

THE ESSENCE OF YOGA: YOGA BASICS WEEK 4

I. WHAT ARE MUDRAS?

Mudra: Have you ever wondered why you place the palms of your hands together in front of your heart when you pray? That hand position is a mudra, specifically designed to invoke the spirit within ourselves and those we meet. There are many mudras. Mudras are hand gestures that seal or lock in specific energy experiences and that bring forth the innate experience of bliss within us. These precise positions of the hands channel the universal energy into our being for very specific purposes. They control the direction of energy and encourage healing. They are visible signs of a spiritual reality. Rich in symbolism, they embody and open communication with the archetypal energies in the universe

II. NADI SHODHANA: ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATH

instructions: Use the right thumb and right ring finger for Nadi Shodhana. Close the right nostril with the thumb and exhale through the left nostril. Inhale through the left, close using the ring finger and exhale through the right. Inhale through the right, close, exhale left. Continue with smooth, deep breathing through alternating nostrils.

general benefits: Nadi Shodhana stimulates the brain side-to-side, synchronizes the hemispheres, and balances any dominance. It strengthens, calms, and regulates the nadis (the nervous system), eliminates wastes and increases assimilation of energy. If you experience dizziness during pranayama then slow down your breathing. If you are gasping, speed up the breath. Breathe less deep if there is nausea.

III. MUDRAS

MANDALA MUDRA: Circle of Wholeness

instructions: Rest the cupped left hand onto your lap. Rest the cupped right fingers onto the left fingers. Join the tips of the thumbs to form an oval. Sense the circuit of energy between the thumbs which expands throughout the circumference of the oval.

benefits: Mandala Mudra invokes a state of mental absorption and the experience of the Self as wholeness.

IV. VINYASA: FLOWING

The term vinyasa combines two Sanskrit words: nyasa denotes "to place" and vi denotes "in a special way." Vinyasa can mean several things.

- coordinating movement between postures with the breath (e.g. cat / cow).
- a specific series of postures coordinated with the breath (e.g. sun salutations)

- linking postures with a short vinyasa, typically Plank → Chaturanga → Upward Facing Dog

V. ASANA

1. Bound Angle Pose
2. Fish
3. Camel
4. Yoga Mudra
5. Sun Salutations

VI. HOMEWORK

- 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.
- 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! Play with the mudras. Take a mudra break, and pause to notice the effects.
- Take a meditation break. (Yoga Journal, August 2011)
- Stretch every day. Then, practice a pose ,,, or two!

	<h2>THE ESSENCE OF YOGA: YOGA BASICS</h2> <h3>week 4 practice</h3>
WARM UPS	<p>Sun Breath w/ kaki breath on exhale Nadi Shodhana Supine Knees to chest narrow / wide / Bound Angle Thigh Press Knee Down Twist Reclined Tree Prone Child's Flow</p>
ASANA	<p>Sphinx / Cobra (tip! relax tailbone to lengthen lower back. Pull forward as you lift up. Spread legs if back still crunched.) Table Top Tiger Lunges Pigeon (tip! There are many variations! Sigh as you melt into the pose.) Standing Mountain Pose (tip! Ground all four corners of the feet. Connect to the earth.) Tree / Stork / Warrior 3 (tip! Find your drishti. Keep your hips level.) Mountain (tip! Ground the feet. Engage the legs) Half Moon Series Sun Salutations (tip! Find the variation that works for you.) 5 Pointed Star Warrior 2 → Side Angle → Triangle (r) (Tip! No floor envy! Keep the shoulders stacked against the "wall". Rotate entire leg, not just foot. Don't let knee wander. Build standing poses from the ground up.) Wide-legged Forward Fold / Revolved Wide-Legged Forward Fold Warrior 2 → Side Angle → Triangle (l) Goddess / Elephant Child's Pose Camel Yoga Mudra Head to Knee Pose Bound Angle Pose Boat Pose Supine Fish</p>
COOLDOWN	<p>Knees to chest Reclines Twist Sacrum Release Reclined Cow Face / Happy Baby</p>
RELAXATION	<p>Contraction and release w/ shoulder press Rotation of consciousness Bhairava Mudra Mandala Mudra</p>