



# Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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## Strength and Stability

The alleviation of pain is, even today, one of the main reasons for the journey into yoga for most people. I recently attended a course on therapeutic yoga and the main focus of the course was about teaching the student how *not* to move into pain. If you have pain in the body, you can do yoga to relieve that pain but you need to pull back.

- ❖ If we give our nervous system pain, it will come back with pain.
- ❖ If we force, it comes back with resistance.
- ❖ If we give ease, it comes back with ease.

Moving functionally is like eating the right food. Pain shows there is dysfunction present. It's not about perfect posture; it is what is functional for you now. The slower you go, the faster you get well.

### Back Pain

Many people have back pain because there is instability in the pelvis. It is all-important to get your pelvis stable. Strengthening the quadriceps muscle in the thigh is important for knee stability but you still need pelvic stability. If you stabilise the pelvis, then 99% of the time, back pain will go away. It is not difficult to shift.

### Pelvic Stability

To create **pelvic stability** we need to work with the abductors and adductors. Come into **bridge posture** with a strap around your thighs. Inhale and lift the hips while pushing into your feet and pressing your thighs into the strap. Feel the hip abductors working on the outside of the hips. This will strengthen the abductors. The hip flexors should not fire or move. If they move or if the pelvis rocks in any way, then back pain could be present.

Now do **bridge posture** with two blocks between your thighs. Squeeze the blocks as you lift and this will strengthen the adductors on the inside of the thighs. Don't squeeze your buttocks too much as this will create rigidity. Create tone in the buttocks but not rigidity. In bridge posture find the position of effortless effort. Find ease and the more we go for ease the faster we get out of pain.

Pelvic stability will help to relieve both back pain and knee pain. Strengthening the abductors and adductors will create release and stability.

### Stress

We all hold stress somewhere in the body, which needs to be released. With less effort, you achieve more. Use less energy while doing a posture. You need both strength and stability for balance in the body. When a body becomes more balanced, the energy flows more easily.

# Posture of the Month

## Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge)

In this asana, the body arches to take the shape of a bridge. The chin lock in the asana calms the flow of thoughts and soothes the mind. The posture sends a fresh supply of blood to the brain, resting and revitalising the mind and body.

### Technique

1. Lie supine on the floor, and if necessary, place a thickly folded blanket under your shoulders to protect your neck. Bend your knees and set your feet on the floor, heels as close to the sitting bones as possible.
2. Exhale and, pressing your inner feet and arms actively into the floor, push your tailbone upward toward the pubis, firming (but not hardening) the buttocks, and lift the buttocks off the floor. Keep your thighs and inner feet parallel. Clasp the hands below your pelvis and extend through the arms to help you stay on the tops of your shoulders.
3. Lift your buttocks until the thighs are about parallel to the floor. Keep your knees directly over the heels, but push them forward, away from the hips, and lengthen the tailbone toward the backs of the knees. Lift the pubis toward the navel.
4. Lift your chin slightly away from the sternum and, firming the shoulder blades against your back, press the top of the sternum toward the chin. Firm the outer arms, broaden the shoulder blades, and try to lift the space between them at the base of the neck (where it's resting on the blanket) up into the torso.
5. Stay in the posture anywhere from 30 seconds to 1 minute. Release with an exhalation, rolling the spine slowly down onto the floor.

### Contraindications and Cautions

**Neck injury:** avoid this posture unless you are practicing under the supervision of an experienced teacher.

### Modification and Props

If you have difficulty supporting the lift of the pelvis in this posture after taking it away from the floor, slide a block or bolster under your sacrum and rest the pelvis on this support.

### Variation

**Eka Pada Setu Bandha Sarvangasana.** On an exhalation, lift the right knee into your torso, then inhale and extend the leg perpendicular to the floor. Hold for 30 seconds, then release the foot to the floor again with an exhalation. Secure the foot again and repeat with the left leg for the same length of time.

### Benefits of this posture

- ❖ Stretches the chest, neck, and spine
- ❖ Calms the brain and helps alleviate stress and mild depression
- ❖ Stimulates abdominal organs, lungs, and thyroid
- ❖ Rejuvenates tired legs
- ❖ Improves digestion
- ❖ Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- ❖ Reduces anxiety, fatigue, backache, headache, and insomnia
- ❖ Therapeutic for asthma, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and sinusitis.



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