



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY

REDUCE TENSION AND INCREASE FLEXIBILITY

Many people suffer from tight hamstrings, shoulders and lower backs. There is no substitute for cultivating true flexibility through the regular practice of yoga postures, yet throughout the ages yogis have combined various methods to increase the suppleness of the physical body. The least known is herbal therapy.

Herbs have long played a vital role in helping to reduce chronic stiffness and improve flexibility. Chronic stiffness can be traced back to an imbalance of the body systems. A balanced body can result in improved flexibility in the skeletal muscles and joints. Certain herbs warm the muscles and joints and calm the nervous system. This reduces tension, smoothes muscle contraction, and allows greater control and range of mobility.

Two common herbs used are turmeric and cinnamon bark. Turmeric has anti-inflammatory properties and is a nutrient for the connective tissues in the joints. Turmeric is mainly used in cooking and commonly added to curries.

Cinnamon bark is known throughout Asia for its ability to strengthen, warm, and harmonize the flow of circulation into the muscles, joints, and bones. Cinnamon is commonly found in herbal teas.

PRANAYAMA (Yoga Breathing)

Another technique used in yoga to improve flexibility is Nadi Sodhana (Alternate Nostril Breathing). This is the yogic practice of regulating and channelling one's breath.

Benefits

- Lowers heart rate and reduces stress and anxiety
- Said to synchronize the two hemispheres of the brain
- Said to purify the subtle energy channels (nadis) of the body.

Technique

Sit in a comfortable position either in a chair or sitting crossed-legged on your mat. With your right hand, fold the index finger and middle finger into the palm of your hand. Gently close your right nostril with your thumb. Inhale through your left nostril, and then close it using your ring finger and little finger. Open and exhale slowly through the right nostril.






Keep the right nostril open, inhale, then close it, and open and exhale slowly through the left. This is one cycle. Repeat 3 to 5 times. This is the basic method when you first start to practice pranayama.

Meditation

Doctors now promote meditation as an effective remedy for stress. A growing body of evidence shows that meditation practices improve our ability to handle extreme challenges as well as anxiety and disappointment. Given the profound benefits of meditation, which include a sense of calm well being, the ability to think more clearly, and an opportunity to integrate difficult emotions and experiences in ways that don't overwhelm us, it's not surprising that the practice is gaining in popularity.

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POSTURES THAT REDUCE TENSION AND INCREASE FLEXIBILITY

<p>Supta Padangusthasana & Parivrtta Supta Padangusthasana</p> <p>Benefits – Stretches the hips, thighs, hamstrings, groins and calves. Strengthens the knees. Stimulates the prostate gland. Improves digestion. Relieves backache, sciatica, and menstrual discomfort. Therapeutic for high blood pressure, flat feet and infertility.</p> <p>If you are especially stiff or suffering with sciatica, do this posture with the heel of the bottom foot pressed against a wall.</p> <p>Contraindications – Diarrhoea. Headache. High blood pressure: raise your head and neck on a folded blanket.</p>	
<p>Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward dog).</p> <p>Benefits: - Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression. Energizes the body. Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches, and hands. Strengthens the arms and legs. Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause. Helps prevent osteoporosis. Improves digestion. Relieves headache, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue. Therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, sinusitis.</p> <p>Contraindications: -Carpal tunnel syndrome, diarrhoea, high blood pressure or headache: - support your head on a bolster or block.</p>	
<p>Prasarita Padottanasana (wide-legged forward bend)</p> <p>Benefits - Strengthens and stretches the inner and back legs and the spine. Tones the abdominal organs. Calms the brain and relieves mild backache.</p> <p>Contraindications - Lower-back problems: Avoid the full forward bend by placing your hands on blocks or on your thighs.</p>	
<p>Upavista Konasana (seated wide-angle posture)</p> <p>Benefits: - Stretches the insides and backs of the legs. Stimulates the abdominal organs. Strengthens the spine and calms the brain.</p> <p>Contraindications Lower-back injury: - sit up high on a folded blanket or block and keep your torso relatively upright. Use a belt around both feet until you can reach your feet easily with your back straight.</p>	
<p>Janu Sirsasana (head to knee forward bend)</p> <p>Benefits: - Calms the brain and helps relieve mild depression. Stretches the spine, shoulders, hamstrings, and groins. Stimulates the liver and kidneys. Improves digestion. Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause. Relieves anxiety, fatigue, headache, and menstrual discomfort. Therapeutic for high blood pressure, insomnia, and sinusitis. Strengthens the back muscles if you keep your back straight and front torso long and not bending too far forward.</p> <p>Contraindications – Asthma. Diarrhoea. Knee injury: - don't flex the injured knee completely and support it on a folded blanket.</p>	
<p>Viparita Karani (legs up the wall).</p> <p>Benefits: - Relieves tired or cramped legs and feet. Gently stretches the back legs, front torso, and the back of the neck. Relieves mild backache and calms the mind.</p> <p>Contraindications: -Avoid if you have eye problems such as glaucoma. With serious neck or back problems only perform posture with the supervision of an experienced teacher. If your feet begin to tingle, bend your knees, put the soles of your feet together and slide your feet down the wall, bringing your heels close to your pelvis.</p>	