

STAND SURE

WEEK 3 NOTES: The Balance of Effort and Ease, and Lunging Postures

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GOALS FOR WEEK 3

- To understand what Sthira and Sukham is and what it means for our Yoga practice
- To learn the meaning and how to set up for savasana
- To continue adding to and understanding different variations of sun salutations
- To understand Kumbhaka, breath retention
- To understand what bandhas are and why we need to use them in practice
- How to set up correctly for chaturanga dandasana, the yogi press-up
- To break down lunges and twist positions

QUICK REMINDERS

"STHIRA SUKHAM ASANAM" - Every asana should be steady and comfortable

Sthira = Strong, steady, stable (Effort)

Sukham = Comfortable, happy, relaxed (Ease)

THE DIRECTIONS OF YOGA

When we begin Yoga we often think of postures being **unidirectional** i.e the effort and the attention all goes to one place.

Our practice and Yoga postures are **Omnidirectional** i.e we are continuously expanding in all directions

PRANA is the Indian / Ayurvedic name given to our energy, our life force; much like chi/qi is within traditional Chinese medicine and cultures.

Our Yoga practice helps to release stagnant energy and keeps the flow of prana.

Think of the body not only in linear lines but as a double helix - the DNA sign, allowing the body to form organic shapes and for energy to naturally spiral foot to head

X SHAPE EXERCISE IN VIDEO :

Lying down in an X shape. Expand outwardly, reaching upwards from the pinky finger and downwards, stretching from the pinky toe. Notice what you feel through the lateral (side) lines of the body.

In contrast, Feel the inner lines of the body when we contract. As thumbs spiral in towards each other notice the arm bones hug into the shoulder sockets, feel the inner thighs engage as the big toe points down to floor. This exercise teaches us about the subtle art of expansion and contraction in our practice and the use of inner and outer lines of energy in the body.



BREATH

KUMBHAKA PRANAYAMA: BREATH RETENTION

Kumbhaka is a powerful breath technique used in Yoga, with many physical and psychological benefits.

BAHYA KUMBHAKA - The retention of breath at the top of the inhale when the body is full of oxygen

ANTARA KUMBHAKA - The retention of the breath at the bottom of the exhale when the lungs are as empty of oxygen as physically possible.

EXERCISE: Breath in, filling belly, ribs and chest with air for four counts.
Hold breath in body for four counts
Release for a count of four
Hold the breathy, the belly contracted and no air in body, for four counts.

See where you can use each count for drawing in breath or releasing breath.

After a few rounds. See where you can double count of the hold. Then double the count of inhale and exhale as well.



"Watch where the effort comes here. If we are in a relaxed, comfortable seat, or lying down, the body shouldn't require too much effort. So it must be in the mind. If you have the capacity to create struggle in the mind you have the capacity to release it too,"

BENEFITS: This breath is great for strengthening the lungs.

It tests our ability to slow down the breath and brings awareness through conscious breathing patterns.

The increase in carbon dioxide level (due to retention) activates the respiratory centre in the brain leading to greater interchange of oxygen. Better oxygenation – improving health and concentration levels

The retentions challenge our mind and perception in a safe way.

BANDHAS

Bandhas can be translated as locks. They are specific points of the energetic body that help us to control the movement of Prana/energy around the body and help to bring control and stability to our practice. A healthy use of bandhas helps to create a lightness in our practice.

MULHA BANDHA - Root Lock, is the contraction of the pelvic floor, specifically the vaginal wall for the female anatomical body and the perineum space for the male anatomical body. This is more than just a kegal exercise. When we spend time connecting to our root bandha we are connecting to a potent wave and feeling of movement within.

UDDIYANA BANDHA - The Abdominal lock. Some schools of yoga teach this naval lock separate from the asana practice due to its intensity and constriction of breath when done to its fullest capacity. Other schools of practice choose to teach uddiyana bandha as the drawing of naval and lower abdominals to the backbone/ spine with a slight upward lift to the ribs.

JALANDHARA BANDHA - Throat lock, is physically great for strengthening the neck flexors which help support the cervical spine and retrace patterns that put pressure on the neck from day to day habits i.e staring at a phone or laptop. As you draw the chin slightly in and down towards the chest. Lift the chest slightly upwards to the chin. This will support the neck during practice.

"Jalandhara bandha/ Throat lock is said to stop negative thoughts from flowing from the head to the heart and body,"



It's important to note that whilst practising bandha work along with physical movement, some degree of malleability should be there. Bandhas should never be forced or utilised to a degree of strain. We should continue to have a steady smooth breath even when working with bandhas in class.

PADMA BANDHA AND HASTHA BANDHA

Two other important bandhas that play a significant role in your practice are padma bandha and hashta bandha. Padma meaning foot lock and hashta meaning hand lock.

When used in such away these bandhas help us protect the ankle and wrist joints, as well as help to aid our postural alignment. They help us maintain spatial awareness and balance in our asana practice

HASTHA BANDHA



3 Positions for hands: middle finger facing forward, index finger facing forward, fleshy part of skin facing slightly more forwards

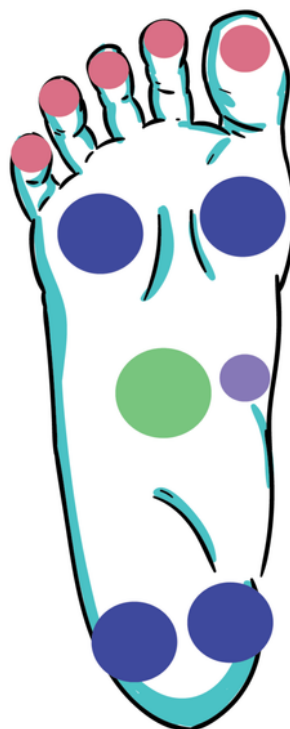
HANDS + FEET PLACEMENT

Yoga poses start from the ground up. Having proper hand and foot placement is so important for developing a strong base for stability, and avoiding wrist, hip and knee pain. Below are two simple diagrams for you to refer to when practicing your poses.



- firmly press into mat (primary pressure points)
- press into mat (secondary pressure points)
- visualize as suctioning up away from the floor
- do not let lift off of mat
- do not let weight collapse here

- toes spread and firmly planted on ground
- keep area lifted
- visualize as suctioning up away from the floor
- ground weight evenly



- Hastha bandha is a way of creating or reminding us of energy, intention consistently moving all the way down to the hands.
- Physically limp hands = energetically limp hands = more prone to injury
- Spread fingers to a comfortable distance
- Plug down through thumb and first knuckles.
- If we roll to the pinky edge of hands, we bring too much weight into soft tissue, instead focus on the above.
- Imagine a precious jewel or stone under the centre of the palm that you don't want to crush. There is a slight lift of the palm centre up from the floor
- Like a little gecko, suction the finger pads to the mat
- All these pointers help to lift up and out of the wrist crease, preventing too much pain or pressure at this delicate joint

PADMA BANDHA

There are four main points of contact with the ground through the feet; Two lie on the ball of the foot just below the pinky toe and the big toe. The other two anchor us down equally through the right and left side of the heel.

-Lifting up through the arches of the feet stops us from collapsing inwards and disengaging prominent support muscles through the legs. This also counteracts patterning that creates collapsed arches/ flat feet as well as other imbalances that can occur higher up in the body due to an unhealthy stance.

-Pressing downwards through these four points automatically enables us to lift and expand upwards,



HOW TO SET UP FOR CATURANGA DANDASANA

AN IMPORTANT PART OF SUN SALUTATIONS AND VINYASAS



UPPER BODY ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

- With arms out in front, palms and fingers spread, remind self of slight rounding through the upper back (protection) Keep this energy and draw the elbows back so they line up with the ribs (watch that they don't go further back than the ribs as this brings us into a shape where the shoulders drop forward)
- Turn the palms upwards like you are holding on to a tray
- Keep elbow close to the ribs and open the arms out as wide as feels comfortable, this fires up the rotator muscles at the shoulders, which helps to support the press up movement of chaturanga
- Return arms in front of the torso, with palms facing forward and fingers pointing to sky. the wrists align with the elbows and the shoulders will be higher than the fingers.
- Feel this shape out. This is what we want to feel when moving through chaturanga
- Test low plank out by stepping straight into modified low plank, with the knees on the floor.
- Take a couple of breaths here before releasing to build strength



After practising stepping into modified low plank a few times you can try with knees lifted. Remember the following:

- Tailbone lengthens downwards to the heels
- Shoulders stay beyond the fingers
- Aim for the shoulders not to drop lower than the elbows to protect the shoulder joint due to the repetition of chaturangas
- Watch that the shoulder blades aren't winging off the back of the rib cage. You can always come back to the above exercise to keep the back engaged.
- Bandhas intact - The belly stays lifted to support the spine

Chaturanga normally leads to an upward dog in our flowing sun salutations, however, in order to build strong foundations and not miss out on the feeling of each posture, during week 3 we stay with practising the movement of high to low plank; pressing back up to child 's pose or downward dog.

FRONT FACING LUNGES

MAIN TARGETS:

- Strengthening of front leg at an angle and in a static hold.
- Lengthening of the quads and hips flexors of the back leg or the inner thigh if the back heel is pressing down into the mat.

AVOID GOING TOO DEEP IF:

- Pinching around the front of hip in front leg
- If stretch in the front leg feels too intense, (In front-facing lunges you can bend the knee)
- If feeling off-balance (widen stance or lessen the lunge)

MAIN ACTIONS THAT OCCUR:

- Our balance is challenged due to the legs being parted.
- We strengthen the muscles around the thighs when we actively press down through the front foot and aim to level hips.
- In an isometric/ static lunge we are strengthening both the inner (In particular the inner thighs/adductors) and outer lines of the body

VARIABLES OF LUNGES

The variables to lunge positions are similar to last week

- The depth of lunge and space between the feet
- The Alignment of the feet
- Orientation of hips
- Hands on waist will help with balance, but can be changed depending on what the target of the upper body is

BE MINDFUL OF

- **The front knee dropping inward** - keep steadily grounded through both feet and watch for rolling on the instep/ big toe
- The pelvis overarching forward and core disengaging** - For more flexible bodies its easy to collapse in the lunge and find the tummy resting more on the thigh. Think of the tailbone lengthening downwards towards the floor or the heels, notice the tummy beginning tone more so at this angle
- **A steady, strong lunge** - Take up space on your mat! Find a good and confident stride

KNEELING LUNGE

Great for stabilising around the hips

Keep the legs at more of a boxed angle (front knee above front ankle, back knee below hip)



Press down evenly between front foot and back shin

draw front hip and thigh back in space whilst simultaneously allowing back hip to tuck forward to level the pelvis.

Hand on the hips may help to keep you more balanced, otherwise hands reaching above head helps to extend the side body and tummy

Great substitute for high lunge or warrior one in Sun salutations if just starting out

CRESCENT LUNGE ANJANEYASANA

Similar to above however more length given to back leg.

You may begin to feel the thigh, above the knee pressing in to the mat too.

More emphasis is given here to arching the back and stretching across the tummy, however be mindful to still support the lower back here with engaged glutes, tailbone lengthening to heels and the tummy toning



For some, the knee may trace a little further over the toes, but watch that it doesn't go so far forward that the front heel peels off of the mat. keep steady and grounded through the sole of the foot. Remember a strong, confident stride before depth

HIGH LUNGE ASTHA CHANDRASANA

High lunge has similar properties to kneeling or low lunge, however the back knee is lifted which challenges balance further.

Keeping the front shin vertical as a steady base point, you can then lengthen the back foot as far to back of mat as physically feels comfortable

Press down evenly between the sole of the front foot and the ball of the back foot. With the hips level feel a slight suction through the inner thighs, as you stabilise the pelvis.



The hands can be on the hips to keep balance or reaching to the sky

WARRIOR 1 VIRABHADRASANA



Find a comfortable stance (roughly hip-width apart) where you can press down through the outer edge of the back foot and keep a strong, long back leg

Allow the back foot and knee to trace the same line. If there is any pressure or tweaking at the knee, step a little wider with the back foot

With warrior 1, we are aiming for the hips to be level and facing forwards.

With the front shin vertical, evenly press down through the foot to keep a strong steady lunge position



WARRIOR 1 .5

Warrior 1 can be an intense pose when we are just starting out, especially when trying to keep the hips and torso level to the front of the mat. Warrior 1.5, where we allow the torso and hips to face slightly more to the corner of our mat gives us a little bit of leeway when building up to a standard warrior 1 position

TWISTS

MAIN TARGETS:

- The Torso/ trunk of the body. Including the internal and external obliques, rectus abdominus, spinal muscles, the lats, trapezius and across the chest

AVOID GOING TOO DEEP IF:

- Pinching at the back of the pelvis / sciatica
- Lower back pain
- Pregnant - listen to your body and what feels comfortable. Twisting isn't necessarily bad for body or baby, but the size of bump as time goes on may cause more discomfort in a twisting posture

MAIN ACTIONS THAT OCCUR:

- There are two ways in which to twist. We might twist with the help of traction. I.e using the arm against the leg or the hand against the floor to pull us round and in to a twist. This is a way in which we passively move into a twist.
- We can actively twist by using the strength of the core muscles. Specifically the internal and external obliques and the spinal muscles to aid rotation

VARIABLES OF TWISTS

The depth of a twist is dependent on many factors, sensation of the twist in the tummy, whether or not the legs can easily meet the ground, tightness across the chest, movement in the spine, strength of the core. We want to avoid straining to get a deeper twist or craning the neck and shoulders just to get the legs closer to the floor, so it might be that we prop a block under the thighs to support the legs while we think about opening up the chest a little more in a supine (lying down) twist.

In a standing twist, we might use a block under the bottom hand to help give 'traction' as talked about above.

In poses like revolved triangle (paravrtta trikonasana) we might choose to lift the torso a little higher from a parallel line to avoid collapsing or twisting with a rounded back

As much as we want to keep the hips level, In standing twists, there will be a varying degree of movement in the pelvis. We don't want to have the twist originating from dropping one hip lower than the other, however we equally don't want to be so rigid that we end up straining the pose just to keep the hips level

Can also be done with the knee on the ground if balance feels tricky.

Find a steady strong base with the front shin vertical. The depth of the pose is determined by how far-reaching the back leg is and the angle of the front knee to the hip. For those who are super flexy watch for sinking into the hips

Lift and tone the tummy and the ribs from the front thigh, so that the spiral in the upper body comes more from the strength of the core

If the palms are in prayer aim to keep them at the centre of the chest rather than the shoulders, to keep the integrity of the twist

Traditionally the back heel and outer edge of foot is anchored to the floor, but if it doesn't feel good for the knee or leg pressing down through the ball of the foot is equally

REVOLVED TRIANGLE

PARIVRTTA TRIKONASANA Take a stride between the front and back foot that allows you to comfortably ground between both (i.e heels aren't lifting)

Traditionally feet are heel to heel aligned, however hip-width apart may feel most comfortable

Allow the back foot and knee to trace the same line, ie facing directly forward or diagonally to the corner of the mat

As the body hinges forward from the hips, keep the spine long and the tummy engaged. Pause before you feel the spine rounding or you feel yourself compromising length for depth.

We are aiming for the sternum to face the side of the mat with one shoulder on top of the other. Allow for the twist to also come from activating the back body, the shoulder blades sliding together to aid more twist

If reaching top hand to sky doesn't feel good for shoulder it can always press in to the back of the sacrum, keeping the elbow pointing to sky in order keep the chest open

The top shoulder rolls back and down the spine to keep breadth in the chest and from compressing the neck and shoulder



MARYCHYASANA C OR D THE SAGE MARYCHI'S POSE



Marychiasana is a seated twist.

The C variation sees us extend one leg forward whilst bending the other knee and placing the foot over the bottom leg, as close to the outside of hip as possible whilst anchoring down through the sole of the foot. This can often feel intense for the groin or hip flexors so another option is to place the foot further down towards the outside edge of the knee or to place the foot on the inside of the lengthened leg.

Press out through the heel of the straight leg to extend through the back of the knee and keep the leg engaged

Pull up through the front of the thigh, drawing the knee cap towards the hip line and sit up tall on the sit bones to avoid collapsing into the lower back or slouching the upper body.

If collapsing is unavoidable, prop a block underneath the sit bones to help project the hips slightly forward

Reach the back arm slightly further away than the hip line. Keep light on the fingers at the back so as not to rely on the arm to keep you upright.

The same principles apply for Marychiasana D however the bottom leg is bent in like a cross leg, so the foot rests by the opposite hip



SUPINE TWIST

Hug the knees into the chest.

Shift the hips slightly to one side of your mat so that when you drop the knees over to the opposite direction, the hips are more level.

Keeping both shoulders anchored to the ground to stretch across the chest. If the knees don't touch the floor, pad up underneath the knees with a pillow or block.

You can also start with the knees firmly rooted to mat and chest facing the same direction of the knees, one shoulder on top of the other. From there unfold the top shoulders towards the mat. If it struggles to reach the floor, pads up underneath the legs or underneath the shoulder



Variations can be made, with bottom leg reaching long whilst the top leg stays at a ninety-degree angle. For a deeper stretch along the outer edge of the top leg one might cross the legs and ankles on top of one another.

The arms can also vary. You may stretch them out wide with elbows straight. Cactus the armed gives even more stretch across the pectoral muscles.

Some may be flexible to bring knees higher up towards the chest whilst twisting. If this pulls on the lower back, keep the knees in line with the hip

EXTRA POSES DISCUSSED

PASVOTTANASANA INTENSE SIDE STRETCH POSTURE



Pasvottanasana takes the principles of forward folding but with A-symmetrical legs.

The stance is very similar to that of revolved triangle.

Keep grounded through both heels

When just learning this pose the torso might stay parallel or higher from the ground in order to keep length through the spine and breadth across the chest.

As one gets more flexible, rounding of the spine may occur as you fold deeper over the legs and the strength of the core draws you closer to the thighs.

To begin the hands may be at the waist.

Reverse prayer or holding on to opposite elbows are other traditional options

WARRIOR 1 VIRABHADRASANA C

A tricky one legged balance.



Imagine you were pressing the back foot against a wall to straighten through the back of the knee.

Keep the hips as level as possible with the back inner thigh rolling up to sky and the toes facing downwards to the floor.

You are aiming to make a strong T shape line with the body, lifting the back leg strongly from the strength of the glutes and the torso edging as close to a parallel line as feels comfortable.

Draw the tummy up towards the backbone to support the spine at this angle

The hands can be where feels comfortable for your balance, in prayer, at the waste, behind the back or arms reaching in line with the ears

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Jai x