



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

Issue no: 75

September 2014

YOGA THERAPY YOUR INNER STRENGTH

B.K.S. IYENGAR

On August 20th B.K.S. Iyengar sadly passed away. He was the founder of Iyengar yoga and he made yoga accessible to everyone with the use of props such as belts, bricks, blocks and blankets. The work he did touched the hearts and souls of thousands of people. His amazing work will live on in all students of yoga. He left this legacy for all practitioners of yoga:

“Yoga is the golden key that unlocks the door to peace, tranquility and joy”.

INNER STRENGTH

This month we will focus on inner strength and also learning to connect to our inner selves. Yoga is so much more than just practicing yoga postures. After a yoga class, you should feel calm and peaceful, having connected to your inner self.

THE SPHINCTERS

The sphincters are muscles used to control the exit of substances from the body. We will learn to control three of the sphincters in order to bring internal strength in all of our yoga postures. This will help to achieve correct alignment in postures and to maintain correct alignment in the pelvis. It will help to protect our lumbar spine and to strengthen the muscles in the back. Pulling up these sphincters will also help prevent prolapses of the bladder, uterus and rectum.

The three sphincters that we will focus on are the urethral, vaginal and anal sphincters. The urethral sphincter is a tube that connects to the bladder for the removal of fluids from the body.

Lie down with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Keep the centre of your sacrum on the floor. Inhale and as you exhale pull up the **urethral** sphincter.

Then inhale and relax and as you exhale pull up the **vaginal** sphincter or, for men, the **scrotum/testicles**.

Then inhale and relax and as you exhale pull up the **anal** sphincter.

Then inhale and relax and as you exhale do all three together.

CONNECT TO YOUR INNER SELF

Sit in a comfortable position with legs crossed if possible. You may need to sit on a support such as a folded blanket or blocks. Imagine there is a jar about a metre in front of you. As you inhale draw the breath out of the jar to the tip of your nose and then as you exhale, breathe back into the jar. Breathe slowly and deeply for about two minutes. Then imagine the jar is behind you and do the same behind you for two minutes. This helps to create space around you and allows you to connect to your inner self.

IMPROVE THESE POSTURES BY LIFTING THE INNER BODY

TADASANA (mountain)

Tadasana is a foundational posture where we stand tall with inner and outer strength.

We actively press down into our feet which will initiate a natural lift in the rest of the body. We keep the kneecaps facing forward to protect the knees. Pulling up the quadriceps strengthens the knees. Keep the inner body lifting by pulling up the sphincters while still pressing down into the feet.



DAVID MARTINEZ

TRIKONASANA (triangle)

This posture strengthens the spine and builds stamina, focus and balance. Keep your legs straight, your leg muscles firm and your torso lined up directly above your front leg. The weight should be equal on both feet. Keep the front of the body open and keep the chest open, not allowing the chest to drop forward.

Before moving into this posture, pull up the sphincters and maintain this control with the breath throughout the posture.



RORY EARNSHAW

ARDHA CHANDRASANA (half-moon)

This posture helps to refine your balance as it strengthens the lumbar, thoracic and cervical vertebrae, the femur bones in your legs and the bones in your wrists, arms and shoulders. Pull up the sphincters before moving into this posture. In order to keep the body open and in correct alignment, do not look down as you lift the back leg. Take the front hand forward onto a block or other support keeping your head looking sideways and not down.



MARTIN SCODUTO

VIRABHADRASANA II (warrior II)

This posture safely stimulates the femur and pelvic bones, improves balance, hip mobility, leg strength and self-assurance. Important to work on core muscles in this posture by pulling up the sphincters.

Keep your upper body directly above your hips and do not lean forward.

Pull up the sphincters before bending the front knee. Feel your inner body lifting and the sacrum dropping down helping you to maintain a healthy lumbar spine.



CHRIS ANDRE

VRKSASANA (TREE POSTURE)

The purpose of practising Vrksasana is to strengthen the legs and hips and to improve balance without risk of falling. Start by pulling up the sphincters and so lifting the front of the body.

Stand firmly on one foot and pull up the muscles of the standing leg. Stretching your arms up or out to the side will give an outward expansion from the centre of your body out through your arms and legs. Enjoy the challenge of balancing with the right amount of effort. Use a wall for extra support by resting the bent knee against the wall. This will also teach you correct alignment of the pelvis in this posture.



MARTIN SCODUTO