

THE ESSENCE OF YOGA: YOGA BASICS WEEK 6

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

II. PRANA AWARENESS

Notice the shifts of energy during the practice tonight.

III. "HA" BREATH: Relaxing or energizing.

Notice the effects of lengthening the inhale vs. lengthening the exhale.

"HA" breath to relax:

instructions: Inhale deeply through the nose. Exhale gently through the mouth saying "haaaaaaaa" until the lungs are completely empty. Try it with Adhi mudra!

general benefits: This breath releases stress and tension from the body

"HA" breath to energize:

instructions: Inhale deeply. Exhale quickly and sharply while exclaiming "Ha!". Combine it with movement!

General benefits: Activates the Hara center, the power center just below the navel, and brings energy into the body.

IV. PRANA MUDRA: Energy Enhancing

instructions: Bring the tips of the thumb, ring finger, and little finger of each hand together. The middle and index finger are extended and separated into a gentle V shape. Rest the back of the hands on the thighs or knees.

benefits: Prana mudra is uplifting and integrating, energizing, and clearing. It expands the spirit.

V. 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

VI. ASANA

1. Traditional Sun Salutations (Plank, Upward Facing Dog)
2. Hero Pose
3. Camel
4. Yoga Mudra
5. Cow Face Pose

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.

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)

- **Stillness:** Stand more firmly on your feet or sit and settle into your buttocks and hips. Breathe deeply.
- **Relaxation:** Soften your facial muscles: forehead, eyes, mouth, lips, and tongue. Breathe deeply.
- **Equipose:** Free your hands and rest them by your sides or place them gently on your lap. Breathe deeply.
- **Informal meditation:** Notice how it feels to be present with yourself, slowing down and observing. You are engaging with the first steps of meditation, which you can enjoy anywhere, anytime.

Practice Ahimsa, and notice your self-critical thoughts.

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

 you•go•yoga	THE ESSENCE OF YOGA: YOGA BASICS week 6 practice
DEMO	Cautionary notes about flowing.
WARM UPS	Seated: Opening Meditation: Nadhi Shodhana neck release Eagle arms Barrel Rolls Supine: Thigh Press Twist with Eagle legs Reclined Pigeon
ASANA	Prone: Boat (tip! Lengthen your lower spine.) Puppy Stretch / Child's Pose Standing: Pulling Prana –HA breath (tip! Focus on Hara center.) Half Moon Series Traditional Sun Salutations (tip! Be careful with the alignment.) Warrior 2 → Side Angle Pose → Revolved Side Angle Pose → Triangle → Revolved Triangle Forward Fold Kneeling: Gate Pose → Half Circle Pose w/ arm (challenge! Lift your extended leg.) Hero Camel (tip! Keep the hips over the knees. Lift the ribs out of the waist.) Yoga Mudra Cow Face Pose (tip! Extend the lower leg if necessary.) Seated: Boat (tip! Keep your back straight.) Relaxed Forward Fold seated 6 movements of the spine Cool Down HA Breath: (tip! Exhale slowly while softly saying “ha”.)
COOLDOWN	Etc.
RELAXATION	Psychic full body Nadi Shodhana: Draw your attention to the left side of your body. Inhale up through the sole of the left foot, the left fingers and palms, and left nostril. Retain your breath as you take your awareness over to the right side of your body. Exhale down through the right nostril, the right hand and palm, and the sole of the right foot. Reverse, inhaling up through the right side of the body and exhaling out through the left. Close: ADHI MUDRA

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