

Help Your Health - The Weekly Review - #04 Autumn 2016

Asana:

Now during our fourth week we continue to work on our Fall theme but have added a few movements for Arthritis.

While standing/sitting this week we went through various exercises for the **hands and wrists**. Some of these are suggestions from Dr. Loren Fishman from his book "Yoga for Arthritis".

Examples:

Palms flat on the wall at eye height and pulling the fingers together

Bending each and every finger joint separately.

Interlaced hands and do gentle figure eights in both directions.

Straight arm, make a fist, bend wrist inward towards you, feel the stretch!

Interlaced hands in front of chest and trying to pull them apart.

Isometric engagement of shoulders and upper arm area which squeezing into sides of body etc.

Chaturanga Dandasana/Four-Limbed Staff Pose

Purpose: to strengthen the upper back and arms; to stimulate the cervical, thoracic, and lumbar vertebrae as well as ankles, hips, shoulders and wrists; to build core strength.

Contraindications: Carpal tunnel syndrome, severe wrist arthritis, Dupuytren's contracture.

Avoiding Pitfalls:

Make sure to retract your shoulder blades and broaden your front chest. Shoulders should stay square across and the whole body remain in one long line. Use your abdominal muscles to maintain the alignment of the body's midsection.

Most modified using the wall:

standing arms length from the wall with palm flat on the wall at shoulder height.

Be mindful that when you bend the elbows directly down that they do not flare out to the sides.

Keep the body straight as if there had a posture pole from your head to your heels.

Exhale come towards the wall only as far as you can then comfortably return to your beginning position.

Do a few sets, resting between, each set consisting of approx. 5-10.

Next variation using a chair:

Kneel in front of a chair which is up against the wall so it can not move.

Place hands on the sides of the chair or where it feels most comfortable.

Keep the body straight from knees to the top of the head, bend the elbows (as mentioned before directly down) and come forward but only as far as you can then return back to your original position.

If you want more challenge either move your knees back a few more inches from the chair and/or pick up your feet from the floor.

Please be sure that in all push-ups the upper arms are hugging the sides of the body and you are engaging the shoulders and upper body.

Do not be tempted to reach with the chin forward, posture is very important. Keep the body straight.

Preventative version:

Kneeling on the floor with hips and shoulders stacked over knees and wrists (can also be done in a longer position)

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This version can also begin very easily with the elbows bending back until the forearms are almost on the mat and progress until the forearms stay perpendicular to the mat and only the upper torso and upper arms move which would bring the forehead towards the area directly on your mat which is beyond your fingertips. You can also do a variation where the body is on all fours but a longer version but as you do this the body then stays more in a straight line.

This can be progressively harder so do not attempt to come down too far until you see and feel the strength you need to return to position.

At first you will feel as if you are off balance and going to land on your face, please do not go this far. Placement of the hands and torso can also depend upon your body condition so take it slowly.

One of the top ten in the study is:

Pashimottanasana or Hip Fold with Long Spine

Purpose: to stimulate the legs, pelvis and spine in anterior-posterior plane with minimal risk of vertebral fracture in the first variation and to conclude the practice with a quiet mind. This pose increases patience and steadfastness.

Contraindications: Hamstring sprain, ischial bursitis, recently herniated disc (version 2 & 3), ischial tunnel syndrome.

Avoiding pitfalls:

Straightening the legs fully, using a strong contraction of the thigh muscles. In the first version, pressing the second leg strongly down on the floor.

Beginning version:

Lying down so that the lower edge of a blanket is at the small of your back and the rest of your upper body lies on the blanket.

Bend your right knee and place your foot flat on the mat.

Firm the muscles of your legs pressing the thighs and sitting bones down which may slightly arch your lower back.

Contract your abdomen in and up and lengthen your tailbone towards your heels without flattening your lower back.

With the pelvis stabilized, raise your right leg up and hook a belt around the foot, hold with both hands.

Gradually straighten the leg, firming the muscles on all sides, elevating the heel and stretching the toes while continuing to press the left leg down onto the floor.

Adjust the angle of the right leg so you can straighten your knee using the thigh muscles strongly to fully extend the knee.

If straightening of the extended knee is not possible/or you have a back issue, do the pose with the left leg bent, foot flat on the floor until your hamstrings become more flexible, this will enable you to stabilize your pelvis.

For either version, press the sitting bones down.

The main action is to push the right thigh away from your upper body against the resistance of the belt pulling the foot toward you.

Repeat on the other side.

More advanced version:

Sitting on the edge of one or two folded blankets with your legs extended forward.

You may want to manually pull your sitting bones and thighs back and apart, this may help you tilt your pelvis forward.

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Begin with the arms behind the body leaning slightly back and then bringing the arms closer to the body for sitting up straight.

Loop the belt around the feet and hold with both hands.

Hug the leg muscles to the bones and stretch though your feet with toes and kneecaps pointing straight up.

Firm your abdominal muscles and lift the spine up from the core of the pelvis, especially the lower back where it tends to round.

Pull the belt to connect your arms into the shoulders with the elbows bent.

With each inhale continue to lift, stretch and pull the shoulders back.

With each exhale, soften without losing form or the actions of the pose.

Extending up evenly on the side, front and back of torso, do not rock back and forth but only think of continuing forward slowing with care and patience.

Single Leg Version: Moderate and Prevention

This version, which was just described above can also be done with single leg extend and other leg bent with heel at the groin area.

If you have a knee issue and this does not work for you then you can open the bent leg or take the foot to the shin.

Keep the straight leg long and pressing the back of the knee and thigh down to the floor and at the same time stretching the heel away from you.

Body facing extended leg. Breathing is done the same, inhaling and stretching up and exhaling as inclining forward towards the foot with the spine extended and no rounding or collapsing. Shifting the belly towards the side of the extended leg to lengthen the side ribs and your stretch forward using the strap with both hands.

Using the breath to remain calm and avoid any agitation.

Keeping the front chest lifting as you bend forward until you are able to grasp you foot with both hands for a deeper stretch for the Prevention Version (not recommended for Osteoporosis or Osteopenia due to risk of fractures)

Repeating on the second side.

Prevention version:

Continue as above using a hinging action at your hips not by collapsing your head, shoulders or chest.

Adjusting and reaching further forward on the the belt or eventually not using the belt at all.

As one becomes more flexible the belly/chest comes closer to the legs and eventually the head to the legs, hand wrapped around the feet with only minimal rounding of the spine.

Misc.

Reading during Attunement at the beginning of class:

an excerpt from a book "Perfectly Imperfect" by Baron Baptiste (a second generation yoga teacher).

Every student has his or her NO pose. maybe even more than one. You know your NO pose: it's the one that makes you inwardly groan when the teacher calls it out, and likely leads you to automatically think, *Ugh.....I don't want to....I can't do this one....*

But you actually don't know for sure that you can't do that pose. What you've come up against isn't necessarily a physical limitation. Resistance can be very deceiving behind the many masks it wears. Maybe you haven't been able to do that pose in the past, but what about today?

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The yogis say you can never step into the same river twice, because the current is always shifting and changing. You've never stepped into this exact river before today, not with this body, not with today's particular energy, with the specific number of bites of breakfast in your belly, with the earth tipped on its exact axis. Perhaps up until now you haven't had a breakthrough in this pose, but that was then. What's possible today?

Every pose is a new opportunity, each and every time. All the work you've done up until now has been to lead you to this precise moment, to face precisely what you're facing.

Yoga is a dance of dealing with what is, and allowing yourself to fully experience whatever you're experiencing right here, in the moment.

In life, we so often resist what we don't like or don't want to do. Here, on your mat, is a safe opportunity to see what's on the other side of that.

Physical asana is a measure of some higher possibility.

Put your attention to what you want to have happen and be for it, and watch the magic unfold.

What are you a YES for today?

Savasana/Closing Statement:

instead we did a guided self-massage of the face and neck. I do suggest that you use an oil while doing this it feel so much better. I use an oil which I can also ingest (coconut, olive, sesame), be sure that it doesn't have any toxins as what you apply to the skin can also be absorbed into the blood system.

Here are a few link to articles which you may find interesting regarding this subject:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/deborah-burnes/skin-care_b_1540929.html

<http://www.herbhedgerow.co.uk/can-cosmetics-be-absorbed-into-your-bloodstream/>

Important Disclaimer

The news, suggestions, information, exercises and other items in this list are intended for informational purposes only. Not all exercise is suitable for everyone. To reduce the risk of injury, please consult your Doctor before engaging in any physical and/or therapeutic exercise program. Nothing is intended to be a substitute for professional medical care.

For more information contact: RoxAnn Madera 714.421.0477 yogatherapyalacarte.com

