



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

Issue No: 12

January 2008

The Importance of Relaxation

At the end of a yoga class it is important to allow time to relax. If you have been practising some difficult asanas then you need to do a restorative posture such as **Viparita Karani** (legs up the wall). The name of this asana means “inverted lake” in Sanskrit, and is based on the belief that blood and hormones circulate better through the body when it is inverted. The benefits of this posture are:

- Regulates blood pressure
- Helps to treat ear and eye ailments, stress-related headaches and migraine
- Relieves palpitation, breathlessness, asthma, bronchitis and throat ailments
- Alleviates arthritis and cervical spondylosis
- Relieves indigestion, diarrhoea, and nausea
- Helps to treat kidney disorders
- Prevents varicose veins

This is a wonderful posture to do if you are suffering from nervous exhaustion, physical exhaustion or depression. All you need is a wall and a bolster or large cushion. If you don't have a bolster or cushion you can do this posture just by sitting on the floor with your legs resting on the wall.

Sit sideways on the bolster or cushion or on the floor and swing your legs up against the wall. Use your hands pressing onto the floor to move your buttocks closer to the wall. Make sure that you rest your neck and shoulders firmly on the floor. Spread your arms out to the side with your palms facing the ceiling. Allow your chest, abdomen and pelvis to expand and relax. Straighten and stretch your legs. Close your eyes, breathe evenly and experience the serenity of the posture. Stay in the posture for 3-4 minutes and gradually increase the duration to 5-8 minutes.

Savasana

This posture is always the final posture of any yoga class. It is often referred to as “The hardest posture of them all”. In this asana, the body is kept as motionless as a corpse and the mind is alert, yet calm. Savasana removes fatigue and soothes the mind. Each part of the body is positioned properly to achieve total relaxation. It's important to remember that any pain, or even discomfort, results in muscle guarding and tension. If you have lower back pain just bend your knees with your feet wide apart with your knees resting on each other. If your chin is higher than your forehead it is important to place a folded blanket under your head. This lift under the head will drop the chin, lengthen the back of the neck, and invite the inner gaze down toward the heart. When you practise this asana, your organs of perception – the eyes, ears and tongue – withdraw from the outside world. The body and mind become one and you experience inner silence. This asana is the first step in the practice of meditation. The steady, smooth breathing in this posture allows energy to flow into the body, invigorating it and reducing the stress of everyday life.

The benefits of this posture are:

- Helps to alleviate nervous tension, migraine, insomnia and chronic fatigue syndrome
- Relaxes the body and eases breathing
- Removes physical and mental fatigue
- Enhances recovery from all long-term or serious illnesses
- Helps towards refreshing, dreamless sleep, especially for those with sleep disorders.

Just allow your body to completely relax. Bring a smile to your face and this helps you to relax. Let yourself sink into a blissful state, which is just between sleeping and being awake. If you ever come to a class feeling exhausted and depleted then Savasana may be the most important posture you can do. You will leave the class feeling relaxed and refreshed and ready to face the rest of the day.

Contact Lynne at lynne.gully@iremia.net or Tel +302892042356

Posture of the Month – Upavista Konasana (seated wide-angle posture)

This posture gets its name from the Sanskrit words *upavista*, which means “seated”, and *kona*, which translates into “angle”.

Before starting this posture make sure you have two belts and a block or folded blanket. This posture is normally just a forward bend but this month we will also include bends over both the right and left legs as a variation.

1. Sit down in Dandasana with your back erect. Place your palms on the floor beside your hips, fingers pointing forward. Look straight ahead and take a few slow, steady breaths.
2. **Beginners or those with asthma:** Sit on the edge of a block or a folded blanket, which will help to keep your back straight and tilts your pelvis forward. **Intermediates:** make sure you are on your sitting bones by pulling the flesh away from these bones.
3. Press your palms down on the floor to push your torso upward and then spread your legs as far apart as possible.
4. Take both palms on the floor behind your back with the fingers pointing away. Press your palms down on the floor again and push your torso upward.
5. Press your heels and thighs down on the floor. Lift your waist and the sides of your torso. Rotate your thighs to the front so that the kneecaps face the ceiling.
6. Stretch each leg from thigh to heel. Hold for 30-40 seconds.
7. Place your hands either side of your right thigh. Press down, lift the torso and twist to the right so that you are facing over your right leg.
8. Take a belt and place it around your right foot. Make sure your arms are straight and level and that your hands are equal distance from your foot. This will ensure that your shoulders are level.
9. Inhale and lift the front of the body. Exhale and bend forward from the hip over the right leg. Keep your back straight and your chest moving forward towards your right foot. Keep your left buttock and left thigh on the floor. Keep your gaze on your right big toe and breathe slowly and steadily. Hold for 30-40 seconds. Inhale and come up.
10. Place your hands either side of your left thigh. Press down, lift the torso and twist to the left so that you are facing over your left leg.
11. Take a belt and place it around your left foot. Make sure your arms are straight and level and that your hands are equal distance from your foot. This will ensure that your shoulders are level.
12. Inhale and lift the front of the body. Exhale and bend forward from the hip over the left leg. Keep your back straight and your chest moving forward towards your left foot. Keep your right buttock and right thigh on the floor. Keep your gaze on your left big toe and breathe slowly and steadily. Hold for 30-40 seconds. Inhale and come up.
13. Place a belt around each foot and hold with your arms straight.
14. Inhale and lift the front of the body. Exhale and bend forward from the hips keeping your back straight. Make sure you do not round your back, as this will put pressure on the lumbar spine. Intermediates: keeping your back straight, hold your big toes with the first two fingers of each hand and take your elbows out to the side while moving the chest forward down towards the floor. Hold for 30-40 seconds.
15. Inhale and slowly come up. Release the belts or toes. Place one hand under each thigh, bend the knees and slowly bring your legs back together.
16. Sit in Dandasana and take a few slow, steady breaths.

Caution

If you have asthma, you must practise this asana sitting on a block or folded blanket. The block or blanket will lift and open the chest, allowing for easy breathing.

Benefits of this posture

- Helps to treat arthritis of the hips
- Relieves sciatic pain
- Helps to prevent and relieve hernia
- Massages the organs of the reproductive system
- Stimulates the ovaries, regulates menstrual flow, and relieves menstrual disorders
- Corrects a prolapsed uterus or bladder.

