



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY

Before the summer break I introduced the subject of yoga therapy. We practised a series of postures to help relieve physical fatigue and then followed this with how a tightened psoas muscle can cause problems with hips, lower back, knees and even shoulders.

I know that when there is a break from your yoga classes it is often difficult to practise on your own at home. You don't have to try and remember all the different postures you do in a lesson. Some simple stretching is often enough therapy to keep you flexible and energised. Even when your yoga classes start again, it is always a good idea to start up a home practice. Start slowly and make it a pleasure to do rather than a chore. All you need is to find the motivation to get on your mat and begin.

Here are some tips to help get you started on practising at home.

1. Set aside a place and a time to practise yoga. Begin with just one day a week.
2. Start with a short amount of time, such as 10 minutes.
3. If you don't have time then identify an activity that can be replaced by a yoga practice.
4. Try and commit to a home practice for a month and then try another month.
5. Recognize how much yoga has already helped you, and trust that your daily life will be better with a regular yoga practice.

The Art Of Staying Young





You may wake up in the morning feeling stiff and aching and wonder why your body feels so different than it did when you were younger. The first thing to do is to get out of bed and swing your arms from side to side in order to release stiffness in your spine. Then do a few roll downs to stretch the backs of your legs and your spine. You don't even need a yoga mat to do these exercises. If you have time roll out your mat and do some simple stretches. Over the page I have given you a ten-minute programme, which will stretch most of the major muscles.

Yoga will help you to feel younger. One of the things that comes with the aging process is that we can feel grateful that yoga came into our lives and that our bodies actually enjoy bending forward and backward. When we stretch we release tension in our muscles. The movement we create when we practise yoga helps the flow of lymph around the body, which carries the toxic waste to our liver and kidneys and so out of our bodies.

Yoga is not about getting into that difficult posture or how we look in a certain posture. It's about how we feel in a yoga posture. Does it feel good? Is it helping to release tension in various parts of your body? Is it opening up parts of your body, which helps the nutrients and energy flow freely? Be gentle with yourself and enjoy the process of the body opening up. Enjoy the breathing and just relax into a posture. When your body resists, watch the tiny places where you have a fraction of resistance. Wait, listen, and be with it. See how long it takes to release and go further.

Yoga can be a fountain of youth as you improve the physical parts of your body as well as opening your mind. Feel the ground supporting you and breathe.

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<p>Releasing tension in your spine and lower back. Bend your knees onto your chest with your arms stretched out either side. Cross your left knee over your right knee. Inhale and as you exhale twist to the right letting your feet rest on the mat. Breathe into the twist and let the back muscles relax. Do this three times each side.</p>	<p>KNEES SIDE TO SIDE</p>
<p>Stretching Hamstrings, Thighs and Hips. Lay down with your legs straight and feet together. Bend your right knee to the chest and loop a belt around your foot. Straighten your leg slowly and hold there for 3 to 5 breaths. Take the belt in your right hand. Take your leg slowly down to the right making sure your left hip is on the floor. Hold for 3 to 5 breaths. Lift your leg up to the centre. Take the belt in your left hand and lower your leg down to the left across the body, keeping the leg straight. Hold for 3 to 5 breaths. Inhale and return leg to centre. Remove the belt and slowly lower your leg to the floor.</p> <p>Repeat for the left leg.</p>	
<p>Stretching the Sides of Your Body Go onto your knees. Protect your knees with a mat or blanket. Stretch your right leg out to the right, with the heel of your foot on the floor. Make sure your right leg is straight, with your knee facing the ceiling. Place your left knee directly below your left hip. Place your right arm along your right thigh with the palm facing up. Inhale and as you exhale bend at the waist over to the right, stretching your left arm over your head, palm facing down. With each exhalation gently deepen your side stretch. Stay for 3 to 5 breaths and then inhale and come up. Repeat with your left leg stretched out.</p>	
<p>Whole Body Stretch Stand with your feet together, toes spread, inner arches lifted. Press into the base of your toes and the inner and outer heels. Stretch your arms up either side of your head. Pull up the mula bandha and breathe fully in through the nose and out through the nose. Take five long breaths.</p>	
<p>Stretching The Back of the Legs and Spine Place your hands on your hips. Lift your collarbone and lengthen the front of the body. Inhale and as you exhale bend forward from the top of your legs keeping the front of your body long and drop into a forward bend. Fold your arms and hold your elbows. Let your back muscles relax and release your head.</p>	
<p>Stretching Your Inner Thighs Take your legs as wide as possible without over stretching the inner thigh muscles. Make sure your feet are turned in slightly and that you are lifting the inner arches and pressing the outer edges of your feet into the mat. Place your hands on your hips and lift the chest. Inhale and as you exhale pull up the mula bandha and fold forward from the top of the legs keeping the front of the body long. Place your hands on the floor with your fingers in line with your toes. Stay in this posture for five long breaths.</p>	
<p>Finish by Relaxing in Savasana Lie on the floor with your back straight, arms away from the sides of the body with the palms facing up, feet hip-width apart and your eyes closed. Allow every part of your body to relax. Stay as long as you want.</p>	