

**Asana this week:**  
**Feet/Toes/Ankles**  
**Hands/Fingers/Wrist**  
**Lunge (to be continued next week)**

**Name: Feet/Toes/Ankles**

**Description: Flex and Extension of the toes and ankle.**

Flexing the toes while sitting in a chair with proper tracking of the knee.

Extension/Pointing of the toes which continues to a strong stretch of the ankle.

Can be done daily while sitting in a chair.

In class we did this sitting sideways on a chair and during the flexion, with the knee directly under the hip we also did a slow/short lift of the buttocks off the chair.

Be mindful to hold-on as well as engage the thighs/buttocks before lifting, as well as the core, in order not to put too much pressure on the knee and flexed toes.

**Physical Benefits:**

A natural stretch for the toes and ankles but one we often no longer do in normal movement and exercise. The toes love to be stretched in both directions, it's just us who do not enjoy this in the beginning as we have a tendency to be tight. This will change with practice as we sit everyday in a chair and this is something we can also do every day, be patient as it took decades to become tight it will take some dedication to stretch.

**Adaptations/Variations:**

We also did work the the toes directly: lifting, pushing down and out etc.

Think about your feet, what do you do for them on a regular basis regarding TLC. Some don't even acknowledge their feet as they don't like they way they look. This calls for unconditional acceptance and love, they deserve it, after all they carry you through your life and without them where would you be? Give them more than an occasional pedicure and a touch of paint!

**Name: Hands/Fingers/Wrist**

**Prevention:**

**Switch** your computer mouse to your non-dominant hand for a change!

Carpal Tunnel is most often found in the dominant hand. A very simple way you can prevent the constant accumulation of stress and strain on your dominant hand and wrist is to start switching liege mundane tasks into your opposite hand.

For example, if you are right handed and use your computers mouse with the right hand, with it to the left hand.

At first it will feel totally exotic, clunk and unnatural but trust me on this one, it will make a huge difference in your hands, wrists, forearms, elbows, shoulder and NECK!

Get past the awkward first day and you will eventually forget which hand was dominant in no time.

**Maintenance = Stretching**

**Forearm Stretch:**

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Start on your hands and knees/Table.

With your hands aligned under your shoulders (palms down and fingers facing your knees either single hand or both depending what you can do/inside of your forearms turned away from your chest) and your knees under your hips.

Relax, just breathing easy.

Gradually sink back until your buttocks is hovering over your heels.

Let the palms raise gradually as you sink back, let the thumbs peel away from the mat with the palms.

Leaving the other 4 fingers on the mat to press into the floor, feel the deep stretch throughout the fingers, wrists and palms.

Why do you want to do this forearm stretch?

We are 'graspers' by nature, holding onto objects, tools, steering wheels and the like so the flexors of our forearms are disproportionately tight. To keep the fine flexors of the forearms and wrists supple, they need to have their own stretch series.

Next week we will add a movement for the top of the forearms which are even more neglected than the underside of the forearms.

### **Various Descriptions: Niyasam, Bend each Knuckle, Finger Circles, Squeezing the Knuckles.**

#### **Niyasam:**

The slide/glide of the thumb up the index finger on one side and down the other continuing to the pinky and then coming back.

At first we usually slide on the back of each finger but with practice the thumb will be able to slide on the side of each finger.

Inhale on the way up to the tip and exhale on the way down to the base.

#### **Physical Benefits:**

Can help relieve arthritic conditions in the hands, help the blood circulating and make the hands more agile and flexible. Can be done with the eyes closed, one hand at a time and be very relaxing.

#### **Adaptations/Variations:**

#1 Slide/Glide with a flick, used for one with Neurologic diagnosis as Parkinsons, seizures etc.

#2 Slide/Glide with a push, use to increase strength of the fingers.

#### **Bend each Knuckle:**

We also worked each knuckle of each finger from the proximal, medial and the distal. Each bending so the tip of that finger could touch the palm without the neighboring fingers following. Use your other hand to hold down the other fingers if necessary or to hold the other knuckle so you can isolate each knuckle of each finger, patience!

#### **Single Finger Circles:**

Beginning with the right thumb making circles clockwise to the pinky and returning with counterclockwise circles back to the thumb.

While making these circles make sure that nothing of that end moves except the one finger.

Spread the fingers wide, engage them with palm facing down.

If they want to have a finger party than use the other hand coming up from underneath to spread the neighboring fingers, holding them away while you practice moving the finger in between.

This takes concentration and a strong effort between the mind and the fingers. I suggest to concentrate on the two fingers next to the one you want to move and not the moving finger.

Good luck and stay with it. It will improve with practice and can become quite enjoyable once you can control those fingers.

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**Squeezing the knocks:** from the sides as well and front/back using two fingers of the other hand. You will feel it if you have arthritis in a knuckle but I have been told (20 years ago) to continue doing it and let it feel uncomfortable. This was when I was diagnosed with Osteoarthritis in my hips and my hands.

### Name: **Lunge/Banarasana**

We didn't explore all the lunge options in every class so we will repeat this series next week.

But for now I will give you the description of the important lunge to counter all of the sitting one might be doing. As asked in class, find a spot ready to use, in each room where you sit for a period of time and do it after a sitting session to stretch. Your body will thank you!

#### **Description:**

Standing near a wall (for support) and or chair.

Place one foot on a chair/stool/ottoman/sofa etc. with knee directly over ankle.

Stepping back with other leg until one feels a strong stretch in the hip/pelvic/groin area.

The back heel should be sturdy on the floor.

Hold for at least 30 seconds on each side.

Besides the intention of this stretch you may also feel stretching in the back of the lower leg from heel to knee.

#### **Physical Benefits:**

Counteracts the tightness that occurs from frequent, everyday sitting/hip flexion. Stretches the quadriceps and psoas.

Supports the stabilization of the knee joint. Help establish a comfortable seated pose.

#### **Adaptations/Variations: to be continued next week in class**

### **Attune: Behaviors for a healthier brain.**

#### **#1 Talk to Strangers:**

Research shows talking to strangers makes us happier. The why is what's so important. Our brains are constantly stressed these days by too much to pay attention to. We feel on edge echoes we don't know where to focus. That's simply the alarm in your brain, your amygdala, overreacting.

Talking to strangers immediately gives you something to focus on. You get a shot of adrenaline from the alarm because you want to make sure this person is safe, but you also begin, sentence by sentence, to feel incredibly engaged.

Suddenly your fear of the new or unknown dissipates and your frontal lobes, which have to fire for your alarm to turn down, are in full gear. You enjoy the novelty of a fresh conversation. And in the future, there is a powerful kicker. You will see strangers as a potential friend rather than a certain threat.

### **Pranayama: Bhramari**

#### **Getting Started:**

In a comfortable seated position, either on the floor or in a chair, with the thighs angled down and your natural curve of your lumbar spine honored. Always balance effort and ease.

Making a buzzing sound of moderate volume, but never forced.

Keep your facial muscles loose, your lips lightly touch, and your jaw relaxed (this is most important for resonance)

With the upper and lower rows of teeth slightly separated, tongue free and loose.

Prolong the buzzing sound on the exhalation as long as it's comfortable and you can still inhale smoothly, without gasping for air.

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If you start to feel agitated, back off and return to normal breathing.

### Basic:

Sitting comfortably and allowing your eyes to close.

Take a breath or two to settle in and notice the state of your mind.

When you are ready, inhale and buzz for the entire length of your exhalation, make a low-to medium-pitched humming sound in the throat.

Notice how a wave gently vibrates your tongue, teeth, and sinuses.

Imagine the sound is vibrating your entire brain (it really is).

Do this practice for 6 rounds of breath and then, keeping your eye's closed, return to your normal breathing.

Notice if anything has changed.

### Basic with Shanmukhi Mudra (Variation):

One way to intensify the effects is to use the thumbs to close the ear canal but placing them on the tragus (a piece of cartilage/like a bump on the cheek side of each ear).

Continue with the low-medium pitch buzzing sound on the exhale, do 6 rounds.

This reminds me of swimming under water with ear plugs.

**Benefits:** Can relieve insomnia, sinus issues/infections, nasal congestion, thyroid problems and stress.

The 'noise' of bhamari's buzzing can drown out the endless mental tape loops that can fuel emotional suffering, making it a useful starting point for those who mins are too 'busy' to meditate.

A safe, easy to learn practice has tremendous therapeutic potentials. Like other pranayamas, its power comes partly from its effects on the autonomy nervous system (ANS). Lengthening the exhalation relative to the inhalation activated the calming parasympathetic brand of the ANS. For those who suffer from anxiety or anxious depression, the practice can begin to quiet a person within a few breaths.

We will continue next with with the Traditional version using all the fingers and dressing all the senses.

## Essential Oil:

Heart Song: lavender, Coriander, Geranium, Rose

## Music: Deuter

## Quote: Lao Tzu

*The Ego is a monkey catapulting through the jungle:*

*Totally fascinated by the realm of the senses, it swings from one desire to the next, one conflict to the next, one self-centered idea to the next.*

*If you threaten it, it actually fears for its life.*

*Let the monkey go....let the senses go...let desires go...let conflicts go...let ideas go...let the fiction of life and death go...  
Just remain in the center, watching.*

*And then forget that you are there.*

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### Miscellaneous:

I spoke about a vegetable which we use often and have since living in Germany.

It is not very common here but can be found at some asian markets and middle eastern markets (the Farmers Market on Gothard which use to be Armstrongs)

It is called “**Kohlrabi**” and can be eaten cold or prepared hot in various dishes.

Our daughters, when you were very young as well as now, always loved eating it.

#### *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](http://yogatherapyalacarte.com)**