



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY

CREATING INNER SPACE FOR BACKBENDS

The previous two months I wrote about creating inner space in the body before moving into postures. This month we'll explore backbends.

Benefits of Backbends

- They counter the compression in the spine caused by sitting for long periods. They also build a strong "back core", which lets you stand or sit up straighter with ease.
- Taking deep breaths in a backbend helps to alkalise the body and improves bone health.
- Exhaling into a deep backbend provides significant relief from lower-spine strain.
- Backbends are energising and help to alleviate depression.

Create Inner Space

Start by using your breath to open the rib cage. You need to find depth and width in the rib cage and this helps to release the stiffer places in your thoracic (upper) spine. Be careful not to push yourself too far into a backbend. Let your lower spine be the last part of your spine to move into a big backbend. Just think of creating a smooth, even, arc in your spine.

Start with Baby Backbends

Starting with small movements will set the foundation for deeper backbends because they teach you how to work your legs, pelvis, and belly. Have the patience to learn the proper foundations of a backbend.







Start with **Sphinx**. Feel your torso in a mild backbend. Internally rotate your legs by rolling your outer thighs toward the floor. This helps maintain width in your sacrum and length in your lower back. Avoid clenching your buttocks and draw your belly away from the floor to create a dome that lifts toward your lower back. This abdominal lift supports you and distributes the curvature of your backbend more evenly, soothing your lower back and awakening your upper back.

Move into **Low Cobra**. This is a slightly deeper backbend. Broaden and expand your chest, pulling your heart forward and up. Draw back with your hands to lift your chest.

Arc into **Full Cobra**. As you extend your arms, pull your chest forward, creating spaciousness in your chest and abdomen. Incorporate your upper and middle back into the backbend, rather than overworking your lower back. As you release to the floor, fill your back with fresh breath as you rest and observe the sensations in your spine.

Contact Lynne on 00302892042356 or email lynne.gully@iremia.net

CREATING INNER SPACE FOR BACKBENDS

<p>SPHINX</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen • Firms the buttocks • Stimulates abdominal organs • Helps relieve stress 	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">THOMAS BROENING</p>
<p>LOW COBRA</p> <p>Don't overdo the backbend. To find the height at which you can work comfortably and avoid straining your back, take your hands off the floor for a moment, so that the height you find will be through extension.</p> <p>If you have flexibility in the armpits, chest and groins you can move into the full cobra.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">THOMAS BROENING</p>
<p>BHUJANGASANA (FULL COBRA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens the spine • Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen • Firms the buttocks • Stimulates abdominal organs • Helps relieve stress and fatigue • Opens the heart and lungs • Soothes sciatica • Therapeutic for asthma 	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">THOMAS BROENING</p>
<p>DHANURASANA (bow)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the entire front of the body, ankles, thighs and groins, abdomen and chest, throat, and deep hip flexors (psoas) • Strengthens the back muscles • Improves posture • Stimulates the organs of the abdomen 	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">RORY EARNSHAW</p>
<p>USTRASANA (camel)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the entire front of the body, the ankles, thighs, and groins, abdomen and chest, and throat • Stretches the deep hip flexors (psoas) • Strengthens back muscles • Improves posture • Stimulates the organs of the abdomen and neck 	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MICHELLE SHERMAN</p>
<p>NATARAJASANA (Lord of the dance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the shoulders and chest • Stretches the thighs, groins, and abdomen • Strengthens the legs and ankles • Improves balance <p>Natarajasana is usually performed as the final pose of a series of challenging backbends.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">CHRISTOPHER</p>