



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

Issue no: 61

March 2013

YOGA THERAPY

BENEFITS OF BALANCING POSTURES

Even relatively simple balances like Vrksasana (Tree Posture) and Ardha Chandrasana (Half Moon Posture) demand our full, wakeful attention in a way that other standing postures do not. The instant we lose focus, we fall over. Standing on one foot, we have to keep all other thoughts out of our mind and just concentrate on the balance. That's why these postures can give us a deep sense of calm even though they require our full attention.

Despite the frustration, one-legged balancing asanas offer so many benefits that it's well worth the trouble to practise them. In addition to promoting concentration and calm, these postures strengthen our muscles and build our coordination and balance, improving our ways of standing and walking as well as how we perform many other everyday activities. These benefits might actually prolong our lives, helping us avoid the falls that often lead to injuries and death among the elderly.

The three essential elements of balance are **alignment, strength, and attention.**

- Alignment of the body with gravity is crucial; it makes balance physically possible.
- Strength gives us the power to create, hold, and adjust alignment.
- Attention continually monitors alignment so we know how to correct it from one moment to the next.

Balancing Tips

- The best way to strengthen the muscles for balancing is simply to practice lots and lots of one-legged standing postures. Try practising the balance with the support of a wall or back of a chair so you can hold it for a long time without losing your balance.
- Do one-legged balancing postures on a firm, level surface.
- Do them early in a practice session, when you are fresh rather than fatigued.
- Keep your gaze gently fixed on one point.

If you still have trouble balancing:

- Use a wall for support.
- Bend both knees before lifting one leg.
- Put extra weight on the outer edge of your standing foot.
- Hold your hands out to your sides like a tightrope walker.

As your balance improves, eliminate these techniques one by one.

BALANCING POSTURES TO PRACTISE

<p>VRKSASANA (tree posture)</p> <p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthens thighs, calves, ankles, and spine• Stretches the groins and inner thighs, chest and shoulders• Improves sense of balance• Relieves sciatica and reduces flat feet <p>Cautions:-If you have high blood pressure, don't raise your arms overhead. Keep your hands on your hips or stretched out to the side.</p>	 <p>MARTIN SCODUTO</p>
<p>ARDHA CHANDRASANA (half-moon posture)</p> <p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthens the abdomen, ankles, thighs, buttocks, and spine• Stretches the groins, hamstrings and calves, shoulders, chest, and spine• Improves coordination and sense of balance• Helps relieve stress• Improves digestion <p>Cautions:-If you have any neck problems, don't turn your head to look upward; continue looking straight ahead and keep both sides of the neck evenly long.</p>	 <p>MARTIN SCODUTO</p>
<p>GARUDASANA (Eagle posture)</p> <p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthens and stretches the ankles and calves• Stretches the thighs, hips, shoulders, and upper back• Improves concentration• Improves sense of balance <p>Cautions: If you have a knee injury, keep the big toe of the front leg on the floor. If you find it difficult to wrap your arms around until the palms touch, stretch your arms straight forward, parallel to the floor, while holding onto the ends of a strap. Keep the strap taut between your hands.</p>	 <p>MARTY SCODUTO</p>
<p>VIRABHADRASANA III (warrior III)</p> <p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthens the ankles and legs• Strengthens the shoulders and muscles of the back• Tones the abdomen• Improves balance and posture <p>Cautions: To help you practise balancing in this posture, place a chair in front of you and as you stretch forward place your hands on the back of the chair.</p>	 <p>CHRIS ANDRE</p>