



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

Issue no: 31

February 2010

CONTINUING THE ART OF LETTING GO

In last month's newsletter I explained that when you "let go" something happens - physically, neurologically and psychologically. Your breathing is better; your body relaxes resulting in greater strength. Your heart rate slows down, and you will often end up going further into the posture with greater ease.

It doesn't matter what age you are, your body can unwind, gain strength, move without pain and gain functioning.

No Pain Allowed

When you practice your yoga, I want you to work within your pain-free range of motion. When pain happens, the result is tension in the body leading to a restriction in movement. Effective healing of the body occurs when you move without pain.

Natural Breath

By cultivating a natural breath you create greater relaxation. A forced breath, as opposed to an easy breath, creates inappropriate tension. The breath is also a key indicator of whether you are working too hard. If you cannot breathe easily in a posture, you've gone too far into the posture.

Your Yoga Practice

Try to apply these principles to your practice. If there is pain, forced breath, striving, struggling, or tension of any kind, you may create problems in your body instead of allowing yoga to make you stronger and more flexible. So breathe, move a little more slowly, be aware and stay in your pain-free range of motion.

Begin With Your Spine

All movement occurs from your spine. The spine is a collection of bones, muscles, fascia, blood, lymph and nerve vessels. When your spine is tight and imbalanced, it can affect the movement of your shoulders and hips. This will have an affect on your ability to twist, bend and move upside down. If your spinal muscles are tight and short you may have a restriction of movement in your shoulders, elbows, wrists and knees.

Always start your yoga practice by gently stretching your spine.

- ❖ Start by swinging your arms gently from side to side to release any tension in your spine. Breathe easily.
- ❖ Stretch your arms up to lengthen your spine.
- ❖ From a standing position, roll forward on an exhalation holding the mula bandha.
- ❖ Slowly roll up on an exhalation, again holding the mula bandha and raise your head last of all. Repeat this three times.
- ❖ Lie down on a back arch or rolled up mat to open your chest and relax your shoulders. Come into Setu Bandha (bridge) holding gently for three breaths.

Posture of the Month

This posture is named after Virabhadra, a legendary warrior. Regular practice of this asana helps to develop your strength and endurance. The posture exercises your limbs and torso vigorously, reducing stiffness in your neck and shoulders. It also makes your knee and hip joints more flexible.

Technique

1. Stand in Tadasana (Mountain Posture).
2. Inhale and as you exhale, jump or step your legs wide apart. Raise your arms to the sides, in line with your shoulders, palms facing down.
3. Stretch both arms from shoulders to fingertips and keep your shoulders down.
4. Turn your left foot in slightly and your right foot out making sure that your right knee is in line with your right foot.
5. Inhale and as you exhale bend your right knee keeping your shin perpendicular to the floor so that your right knee is positioned above your right heel. **Beginners** – make sure you are not leaning forward over your right leg but keep your torso in the centre. **Intermediates** – ensure that your right thigh is parallel to the floor.
6. Press the outer edges of your feet and the base of your big toes into the mat.
7. Keep your back leg straight and stretch the muscles of the leg fully.
8. Turn your face to the right and look along the fingers of your right hand.
9. Stay in this posture for 3 breaths (Beginners) or 5 breaths (Intermediates).
10. Inhale and as you exhale, straighten your right leg and turn your feet to the front. Repeat on the other side.

Beginner's Tip

When you bend the left knee to a right angle, aim the inside of the left knee toward the little-toe side of the left foot.

Cautions

Neck problems: Don't turn your head to look over the front hand; continue to look straight ahead with both sides of the neck lengthened evenly.

Partnering

A partner can help you strengthen your back leg. Have your partner stand behind your back leg. Loop a strap around your inner groin, and as you bend the front knee into the pose, your partner can pull firmly on the strap while you resist the back-leg inner groin away from that movement. Feel how this helps to open the groins.

Preparatory Postures

Baddha Konasana (cobbler), Supta Padangusthasana (stretching the legs using a belt), Trikonasana (triangle) and Vrksasana (tree).

Benefits of this posture

- Strengthens and stretches the legs and ankles
- Stretches the groins, chest and lungs, shoulders
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Increases stamina
- Relieves lower backaches
- Therapeutic for carpal tunnel syndrome, flat feet, infertility, osteoporosis, and sciatica
- Reduces fat around the hips



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