

# STAND SURE

WEEK 2 NOTES: THE 5 INGREDIENTS AND OPEN HIP POSITIONS

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BUILDING ON SUN SALUTATIONS

OPEN HIP POSITIONS





# GOALS FOR THE WEEK 2

- To understand the five main ingredients to a Vinyasa based practice
- To understand ujjayi breath further
- To continue adding to and understanding different variations of sun salutations
- To understand the difference between protraction and retraction and how it helps us with plank pose (an often vital pose in sun salutations and vinyasas)
- To break down and practice different ways stepping to the top of the mat
- Understanding how to best execute open hip positions in our practice



# QUICK REMINDERS

CELEBRATE you making a habit of coming to your mat week by week and dedicating this time to yourself!

THIS IS A LIFELONG PRACTICE.

I am throwing so much information at you my loves, do not worry if it doesn't all make sense, first time around. You are learning and we need to repeat these patterns for our minds and bodies to digest and retain information.



DISTRIBUTE THE ATTENTION, DISTRIBUTE THE EFFORT

There are so many layers to our practice, its like peeling back the layers of an onion.

For the first few sessions, weeks or months you may be focused on the most obvious physical sensation. Give the body time to open up and speak to you.



Give yourself time to be in the pose, and notice what else might call out to you.





# BREATH

## UJJAYI PRANAYAMA: CLOSING OUT EXTERNAL SOUND EXERCISE

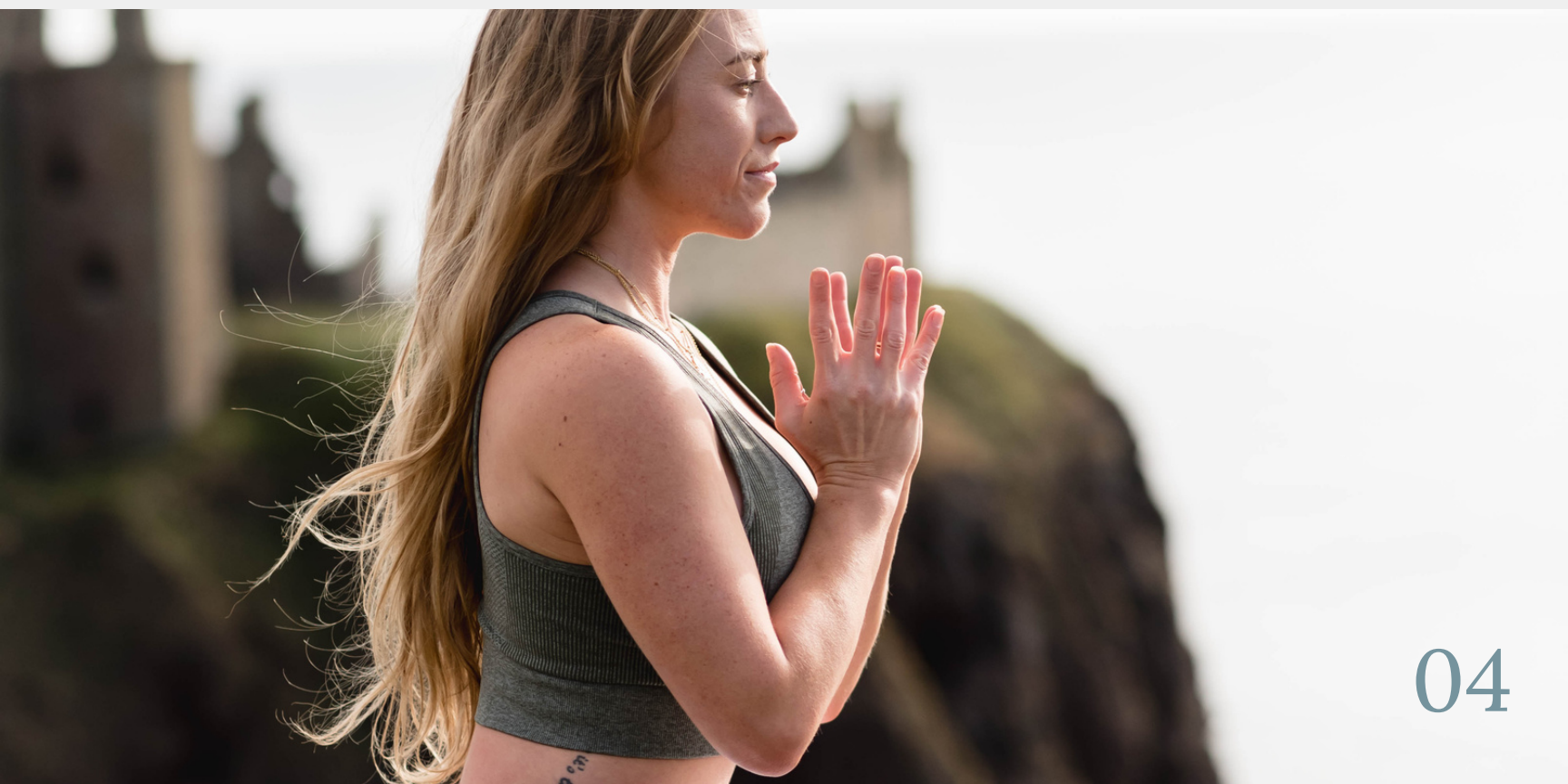
Sitting in Sukasana (Easy seat) Find ujjayi breath. You can do this with mouth open or closed, whichever you feel comfortable with for the time being.

Bring the hands to the ears and close down the earlobes so that external sounds become muffled. (Side note, this is a great exercise to do with earplugs) With the ears covered or closed, come back to the sensation of Victorious breath. What do you notice? What do you feel?

The sound of ujjayi is a powerful sound and feeling, and this is heightened when we really hone our attention to the breath, beyond any external noise. Sit in stillness, focussing on the breath this way, for as many cycles as you feel comfortable with.

I often liken this to diving under a pool of water; The moment when you are submerged looking upward towards the sky or beyond the realm of water cradling you. You know that life continues on and around you, but there is an overriding feeling of contentment. The body feels weightless and yet you are able to feel every part of your anatomy. Again, you know there is life beyond the water that supports you, but there is a sharpness, a newfound alertness that keeps you focussed on your inner world, your own little bubble underneath the water. This is what this breath exercise feels for me. The sound, the feeling and the experience of ujjayi breath is heightened so much more.

This same experience can be explored the more time we give to the breath in our practice.



# FLOW

## WARMING UP AND ADDING ON TO SUN SALUTATION VARIATIONS



## THIS WEEK'S SUN SALUTATIONS

1/2 sun sal. (2x or 3x)

### Modified Sun Salutation A

3x knees to ground

3x stepping straight forward and with added roll to high plank

2x adding in low crescent lunge to down dog and to top of mat / added roll to high plank

(Diagrams can be seen in Sun salutation pdf)

## MOVING FORWARD TO PLANK

There are two main ways in which we can move to plank:

- We can hinge from the hips extending through the front of the pelvis.
- We can also move through the length of the spine to get us to the same place.

Movement stems from the joints and the spine is made up of many. Therefore we are able to create fluid movement along the back. This angulation feels really freeing, especially for the upper back.

From downward dog rise on to the balls of the feet. Feel the belly draw suction into the backbone, the tailbone tilts downwards, and as the shoulders edge above the palms to plank, we roll through the back, keeping a slight rounding to the upper back as you arrive.

# 3 WAYS TO STEP FORWARD TO THE FRONT OF THE MAT

Stepping forward smoothly to the front of the mat requires a lot of abdominal core engagement, strength in the upper body and compression of the thigh towards the chest.

There are different ways we can transfer to the top of the mat, depending on what feels comfortable to you.

The action of stepping forward brings us from a downward dog to a low lunge, with the front foot landing in between the hands, or to the outside edge of the hand. This allows us a steady foundation with the foot firmly planted on the ground and the shin closer to a vertical line. It might be tricky to land the foot here in one go in which case we might:

- Come down to the knees and step forward as practised already.
- Use the same side hand as leg to help pick up the leg from the back of the calf. With a bit of momentum, we can 'swoop' the foot forward into place.
- If we find it hard to lift the leg close to chest/ feel the foot dragging across the floor, give yourself more space by propping blocks underneath the hands. This will give you more space away from the floor.



## EXERCISE FOR AIDING STEP THROUGH

- Come to all fours/ tabletop
- Take an inhale breath to prepare
- Exhale, press the palms firmly into the mat, round the upper back and hug the right knee as close as you can into the chest.
- Hold for a couple of counts drawing the abdominal wall towards the back bone too.
- With next inhale breath lower the shin back down to the floor
- Repeat five times each leg

# TECHNIQUE

## PROTRACTION VS RETRACTION

The movements of protraction and retraction are so important in our yoga practice. They help us stabilise around the shoulder joint, a delicate joint in our anatomy.

**PROTRACTION** - The action of the shoulder blades sliding around the rib cage, moving further away from the spine. Protraction is very important for our plank pose as it helps us integrate deeper posterior muscles in the back that support the shoulder as we bear weight in the upper body.

**RETRACTION** - The action of the shoulder blades sliding towards one another. Retraction helps us open up more through the front of the chest, supports a better posture and awakens our pull muscles that often get forgotten about in yoga.

### EXERCISE:

Sitting on the shins or cross-legged, reach the hands out in front of you, shoulder-width apart, like you are going to push a big box. Push into that imaginary box, watching that the shoulders don't lift upwards to the ears, but rather feel the shoulders slide around the ribcage.

For a little extra pick up a block width ways in the upper arms (Again you can use your imagination here) As you slide the shoulders around the back, squeeze the upper arms in to the block. Notice what you feel underneath the armpits. This is what we are trying to create in our high plank pose.

To experiment with retraction, keep the arms in front. Feel the shoulder blades slide towards the spine, Notice a slight pulling down the back as you awaken larger muscles around the shoulder blades rather than letting shoulders climb towards the ears.

## OPEN HIP POSITIONS

### MAIN TARGETS:

- Inner groin muscles (adductors) / Inner line of the leg. Conversely, as you are lengthening the inner thighs you are strengthening the glutes and outer line of the leg,

### AVOID GOING TOO DEEP IF:

- Pinching around the hip
- Groin tears
- Knee issues

### MAIN ACTIONS THAT OCCUR:

- External rotation (Where we rotate the inner thigh to face forwards or upwards)
- Abduction (Where we are moving the leg/ limb away from the centre line of the body)

## VARIABLES OF OPEN HIP POSITIONS

### -The depth of lunge and space between the feet

The distance between the feet controls the intensity of the lunge. the wider the space between the feet the more intense the lunge, therefore this can be a variable of change depending on what you need

### - The Alignment of the feet

Should I line up my feet heel to heel or heel to arch?

The honest answer is both work. (as does everything in between!) If we align the front heel to the arch of the back foot, this is going to be more intense as you are going to have to open the hips wider to support this alignment. Heel to heel provides less cranking of the hips in some people's case.

### - Orientation of hips

Where our hip bones face in these open hip positions will be dependent on our unique external rotation and how much strength we have to keep the front leg abducted. The more open we are in the hips the easier it will be for both hip bones to face the side of our mat. We don't have to struggle to achieve this however. It may feel more comfortable to align the hips to the front corner of your mat instead to allow for a more stable base.

In the Warrior 2 family poses, a certain amount of movement will come from the hips. The rest will come from the spiraling of the upper torso.



## BE MINDFUL OF

- **The front knee dropping inward** - keep steadily grounded through both feet
- **The pelvis over arching forward and core dissengaging** (very common in these standing open hip positions ( Think of the tailbone lengthening downwards towards the floor or the heels, notice the tummy beginning tone more so at this angle
- When moving in to side stretches Remember **pelvis rotates over thighs rather than torso over pelvis** to keep side body lengthened

## STRIDE AND MOVEMENT OF THE KNEE JOINT

Why do we keep the front shin verticle?

The knee is capable of moving beyond the ankle and with standing this range of motion. Think of when you move up and down stairs, how the knee naturally angles beyond the ankle. This means that in Yoga it is also not a worry if we orientate the knee this way. However, keeping the joints stacked allows for two things. It allowed for less effort in the posture over time. And having the front shin verticle (i.e knee over ankle) allows us a steady base in which to orientate from. With the front leg anchored in a steady place I can then choose the depth of my side with confidence.,

### MODIFIED SIDE PLANK

Side planks are great for strengthening lateral / sides lines of the body. With one hand underneath the shoulder, press into the ground and lift hips from ground.

Stack the feet one on top of the other, or scissor the feet pressing the outer edges of the feet and heels into the mat

If this feels too intense side plank can be done on the knees

Lifting the hips higher into more of a semi-circle will strengthen the oblique muscles further

### KNEELING SIDE ANGLE POSE

Side stretch with or without a block underneath hand to raise the floor up to meet you

Press right shin into mat, knee pointing forward toes pointing to back of mat. Left leg stretches out towards back of mat too

Left arm reaches over head in a diagonal line. Feel the glutes switch on and aid the turn out of the bottom leg.

How much reach and space can you find?

For an extra challenge, you can lift the left leg in line with the hip and hold

To help support with balance, this can be done against the wall



## VIRABHADRASANA B WARRIOR 2



The stance in which all following poses stem from - The Warrior 2 family

Your stride will be dependent on the variables described on the previous page and what feels comfortable to you.

Hands on hips while you figure out placement of the hips and lower limbs  
Increase the intensity of pose by increasing the stride

Front foot and knee facing in same directions

Watch for the front knee dropping in, press down evenly between big toe and pinky toe to awaken the outside line of the front leg and to keep the external rotation of hip and thigh

Variations of upper body welcome (as noted in the postures to come) Traditionally arms are parallel with mat beneath you

## EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA

Same legs as warrior to above.

Tilt the upper body over front thigh, creating a long diagonal line from back heel to hand. Top arm can reach up to ceiling as a variation, but reaching arm over head tends to create more of a stretch through the side body.



When first practicing this pose, press bottom forearm against the top of thigh. watch for collapsing on to the leg, rather use it as a base to lift up from to create that long lean line through the body

In time, variations include reaching down for mat/block beneath you or binding/ wrapping the arms around the front thigh whilst keeping chest broad and heart spiraling to sky.

To find stability in the legs, imagine practicing on a sheet of ice. To stop from sliding, we have to find control by hugging heels towards one another. We don't physically move the heels towards one another but notice what you feel engage

## UTTHITA TRIKONASANA EXTENDED TRIANGLE

Same engagement as warrior 2 is found here even with the front knee straightening  
Press the thumb in to front hip crease to tease hip back in space



Toes and front knee face the same direction by firmly planting down through the outside edge of foot as well as big toe mound and from the activation of the glutes

Hips lean over thigh rather than torso over hips/pelvis.

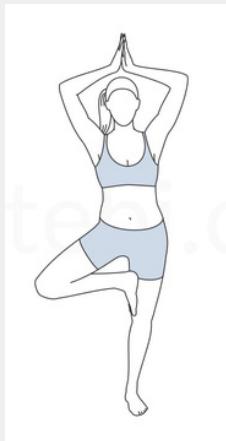
Don't worry about how close you can get to ground. focus on keeping length through spine.

Hand can grab the shin for support or bring block to outside of front foot. Push down in to block to lift and engage upwards. Block on outside edge of foot helps us keep chest lifted and spiralling to sky

Plenty of variations for the arms with trikonasana, but traditionally whilst bottom hand reaches downwards the top arm reaches directly upwards to sky.

Stacking top hip directly above the bottom may feel uncomfortable for the lower back. It is fine to let the top hip roll slightly forward so as not to 'crank the hips'

## TREE POSE VRKSASANA



This is a balancing pose where, instead of directing our energy down two columns we are directing it down one instead.

Lift one knee to chest. You can hold on to a wall for balance or support the lifted leg with hands around shin.

Keeping hips level, rotate the bent leg outwards.

Place sole of foot to the inside thigh of opposite leg. If this feels too intense, place foot to shin or ball of foot to floor

For an extra challenge place foot to inner thigh without using hands, This is you working tree pose in active manner rather than passive



## BADDHAKONASANA BUTTERFLY



Sitting on your mat or block, press the soles of the feet together and hug the heels close to the groin.

Press the forearms down on the thighs and simultaneously press the thighs upwards to the forearms, to create traction.



Lengthen out of the hips, keeping the spine long.

Another variation is to round the spine and passively fold over the legs

## UPAVISTHA KONASANA SEATED WIDE ANGLE POSE

Abduct the legs as wide to the side of your mat

Press the heels firm to the floor, toes pointing to sky

Lead with the heart as you lengthen forward from the hips

Prop a block underneath the hips if needed to help tilt pelvis forward



# SOME NOTES ON MEDITATION

"Register thoughts in your mind  
Register sensations in your body  
Feel the feeling of breathing,"

Mindfulness meditation does not require us to drop away from all thoughts. Simply staying with and experiencing fluctuations is the practice.

Yoga is like science. science says experiment, yoga says experience.

"Experience is an inside experiment," - Osho



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Jai x