



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY YOGA POSTURES TO PRACTISE AT HOME

It's so rewarding to be able to practise yoga at home but I know it's also difficult to get motivated and how to remember what to do. In May and June, I wrote about some of the classic standing, sitting and forward bend postures. This month I've written about a few of the classic twisting postures and back bends. Make sure that you always begin your yoga practice with some basic postures. I included these in the lesson plans sent to you in July. These postures will help to stretch the main muscle groups and your spine and so prepare you for the deeper postures.

Stages of Learning Yoga

In my previous newsletters I explained how the beginner's stage is important to build a strong foundation in yoga. It may take years before you are ready for the intermediate stage where you practise the asanas with reflective and meditative attention and become aware of your tissues, organs, skin, and individual cells as you push your mind to touch every part of your body. The next stage is the Advanced stage known as *Parichayavastha*. This is the stage of intimate knowledge, when your mind brings your body in touch with your intelligence. In the advanced stage, you are in the realm of the mental and physiological body, rather than just being in your muscles, bones, and joints. At this stage, asanas become meditative and this may take a lifetime to achieve.

Twisting Postures

These asanas teach us the importance of a healthy spine and inner body. In twists, the pelvic and abdominal organs are squeezed and flushed with fresh blood. Twisting postures improve the suppleness of the diaphragm, and help to relieve disorders of the spine, hip, and groin. The spine becomes more supple, and this improves the flow of blood to the spinal nerves and increases energy levels. **Bharadvajasana's** twist is a gentle twist and acts as a tonic for the spine and the abdominal organs. It also helps to ease a painful, stiff, or fused lumbar spine. The posture increases the flexibility of the back and hips. **Marichyasana's** twist improves the functioning of the liver, spleen, pancreas, kidneys, and intestines. **Ardha Matsyendrasana** energises the spine and stimulates the digestion.

Back Bends

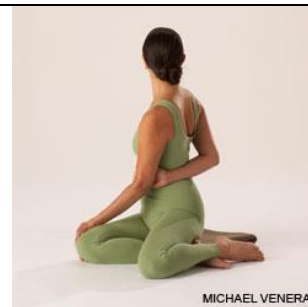
All back bends stimulate the central nervous system and increase its ability to bear stress. They help to relieve and prevent headaches, hypertension (high blood pressure) and nervous exhaustion. These asanas stimulate and energise the body, and are invaluable to people suffering from depression. **Ustrasana**, the camel posture, improves blood circulation to all organs of the body and increases lung capacity. In **Urdhva Dhanurasana** (upward bow) the liver and spleen are fully stretched, and can therefore function more effectively. Urdhva Dhanurasana is a more advanced posture and unsuitable for beginners in yoga. Other back bend postures include Dhanurasana (bow), Setu Bandha (bridge), Bhujangasana (cobra), and Matsyasana (fish).

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

YOGA POSTURES TO PRACTISE AT HOME

BHARADVAJASANA

Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you. Bend your right leg and take your foot under your left leg and out to the side. Now bend your left leg and place your left ankle onto the sole of your right foot. You may need a support to keep your pelvis level. Take your right hand onto the floor behind you and your left hand on the outside of your right thigh. As you exhale, slowly twist to the right. You can practise this posture sitting sideways on a chair with your hands on the back of the chair and keeping your pelvis level.



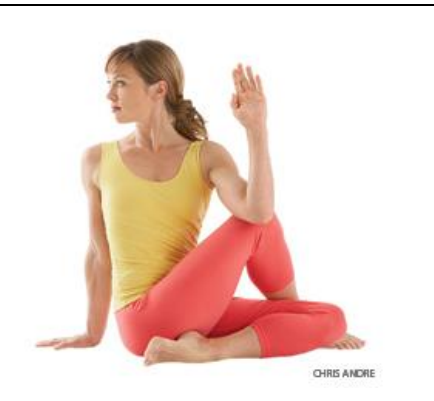
MARICHYASANA III

Sit in Dandasana on a folded blanket, then bend your right knee and pull the right foot back until your right heel touches your right buttock. Place your palms on the floor and as you exhale, lift your spine and turn to the right. Keep the left leg strong with your toes pointing upward. Bend the left arm and moving your left shoulder forward, stretch it out against your right thigh. Extend this arm from the armpit to the elbow and then bend the elbow making a stop sign. Keep your spine upright and twist from the waist and not from the chest.



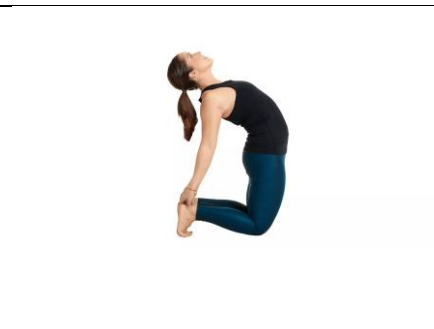
ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA (half lord of the fishes)

Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you, buttocks supported on a folded blanket. Bend your left knee and slide your left foot under your right leg to the outside of your right hip. Lay the outside of the left leg on the floor. Step the right foot over the left leg and stand it on the floor outside your left hip. The right knee will point directly up at the ceiling. Take your right hand behind you onto the floor. Press into your right hand and your right foot and as you exhale, slowly twist to the right. Take five long breaths and repeat on the other side.



USTRASANA (camel)

Kneel on the floor with your knees hip width and thighs perpendicular to the floor. Rotate your thighs inward slightly, keeping your hands on your hips. Drop the sacrum and activate mula bandha. Lift the sternum to fully open the front of your body. You can either keep your hands on your hips or place your hands on the soles of your feet. If you're not able to touch your feet without compressing your lower back, turn your toes under and elevate your heels.



URDHVA DHANURASANA (upward bow)

Lie on the floor. Bend your knees, feet on the floor, heels close to the sitting bones. Bend your elbows and spread your palms on the floor beside your head, forearms relatively perpendicular to the floor, fingers pointing toward your shoulders. Pressing your inner feet actively into the floor, push your tailbone up toward the pubis, and lift the buttocks off the floor. Keep your thighs and inner feet parallel. Then firmly press the inner hands into the floor and lift onto the crown of your head. Keep your arms parallel. Press your feet and hands into the floor, and lift your head off the floor and straighten your arms. Turn the upper thighs slightly inward and firm the outer thighs.

