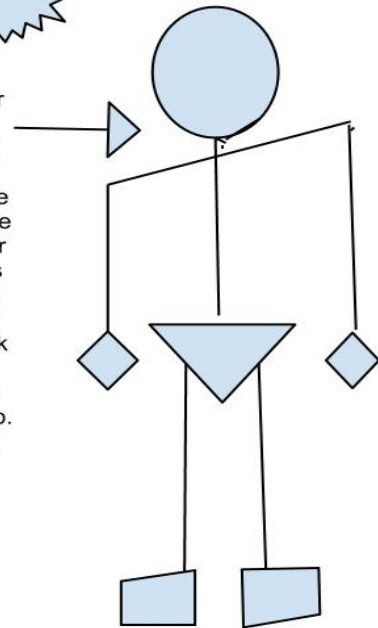
BodhiYoga



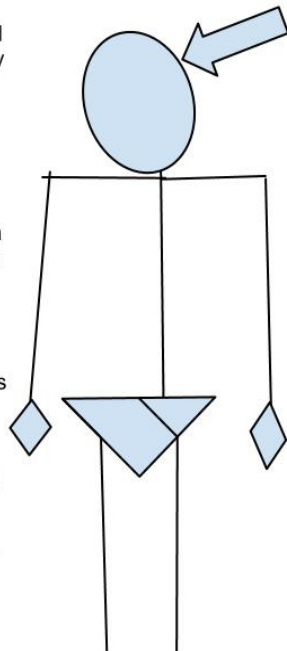
Watch out for left tilt of pelvis, might mean that there is a lumbar scoliosis, or tight muscles in the right side of the lower back (quad lumborum). Special care in postures that involve back bending or lateral bends.



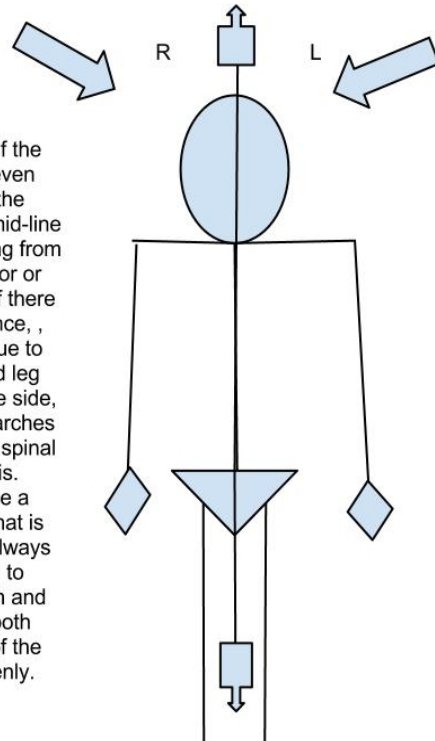
Watch out for elevated shoulder on one side. Could indicate scoliosis to the L or R or over tight muscles to the upper trapezius or posterior neck muscles. Caution with inversions esp. head stand.



Watch out for head tilt to one side. May indicate that the posterior neck muscles or trapezius (upper) are contracted and/or shortened. The levator scapula is a prime suspect in this situation. Careful with head balance poses or shoulder stand. Give them practices of asana and posture work that will elongate the neck muscles and the fascia to both sides and well as plenty of shoulder work.



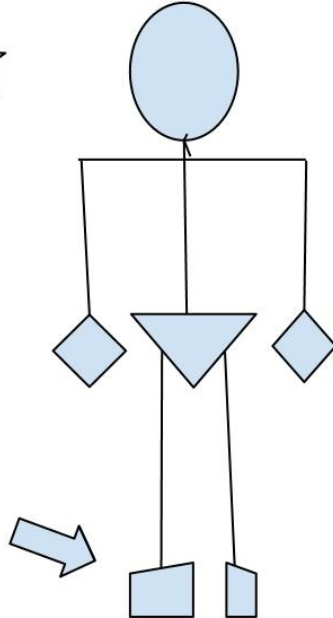
Observe if the body is even across the imaginary mid-line when looking from the anterior or posterior. If there is imbalance, may be due to shortened leg bone to one side, collapsed arches of the feet, spinal scoliosis. Prescribe a practice that is bilateral, always working to strengthen and stretch both aspects of the body evenly.



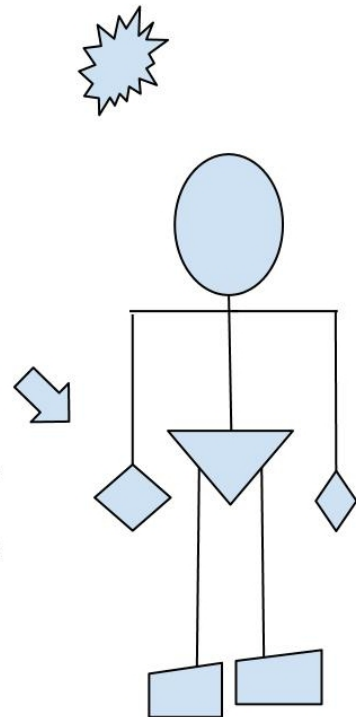


BodhiYoga

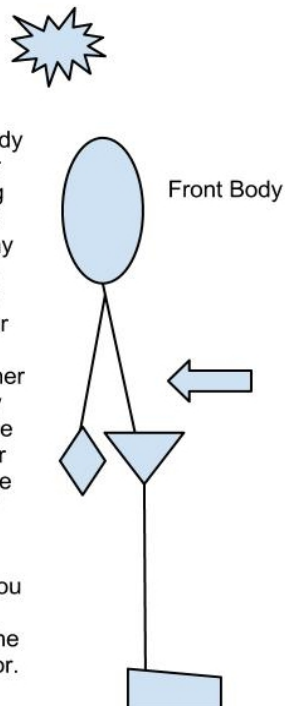
Watch out for one foot rotated out more than the other to a noticeable degree. Could indicate musculature shortening in the posterior deep pelvis (External rotators) or knee weakness and/or misalignment.



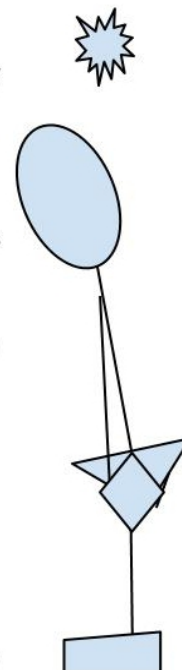
Watch out for one hand and arm being more rotated outwards than the other. This might indicate contacted muscles in the posterior rotator cuff muscles, or some shortening in the Lat. dorsi muscles of the back. Strengthening of frontal shoulder and chest muscles of the same side stretching of the posterior muscles that are shortened. Caution in downward dog or other arm balances.



Watch out for body tipping back or forward looking from a side on perspective. May indicate weak abdominals (if leaning back) or over tight (if leaning in the other direction). May indicate unstable lumbar spine or shortening in the hamstrings, if leaning back. When person forward bends you can see them struggle to get the hands to the floor.



Watch out for tipping forward. The head can drop or the head, shoulders and upper back can drop giving rise to collapsing in the upper posture. Causes are various: Upper Kyphosis, other spinal problems, tightness in abdominal area, shortness in the anterior leg muscles or a posteriorly rotated pelvis to one or both sides.





3. Anatomy and physiology

This is an introduction to general human anatomy and the way yoga effects the various systems of the body. The human body is obviously the tool that we as yogis are working with. Understanding how the body works and getting to grips with anatomy is all part of the yogis' training. If you are to teach yoga effectively, then the more you understand about how the body works, the better the position you'll be in to adapt and develop your students' practice. In the following sections, we'll explore the body through anatomy and physiology. Take each section and study it, using the suggested guide notes on study.

The idea of this section in your Teacher Training manual is to give you quick reference to the essential points of human anatomy and to act as a guide in your studies. It is not in itself a comprehensive coverage of anatomy and physiology.

Familiarise yourself with these areas:

Location (muscle groups, bones and organs), origin and insertions (for muscles) and action (for muscles). Common problems occurring in the parts of the body that you will be studying.

Resources for study:

- Anatomy colouring book - Wynn Kapit
- Human anatomy and physiology - Eldra Pearl Soloman (2003)
- Anatomy of Hatha yoga - H.David Coutler (2001)





Section one - approaches to study of anatomy

1. Use different ways to orientate yourself around the body such as: a mirror, touch, observing the body's ROM (use a friend) or your own body.
2. Keep notes as you discover something new (*be a student of the body*)
3. Memorise key joints and the origin and insertions of muscles.
4. When studying a body system (the respiratory system for example) have a diagram of that body part with you whilst you are reading about its function. Try to imagine it working, in your mind's eye.
5. Make an imaginative connection to the body, it is a living system.
6. Systems of the body are interconnected so try to get a grasp on how for example the nervous system will affect breathing or, how anxiety will effect muscle function.

Useful terms in the study of anatomy and physiology

There is a required understanding of the following terms for the study of anatomy and physiology:

"Anatomical position" - refers to the relationship of joints and positioning of the body e.g. lying, squatting, sitting, standing, prone or supine.

"Planes" - cross sections through the body that details the whereabouts of the various aspects of anatomy e.g. Sagittal, caudal, cephalic, lateral and medial etc.

"Proximal" and "Distal" - refers to the distance in relationship to the trunk; near or further away.

"Deep" and "superficial" - the structures of the body that are deep internally and more to the surface externally.

*Many technical points of anatomy have been *italicized* to allow for easy identification in study.





Key points of anatomy study - The neural-muscular and skeletal system

The study of the neurological relationship to the musculoskeletal system

Included in this section includes learning how neurology effects musculoskeletal activity.

Stretch receptors including:

The function of *golgi tendon organs* and *Spindle cells*.

These two anatomical structures alone are perhaps the most important for a yoga teacher to know about. They are directly relevant to the stretching of any part of the body. They are protective bio-feedback mechanisms that provide the practitioner with the internal sensate awareness of what is going on in any one posture. It is these anatomical processes that we tune into when doing asana practice. *With slow stretch and longer holding times*, these structures (especially the spindle cells) can be re-educated. This is why it is best to practice asana slowly and mindfully, if we are focusing on extending and stretching, within an asana class.

The skeletal system

This will include the study of joints: ball and socket, gliding, hinge etc. Bones and the different types, the structure of bone (its composition) and knowledge of *inter-skeletal* 'cushions' such as: collagen discs and synovial joints etc.

The four different types of bones are: *Long bones* - longer than they are wide.

Short bones - roughly cube shaped or irregular (asymmetrical).

Flat bones - the pelvis and skull (even though slightly curved) and *Irregular bones* - the scapula, vertebrae, and some smaller bones of the skull.





Determining the relationship with muscles and movement

We need to have an outline of how muscles function and what movements muscles make e.g.: abduction, adduction, rotation, flexion and side bending. Also, acquiring a knowledge of the way in which muscles work in groups i.e., primary movers, antagonists, stabilisers, flexors and extensors etc.

Learn the origins and the insertions of the major muscles. This will be an important part of determining where and how the muscles works.

Understanding the nature of ligaments and tendons

Ligament structures and tendons can be seen as the bridge between the bones and their corresponding muscles. They are made up of dense bundles of collagen (protein fibres) and have much less flexibility capacity than muscles. Ligaments, especially, are prone to becoming hyper-slack and then destabilising joints. Ligaments do not have a capacity to contract, unlike muscle. Nor do they stretch beyond 6%. Tendons have even less stretch capacity (4%). It is possible to 'overdo' a stretch by working into the ligaments and tendons. They will be the first to get injured if yoga is forced. A deep and complex web of collagenous material known as *fascia*, also binds and holds the body together at deep and superficial levels. This *fascia*, can be responsible for pain in the body and can be injured (torn or ripped) thus giving the sensation that there is a problem in another part of the body.

Anatomy of bone

Bones are essentially designed to give protection to the internal organs, withstand stress, produce movement and produce blood cells, as in the case of *bone marrow*. Bones consist of a shaft that is a dense structure and a hollow inner aspect that has a less dense *mesh* network of fibrous but fragile collagen.

White blood cells are produced in this marrow part of the bone. The ends of bones tend to have a covering of *cartilage*, which aid them in articulating with other joints as well as protecting them.





Composition of bone:

$\frac{2}{3}$ minerals, mostly calcium salts which give strength and toughness to the bone.

$\frac{1}{3}$ organic components which give elasticity. Bones are not just dry ridged structures, they have to have movement capacity.

Types of synovial joints

Hinge: allows movement in one plane, with slight transverse movement e.g. the knee and the elbow.

Gliding: rib-vertebrae, *intercarpals* and *intertarsals* or the wrist and ankles.

Ellipsoid: oval shaped process of one bone, fits into elliptical cavity or another. movement in two planes (radius/carpals - wrist - flexion/extension, ab/adduction)

Saddle: Both joints are saddle shaped, allowing for movement in two planes (thumb and metacarpals).

Pivot: the atlas and axis of the cervical vertebrae. Rounded bone like structures one fitting into another. Rotation is the principle movement. The head has the capacity for high range of movement and the neck, therefore, has a great capacity for injury.

Ball and socket joint: includes the major joints of the body - hips and shoulders. Allows for high range of mobility in different panes.

***Note** *As a general rule, a joint that has greater range of motion such as the neck or the shoulder, also has the greater capacity for injury and problems, due to its high mobility factor.*





Anatomy of muscles and definitions of different muscle types

There are three types of muscle:

- Cardiac-heart (unique only to the heart)
- Smooth: related to the digestive tract, stomach, the lungs and blood vessels.
- Skeletal: muscles that create movement between joints of the body

Skeletal muscles can have multiple “heads” of attachment, otherwise known as *origins*.

An example of this are the *Biceps* of the arm and the *triceps*. Both have more than one origin.

Muscles have the capacity to stretch (unlike ligaments and tendons) and they habitually want to return to their neutral length once stretched.

There are white fibres and red fibres in muscles. The denser muscles that have a slower action such as the calf muscles would have *white fibres muscle*, whereas the *bicep femoris* of the thigh has *red muscle fibres*. The red muscle fibres tend to be more “explosive” i.e., they are used for quick high powered activity (like running quickly away from lions for example). White fibre muscles are more for endurance and long lasting activity.

The direction that muscle fibres run, determines the movement and direction of movement that they perform. For example the *rectus abdominus* runs from the base of the sternum to the pubic bone. Its action is to forward flex the trunk.

Muscles are attached to bones via tendons. Remember that tendons only have a 4% stretch capacity. In the belly of the tendon, lies what is known as the *golgi tendon organ*. This measures speed and intensity of the stretch and gives corresponding warnings if under threat of strain or tearing.

The origin of a muscle is the end of the muscle that has least movement when articulating a joint. The insertion is where the the greater part of the movement occurs. If you bring the the knee to the chest, then, the origin is the bicep *femoris* in





the *ichial tuberosity* and the insertion is at the knee. The knee approximates the chest and therefore is the *distal* part.

Further anatomy of muscles

Muscles are composed of bunches of fibres that are bound together with fascia, nerves and fed with a high density of blood vessels.

When there is stimulus from the nervous system to the muscles, a contraction is stimulated, as a series of chemical reactions take place. Then, the thin filaments (*actin*) slide along the thicker filaments (*myosin*) causing a shortening of the fibres and therefore a contraction. This is briefly how muscular contraction takes place.

Which factors influence flexibility?

Flexibility - that which articulates easily, “easily bent”

Which factors influence flexibility:

- Type of joint
- Restrictions in joint capsules
- Scar tissue
- Bone structure in joint
- Ability to relax the opposing muscles
- Temperature
- Mental attitude, emotions etc.
- Tendon or ligament problems (injuries)

One has to take into account the many possible reasons for a person's lack of flexibility. It will not always be mechanical or muscle related, but sometimes emotional and stress related. It is therefore important to teach people how to relax effectively. Part of the class should always be given over to systematic relaxation.





Areas of familiarisation and study for yoga teachers: Trunk

The bones of the trunk including:

- Bones of the spine and neck.
- Bones of the rib cage and sternum
- Muscles of the back
- Bones of the coccyx and sacrum
- Muscles of the rib cage, abdominal areas, chest and neck

Study approaches for these areas - learn: The origins and insertions of the muscles, the types of joints that make up these areas and the actions of the muscles.

Common abnormalities of the spine

Kyphosis - extreme curvature of the thoracic spine. Characterised by head thrown down and forwards. “Hump back” in very extreme cases.

Lordosis - extreme lumbar curve. Commonly known as “sway back”. This is identifiable as pelvis tilting forwards and the belly protruding in extreme cases. Risk of disk herniation in forward bending.

Scoliosis - lateral asymmetrical curve either to the lumbar the thoracic or both parts of the spine.

In extreme cases one can see almost an S shaped spine when viewing from a posterior angle.

Prolapsed disk - when the collagen “cushion” between the vertebrae has become ruptured or torn and is leaking a part of its gel like interior. This can be chronic and serious or mild and uncomfortable.

Areas of familiarisation and study for yoga teachers: Upper extremity

- The bones of the hands and arm
- The bones of the shoulder girdle and chest
- The muscles of the corresponding areas





Study approaches for these areas - learn: The actions of the various muscles and the origins and insertions. The types of joints that make up those areas of the body and how they function. Learn the locations of the various structures.

Common abnormalities and problems in the upper extremity

Caved in chest - can cause inability to breath well. Characterised by sunken *sternum* and often, rounded upper back.

Medially rotated arms - when the hands noticeably face forwards to the front of the body. Suggests a shortening through tension of the muscles of the posterior *rotator cuff* muscles and muscles of the upper back scapula.

Rotator cuff injury - the shoulders may be held high (both or one) and the range of motion may be limited in all directions. A general sense that the student is “locked up” around the shoulders and neck.

Frozen shoulder - Range of motion can be limited to a high degree, especially in abduction of the arm to the side. Sometimes only 20 or 30% ability to raise the arm. Often chronic and painful as a condition.

Carpal tunnel - Repetitive strain of the wrist which can cause problems in the elbows, shoulder, neck and head. Inflammation on the tunnel of the *carpel* where the tendons for the fingers run through. Difficult for these people to put much pressure on the wrists and often you have to adapt the class for them.





Areas of familiarisation and study for yoga teachers: Lower extremity

- The bones of the pelvic girdle
- The bones of the legs (upper and lower)
- The bones of the feet and ankles
- The muscles of the pelvis
- The muscles of the legs, feet and ankles

Study approaches for these areas - learn: The actions or the various muscles and the origins and insertions. The types of joints that make up those areas of the body and how they function. The location of the muscles and joints in the body.

Common abnormalities in the lower extremity

Medially or laterally rotated knees - caused by weakness in the corresponding hip flexors or extensors. Visually, when the person moves, they tend to splay their knees out in postures and walking, or, they look “knock kneed”. Strong correctives in postures are often necessary. Sometimes though this is due to joint structure and cannot be changed necessarily.

Dropped or prolapsed arches of the feet - This can give rise to the above condition, as the alignment of the feet is important to the rest of the body. Flat feet can give rise to lumbar back problems due to impact and incorrect *heel strike* when walking. It is quite important to get people's feet therefore actively engaged in standing postures.

Pelvic misalignment - one part of the ilium is tilted forward or backwards, thus, the postures will often be thrown out of balance. This is not easy to detect without some knowledge of what to look for. Possible causes: Tightening in the gluteus maximus, bicep femoris or problems with sacroiliac joints such as looseness, instability or injury. These last two may require some expert help.





Key points of anatomy study - the respiratory system

Areas of familiarisation and study for yoga teachers:

Lungs, muscles of breathing, nose, functions of the nose, stages of respiration, metabolic relationship with breath.

- The muscles responsible for breathing
- The diaphragm: location and anatomy
- The nose: anatomy and function
- The lungs: their anatomy and function
- Voluntary and involuntary system - the *phrenic nerve*
- Understanding the way breathing relates to other systems i.e., heart and circulatory, nervous.

Study approaches of these areas for yoga teachers - learn: Where anatomically these areas are located, what their functions are, how they relate to each other, how they might be affected by yoga practice.

Common abnormalities in the respiratory system

Bronchitis - Bronchitis is an acute inflammation of the air passages within the lungs. It occurs when the trachea (windpipe) and the large and small bronchi (airways) within the lungs become inflamed because of infection or irritation from other causes. It will not always be possible for people with chronic bronchial problems to use diaphragmatic breathing.

Asthma - is the common chronic inflammatory disease of the airways characterized by variable and recurring symptoms, reversible airflow obstruction, and bronchospasm. Symptoms include wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. Again, people that suffer from asthma cannot sometimes follow instructions on diaphragmatic breathing.

Note: There are of course many illnesses related to the lungs. Students should do some independent study in this area.





Deviated septum - This condition can prevent people from doing some pranayamas such as *Nadi Shodonam*. The thin membrane separating the air openings to the top of the nose has been breached, resulting in occasional pain.





Key points of anatomy study - the circulatory system

Areas of familiarisation and study for the yoga teacher:

The parts that make up the circulatory system: the heart, the veins, the arteries and the blood vessels and the blood. The function of the circulatory system and the common problems as they apply to yoga.

- The blood: white cells, red cells, platelets (what are they made of and what is their function?)
- Glucose, plasma, blood types (how many blood types are there?)
- The heart, its anatomy and its function
- Common problems of the heart and circulatory system
- Veins, arteries, capillaries
- Veins bring blood to the heart. Arteries take the blood away from the heart to the body.
- **Contra-indications** for people with the following conditions you would not practice anything that would increase intra-abdominal pressure:
 - Heart disease and high or low blood pressure.
 - Backward bends, Agni Sara and inversions.
 - Be clear as to WHY these are contra-indicated.

Common abnormalities of heart and the circulatory system

Heart disease - Heart and blood vessel disease, cardiovascular disease which is also called heart disease includes numerous problems, many of which are related to a process called atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is a condition that develops when a substance called plaque builds up in the walls of the arteries. This build up narrows the arteries, making it harder for blood to flow through. If a blood clot forms, it can stop the blood flow. This can cause a heart attack or stroke.

High BP - High blood pressure (HBP) is a serious condition that can lead to coronary heart disease (also called coronary artery disease), heart failure, stroke kidney failure and other health problems.





Low BP - In physiology and medicine, **hypotension** is abnormally low blood pressure, especially in the arteries of the systematic circulation. It is best understood as a physiological state, rather than a disease. It is often associated with shock, though not necessarily indicative of it. Hypotension is the opposite of hypertension, which is high blood pressure. Blood pressure level is determined by the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps out blood. If it is lower than normal, then it is called **low blood pressure** or hypotension.





Key points of anatomy study - the digestive system

The digestive system provides us with the 'equipment' with which to assimilate food and give nutrition to our systems through eating, digestion and elimination. These processes work as an interconnected whole. If one part of this process does not work well, illness can occur. Therefore we should be aware of how and what we eat and under which circumstances.

Eating mindfully and quietly is a practice that would benefit people's health tremendously.

Areas of familiarisation and study for yoga teachers: the mouth, the salivary glands, the stomach, the small intestines and the large intestine.

- The mouth and salivary glands are the first part of the digestive system
- The stomach continues the process of absorption and digestion.
- The small intestine assimilates nutrients.
- The large intestine deals with assimilation of water and the latter part, elimination through the rectum.
- The assisting organs that are involved in digestion:
The liver, the gallbladder, the pancreas.
 - The liver plays many roles in the body's health.
 - The gall bladder helps to break down fats for digestion or elimination
 - The pancreas deals with glucose, making it usable by the body
- According to the Ayurveda system, overall health is determined by the following: elimination, digestion (nourishment) and the cleansing of the body.

Common health problems of the digestive system

Gall stones - These can occur in the gallbladder and cause intense pain

IBS -(irritable bowel syndrome) often related to stress. Symptoms vary from person to person but typically a person suffering IBS will have frequent diarrhea and not be able to eat certain foods. The opposite can happen, which is that constipation develops and gets bad at times. People sometimes take *psyllium husk* to relieve the problem.





Hiatal hernia - This is where part of the stomach protrudes through the opening of the diaphragm. It can be a painful condition. The symptoms of this condition vary, but there are some postures and yoga practices that are definitely contraindicated for this condition.





Key points of anatomy study - the nervous system

The nervous system and brain define, within the bounds of physiological existence, the way in which the entire system of the body functions. One can only marvel at the human body and its myriad functions being performed quietly and most often, without problem day in and day out. The nervous system is also a complex system with many details and aspects. We need, as yoga teachers, to have some of this knowledge to hand when we are teaching, as from an anatomical point of view it is the nervous system that we are working with. Take time to study and familiarize yourself with the aspects of the nervous system outlined below. Make good notes and try to memorise key points.

General function of the nervous system:

1. Maintains homoeostasis of the body
2. Receives input from external stimuli and initiates response
3. Controls functions and links together all of the systems of the body
4. Indicates when there are problems or risk of danger to the human organism

Areas of familiarisation and study for the yoga teacher: Central and peripheral nervous system

The different elements that make up the nervous system are:

- Central nervous system (CNS) = Brain and spinal cord
- *Peripheral nervous system* = PNS Cranial nerves + spinal nerves
- The PNS is also composed of the autonomic NS which is made up of the *Sympathetic and parasympathetic* nerves.
- The cells of the nervous system are made up to form *dendrites, synaptic bulbs, myelin sheaths and myelin*. The *myelin sheaths* protect the nerve tissue from harm.
- Furthermore, the nervous system is made up of *Efferent and Afferent* nerve bundles. That is to say, groups of nerves relaying impulses to the CNS and those relaying them away from the CNS (Central nervous system) towards areas of the body, either motor neurons or other nerves that perform other functions.





Further categorisation of the nervous system:

The different elements of the nervous system are further divided into:

Spinal cord

- The main pathway for nerve impulses to flow from and to the brain
- Responsible for the reflex response, sometimes referred to as '*fight or flight*.'
- Carries the nerve "matter" in the form of bundles of nerves, which in turn branch off of the spinal cord and enter the various organs of the body.

The brain consists of the following:

- Cerebrum
- Cerebellum
- Pons
- Cerebrospinal fluid
- Medulla
- Right and left hemispheres of the brain
- Cranial nerves

Common problems of the CNS and PNS

Multiple sclerosis: This is a condition that can be very serious leading to loss of capacity to walk and maintain voluntary systems of the body. The *myelin* sheaths begin to deteriorate thus exposing the *myelin* nerve fibres.

Stroke/Paralysis: Damage caused to nerve centres in the Brain, which inhibit normal functioning of bodily systems, can lead to death.





Parkinson's disease (also known as Parkinson disease, Parkinson's, idiopathic parkinsonism, primary parkinsonism, PD, or paralysis agitans) is a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system. The motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease result from the death of dopamine-generating cells in the substantia nigra, a region of the midbrain; the cause of this cell death is unknown. Early in the course of the disease, the most obvious symptoms are movement related these include shaking, rigidity and difficulty with walking and gait. Later, cognitive and behavioural problems may arise, with dementia commonly occurring in the advanced stages of the disease. Other symptoms include sensory, sleep and emotional problems. PD is more common in the elderly, with most cases occurring after the age of 50.





Key points of anatomy study - the endocrine system

The Endocrine system affects the body through neuro-chemical release and *hormone* transmission. Our *endocrine* systems are the carefully balanced nexos of *hormonal* messengers that regulate the following processes:

- Growth
- Metabolism
- Reproduction

The endocrine system comprises a number of glands in the body and these glands are responsible for the production and release of the various *hormones*. The Hormones themselves comprise of protein and *steroids*.

Areas of familiarisation and study for yoga teachers: The endocrine system

- Pituitary “master gland” consists of a two part gland interior & exterior
- Thyroid *Thyroxin (hormone of Thyroid)*
- Parathyroid - PTH
- Adrenals - Adrenaline and steroids
- Gonad Ovaries - Estrogen and progesterone
- Testes - testosterone
- Pineal - Melatonin
- Thymus - Thymosin

Common problems of the endocrine system

The following is an outline of common problems that can occur within the endocrine system.

Diabetes - When the pancreas ceases to function efficiently to produce enough insulin, the body cannot then utilise the glucose effectively. This causes problems for the metabolism of the body and the individual needs to take a medically prescribed version of insulin that is injected or taken orally. Yoga can greatly benefit people with diabetes.





Hypothyroidism - an under active thyroid that causes systemic problems in other areas of the body.

Infertility - primarily refers to the biological inability of a person to contribute to conception. Infertility may also refer to the state of a woman who is unable to fulfill the whole term of pregnancy.





Key points of anatomy study - the immune system

The immune system prevents pathogens, potentially harmful toxins from damaging the cells of the body. It functions in a variety of ways. When our defences are low, due to high levels of toxicity or disease, we need to work to strengthen the immune system in various ways. One way in which we can do this is to practice yoga. Yoga has a naturally stimulating effect upon the immune system.

The following parts make up the immune system:

- Lymph nodes - range throughout the body and filter the lymph fluid.
- Tonsils - a collection of lymphatic nodes that are buried at the back of the throat sometimes referred to as “the first line of defence”.
- Right lymphatic duct - major duct of drainage for the lymph fluid.
- Thoracic duct
- Thymus - *the Thymus, Spleen and Tonsils are seen as “masses of lymph tissue”*
- Spleen
- White blood cells - are cells of the immune system involved in defending the body against both disease and foreign materials. Five different and diverse types of leukocytes exist, but they are all produced and derived from a *multipotent cell* in the bone marrow known as *Hematopoietic cells*. They live for about 3 to 4 days in the average human body. Leukocytes are found throughout the body, including the blood and lymphatic system.
- Lymph - made up of blood plasma that escapes into intercellular fluid. It is then recycled back to the venous system via lymphatic vessels. The movement of the lymph occurs primarily from movement of skeletal muscle. Therefore yoga can greatly benefit the immune system.





Common problems of the immune system

The immune system can suffer from an overload of environmental toxins and there are a number of different rare and congenital or inherited diseases that are usually referred to as primary immune deficiency diseases. These problems with the immune system are severe and affect an estimated 50,000 people in the United States. A healthy immune system recognises "invaders" such as viruses, bacteria or anything that is not a normal part of the body and destroys them. In cases of severe immune system diseases, the body may have little, if any, normal immune responses, resulting in frequent recurring infections. Nezelof's Syndrome, Granulomatous Disease, T-Lymphocyte Deficiency, Chronic Dysphagocytosis, Impotent Neutrophil Syndrome and Congenital Dysphagocytosis are all examples of immune system diseases in which there is a weakened or absent response to everyday bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is not inherited or congenital. It is caused by an infection with the human immunodeficiency virus or HIV. HIV invades and inactivates certain cells of the immune system, known as helper T-cells. Helper T-cells are white blood cells that normally stimulate the production of antibodies and killer T-cells, which destroy viruses, bacteria and other invaders such as cancer cells.





Key points of anatomy study - the reproductive system

Reproduction is one of the most important and fundamental properties of living organisms by which every kind of living organism multiplies to form new individuals of its own kind. In this process, one generation of living organisms gives rise to the next generation. This process is not essential to the life of any individual but is a function essential for the life of the species.

The continuity of life has been possible from the time of its origin, millions of years ago up to the present day, only due to the phenomenon of reproduction. In fact, perpetuation of self and of the species is one of the most remarkable features of living organisms. A species is a group of related animals, plants or microbes that can interbreed to produce a fertile offspring. The preservation of species has been made possible because the parents produce offspring like themselves. It is also the means of increasing the population of a species. It plays a major part in evolution by transmitting advantageous changes or variations from organisms of one generation to those of the next.

In human beings, the process is one of sexual reproduction, which involves both male and female sexes. The new individual or offspring develops from the fusion cell called zygote, which is formed, by the fusion or union of two specialised cells called germ cells, sex cells or gametes.

Generally, one of the gametes is active, smaller in size and without any reserve food. This is the male gamete and it is called the sperm.

The male reproductive system of a man consists of a pair of testes, ducts, accessory glands and a penis. The functions of the male reproductive system are:

- Production of sperms.
- Transmission of sperms to the female.

The female reproductive system consists of two ovaries (produce ova and female hormones), Fallopian tubes, uterus (muscular organ which supports the fetus during its 40 week gestation period before birth), vagina and external genitalia.





The functions of the female reproductive system are: -

- Production of ovum eggs.
- Receiving the sperms.
- Providing suitable environment for fusion (fertilisation) of the egg and the sperm.
- Childbirth.
- Nourishment of the baby with breast milk until it can take a mixed diet.

Common problems of the reproductive system

Erectile dysfunction - is a common disorder that inhibits a male from being able to achieve and maintain an erection. In order for an erection to occur, blood must fill the sponge-like tissue that makes up the penis. The causes of erectile dysfunction vary with each person. The most common are diabetes, cardiovascular disease, neurological issues and side effects from medication.

Testicular cancer - is the presence of malignant cells in the testicles. Symptoms include the presence of a lump or mass inside one testis, the hardening of the testicles, numbness or pain, lack of sexual interest, fluid build-up in the scrotum, burning sensation after physical activity and lower back pain.

Prostatitis - is the swelling of the prostate gland due to an infection. According to a study conducted by physicians, prostatitis is diagnosed in 8 percent of all urologist visits. Prostatitis is classified into four categories: acute prostatitis, chronic bacterial prostatitis, chronic prostatitis/chronic pelvic pain syndrome and asymptomatic inflammatory prostatitis. Chronic prostatitis/chronic pelvic pain syndrome is the most common classification of prostatitis, constituting up to 95 percent of all diagnoses.





Endometriosis - If the tissue that normally lines the uterus (endometrium) abnormally grows outside of the uterus, a woman can be diagnosed with a medical condition called endometriosis. The endometrium may grow on the other organs of the female reproductive system and can also affect the bladder or bowel. Symptoms of endometriosis include severe abdominal pain, nausea, bloating, diarrhoea, constipation or fatigue---especially during menstruation.

Uterine Fibroids - Abnormal, non-cancerous tumours that grow within the muscle cells of the uterus are called uterine fibroids. Approximately 20 percent of women under the age of 50 will develop fibroids, estimates the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Problems caused by uterine fibroids can include heavy or painful menstrual bleeding, frequent urination, lower back pain, pain during sexual intercourse or reproductive problems, such as miscarriage or infertility. The most common forms of treatment for uterine fibroids include pain medication and surgery.





Key points of anatomy - the excretory system

The **excretory system** is a passive biological system that removes excess, unnecessary or dangerous materials from an organism, so as to help maintain homeostasis within the organism and prevent damage to the body. It is responsible for the elimination of the waste products of metabolism as well as other liquid and gaseous wastes. As most healthy functioning organs produce metabolic and other wastes, the entire organism depends on the function of the system; however, only the organs specifically for the excretion process are considered a part of the excretory system. The excretory system gets rid of waste called urine.

As it involves several functions that are only superficially related, it is not usually used in more formal classifications of anatomy or function.

Removes metabolic and liquid toxic wastes as well as excess water from the organism.

Within each kidney there are an estimated one million microscopic nephrons where blood filtration takes place. Each nephron contains a cluster of capillaries called glomeruli. A cup-shaped sac called a Bowman's capsule surrounds each glomerulus. The blood that flows through the glomerulus is under great pressure. This causes water, glucose and urea to enter the Bowman's capsule. White blood cells, red blood cells and proteins remain in the blood. As the blood continues in the excretory system, it passes through the renal tubule. During this time, re-absorption occurs: glucose and chemicals such as potassium, sodium, hydrogen, magnesium and calcium are re-absorbed into the blood. Almost all the water removed during filtration returns to the blood during the re-absorption phase. The kidneys control the amount of liquid in our bodies. Now only wastes are in the nephron. These wastes are called urine and include urea, water and inorganic salts. The cleansed blood goes into veins that carry the blood from the kidneys and back to the heart.





Common problems of the excretory system

Cystitis - is inflammation of the bladder most often caused by a bacterial infection that enters the body through the urethra and travels upward into the bladder. Less commonly, cystitis may be caused by certain drugs, radiation or chemical irritants, according to the Mayo Clinic. Symptoms of cystitis include a strong urge to urinate, burning during urination, blood in the urine, urine with a strong odour, discomfort and pressure in the abdomen and pelvis and a low fever. Treatment for bacterial cystitis consists of antibiotics that patients either take orally or receive as injections directly into the bladder. Treatment for cystitis that is caused by other factors focuses on treating the underlying cause.

Urethritis - The urethra is the narrow tube that carries urine from the bladder to the outside of the body. Urethritis is a condition in which the lining of the urethra becomes inflamed. Urethritis is caused by a bacterial infection that may also affect the bladder and reproductive organs, according to the University of Maryland Medical Center. Usually patients experience no symptoms with urethritis, but when symptoms do occur they include burning and pain during urination, pus or discharge from the penis or vagina and burning and itching around the vaginal or penile opening. Urethritis is treated with a series of antibiotics. Patients should abstain from sex throughout the entire course of treatment until symptoms resolve completely.

Haemorrhoids - As a pathological condition, haemorrhoids does not exist, but they can be described as masses or clumps ("cushions") of tissue within the anal canal that contain blood vessels and the surrounding, supporting tissue made up of muscle and elastic fibres. The anal canal is the last four centimetres through which stool passes as it goes from the rectum to the outside world. The anus is the opening of the anal canal to the outside world. Although most people think haemorrhoids are abnormal, they are present in everyone. It is only when the haemorrhoidal cushions enlarge that haemorrhoids can cause problems and be considered abnormal or a disease.





Prevalence of haemorrhoids - Although haemorrhoids occur in everyone, they become large and cause problems in only 4% of the general population. Haemorrhoids that cause problems are found equally in men and women, and their prevalence peaks between 45 and 65 years of age.





4.0 Breathing and Pranayamas

In this module we shall study the breathing from an anatomical perspective and learn how to teach breathing techniques as a basis for pranayama exercises. We will then explore more from a yogic perspective the effect of breathing on the quality of the body and mind.

We are, as it were, *multi-layered beings*. Within the complexity of our psycho-physical make up there are worlds within worlds of inner activity going on. These processes are largely autonomous, meaning that they do not need conscious engagement in order to function. Having said that, we can with a bit of practice, begin to influence some of these systems consciously. One system in particular that is capable of being influenced is the respiratory system. The respiratory system again functions mostly without intervention, yet through certain practices it can indeed be influenced, which then will have an effect on other aspects of our organism. We are in this section of the course going to study the respiratory system anatomically. Then we are also going to practice breathing exercises that give us a direct experience of how we can work with breathing patterns.

You will see in your yoga classes a wide variety of breathing habits. On the whole though, there will be two distinct patterns observable to us. Firstly, you will have those that breath into the upper thorax (chest breathers) and then those which breath into the abdomen (diaphragmatic breathers). You will also have variations on the theme of both of these. It can not be stressed enough the importance of getting to know the breathing patterns of people and beginning to re-educate them.

By and large it can be observed that more than 60% of the people need some correction to their breathing habits. This is a general figure, but non-the-less points to a potential issue with regards peoples' breathing habits. As I have already mentioned, many people just won't be aware of their tendencies and may even believe that they do not actually have a problem. It is your job as a yoga teacher, to guide people gently towards breathing well.





If we consider the fact that the blood is oxygenated in the lower part of the lung, and we have people that are dominant chest breathers, this will be having a detrimental effect on their health and state of mind as well. Correcting the breath is in fact going to benefit health overall.

- Why do we practice pranayamas?
- Are they useful to us as yogis?
- Are they safe and appropriate for everyone?
- What are the contraindications and why?
- Looking at breathing and then pranayama. How are they different?
- What part % should they play in our practice?
- How often should they be practiced?

List of practices:

1. 2-1 breathing and diaphragmatic breathing
2. Nadi shodhonam
3. Complete breath (not pranayama)
4. Breath through the Bandhas
5. Ujjayi

Pranayamas are said to enhance or expand the “prana body” and indeed they do seem to enhance the energy in some way within the psycho physical organism. However, we will find that not all pranayamas are suitable for all people and not everyone will have the same results from their practice of pranayama. The resultant effect will depend on the experience of the yogi.

Generally as a guideline, we say that the student of yoga should have done a minimum of six months asana practice and have some basic experience of practices like diaphragmatic breathing, 2-1 breathing and should be consciously applying the principles in your classes and be seen to be doing so. This sets up a sound basis for the practice of pranayamas which are more demanding on the mind and body. Like everything in yoga, we rest on the principles of conditionality (that everything arises from a cause and condition.) If we stick to this principle, it will help us to determine





where we should be going with our group at any one particular time. Teach these practices wisely and with due consideration for the age, experience, aptitude and fitness of our students. Be very cautious of teaching any pranayamas to people that have some sort of mental instability or depressive tendencies. For these people, it will be sufficient to be doing an asana practice and some meditation that is well guided. It is as well to have other things that we can give to the students who will not be doing the pranayamas to do in place of these practices so that no one is left hanging, as it were.

We practice pranayamas in order to refine our skills as practitioners and to develop the breathing process and 'garner our energies'. Pranayamas can cleanse the system and they can also strengthen it. They add velocity to our breathing and can tune and tone the nervous system. Normally the outcome of a pranayama session should leave one feeling refreshed and cleansed and relaxed. So they *are* worthwhile.

Before giving your students any pranayamas to do though, you need to make sure that other basic things have been looked at such as the general state of the breathing in the individual. If a person has chronic tight upper chest breathing patterns, then its unlikely that they will benefit in any way from pranayama exercises. For these people, we need to first train them in the complete breath and then diaphragmatic breath. Once that they have established a healthy breathing pattern and can use diaphragmatic breathing in the context of asana practice, we would say that then it is appropriate to use pranayamas. To do so before may cause more harm than good.

Not everyone in terms of our students are eligible for the practice of pranayama. You should not be inclined to teach them indiscriminately. The reason we say this is because breath and mind (emotions thought processes etc.) are closely linked to the breathing process. Someone who is a bit volatile emotionally, may find that pranayamas exacerbate the symptoms that they have. Therefore, in a group we





really need to be **observing** and getting to know our students tendencies and their capacities.

As already mentioned, not all pranayamas are suitable for every student of yoga. Most of the basic ones however will be fine for most people. Here are some observations to consider in relation to teaching pranayamas.

- Always have food digested through the system beforehand (2-3 hours).
- Always make sure that the student practising does not have heart condition (High B.P) or hyperglycaemia.
- Menstruating women should avoid Kapalabati, Bastrika (bellow breath) or strong diaphragmatic breath techniques. Pregnant women should also avoid these techniques.
- Don't let students with depressive tendencies or mental instabilities use pranayamas. Just give them breath awareness exercises to do instead.
- Always build the pranayama practice up gradually stage by stage. Use the lighter techniques first.
- Certain pranayamas (Kapalabati for example) should not be practices if the student has a hernia on the thorax or abdominal region.

Reading list for breathing and pranayamas (and articles)

- Science of breath - Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine, Alan Hymes (Himalayan institute press)
- Breathing in sitting postures - Rolf Solvik (article)
- The Power of Breath - Pandit Rajmani (article)





5.0 Kriyas, theory and practice

The Kriyas are an aspect of general yoga often overlooked. However, some kriya yogas are highly beneficial for keeping our system in tune.

They comprise of a number of practices which help clean and tone the body and some of its functions. We will learn to practice and teach some of the more relevant and useful kriya yogas.

Jala Neti

This is a nose washing practice that uses the infamous “neti-pot”; a small porcelain, metal or plastic pot about palm sized that resembles a watering can. A slightly warm and saline solution is placed in the pot. It is recommended to use a minimum amount of salt and to make sure that all the grains are dissolved to about the salinity of tear drops. Bend forward with the nose orientated up and relaxing the face and nasal passages pour the saline solution through the top nostril allowing the solution to wash through and out the lower nostril. Best done outside or over the sink! It has a refreshing effect, alleviates hay fever and allergies and can even provide relief during a cold. We recommend regular use, though it is not necessary every day.

Kapalabhati

Literally means “skull shining”. This appears to be a breathing exercise though in fact is considered a kriya. It has the benefit of gently warming the body, especially the lower body, toning the abdominal area, assisting digestion and helping clear the lungs and breathing passages. It is a refreshing, stimulating practice best done on an empty stomach and before an asana or meditation practice.

Seated in a comfortable upright position maintaining a broad open thoracic area. Relax the hands onto the legs, though in the beginning you could bring one hand to the belly. Take a few natural normal breaths centering yourself and relaxing the body.

To begin with, in rounds of say 10 exhales, draw in rapidly and sharply though not aggressively the lower belly, below the abdomen, allowing air to be naturally exhaled





in a short sharp exhale. The inhale will be a spontaneous rebound as the belly relaxes and the body draws in the breath.

Take a few natural breaths and then do another round up to your capacity. Do not get to a place where you feel out of breath or over stimulated.

With practice you can build up to longer rounds of say 50 or a 100 exhales. Always spend some time allowing the breath to normalise after the practice.

Alternate nostril variation

Here, on the right hand draw down the index and middle finger to the base of the thumb to form a “pincer-like” hand with the thumb and two other fingers. Place the thumb and fingers lightly below the bridge of the nose. Alternating a light pressure close off one nostril, say the left, and deliver a short sharp exhale followed by its accompanying rebounded inhale and repeat on the other side. Try, say 20, then build up with practice. Extend the last exhale on the left, to completely empty the lungs. Take a few natural breaths though both nostrils and then repeat starting on the other nostril first, the right. The sound resembles a steam engine or an old two stroke!

Uddiyana bandha and the bandhas

Uddiyana bandha translates as the “upward flying” bandha or seal and is one of the three important internal adjustments or locks or seals that we perform in yoga posture practice and pranayama. We have mula bandha, the root bandha, uddiyana, and jalandhara bandha, the net embracing seal.

Each has different effects and functions. The mula bandha is best experienced upon a deep exhale and can be felt as the gentle toning and drawing in of the area below the navel as we activate the accessory muscles of the deep exhalation. It tones up a supporting band of muscles around the base of the spine as well as draws up passively the pelvic floor. The primary benefit is to stabilise the lower back and pelvis. It is a stabilising adjustment the body naturally makes when it reaches out moves toward an object to pick it up.





Uddiyana bandha is the lifting and broadening of the rib cage and can be experienced on a deep inhalation. It has the effect of lengthening the spine especially the lower back.

Jalandhara bandha most evidently seen in shoulder stand where the jaw is drawn down to the chest. More subtly it is the regulating of the breath through a gentle toning or restriction in the throat area which may or may not result in the quiet though audible sound of the breath coming in and leaving the body. It is best left to arise spontaneously to avoid creating tension in the face or throat area which will only aggravate the nervous system.

Uddiyana bandha

This best learnt up on the feet. Stand with the feet apart, slightly more than the hips and bend the knees. Slightly bend forwards with the hands just above the knees, hands turned in to open the back of the shoulders.

Exhale completely through the mouth, making a sighing sound as you do so if you wish, folding forwards towards the legs. Push up *as though you are inhaling without drawing air in* and stay a moment or two savouring the effect. The belly draws in deeply and fully up into the ribcage. Uddiyana bandha. Carefully “unhook” the belly and take a few natural easy breaths. Repeat a few times.

This bandha massages the belly and internal organs. It lengthens the spine and activates the muscles of the upper body, especially those associated with deep inhalation.





Agni sara

Agni Sara has been referred to as “The Master Practice” by some regular practitioners.

It has many benefits both physiological as well as psychological. On the physical plane, Agni Sara strengthens and tones the abdominal wall and tones the organs of the abdominal region. Regular practice stimulates immunity and enhances the powers of digestion and elimination. Many illnesses begin in the bowl and intestine, through poor elimination and or digestion. Agni Sara corrects imbalance in energy related to poor digestion. All in all it is a potent practice to have as part of a yoga scheme. Agni Sara can give us a sort of power of perseverance and a sense of confidence in our bodies.

Again, on a physical level, Agni Sara keeps the tone of the abdominal wall and the connective tissues. These tend to weaken and collapse in people as they get older and especially if they have lived sedentary lives. This can lead to the accumulation of fluids such as urine in the bladder and other toxins in the bowel not being removed properly. The great thing about Agni Sara is that it is not an ‘invasive’ Kriya practice. One can gain many benefits from its practice.

Below we will give a step by step practice guide, along with some contra-indications. Agni sara begins by adopting one of two postures.

- a) standing with knees bent
- b) kneeling

With either position, we place the hand onto the knees with the fingers turned inwards and have the body bent forward slightly.

We then begin the practice on a full exhale. As we exhale we contract the lower abdomen and mula bandha and in a wave like motion we contract the lower abdomen up to the upper abdomen. This wave like contraction is then released on





an inhale in reverse. So, as you exhale release first the upper abdomen then the lower and finally let go of the mula bandha and anal sphincter or perennial floor.

We want to develop a rhythm of contraction and release that is smooth and controlled. After several rounds, rest and then repeat until you have done around 50. For students around 25 is good, but teachers do more!

In the book 'Mastering the basics' you will find fuller details and images of the Agni Sara practice.

Contra-indications for the various Kriyas outlined above

- Recent surgery, especially to the abdominal region
- Detached retina
- Hernia
- High blood pressure
- Irritable bowel syndrome or serious conditions of the digestive tract





6.0 Systematic relaxation

Here in this module we will learn how to lead relaxation exercises. These can be taught in their own right. When combined with other yoga practices and meditation, we are then able to offer students a very transformative and rounded yoga class. These practices form the basis of Yoga Nidra.

Introduction to the theory of relaxation.

- Relaxation defined.
- How do we use relaxation exercises and what effect will they have?
- Are relaxation techniques worthwhile?
- How do we teach relaxation and how is it different from teaching asana and or meditation?
- Should we use one or more methods? Should we teach relaxation in every class?
- How does relaxation fit into the overall schema of our practice?

Taking the first point, we need to give a clear definition of what relaxation is as nowadays it is a term that can be misunderstood and misapplied. Relaxation is not 'vegging out!' by the TV nor going to the pub. At least not in yogic terms. We have to be clear what we mean, because if we are going to teach this to students then we must have them understand what it is that they are doing.

Relaxation is a process whereby the sympathetic nervous system does not dominate in the body. The state of equilibrium that we achieve through yoga is due to the fact that we have calmed the nervous system and the mind by giving the body tools to focus and control the energies and the mental flow, as it were. In doing this, the mind quietens and the body feels energised, clean, integrated and rested. These are some of the benefits of yoga.

Relaxation takes this process a step further, as we disengage from bodily activity, we lie down with eyes closed thus withdrawing from the senses and we give a quiet inner focus to the mind. As the mind is largely externally oriented in our normal





everyday lives, we are thus much of the time stimulated by impressions from our daily lives. Whilst these things in themselves are not wrong, still what seems to happen is that there is a cumulative build up of mental and physical 'residue' that leaves us feeling tired and energy deficient. This situation tends to get worse if not rectified or *counter-balanced*.

Relaxation exercises then are a very useful part of the yoga teachers '*tool kit*'.

So to begin with, we should look at the methods of the relaxations that we are going to teach. There are three main exercises

- Tense and relax
- point to point relaxation
- 2-1 breathing

Of course there are many more methods that one could use, but it is better for our purposes to explore and gain experience with a few methods.

Generally, these can be done at the end of the yoga asana part of the class or just before the meditation. Many people find that if they do relaxation session before they meditate, they are fresher and more engaged with the meditation. This is because any residual tiredness or resistance tends to be dealt with by the relaxation session. So next we set up the session in the class by getting the student to lay down and rest the body comfortably: savasana is the best pose. Some people will find that supports under the head and knees work better for them.

We use relaxation classes to finalise an asana class or to prepare for meditation. The skill of leading relaxation classes can be applied independently for people with stress related illness.

Anytime is a good time for people to relax. A good relaxation session should leave people feeling energised *and* relaxed. These skills can also be used to help us





deepen our own practice. In Relaxing we train ourselves to live well and others to do the same. How much stress related illness is there in the world today!?

Are relaxation techniques worthwhile...yes!

When we relax we discharge positively the build up of unhelpful stress in the body and the mind. Also, this practice can help us to learn to gain perspective and see things from a more 'spacious' angle or perspective.

Relaxation needs a quiet tone from the teacher, a sense that the teacher is present and respectful of the student. When people go into the mode of relaxation they become quite open to suggestion and so it is important that we treat the situation with respect and lead things in a positive way.

Relaxation is different from the mode of meditation and asana practice. It's aims are somewhat different and so we need to be aware of how this is the case. When people are not used to relaxation and we put people down on the floor and prepare them, what often happens is that they go to sleep. They do this because they are not used to relaxing in this systematic way or they are just plain exhausted and overworked. The only response their bodies know to lying down is to go to sleep. So we must educate students to try and remain aware and awake whilst at the same time letting go into a deep restfulness. This balance between restfulness and alertness could be said to be the hallmark of a yogi or meditator. Without this balance we simply go to one extreme or another, we use too much force or we don't make enough effort and the whole process is sort of slack and without energy. Ideally we would include a relaxation session in every class. We would do this at the end of the class to allow students to assimilate the process of the practice and to ritually mark the end the practice session.





Tense and relax

Within this practice, what we are doing is to train the student to be aware of the kinaesthetic experience of relaxation of the muscles versus tension or holding on. We use this as the first stage of the practice because it is the most demanding and least subtle. The idea is to move from the grosser to the more subtle.

1. Lie the student down in Savasana
2. have them become aware of the body in a general way
3. Begin at the face and work down to the feet, getting them to tense the muscles in various parts of the body.
4. Have them hold the contractions for around 2 breaths.
5. Have them release the contraction and move onto the next body part. Keep up a momentum and pace so as there are not long gaps between body parts.
6. Once down to the feet have them contract the entire body and then release it.
7. Then have them be aware of the sense of the body before and after the contractions.
8. Have them use 50-100% of their muscle strength. You can vary this.
9. You can repeat this more than once or use it as preparation for the next stage.





2-1 breathing

This practice can be done sitting or lying down. If done lying down, the practice will have a more relaxing effect due to the fact of being in a gravity neutral position.

Practice description: This form of breathing quickly slows down the heart rate

1. Have the student lie in Savasana.
2. Get them to focus on the breath from a basis of diaphragmatic breathing.
3. Then have them gradually lengthen the exhale at a ratio of 2:1 to the inhale
4. Don't let them force the exhale, but try to encourage full exhalations.
5. After say 15 rounds of this breath, have the student let go of the effort and just focus on the effect.
6. Let them breathe normally for a few minutes to finish.

Point to point relaxation

This practice requires more time and skill for the teacher and the student. The trainee teacher should be trying to gain experience leading this practice throughout the training period. For this reason, there are two variations of the practice (one shorter) but in principle the same practice.

Practice description:

1. Have the student set up in Savasana.
2. Have the diagram of the points with you if you cannot remember the sequence
3. Start with a few minutes of 2:1 or diaphragmatic breathing.
4. When you think that they are in a receptive state, begin to lead the exercise.
5. You need at least 15 mins for a good relaxation session, so keep this in mind when leading your class.
6. The instructions of the procedure will be given as a hand out.





7.0 Teaching methods

In some detail we will explore creative and well established ways of communicating yoga. We will learn how to work with groups confidently as well as working more closely with students to adjust them and support them in their practice. As part of this module, students are to maintain a reflective teaching practice diary for the duration of the course, from the moment of starting to teach to the point of qualification.

General guidelines in teaching

There are various ways you can teach a class;

- Teach as you practice
- Demonstrate, then lead the class through verbally
- Teach verbally (when students know where they are going)
- Teach the class verbally even with beginners, keeping demonstration to a minimum
- Have your best student up front and teach verbally, using them to demonstrate whilst you explain the procedure

Each has its pros and cons. Be aware of these different approaches and use a variety of methods.

Teaching as you practice with the students limits the possibility of moving around and correcting. Make sure you are visible and try not to get completely lost in your own practice (the main drawback).

Doing a lot of demonstrating slows down the rhythm of the class, though frees you up later to guide and correct.

Having a student demonstrate allows you to physically rest, teach verbally and correct.





7.1 Vinyasa Krama - development and sequencing

This approach is essential to safe, sensitive and intelligent practice.

We can look at Vinyasa Krama, which can be translated as “step by step progression” from three principal perspectives;

1. sequencing a class or individual session to take a certain path, arrive at a certain point or explore a certain theme
2. entering and leaving a given posture
3. building courses or workshops or retreats.

1. Sequencing a class

In the context of a class we recommend that you decide on one or two themes for a class, for people to arrive at a pose like Urdhva Dhanurasana, the full back-bend or full bridge like, a relaxing hip-opening class. The class is then structured to arrive at this point, each posture placed in an appropriate sequence to allow preparation for postures that follow on. There are general rules as outlined earlier but a lot will be learned through practice, seeing what other teachers are doing and seeing what you students are capable of.

Progressing from gentler movements to stronger ones is fundamental in terms of practising safely. We can also include the practice of repetition; repeating a given movement within a pose or repeating the pose several times. Muscles and joints are then warmed up and prepared systematically.

Generally speaking it is advisable to do less than you think in a given session and take your time to prepare, enter more deeply and derive the benefits from the chosen practice. A lot of postures done rapidly leads to superficiality and possible injury.

It is also vital that the class is adapted to the students, not built around what you want to do. You may have a back-bend class planned out in great detail then





someone arrives who has a low back problem, so you have to be prepared to simplify the class on the spot.

General guidelines for a class

- Choose a theme or themes for your session
- Do less than you may like to do
- Be aware of the rhythm and pace of the class, this can of course vary during the class
- Work through simpler, gentle poses or variations of poses towards a more advanced pose
- Design a balanced practice as a rule, choosing from several categories, though some specialisation will be desirable to follow the theme
- Use repetition of both elements of poses, poses in themselves and sequences of poses within the class
- Begin and end the class clearly and politely
- Be on time and punctual, this communicates and creates confidence
- Prepare your class well (notes, drawings, background study and research) - your students will benefit and you will be less stressed
- Be prepared to adapt to circumstances





Lesson plans

Lesson plans can take many forms and you will learn to devise your own. The basic format of the lesson plan may well contain these themes:

- Date and heading (theme for the class)
- Outline of the posture work with postures in the sequence that you will explain them
- The desired outcome for the class (i.e. what is the purpose of the class that you teach)
- Some way of assessing that the class is unfolding according to the plan i.e. observation, questioning of the students, ask a student to demonstrate a posture that you have been explaining etc.
- Aims for the class (a class may well be part of a course so what are the aims for that particular class?)
- Points, comments or quotes from traditional sources that you might want to read out during the class
- Some means of helping the students to practice at home.
- If you are teaching additional material; meditation, breathing or relaxation, also include this in your plan.





2. Entering and leaving postures

Any posture needs to be carefully set up and then exited safely and systematically. In the context of a class, having decided on one or two themes, the sequence of poses will facilitate preparation and warming up of the body and specific joints to help access the desired posture.

At this point, when we are arriving at the climax of our sequence, one approach can be to break the posture down into components and practice the individual parts before combining into the whole, for example *garudasana*, eagle pose doing the arms entwined then the legs or ***urdhva dhanurasana*** working the arms then the legs, then both together.

Another approach would be to break down entering the posture into definite steps. For example, ***urdhva dhanurasana*** can be entered in six steps.

1. Lying in semi-supine with the knees up feet hip width relax
2. Bring the arms to vertical and broaden shoulder girdle
3. Tuck the hands under the shoulders, elbows tucked-in
4. Lift the hips, adjusting the foot base
5. Lift onto the crown of the head, adjusting the hand base
6. Straighten arms and lift into the full pose, hold a few breaths

Likewise with leaving, maybe less steps, but definite and conscious movements

1. Lower back of head and shoulders to the floor
2. Lower pelvis to floor
3. Release arms to side

We will see many more examples in the course of the training programmes that we are offering.

Examine any pose and look to see the key movements needed to make up the pose. See if it is possible to sequence each element, preferably synchronised with the breathing to build the pose up in intensity.





Adaptations and variations of postures, leading to principles of posture work

In this section, there will follow an explanation and conclusion as to how and why we may adapt a posture and the difference between adaptation and variation of a pose. Essentially, the body needs stimulus from different postures and for them to be done in different ways in order to continue to develop and grow. If we repeat the same postures and sequences again and again, sooner or later we will arrive at a point of 'dryness' and begin to stagnate. This is inevitable, even with the greatest interest being brought to the process of practice. One needs variation in order to remain engaged and stimulated by asana practice. This may also be said to be true for the other Hatha yoga practices, although does not apply in quite the same way to meditation and relaxation practice.

We teach a variation of a pose when we want to work in a more advanced way within a posture or group of postures, e.g. **Paschimotonasana** done in the classical way: hands on the feet, back lengthening, knees slightly unlocked and the legs extending. We work in this pose to intensify back lengthening and then to stretch the structures of the lower back, sacrum and pelvis.

A variation might be whereby we incorporate the twist (**Parivrtta Paschimotonasana**). This is a variation, not an adaptation. Here, we are concerned to explore the range of motion in the body more deeply, to invigorate different structures and achieve growth in a different areas of the posture. Like the petals of a flower, they are attached to the main body of the flower, but their function is different than that of the other parts of the flower. With variations, whilst you will have a range of classical variations associated with any one posture, still they belong to the original 'base' pose.

Adaptations have a different theoretical basis and the difference between the two should be understood. With an adaptation of a classical posture we are more concerned to explore one of the following:





1. An aspect of the pose that needs drawing out and explaining more fully
2. Modifying the pose because the classical posture does not serve a particular individual in the class
3. We want to explore the principles of the posture and so it is easier to do by adapting it
4. We are preparing the body for deeper posture work.

These four main areas are why we use adaptations to classical postures. In many cases, it is not appropriate for a student to do a posture in the 'classical way' as outlined in a book. Peoples' bodies and capacities and their needs vary so much that in teaching yoga, you really are entering into a sphere of different capacities with your students. You will need to learn then how to observe and then think in order to apply your teaching to someone who is never going to be able to do the posture that they would so like to do in the classical way.

We begin to think more principally about the work that we are doing in terms of the postures. Once you have imbibed the purpose that any one pose or practice is trying to achieve, you should then feel free to adapt that posture as is needed by the class or the individuals in the class, rather than simply trying to 'hit home' the form of the classical posture. This only leads to injury and long-term problems. Whenever there is force of the wrong kind being used in the practice, problems will surely follow.

So in learning why we are doing a certain posture and what we are aiming to achieve in it (or group of postures) we become better teachers to our students. Most postures have primary and secondary aims. For example, back bends. Some back bends are designed to specifically stretch the spine, either anterior or posterior. However the majority of back bends are about either strengthening the back or opening and stretching the frontal aspects of the body such as the chest and the abdominal regions. We therefore need to know what our primary aims are with the postures that we are teaching. What are the principals in other words?





General guidelines for entering and leaving a pose

- Work with the breath
- Consider five overall stages to entering and leaving a pose; set up, move into posture's full expression, refine, release, feel the effect
- Consider breaking down the pose into workable elements
- Use repetition of various elements, working with the breath, to build up the pose
- Create a sequence of steps to enter the pose and a sequence to leave
- Return to stillness from time to time in between poses to feel the effects of the body-work and rest
- Vary the time sustained in a pose, less time for beginners
- Give clear instructions for moving between each element
- allow silence in the class so the students can focus more on their own experience





Teaching postures in more detail

- Use as clear, precise instructions don't be vague or wandering
- Use commands and directive suggestions
- Prescribe how to do a given movement or technique, do not describe the effect or consequence desired that the student have to achieve. Students need to know what to do, not what to experience in arriving into a posture or technique
- However one can explain the benefits and consequences
- Give time for students to feel the effect of the practice
- Encourage students to explore
- Give hand outs from time to time with sequences and explanations
- These following criteria ought to be guides for teaching asanas:

Structural: how do I do the pose? (explain it anatomically)

Effects: what effects come out of the pose?

Benefits: what are the benefits of the posture?

Does the pose lead to something new, either a new capacity or health benefit?

3. Structuring courses on three levels;

- A month cycle
- Three month term or season
- Year (3 terms)

We can plan a sequence of classes that cover a full range of postures with a sense of progression as the weeks go by. Inevitably there will be repetition, repetition is desirable even, so that progress in certain poses can be experienced and observed. The practice of yoga like any practice has a cyclic quality which for the committed students there will be a process of improvement and mastering and adapting to the work. The cycle is more like a spiral of development from this perspective. We revisit work that we were doing years ago and can see how our bodies have changed and





grown in relation to this work. This provides plenty of material for reflecting on impermanence and change.

If we are teaching city classes we also need to provide for new students coming into the classes. The ideal way would be to have Beginners level classes and more Advanced level classes allowing people to progress with time to different levels of practice and work with others of a similar level. If this is not possible, classes have to be managed to accommodate different capacities and levels of experience. If we develop our postures in a systematic way then more capable students can be offered more advanced variations of a given pose. Beginners can work to their level and still feel included in the flow of the class.

When planning classes it is important to draw from your own inspiration and practice and be willing to change plans if necessary according to what inspires you in a given month. Also it is vital that the class is adapted to the students, not built around what you want to do. You may have a back-bend class planned out in great detail then someone arrives who has a low back problem, so you have to be prepared to simplify the class on the spot. Lesson plans are a necessary part of teaching, but one should also have the knowledge to adapt on the spot. With experience, one gains the ability to do this more smoothly.

General guidelines for structuring courses

- Consider themes for a given period
- Include plenty of repetition to allow students to master the work
- Give room for following your interests and inspirations in designing your classes





Art of Observation

Observing students and then helping them in their practice is vital in effective yoga teaching. Observation and correcting takes time to learn and develop.

Observation can be seen as a development of “awareness of others” from the Four Dimensions of Awareness. It is important to get off of the mat and look around the class room. At the same time try not to overdo walking around the classroom whilst students are practising, some will find it disagreeable. Again, be aware of your class and respond to the situation clearly and confidently. Yoga teaching involves a balance between responsiveness and directness in communication.

Become aware of how your students are practising and consider correcting where appropriate. Do not be quick to rush in and adjust - spend some time looking and watching.

Observing means taking people in and given them appropriate feedback via adjusting your instructions accordingly. We should never go vague and just instruct without keeping our eyes and minds on the job. Because of the nature of yoga teaching, one has to maintain this constant awareness of what is going on with the group and the individuals in it. Sometimes, if one needs to pause, then it is best to do this whilst students are in a resting posture (when you are teaching asana).

Be aware to release the students from instruction from time to time. At the same time, do not leave very long gaps between instructing the class. For new students especially, this can become the cause of anxiety as they don't know what to do mid-pose. You will gain experience as you teach. This is one good reason for keeping your 'Teaching Diary' up-to-date. Jotting down a few notes after a class can help you teach better and improve your approach.

It is always a good thing to examine from time to time how you are doing things. Going to the classes of other teachers can also inspire us, if we feel sometimes that we are not engaging with the teaching as much as we'd like to. Study, reading and reflecting on new material can also help us to go deeper into what we are teaching.





You will rarely have the chance to teach all of your material in one class or course. It is good therefore to make sure that you are varying your content, but staying in sync with the progress of the students in front of you. Ask yourself, 'what is the outcome that I want from this teaching session?'

Adjusting versus correcting

We are following a middle way between what could be called an adjustment and a correction. The emphasis will be on encouraging the student to discover for themselves the correct position in a given pose for their own body through their own experimenting and self-practice. Guidance through a practice is given verbally and visually with appropriate hands-on adjusting and correcting as the practice unfolds.

Some schools of yoga adjust to the point of manipulating students into a desired position. You can particularly see this in Iyengar and Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga circles. This may have value if a student is really unable to recognise where they need to self-adjust, feeling their way to a corrected position. However such adjusting should be highly judicious and manipulating for the sake of manipulating can lead to some negative consequences especially if done without sensitivity. Harm to the body, especially if adjustments are aggressive, and/or dependency on having a particular experience i.e. the deeper adjustment performed by the teacher on the student, could develop through this approach.

It is helpful to touch and correct. Move from your mat and move around the classroom from time to time, Observe what is going on. Where appropriate gently guide the students, aligning limbs, hands or feet, the position of the pelvis, bringing attention to regions of the body that the student is apparently unaware in a given moment. The amount of time you can dedicate to this will depend on the size of the class and the rhythm and nature of the posture practice. A slower floor practice with 3 or 4 students will allow more time in adjusting than a fast sun salutation with 25 students. In this case you will have to rely more on verbal adjusting and perhaps a model up front (your best student).





This correction should be non invasive, given with confidence and should have the implicit agreement of the student. Some students will not want to be touched and that should be respected. Such correcting could be a simple fingertip stroke, much like a match strike, the steadying of a leg in half-moon pose (**ardha chandrasana**). Assist a student and be clear that you are with them for the time you are with them, leaving them gracefully.

“Spotting”

For some poses it will be appropriate to be very hands-on and actually guide a student up into a pose. Headstand or handstand are good examples. Although a similar effect can be achieved with a wall, here you provide support and stability until a student has confidence to “go it alone”.

Supporting someone lifting up into the full bridge (**urdhva dhanurasana**) would be another example. However it could be argued that if someone does not have the strength or flexibility to enter a pose, it is more appropriate to work on easier postures for a while longer building up to the more advanced patiently.





Resume of do's and do not's for yoga teaching

- Do not give unnecessary physical assistance to students
- Do be positive and inspiring to people
- Do not openly criticise a student in the class nor give harsh feedback
- Speak kindly, firmly and with awareness of those in front of you
- Do not talk a lot about your personal life and experiences in the class
- Do not criticise other teachers or schools in the class
- Speak constructively and helpfully about yoga and the other practices that you are teaching
- Give space for students to ask questions from time to time. Draw them out by asking them questions
- Use different teaching methods to stimulate
- Start the class on time and be punctual and finish on time
- Prepare for the class well, both the material and yourself
- If you have to go away, get cover for your class and do not cancel
- Develop a sense of progression in the course or class
- Neither congratulate nor discourage students, but acknowledge progress where appropriate
- Do give handouts to back up themes, well presented and clear
- Do not advise people on medical issues unless you are a qualified doctor





Setting up as a teacher

Here are some suggestions to help you get going as a yoga teacher and how to set up your professional practice.

1. Set up classes; consider teaching voluntarily for a period to get experience. You can work with friends, family and acquaintances considering that the classes are an opportunity to share what you know. This can begin in a relatively informal way.

It takes time to establish yourself as a teacher. It can easily take six months to set up a new class. Be patient.

When setting up working for an income negotiate what you consider a fair amount for your time and energy, even as a novice teacher. All parties need to be happy when negotiating rates, you, as well as your client or employer.

2. Effective teaching requires that we build confidence into our relationship with students. This takes time and patience. Commit yourself to your own practice and commit yourself to teaching your students. Be clear about your schedule and let people know if you are going to be away as much in advance as possible.

3. Be professional and polite in the classroom

- Treat your students as serious practitioners of yoga
- Prepare your classes sufficiently; introducing new material and developing existing work
- Be on time, preparing the practice space beforehand and start and finish at the agreed time
- Dress appropriately to your taste
- Be polite to your students, treat them with respect and kindness
- Remember that the yoga class for some students can be one of the most important events in their day or week
- Do not befriend students in the class.





- Outside of the class, befriend as much as seems appropriate

4. Do not let students down, always turn up and if you can't teach because of illness or another reason, get adequate cover, preferably a trusted colleague. Cancelling classes should not be taken lightly. This can be a sensitive issue, try to get consistent cover i.e. the same person each time, so your students can get to know this teacher and your colleague get to know your students.

5. Consider your professional presentation and presence in the local area;

- Business card and publicity, website, blogs and so on. It is helpful to have some web presence.
- Get flyers out into local shops and into public spaces.
- Be persistent.

6. Build up a database of your students. It is useful to keep a fairly complete record of your students so long as they are happy to be kept on a database. You can offer a simple questionnaire that covers health issues, previous experience with yoga, email, telephone etc. Check if this is ok with your students and how best to communicate with them. You could set up a "whatsapp" group to communicate class times or changes and workshops for example. Also consider setting up an electronic newsletter, with "mailchimp" for example.

7. Be ethical in relation to your students, employees and colleagues. Endeavour to be honest and straightforward. Practice the five ethical precepts in your communication and dealings. Represent fairly your own interests when negotiating around money and payment. You can see difficult situations as a potential opportunity to mature, learn and grow.

8. Build up connections with other yoga teachers informally or otherwise. Being able to share your experience, share ideas and techniques as well as simple mutual friendly support is important as a lot of your teaching work is a solitary activity. This will bring benefits on many levels.





8.0 Foundation in Meditation

We can say that hatha yoga works indirectly on the mind (through the body) but meditation works directly on the mind itself. Transforming ourselves, through yoga and meditation leads to deeper awareness of self and others.

Part 1 - Movement into Stillness

The following teachings draw strongly from our own Buddhist training. These derive originally from early Buddhism as recorded in the Pali Canon texts which were later compiled by Buddhaghosha in his “Visuddhimagga” (5th Century C.E. India) and Chi-I in his “Dhyana for Beginners” (6th Century C.E. China).

To go deeper we have to stop, be still. We would like to advocate the practice of sitting meditation as a natural conclusion to posture work practice. It is a vital opportunity to work on the mind directly. In stillness, and by that we mean physical stillness, we can begin to see the movements of the mind itself, its tendencies, predilections, fluctuations and its fluid and flighty nature. We can see and experience directly and can begin to differentiate between skilful and unskillful states of mind and we can begin to work with these directly too.

We will employ the model of samatha / vipassana here, a model which comes from the Buddhist meditation tradition. Put simply it can be translated as something like calming and seeing clearly.

Samatha is the cooling, calming down or quietening of our mind. The root causes of our unstable, unhappy mind are temporarily assuaged. As the mind becomes quieter more malleable and more absorbed, a degree of contentment, fulfilment and happiness arise. You may have noticed when engaged in an activity wholeheartedly and enthusiastically you are naturally happy, absorbed and focused.

In Vipassana we see directly how these root tendencies are frustrating even hurting and entrapping us and we begin to let go, even let go or sever more permanently these roots at the root. We can drop once and for all habits and tendencies that lead





to strife, we begin to really grow up. We grow up in the sense of grow into a happy, or at least more contented, responsible and free human being.

Here we are speaking to hatha yogins and yoginis and we can see that yoga can lead quite quickly to a "good feeling". After even a short asana practice, physical and psychological tensions are released, a mild euphoria can be felt, one feels more present in the body, more connected, more embodied, more alive. We become more concentrated, "gathered up", integrated and happier. Actually, we can experience this physical and mental well being from any (not overly strenuous) physical activity provided we bring awareness to what we are doing.

Meditation gives us the opportunity to take this samatha experience deeper into our being. It is best approached as a gradual process and for this reason we would recommend a daily meditation practice. There are many benefits which far outweigh the expense of giving time and energy to sitting practice. Meditation allows you to cultivate samatha in your mind stream, calming the body/mind and creating a sense of spaciousness in our life and experience. It also allows us to get in touch with how we really are and connect with what is going on internally. We begin to connect with deeper streams and currents in our being. We are giving time to listen, be receptive and open to our experience and the world about us.

An important ongoing dimension to this listening and tuning into yourself more deeply paves the way for you to listen and open up to others and begin a process of deepening our relationships with others.

If we want these qualities in our life it seems natural to honour and respect this desire by setting aside some time, say 20/30 minutes each day or 4/5 times a week to cultivate them.

It is helpful to meditate with others. Meditating with others creates mutually supportive ambience. Meditating with others also offers us a new way of actually being intimate and sharing a creative space with others, all be it in the silent





application of sitting in meditation posture. We can say there is an important collective or communal aspect or dimension to meditation in this sense.

How to meditate

We will describe here a simple approach to meditation based in awareness of the body, breath and heart/mind. Each element is important and we need to attend to the whole in order to create a skilful meditation practice. Take your time to gather yourself up in the practice. As you proceed you will find you become more concentrated, present and clear. Relax, do not force your mind or body. It is helpful to see your practice time in three stages; beginning, middle and end. Spend some minutes arriving, tuning in and settling. Then have a definite period of making an effort to cultivate awareness. Finally have a period of some minutes winding down and letting go of the practice. The process of gathering yourself together, integrating body, heart and mind begins, over and over again.

It is worth pointing out early on that, in this meditation or any other meditation method that we are teaching here, the practice is not about necessarily feeling good. It may be that pleasure arises as a consequence of practising but our main concern here is becoming aware and having the intention to transform our mind by cultivating a skilful attitude towards ourselves and others. So it is possible to be feeling lousy even irritable and angry and preoccupied and in pain. We can still meditate bringing a patient awareness to our experience.



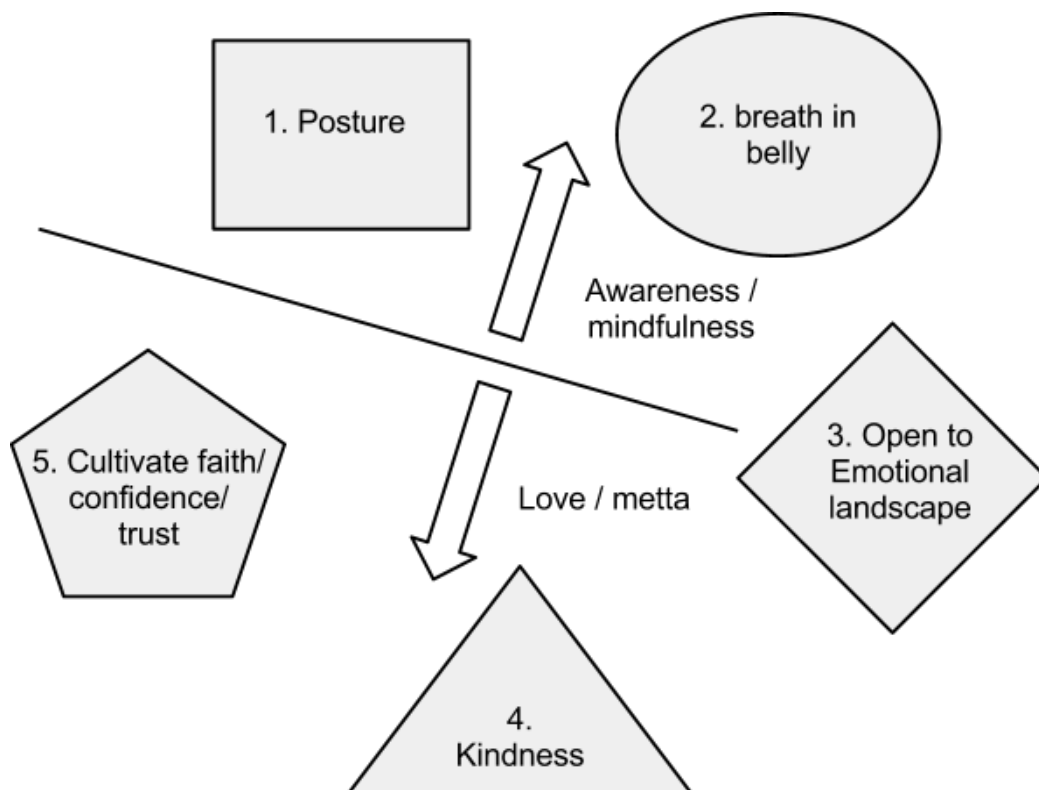


- 1. Posture** - we are looking for a stable posture with a clear stable foundation whereby we can give weight to the earth. The posture needs to be upright and well aligned so that the joints line up and the spine can express its natural curved form. (Sthiram - stability). With good alignment we can let go into the structure of the body and sit with the minimum of muscular effort. Next, we look for a sense of balance, poise and ease in the form (Sukham - ease). However some discomforts can be expected. We are embodied beings after all and some aches and pains are natural. Awareness of posture also includes the space one occupies and to some extent an awareness of the space and ambience around oneself. There is awareness of the posture, the room and others around us as well as the wider perspective of the terrain or landscape we are in. It depends where we are sitting in a given session. For example being aware of the background city environment or the mountains or sea.
- 2. Breath in the belly** - give attention, say 50% of your attention to the breath, feeling the breath in the abdomen, the rise and fall of the belly. This anchors our attention low in the body, earths or grounds our attention. The rest of our attention is with the posture itself (touch sense), the other sense spheres and the emotional landscape of our experience.
- 3. Emotional landscape** - in the practice we start to open up to and become familiar with our inner world. The overall attitude is one of embracing all, everything is acceptable and using the body as a container for our experience. We become receptive and open to the internal movement of emotion, the flow of thoughts, images and experience. Awareness of the breath and body simultaneously allow us to stay grounded and spacious and not get lost in particular thoughts and emotions. There is an ongoing process of coming back to, returning to the body and breath as it is happening now in our body. We are looking for or cultivating the felt sense of how the body actually is, not an idea of how the body is.





- 4. Kindness** - we connect with and cultivate an attitude of kindness, patience and generosity, a sense of being content with what is. Easy to say, but can be difficult to do, as a lot of us don't like ourselves. Look for elements of yourself you appreciate and like. It is helpful not to exclude any part of yourself however and we can say that any thought that arises is OK. See how these thoughts arise and then pass away. We don't need to get hooked in to a particular stream in our minds. It is helpful to come to the body, posture and breath experience again and again.
- 5. Faith or confidence** - we can sit with a quality of nobility and elegance, almost a regal quality in our posture. This has an internal aspect too. We touch the quality of self worth, valuing the practice and the time we give to the practice. We can have confidence that the practice works and that we too are "workable", whatever is going on for us in a given time.





When we practice we engage all these elements together, 1, 2 and 3 are the mindfulness aspect of meditation, 4 and 5, the metta or maitri aspect (in Pali and Sanskrit) of love or compassion or loving kindness.

Meditation posture - a checklist

1. Adjust your seat height and angle so that your back is relatively straight, and also relaxed. The pelvis will be slightly tipped forward (in ante-version) to facilitate the natural lumbar curve.
 2. Make sure that your hands are supported so that there's no strain in your shoulders or between the shoulder-blades.
 3. Relax your shoulders, letting them roll back to open your chest. Let your shoulders move with your breathing.
 4. Take a few deep breaths into the upper chest to allow your chest to open. Relax on the out breath, but see if you can keep a sense of space across the front of the chest as well as across the back body, between the shoulder blades.
 5. Adjust the angle of your head, so that the back of your neck is relaxed, long and open, and your chin is slightly tucked in.
 6. Relax your jaw, your tongue, your eyes, and your forehead.
- You're now ready to begin working on body awareness and relaxation.





Ana-pana sati - the Mindfulness of Breathing practice

This is a classical meditation practice common to many meditation traditions. In Pali, Ana is breathing-in and Pana, breathing-out and Sati is this word for mindfulness or awareness.

Benefits of Mindfulness of Breathing practice

The primary benefits of this practice relate to become more calm, concentrated and contented, that is the development of samatha qualities. This practice provides a basis for going deeper seeing into the ever changing breath leading to Insight. Secondary and not unimportant benefits of this practice, also include improved immune function, the development of greater amounts of brain tissue, delayed ageing, etc.

Stage Zero

Before we can start on Stage 1, we need to do some essential preparation — what we could call “Stage Zero”. Stage 0 involves setting up your meditation posture, then taking your awareness through your body, relaxing as much as you can.

This meditation is not a breathing exercise, and we don't control the breath in any way, simply letting it flow naturally in and out. We breathe an organic natural breath. Generally we inhale and exhale through the nose, unless perhaps the nose is blocked.

It's natural for there to be a slight pause between the end of the in breath and the start of the exhalation, and a slightly longer pause between the end of the out breath and the start of the in breath. Again, we allow the breath to flow naturally, and there's no question of deliberately holding the breath or controlling it in any way.

Sometimes it can be beneficial to take a few deep, long, breaths, or to breath more fully using the abdomen. This is done to encourage the body and mind to slow





down. But if this is done it's just for a few breaths, after which we let the breathing return to a natural rhythm.

Stage 1 Counting the Breath

Once you've taken a tour of your whole body, begin to focus on the physical sensations of your breath. Let yourself become absorbed in the sensations of the breath flowing in and out of your body. Notice how the sensations are always changing.

Then begin counting (internally) after every out-breath:

Breathe in - breathe out - 1

Breathe in - breathe out - 2

Breathe in - breathe out - 3

Breathe in - breathe out - 4

Breathe in - breathe out - 5

... and so on until you reach ten. Once you get to ten, start again at one.

Keep following the breath, and counting, for at least five minutes.

If your mind wanders, just come back to experiencing the physical sensations of the breath, and begin counting again.

Bring as much patience into the process as possible. It's normal for a lot of thoughts to arise, and from time to time you'll completely forget you're supposed to be following your breath. Distraction is a normal part of the meditation process. Coming back gracefully with patience is the art of meditating.

Stage 2 Counting the breath

In the second stage of the practice we continue to count in cycles of ten breaths, the difference being that this time we count just before each inhalation. Whenever you regain your awareness after being distracted, bring your attention gently back to the breath.





Stage 3 Following the breath

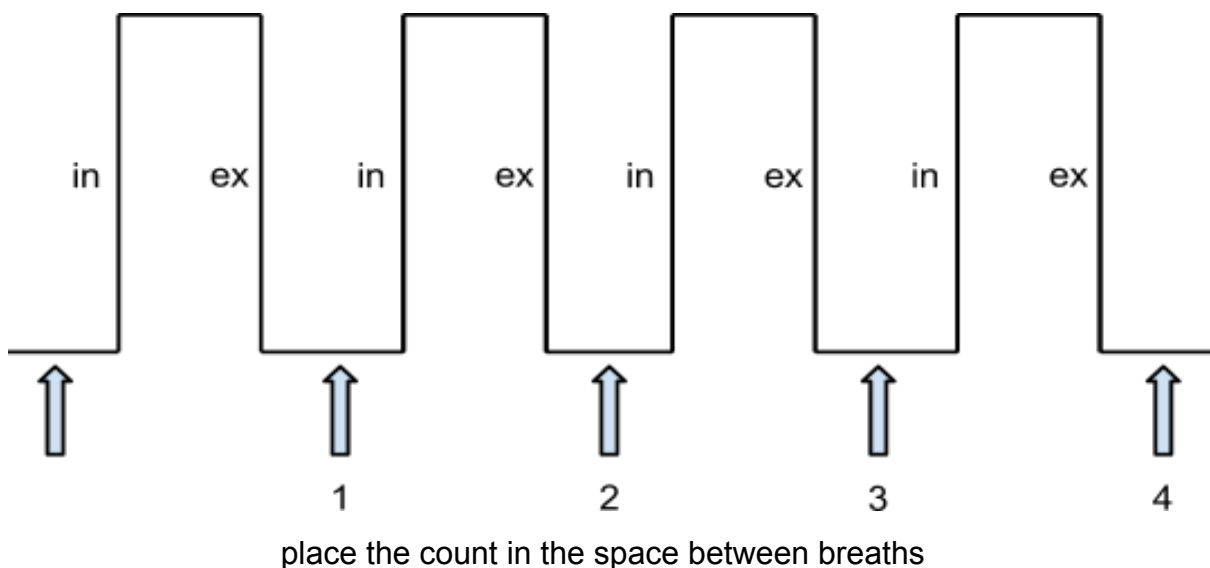
In the third stage of this meditation practice we let go of the counting and simply follow the breath as it flows in and out.

Take an interest in the texture of the breath, how long or short, how deep or shallow. Where in the body do you feel the breath reach into?

Stage 4 Focusing on one point

In the fourth stage of this meditation practice we work on developing one-pointed concentration. This involves encouraging the mind to move to a more subtle level of perception by deliberately paying attention to very delicate sensations connected with the breath. By doing this we help produce a much deeper level of calmness in the mind.

Begin to narrow the focus of your awareness, so that you're focusing more and more on the sensations where the breath first passes over the rims of the nostrils. You may even notice the sensations where the breath passes over the upper lip. If any of these sensations are hard to find, just notice the breath at the first place you can feel it as it enters and leaves the body.





Loving Kindness Meditation- Metta Bhavana

The Metta Bhavana, or Development of Loving Kindness practice is one of the most ancient forms of Buddhist practice, one that has been passed down in an unbroken line for over 2,500 years. Interestingly, the set of four practices called the Brahmaviharas is referred to in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, a text strongly associated with the Yoga tradition.

The development of loving kindness meditation practice is the practical means by which we learn to cultivate love for ourselves and others.

The practice helps us to actively cultivate positive emotional states towards ourselves and others, so that we become more patient, kind, accepting, and compassionate.

It is part of a series of four practices called the Brahmaviharas, which literally means divine-like (Brahma) abodes (viharas), which lead to the arising of:

- Loving kindness
- Compassion (empathising with others suffering)
- Empathetic joy (rejoicing in others well-being and joy)
- Equanimity (patient acceptance of both joy and suffering, both our own and others)

Buddhist theory teaches, and practice demonstrates, that happiness comes from empathizing with others and from seeing their well-being and their suffering as being important as our own.

It is not that we set aside our own needs entirely and become martyrs in the popular sense of the word, but that we recognise that one of our needs is to help others meet their own needs. In meeting our need to help others meet their needs we find that we become happier: a layer of self-induced (and selfishness-induced) suffering starts to dissolve. We could say that developing a sense of connectedness with others and overcoming selfishness is the essence of the spiritual path.





Our attitude towards our self conditions our attitude towards others. It is for that reason that in the development of loving kindness meditation practice we begin by cultivating Metta first for ourselves.

Ways of Cultivating Metta

Sometimes when people are beginning to learn loving kindness meditation they think that loving kindness is something that's to be manufactured. And so they make lots of effort to try to generate some emotion, as if they are trying very hard to wring some emotion from the heart.

And sometimes, if you make a lot of internal effort, you can become somewhat excited and convince yourself that you are developing loving kindness. But more often a sense of disappointment and even despondency sets in, because you do not get the expected result. So this is not a very useful approach.

You can not actually make emotions happen — all you can do is set up the conditions for them to arise and then see what happens. Love can not be manufactured through meditation. It can't be squeezed out of our being.

It is a bit like growing seeds. You can not make a seed grow. All you can do is provide warmth, water, and soil, and then be patient.

In cultivating feelings of loving kindness we're encouraging ourselves to wish others well. So how do we set up the conditions for doing this?

The first thing is to become aware of how we actually are feeling just now. This is essential groundwork. Remember: whatever emotions you are feeling (good, bad, or even neutral) are fine. You can work with those emotions, and you can only start from where you are.

To get seeds of Metta to grow, we need soil and water. The soil is our awareness: we need to keep our emotions in our awareness in order to cultivate positive





emotions. So while in the Mindfulness of Breathing practice our focus is on the physical sensations of the breath, in the Metta Bhavana practice our focus is on our emotions.

An awareness of our emotions helps nourish us so that loving kindness can flourish. As we stand back from our emotions in meditation — simply observing them — we find that negative emotions begin to subside and that positive emotions begin to flourish.

There is an intelligence inherent in the aware mind that recognises that negative emotions are fundamentally unsatisfactory and lead to suffering, and so energy is withdrawn from them. That same intelligence recognises the fundamentally satisfying and enriching nature of positive emotions such as loving kindness, and by dwelling upon positive emotions we strengthen them.

But we do not have to simply observe our emotions. We can directly cultivate positive emotion. This leads us to ask, what is the rain which develops positive emotion or Metta? The rain is the variety of methods we can use to encourage the development of the seeds of Metta. There are four main methods that we have found useful:

- 1. Using words.** You could try saying quietly within, as though dropping pebbles into a quiet pool of water and allow the ripples to gently pass through your heart and body;
May I be well
May I be happy
May I be free of suffering
May I grow in my love and wisdom
for latter stages change "I" for "you" or "they".





2. **Memories.** As you sit in meditation, recall a time when you felt good about yourself. You may have just been in a very good mood for no apparent reason. Or you may have just scored a significant achievement. Recall every detail of that time. The more vivid the experience, the more likely it is that you will recapture the emotions that you experienced then. Recall what you were wearing, the things you saw, how you held your body, any scents that you smelled, the things people were saying. Remember the details: the texture of your clothing, the brightness of the colours you saw, tones of voice.

3. **Creative imagination.** Think of an experience that would make you happy. Sometimes I imagine being on the beach in the summer. I imagine the light and the warmth of the sun, the sound of the waves and smell of the sea air. You can think of anything that would bring you a true, deep sense of joy and well-being. You could imagine flying in a hot-air balloon over the Andes, or walking on the moon, or just lying on a beach.

4. **Body and posture.** The way you hold your body has a huge effect on the way you experience emotion. When you are depressed, your chest sinks in, your shoulders slump, you do not stand up straight, and your chin tries to move towards your chest. The flow of your breath is restricted and your body and brain cannot function effectively. When your posture is like this it is virtually impossible to be anything but depressed, and when you are in this depressed, slumped, hopeless state, then it's very hard to feel good about yourself. Conversely, when you hold your body upright (but relaxed), with your upper body broad and open, and your head held high, then it's much easier to feel good about yourself. It is much easier to feel strong, and confident, and capable, and in fact it's hard not to feel confidence when you hold the body in this way. The breath is able to flow freely and the body seems to be alive with energy. Yoga posture work practice can have a very positive effect on the emotions, in part, for these reasons.



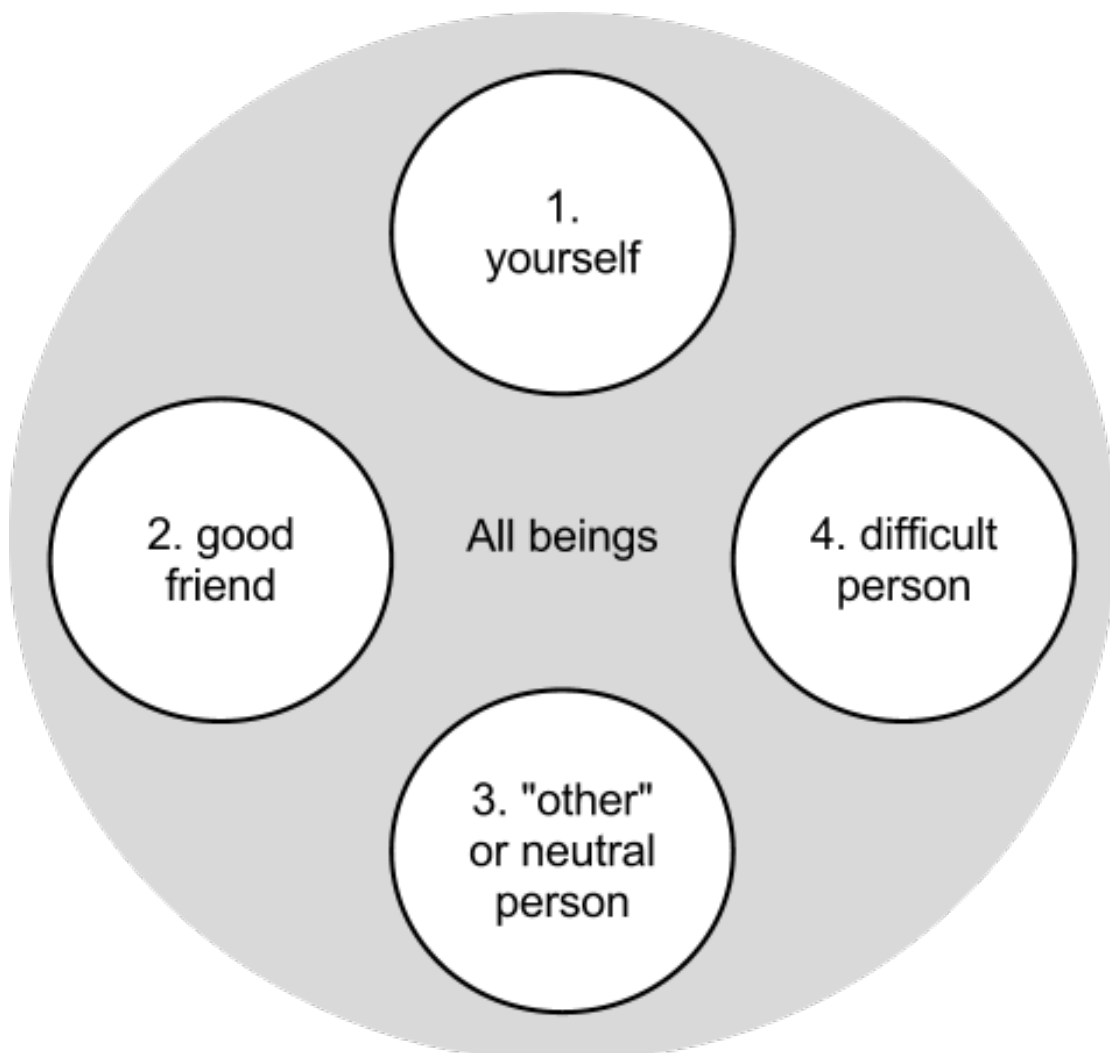


The 5 stage Metta Bhavana practice

Stage Zero

Stage Zero is what we call the initial stage of meditation, before the stages proper, in which we set up conditions that help the meditation practice to go well.

So first, set up your posture, and deepen your awareness of your body, taking your awareness into every muscle and relaxing as best you can.





Stage One

In the first stage of the practice, set up your posture and deepen your awareness of your body.

Then become aware of how you are feeling. What emotions are present? You don't necessarily have to label them, just be aware they are there. These emotions will be your focus during the practice. Keep your attention focused on your emotions throughout the practice. If you get distracted, come back to your body, and then to your emotions.

To work with your emotions, use a word or phrase, or a memory, or your imagination. As you work with your particular method, be aware of what effect it is having on your emotions, which are your focus.

Stage 2 - Cultivating Metta towards a good friend

A friend is by definition someone whose well being is important to us. When they feel bad it upsets us, and when they feel good it is pleasing to us. So a friend is someone we already have Metta for, and what we're doing is strengthening that Metta.

It is worth thinking in advance who we are going to choose as the friend, otherwise we can spend much of the time deciding which friend we are going to be meditating on.

In the second stage of the practice, think of a good friend, and wish them well.

Stage 3 - Cultivating Metta towards a “neutral person”

In this stage of the meditation practice we cultivate Metta, or loving kindness, towards someone we have no strong feelings towards. This person is not a friend, nor are we in conflict with them. We simply feel neutral towards them.





Most people in our lives fall into this category. If we walk along a city street or go into a crowded shop we encounter so many people that we put our emotions into a neutral state, and virtually ignore people.

Life is simply too full of other people for us to have a real emotional relationship with all those we meet, and often people we have never met do not seem real to us because we have never connected with them.

So in this practice we learn to take more seriously the well-being and the sufferings of those beings we habitually ignore and those that we habitually fail to connect with.

Stage 4 - Cultivating Metta towards a “difficult person”

In this stage of the meditation we deliberately call to mind someone we are in a state of conflict with and we wish them well. This may be someone we are merely irritated with, or there may be a more deep-rooted conflict. Here we are meeting our ill-will head on. Metta, or loving kindness, is the emotional opposite of ill will, and so we are consciously evoking the image of someone we usually respond to with feelings of aversion in order that we can overcome them.

Stage 5 - Cultivating Metta toward all sentient beings

In this stage we develop a sense of expansiveness in our well-wishing. Although in earlier stages we have directed our loving kindness towards one person, we now include many people, and not just people but all beings capable of feeling suffering and experiencing happiness.

Start with yourself, your friend, the neutral person, and the difficult person. See all four of you together, and wish all four people well. Try to do this equally for all four of you. Then spread your well-wishing out in wider and wider circles, until you are wishing that all sentient beings are well and happy.





Part 2 - Working in meditation

Just Sitting practice

This, in a way, has been described in Stage Zero of the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana practices. However, Just Sitting is a practice in its own right, as a stand alone practice.

There are 3 principal modes of employing the Just Sitting practice:

1. Preparation for another practice
2. A way of "winding-down", or coming out of another practice
3. As a practice in itself

We have been employing the first two approaches to some extent already, called Stage Zero. In general, it is a good practice to give yourself some minutes after doing a practice, or doing anything for that matter, simply to relax and absorb the experience. Just Sitting, or doing the pose of relaxation (savasana) after a Yoga practice gives you the chance to make a smooth and conscious transition between activities. It involves in the simplest way, becoming aware of oneself through the Four Foundations of awareness.

What is described under the "How to Meditate" section; the five elements of awareness of posture and breath, awareness and containment of the emotional landscape and cultivating a sense of kindness, confidence or faith is really the basis for the Just Sitting practice as a practice in itself. We simply continue with the cultivation of awareness and loving kindness as an ongoing endeavour for the period of the practice without focusing on any particular part of our experience. We become aware and let go. We return again and yet again to this intention. Just Sitting practice emphasises the receptive and spaciousness aspect of listening and opening to our experience and it is appropriate to alternate the more active practices of Mindfulness and Breathing and Metta Bhavana with Just Sitting as you see fit.





Knowing the mind

Buddhist psychology offers us a way of looking at and understanding some of the processes that take place from moment to moment in our day to day experience. Through some simple analysis and comprehension of what is going on we will enable us to work more creatively with these processes.

Put in simple terms our heart/mind can function upon the basis of skilful states (kusala) of mind suffused in love, generosity and understanding, what could be called the creative mind or function upon the basis of unskillful (akusala) states tainted by greed, hatred and confusion.

The Buddha said in the first lines of the Dhammapada, an ancient collection of the Buddha's sayings:

- *Experiences are preceded by mind, led by mind, and produced by mind. if one speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows even as the cart-wheel follows the hoof of an ox (drawing the cart).*
- *Experiences are preceded by mind, led by mind, and produced by mind. if one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows like a shadow that never departs.*

A useful explanation of the mind process can be seen in the Tibetan Wheel of Life often depicted in the doorway of Buddhist monasteries. This image is quite a complicated one. It is said to be a like a mirror representing the world in which we abide in all its richness and complexity. The part that is interesting for us to explore now is concerned with the outer rim of 12 images or links or Nidanas. These represent the chain of becoming from the initial spark of consciousness around to birth, death. In a sort of kaleidoscopic, multi-dimensional, holographic manner each of the 12 links or Nidanas has an effect on the other eleven. This represents the process of conditioned co-production, a conceptual expression of the Buddha's Awakening.





The part that is interesting for us are the links between;

1. The boat with 5 people which symbolizes **body and mind** i.e. us
2. A house with 5 windows and a door, the **6 senses** (including mind as the 6th sense)
3. Lovers embracing, **contact**
4. Arrow in the eye, **feeling** either pleasant, painful or neutral
5. Man reaching for a drink, **craving** (or could be aversion)
6. A monkey grasping for a fruit in the tree, **grasping**

This sequence represents our mind process functions. The first four of this series are a passive process; having a body and mind, having the senses, there being contact and then a feeling (*vedana*) arising is a given, **we can't do anything about that**. The latter two represent the active or rather reactive phase.

That we can change or choose here is the essential teaching that we can learn through our practice of awareness. It could be described as the essential teaching of Buddhism.

Awareness practices will enable us to not react, but respond creatively. We will differentiate between a response to our experience as being creative and aware and a reaction to our experience as reactive and largely unaware. We can begin to choose to let love, generosity and clarity arise more fully and begin to let go of the reactive habits of grasping, pushing away and not bringing awareness to them.

This is a gradual, transforming process of a life time(s).

Tibetan Wheel of Life drawn by Dharmachari Aloka (over leaf)





The Hindrances

1. **Desire for sense experience.** (*kāmmacchanda*). Our mind keeps getting drawn back to the sense-world. Sounds interest us. Colours distract us. Fascinating ideas may come up that we want to explore. We focus on people we know, the pleasures we seek, our plans for the future, and so on.
2. **Ill-will, hatred or negative feelings.** (*vyāpāda*). We are irritated by something or someone and can't let it go. A sound is irritating, or a person angers us, and we cannot let go of these negative thoughts.
3. **Sloth and torpor.** (*thīna middha*). Dullness of mind (torpor) and heaviness of body (sloth) can be generated by a resistance to an unacknowledged emotion or simply from physical or mental exhaustion.
4. **Restlessness and anxiety.** (*uddhacca kukkuccha*). Our mind is occupied by things we ought to be doing or would rather be doing. We have pressing concerns (real or imagined) that keep us from concentrating. We feel physically restless and want to fidget or move about.
5. **Doubt and indecision.** (*vicicchā*). We have doubts about the meditation. Is this kind of practice a good one? Is the teacher competent? Can it actually do anything for me? Can I do the practice anyway? Because it often seems that something is not perfect, we convince ourselves that the meditation won't work, and we lose the motivation to practice.





Working with the Hindrances

The first thing to do is to recognise how your mind has wandered and name it. This is Doubt! This is Sense Desire! Even just naming a hindrance can loosen its grip. Next we have to acknowledge it and allow it. Simply let it be! Do not fight it!

Bring awareness and kindness to your experience and avoid getting into criticising yourself. You can come back to faith in your own potential to grow and develop, and overcome specific hindrances.

Next come back to the general awareness, especially the Four Foundations of Mindfulness we looked at earlier: namely awareness of Body, Feelings, Emotions and Thoughts. Just check in with yourself to see what is going on in each of these fields of your being. What is going on in your body? What is the feeling tone? What emotions are there (in this case probably the hindrance you have identified already) and what thoughts are connected to it.





Specific Antidotes:

- 1. Consider the Consequences.** Pay particular attention to the feeling tone of whatever way your mind has wandered. Often, perversely, we think that to do anxiety or another hindrance is actually more pleasurable than not. Check this out for yourself! Sometimes the fact that these hindrances are familiar makes them feel more pleasurable than they really are. If we can pinpoint that it is actually not really enjoyable to do anxiety or ill will etc., we have a chance of lessening its grip on us.
- 2. Cultivate the Opposite.** If we are feeling sense desire, we can cultivate contentment with our lot, or try and get more interested in the object of meditation. If it is ill will we are experiencing, then we can cultivate Metta, or simply look for enjoyment in our experience. For restlessness and anxiety we can cultivate calm, especially paying attention to our body, and the weight of it. If experiencing sloth and torpor we can open our eyes, open a window, even get up and jump up and down a bit to get the energy flowing (do not do this if you are meditating with others – they might think you a little strange!). And of course we can clarify any resistance outside of meditation. With doubt the opposite is commitment. The trick is to ‘just do it’! Forget about whether or not it is the right practice or whether you can do it or not – just do it as taught for the length of the practice. You can clarify any rational doubts afterwards. Recognize any doubts that arise during the sit for what they are – a hindrance.
- 3. Sky Like Attitude.** In Buddhism our minds are often said to be like a vast, beautiful, clear blue sky, and any thoughts or emotions imply clouds that are passing across it. What your mind has wandered to is not permanent – it has arisen in dependence upon conditions, and when those conditions cease it will pass away. Things arise, things pass away. There is no need to feel oppressed by them, feel cowed by them. So in this antidote, we try to simply allow things arise, and then allow them pass away, trying to develop perspective on them. It might be useful to think in terms of having Big Mind, and small mind. Your Big Mind is the clear blue sky, open and creative and





free. Your small mind is the intellectual thoughts and emotional habits that manifest as distractions etc. which pass across, and sometimes even cloud over your true nature. But somewhere behind it all is your Big Mind, just as behind the clouds there is always the brilliant blue sky.

4. **Suppress it.** This really only works if what the mind has wandered onto is weak and you are not much caught up with it.
5. **We can Go for Refuge.** This is a technical Buddhist term that means to take refuge in your potential to grow and develop as a human, to become much more than you are at present. Rather than getting despondent about a meditation that maybe was not very concentrated, you can reflect that this session may not have been easy, but in the long run, through persistence, the mind will wander less and you will develop clearer, calmer states of mind.





Dhyana

As we enter the process of meditation the energies of our body, heart, and mind will begin to gather up and integrate. This is the samatha process and we may find ourselves in what is called Dhyana. Dhyana is the state of absorption, clarity and creativity. We can say it is an elevated creative state of consciousness. The higher Dhyanas are said to be the most pleasurable and elevated states of consciousness we can attain as human beings, this side of Awakening. Look out for the elements as you explore your meditation practice.

Six factors characterize these states of Dhyana;

1. One-pointedness, (*Ekāgratā*)
2. Movement of the mind onto the object, (*Vitarka*)
3. Retention of the mind on the object, (*Vicāra*)
4. Rapture, more in the body experience (*Prīti*)
5. Happiness or bliss, more in on the mind level experience, (*Sukha*)
6. Equanimity, (*Upekṣā*)

The Pali Canon has a delightful description of the first four of these Dhyanas;

1. Just as a skilled bath attendant would pour soap powder into a basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again and again with water, so that the ball of soap powder would be entirely filled with moisture.
2. Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from below, the cool spring-water permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills that lake with cool water.
3. Just as in a lotus pond, there may be some of the lotuses which, born and growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated and pervaded, suffused and filled with cool water from their roots to their tips.
4. Just as if someone were sitting wrapped from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of their body to which the white cloth did not extend; even so, the Yogin(i) sits, suffusing the body with a pure, bright awareness so that there is no part of his/her entire body not suffused by pure, bright awareness.





Reflection and Insight

Buddhist practice is aimed at Insight or "seeing things clearly, as they are". This Insight is a seeing through our greed, hatred and confusion to love and Wisdom at first via glimpses of Reality or "vision experiences" and further as Insight into Reality, where a wholly new awareness comes into being.

In this section we want to say a little about developing a reflective or Insight practice in meditation. In our model of Samatha / Vipassana, Samatha is the cooling and integrating of our consciousness, Vipassana is understanding in our hearts and seeing through the cause of our suffering and unhappiness, paving the way to a bigger, more liberated mind.

During your practice of meditation and day to day life explore these dynamics within your being and from time to time reflect on the course and causes of your mind states. One can also reflect on Wisdom teachings from the Buddhist or other spiritual traditions. A useful and profound teaching from the Buddha is on the three Laksanas or three "characteristics" or "marks" of conditioned existence.

Insight can be approached through cultivating specific factors: clarity, integration, sustained concentration/ absorption, positive emotion, faith or confidence trust, and single-minded dedication.

The first four of these we have been cultivating through our Samatha practice so we would like to talk about faith or confidence-trust or Sraddha in Sanskrit.





Sraddha (faith or confidence-trust)

This is not blind faith or superstition. Sraddha is the ability to perceive value and want to move towards it. It can be developed, refined and clarified. It has three qualities:

1. *A deep conviction of what is real*, that Truth exists and existence has meaning.
It is a feeling of confidence.
2. *Lucidity as to what has value*, which is a state of contentment, clarity and serenity.
3. *Longing for what is possible*. There is a desire to move towards what we value.

Sraddha is not something one can learn it has to be "caught". The traditional way of doing this is through study of the Wisdom texts and through devotional practice.





Three Laksanas

Buddhism describes conditioned existence characterised by the three Laksanas; that it is unsatisfactory, suffering, or Dukkha in Sanskrit; impermanent, or Anitya; and devoid of self-hood, devoid of permanent unchanging individuality, insubstantial, or Anatman.

Existence is conditioned in the sense that all phenomena arise upon the basis of other phenomena, this being a central theme in Buddhist descriptions of reality. We live with in a matrix of interrelations and interconnectedness. This was the Buddha's conceptual explanation or working out of his Awakening, the Wisdom or cognitive aspect of Awakening. We can say Love or Compassion for all beings was the visceral or affective aspect of Awakening.

Why talk of Dukkha? Why reflect on suffering? The teaching of the Buddha was a realistic teaching in that he described our experience as a mixture of pleasure and pain and that to grow, to motivate us to wake up and free ourselves it would be useful to reflect on the fact that there is suffering and that through actions of body, speech and mind based in awareness and love we can begin to alleviate, even liberate ourselves, and others, from this suffering. Lets face it, if we were always happy and experiencing pleasure there would be little motivation to do anything! Dukkha is likened to the ill-fitting wheel (*du*, ill-fitting and *chakra*, wheel), more like a sense of dissatisfaction, rather than outright physical pain. Emotion after all is what moves us, so this appeal to the heart calls directly to the part of of that moves us, the desire to grow to be free of suffering, to be happy.

Anitya or impermanence describes our experience as one of change and flux, "life is a constant rearrangement". This change is a fact of life. Resisting change can lead to frustration and suffering, *Dukkha*. More positively, change means that nothing stays the same and that there is a potential to grow, become free, to become more loving, more aware.





BodhiYoga



Yoga teacher training based upon Buddhist principles - www.bodhiyoga.es



The teaching on Anatman or non-self or insubstantially, also in later Buddhism described as *Sunyata* or "Emptiness" or "Voidness" is again a central and distinctive teaching of Buddhism, particularly Mahayana Buddhism. We are talking here as empty or void of anything substantial or permanent. This teaching is a deeper working out of the theme of impermanence. If everything changes, in no way can we talk about any fixed unchanging element, self or entity. It is sort of scary to think about it, right? But again it is a liberating concept in that it suggests that there is nothing fixed, permanent and therefore closed, tight and claustrophobic. One way of translating the word *Sunyata* from the Sanskrit is to talk of the "open dimension of being" suggesting that the very deep and profound nature of all things is mysterious, unfathomable, open.

It is important to note that these Wisdom teachings of the Buddha are best approached from a strong sense of love, devotion and fearlessness. Qualities we can cultivate in our meditation and yoga practice. On the basis of this calm, kindly mind bathed, as it were, in states of *Samatha* we can approach "things as they really are" described by the three *Laksanas*, as marked by *Dukkha*, *Anitya* and *Anatman* or *Sunyata*.





9.0 Critical study of key texts from Buddhist and yoga tradition

It is well to remember that Hatha yoga and Buddhist practices are concerned to transform the lives of people. These practices were designed for the development of the individual and the eventual transcendental realisation of the nature of the way things are. So when we are doing our practices, in a way, what we are doing is trying to wake up from delusion. This is no small task and requires a lifelong commitment on the part of the teacher and practitioner. Somehow in western consumerist society, we seem to be able to lose touch with this ideal and make yoga into a purely body oriented discipline. But this is limiting the scope of what practice is for and about. Of course, at the end of the day, each person has to be free to make their own choices about what they do in their practice.

We will explore in this section the theoretical underpinning to our course, the basis on which we are practicing. This is essential if we are to communicate a clear vision to our students of what it is that we are aiming to do. We will begin by looking at some key text material, the Sattipathana text. We explore the main features of this text and then go on to look at briefly what the great 'Father' of Raja Yoga has to say about working with the mind and the body through looking at "Patanjai's Yoga Sutras".

We must at all times when exploring this material bear in mind two things.

1. The material is aiming to guide us to an experience that is realisable by us through committed practice (it is not something out of our reach)
2. We must think about the meaning behind the words and try to get to a deeper understanding of the textual material.





Yamas and niyamas and the five precepts

The Yamas and the Niyamas form the basis for what we would refer to as the ethical element of yoga practice. It is curious that in the Patanjali system of Yoga, we have ethics as the preliminary path of practice. In other words, in the Raja Yoga system, Patanjali wants us to appreciate that this is a system of spiritual discipline that is aiming to transform us from inside out, as it were. We are therefore first of all concerned to work with our relationship towards ourselves and to other people. This is also where Buddhism begins and we could say this is possibly where Buddhism has influenced the yoga tradition. Broadly speaking, we have a system of practice that we can look at from three different perspectives. There is the transformation of Body, the transformation of Speech and the transformation of Mind.

Clearly they are interconnected. Body, Speech and Mind, when you think about it, are all that we have. From the Buddhist perspective, mind is primary. In other words, all experience is preceded by mind. Our experience is initiated on the basis of some volition or intention to move in a particular direction. This comes from our mind primarily and then manifests in the world in the form of speech or bodily activity.

It makes sense that if you are trying to develop spiritually you take into account all that you do through these avenues and that we learn to take responsibility for our actions that are based in these three aspects of experience. This way, our lives and minds begin to change for the better. When the Buddha points out that we are creating our own suffering most of the time, he was referring to the primary tendency in human beings to see themselves as fixed and separate self centred beings. We identify with ourselves and our world as something permanently existing. This is not the way things really are according to the Buddha. There seems to be an inevitable tension in human life that has to do with this self concern, over that of others. We intuit that somehow only being concerned with ourselves is not really quite the way it is, yet we are habitually drawn to behaviour that is aimed at fulfilling our own ends much of the time. Really then, we have to look at ways we can loosen up this self attachment and begin to free ourselves from the cage that we keep building for ourselves.





8 limbs and 8 fold path

People often compare Patanjali's eight limbs of yoga with the Buddha's eightfold path. Yet, there are big differences between these systems and part of our study will be to explore these different approaches to self development. During the course we shall clarify what those differences are, and we shall come to an understanding of how these teachings might be relevant to us and our students.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras in general and Satipatthana Sutra material from the Buddhist tradition are quite different perspectives on the spiritual path. On the one hand we can appreciate that these are different contexts and traditions of spiritual practice. On the other, we can also utilise from these teachings that which helps us to grow and change. Satipatthana is a Buddhist teaching and is unique to the Buddha. Although some similar teachings can be found in the Hindu and Vedanta non-dual schools, still it is unique in its depth and breadth of teaching about how to cultivate mindful attention. The implications of this practice, should we pursue it to its logical end, is Enlightenment. Hatha yoga is a practice designed to develop (according the Raja Yoga commentaries) a still mind, a clear mind that is based upon the systematic training of the body through the use of postures, breathing, relaxation and some other practices less familiar in the west such as Kriyas and Bandhas.

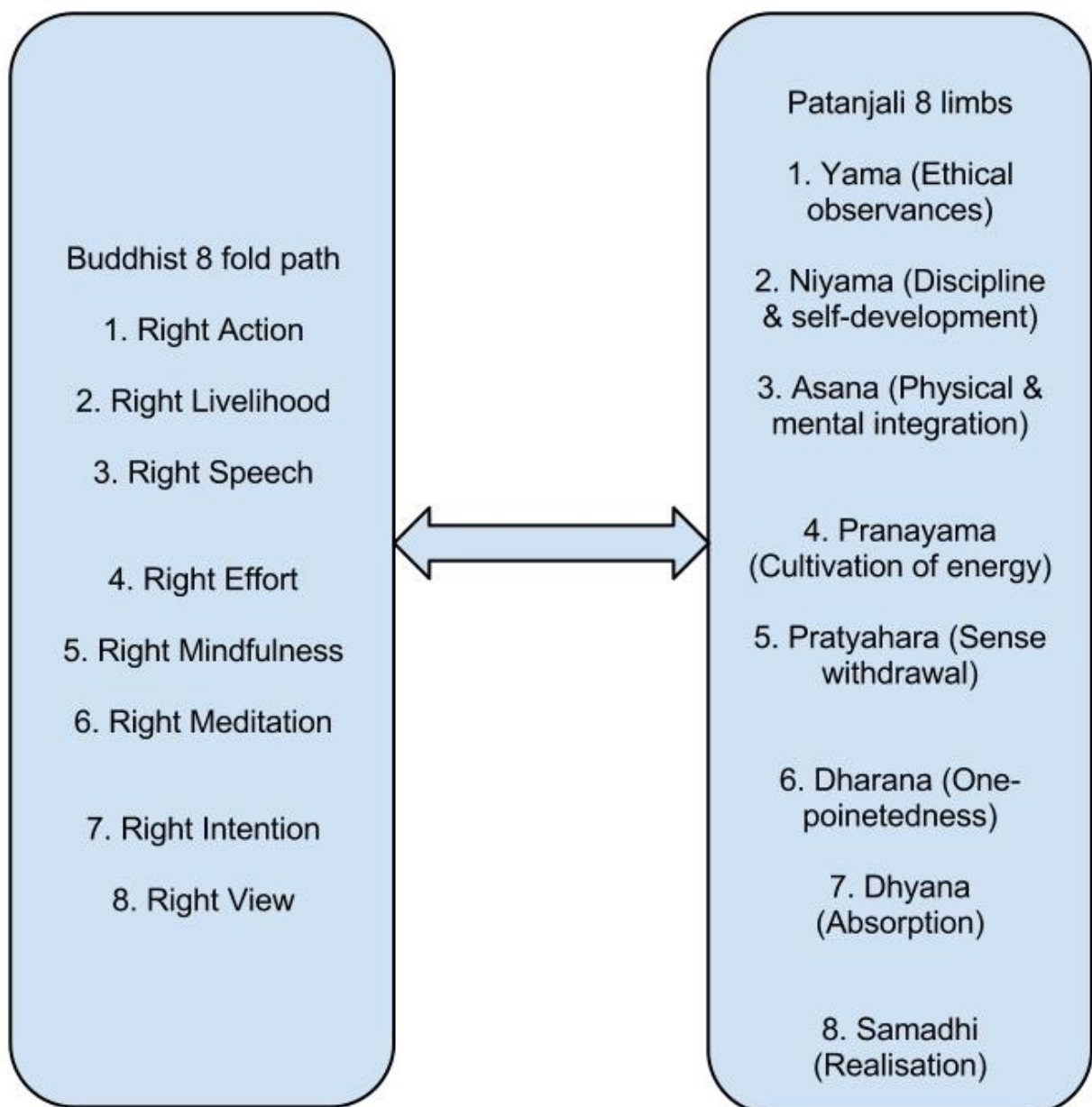
The overall aim of the practice is to prepare oneself for higher states of development through meditation. One could argue that it is not necessary to develop the body in this way, before beginning the practice of meditation, as there are a substantial number of people in the world, Buddhist and otherwise that do not do Hatha yoga but do meditate. They nonetheless seem to develop despite not doing this more physical training. Perhaps it is a question of temperament, or perhaps some people just feel that they have to use their bodies as part of their spiritual training and this is certainly valid.

So whilst we are going through our studies, we might stop and ask ourselves at times, what is the real relevance of this teaching, or how does it apply to me. This kind of questioning, is itself a part of our own development. To ask such questions is





to cultivate an interest in the significance of these teachings for ourselves and to look deeper into their meaning. Therefore we encourage moments of reflection and enquiry in the practice, both in yoga and meditation. Different people have different ways of working with this kind of thing, so it will be up to you to find out the best way for you to reflect or enquire.





10.00 Exploring a Yogic lifestyle

Yoga is concerned with the total transformation of our being, physically, emotionally, intellectually and mentally. We cannot afford in this path to leave anything out. So here in this section we are going to review our own lifestyles and give honest appraisals as to how we might change things for the better. We want to focus on some main areas including: Diet and food, sleep habits, work habits and, of course, yoga and exercise.

Lifestyle is something that has to come under the light of inspection for a yogi and especially a yoga teacher. If one takes what one does seriously then you will want to set some example to your students, will want to inspire trust in them. We are not aiming here to be prescriptive as to how one might live, but more trying to see how we can improve our lives through change that is realistic and constructive. We cannot be prescriptive to our students, but we can encourage them in different ways. This is part of your role as a yoga teacher - to be an educator. Being a yoga teacher should not mean swanning into a class to do some asana and swanning out again. One has to make more of a commitment to it than that if we are to be effective teachers.

We also have to recognise that change in lifestyle patterns takes time for people, even if they can see that those habits are in fact detrimental to their health. So we can encourage our students to take their practice more seriously by helping them to think about lifestyle changes.

Exactly how you do this as a teacher means drawing on your own creativity and awareness of other's needs. You will have to find the way to put things across that are of value and meaning to you, without being dogmatic or expecting things from people that are unrealistic.





Below are some suggested way that we might start with this lifestyle experiment

- Diet
- Food
- Sleep habits
- Finding time for regular practice
- Collective practice (attending classes or workshops)
- Practicing with friends
- Time in the nature
- Going on retreat
- Studying with teachers or those that inspire you





11.00 Protocol for 300 hour and 500 hour students in training

We have implemented this set of protocols for our students to observe during their period of study under the tutelage of Bodhiyoga.es

300 hour protocol

1. 300 hour teachers are required to hand in all topics of work within one calendar year of taking the training in Spain. As stated on the first forms, handing papers in any later may disqualify you from obtaining Bodhiyoga Certification. Please take this to heart as we do not want awkward situations to arise. If you feel that you need more time, get into dialogue with us, but don't just leave it.

2. Teachers that are not yet qualified at 300 hour level should not lead workshops or set up and lead retreats or other intensive residential teaching programs. We would consider this inappropriate for a teacher that has not yet completed the hours of teaching and the papers at 200 hour level. Once qualified and as the confidence comes, one can start to set up more intensive teaching situations.

3. Whilst training, teachers should remain faithful to the theory and practice of the Bodhiyoga school by not introducing new techniques of yoga that are unfamiliar or as yet undigested into their teaching. Post training, teachers should stand on the side of caution of too quickly introducing new topics and techniques that are not familiar.

500 hour protocol

1. All assignments should be handed in within one calendar year from the date of practical training. The above also applies here to 500 hour teachers in training.

2. 500 hour teachers should not set up one to one classes based on remedial yoga charging a current market rate to the public before gaining the required hours of post training practice and before having all papers assessed.

3. 500 hour teachers are free to run workshops and retreats, but not with strictly remedial themes, until qualified. For example, until you have finished all work assignments and case studies you would not set up a retreat for working with back pain, specialising in this kind of yoga.





The only occasion where this would be appropriate is in the case of a non charging event to volunteers that form part of your 500 hour certification process.

Technically, in order to gain insurance, all this work should be done and agreed by us, the Bodhiyoga team, before Certification is awarded. The IYN have asked us to comply with their standards.





Recommended reading list

Essential Reading list

- Living with Awareness - Sangarakshita (2004)
- Living with Kindness - Sangarakshita (2004)
- Anatomy of Movement - Blandine Calais-Germain (2007)
- Introduction to Human Anatomy and Physiology - Eldra Pearl Soloman (2008)

Additional reading

- Meditation – Kamalashila (2012)
- Satipatthana - Analayo (2004)
- Hatha Yoga Pradipika - various translations
- Science of Breath - Himalayan Institute Press (2007)
- Mastering the Basics - Himalayan Institute Press (2007)
- Anatomy Colouring Book - Wynn Kapit
- Anatomy for yoga - Leslie Kaminoff (2007)
- Somatics - Thomas Hanna (2004)
- Stretching without Pain - Paul Blakey (1994)
- The Muscle Book - Paul Blakey (2000)
- The Heart of Yoga - T.K.V. Desikachar (1999)
- Light of Yoga - B.K.S. Iyengar (2001)
- Insight Yoga - Sarah Powers (2008)
- Yin Yoga - Paul Grilley (2002)
- Dynamic yoga - Godfrey Devereux (1999)
- The Yoga Tradition - George Feuerstein (1998)
- Yoga for Wellness - Gary Kraftsow (1999)
- Yoga Body - Mark Singleton (2010)
- The Science of Yoga - William J. Broad (2012)





*Copyright Bodhiyoga International
All rights Reserved
Bodhiyoga Teacher Training Manual
Module 1 Foundation
300 hours
for the 300 hour Bodhiyoga International
Mindfulness Yoga Teacher Training course
Given by Dharmacharis Suḍāka and Sadhita
April 2021*

