

## THE ESSENCE OF YOGA: YOGA BASICS WEEK 2

### I. WHAT ARE PROPS? WHY USE PROPS?

A. The "What Not To Wear" philosophy of yoga: Love your body! Blame the pose.

*Release ego! According to Ghandi, "The yogi is not one who sits down to practise breathing exercises. He is one who looks upon all with an equal eye, sees other creatures in himself."*

B. Props are used for three main reasons:

1. to do the pose more correctly and safely.
2. to alter your body or the environment so that you can go more deeply into the pose or so that you can do poses that you otherwise might not be able to do.
3. to bring your attention to a specific aspect of a pose
4. to support you in a pose. Supporting a pose can allow you to relax more fully into the traditional pose, increasing flexibility. A pose can also be fully supported to encourage total relaxation by eliminating any effort on your part, as in restorative yoga.

### II. BODY AWARENESS

Can help you:

- to do the pose safely. Is the tension or pain in the muscle or the bone? Is it a gentle tension or too intense? Is it a gentle tension or sharp pain? Can I release the tension?
- to do the pose correctly. Knowing where your body is in space can help you align properly. Understanding where you are supposed to feel the pose can let you know whether or not you are doing the pose correctly
- to develop Witness Consciousness, which leads to greater awareness and equanimity in life. If you become the observer, you realize that you are not the body, mind and emotions that you are observing but that you are instead detached and capable of observing them. You still experience the sensations, the thoughts, and the emotions, but you no longer identify with them. The development of Witness Consciousness, therefore, leads to greater equanimity.

Note: I will not always do the poses with you. This will encourage you to bring attention to your body instead of just following along and it will free me to really watch how you are doing.

**Body Awareness Exercise:** As a neutral observer search your body for areas of tension and relaxation.

### III. DIRGHA PRANAYAMA: THREE PART YOGIC BREATH

**instructions:** Slowly inhale and bring the air into the bottom of the lungs with the diaphragm. Then continue inhaling to open and expand the rib cage upward and out to the sides. Continue to inhale up under the shoulders to fill the lungs completely. Then exhale slowly from the top to the bottom of the lungs. Contract the abdominal muscles at the end of the exhalation to squeeze out all of the residual air.

**general benefits:** Dirgha Pranayama is calming. (student anecdote!) It slows the breathing process increasing the amount of carbon dioxide in the bloodstream so that the body learns to function more efficiently using less oxygen (fuel). Dirgha Pranayama uses the full capacity of the lungs, removing stale air and toxins. It keeps the chest and lungs flexible and relaxed. It increases overall energy, renews the entire system, and improves digestion and elimination.

### IV. ADHI MUDRA

**instructions:** Curl the fingers around the thumbs forming a soft fist with the thumb held inside it. Place the hands palms down on the thighs or knees.

**benefits:** This mudra soothes and calms the nervous system. It facilitates Three-Part Breath, especially in the abdomen and the back of the body.

### V. BENEFITS OF FORWARD BENDS

Forward Bends massage and decongest the abdominal organs. They improve peristalsis and help relieve constipation and hemorrhoids. They build strength, increase flexibility in the hips, and decongest the spine. They calm the body and mind.

**Careful!** If you suffer from Sciatica, keep the spine elongated without rounding down. Simply do not practice forward bends if the problem is acute. If you have uncontrolled high blood pressure or a heart condition, do not raise your arms overhead.

### VI. ASANA

1. Locust
2. Standing Forward Fold
3. 5 Pointed Star
4. Wide-Legged Forward Fold

5. Triangle
6. Head to Knee Pose
7. Seated Twist

## VII. HOMEWORK

Remember Mountain Pose! Check your posture when standing, for example, while waiting to check out at the supermarket.

Scan your body and consciously relax the areas of tension. Try "contract and release.

Try Adhi Mudra! Does it help you to deepen your breath and relax?

Check your breath. Find one or two things that happen regularly during the day that will remind you to check your breath. Remember to fill your lungs completely with 3 part yogic breathing!

Practice Ahimsa, and notice your self-critical thoughts.

Stretch every day. Then, practice a pose ,,, or two!

 you•go•yoga	<b>THE ESSENCE OF YOGA: YOGA BASICS</b> <b>week 2 practice</b>
<b>WARM UPS</b>	Seated: Dirgha Pranayama w/ Adhi Mudra neck release shoulder shrugs, circles Supine w/ strap: Leg Circles Supine Triangle (tip! Engage extended leg.) Supine Revolved Triangle
<b>ASANA</b>	Locust (tip! lengthen the spine.) Child's Pose Downward-Facing Dog (tip! Roll mat or use washcloths for your wrists.) Breath of Joy (tip! Remember 3 part yogic breath.) Mountain (tip! Check alignment using wall. Use block to engage legs) Half Moon Series (tip! Check shoulder alignment against wall. Lift from the waist.) Standing Forward Fold (tip! Raise the floor with a block.) Warrior 1 (tip! Ground the front heel and outer edge of back foot.) 5 Pointed Star Wide-Legged Forward Fold (tip! Raise the floor with a block.) Triangle (tip! Keep your shoulders against the "wall".) Mountain Stork → Extended Hand to Big Toe Pose (tip! Use a strap to straighten leg.) Staff Pose (tip! Sit on the edge of a blanket.) Seated Forward Bend (tip! Use a strap to keep your back straight.) Head to Knee Pose (tip! Engage the extended leg!) Seated Twist (tip! Lengthen the spine with the inhale. Soften into the twist with the exhale.)
<b>COOLDOWN</b>	Wind-Relieving Pose Hip Lifts Windshield Wipers Sacrum Release Happy Baby
<b>RELAXATION</b>	Contraction and Release / Directing the breath

THE ESSENCE OF YOGA: WEEK 2 PRACTICE					
 Sukhasana Easy		 Supta Padangusthasana Reclining Big Toe Pose			
 Salabhasana Locust	 Balasana Child's Pose	 Adho Mukha Svanasana Downward Facing Dog			
 Tadasana Mountain	 Standing Side Bend	 Uttanasana Standing Forward Bend	 Virabhadrasana I Warrior I		
 5-Pointed Star	 Prasarita Padottanasana Wide-Legged Forward Bend	 Utthita Trikonasana Extended Triangle	 Tadasana Mountain	 Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana Extended Hand to Big Toe	
 Dandasana Staff	 Paschimottasana Seated Forward Bend	 Janu Sirsasana Head to Knee	 Marichyasana III Marichi's Pose III		
 Apanasana Knees to Chest	 Ananda Balasana Happy Baby			 Savasana Corpse	

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