

Help Your Health – The Weekly Review Summer Session 2018 – #3

Some key points regarding the shoulders and upper extremities:

This area normally does not do weight bearing. Usually, we hold weight only on the lower extremities and anatomically the lower extremities are built for stability, locomotion and weight training.

The upper extremities, on the other hand, are built for mobility and relationships with other, ex: shaking hands.

In yoga we bear weight on the upper extremities and at the same time asking to move through the full range of motion (ROM) of the shoulders in overhead movements.

Most of us do not go through the full range of motion during daily activities. We probably don't even raise our arms above our shoulder height or 90 degrees.

A few tips to protect the shoulders:

1. Align the shoulders with the elbows and wrist. Determine where you feel the most stable when bearing weight on the upper extremities.
2. Use your core muscles to pull away from the floor as you stabilize your arms and push your hands into the floor. You need stability in the shoulder blades and the central core in order to be able to protect the upper extremities in an asana.
3. The sense of stability comes from the shoulder blades. Set the shoulder blades before you start full weight bearing on the upper extremities. In general, you should hold the shoulder blades slightly down and in toward the thoracic spine.

Exploration: Shoulder Stabilization

1. In a facedown position, place your forehead on a very small rolled/folded towel. Arms are by your sides and slightly away from the body with the palms facing up.

Keep your upper back and neck relaxed as you squeeze the bottom of the scapulas(shoulder blades) down the back, then in toward each other (in their pockets) as you lift your arms off of the ground.

Hold for a count of five. Repeat three times.

2. Starting in the same facedown position, bring the arms to shoulder height in a goalpost/cactus shape with the palms on the ground.

Keep your upper back and neck relaxed as you squeeze the bottom of each scapula down the back and then toward each other:

- a) as you lift the arms off the ground
- b) now lift and draw the bent elbows in toward the body

c) now lift and draw the hands toward each other until the fingers touch over the head.

These are three different versions, each to be done separately, keeping the 90 degree angle at the elbow, forearm/wrist/hand as straight as possible. Held for a count of five and each repeated three times.

3. Starting in the same face down position, extend the arms straight in front of you/up over head with the palms down on the ground.

Keep your upper back and neck relaxed as you squeeze the bottom the scales down the back and then in toward each other as you lift the arms off the ground.

Hold for a count of five. Repeat three times.

Exploration: Range of Motion (ROM) Supine Shoulder Series

You can perform this series from a reclined position with the knees bent and feet on the floor or reclined with the legs straight. Most of this series can also be done standing with back contact to the wall but in this position you do not have gravity on your side.

Flexion and Extension

1. Start with the arms active by the sides of the body, a few inches off the ground with the palms facing the floor.

2. Inhale to lift both arms skyward, eventually raising them until they are beside the ears. Exhale to lower the arms back down by the sides of the body. Repeat 5-10 times.

Internal and External Rotation

1. Bring the arms out to the sides at shoulder height with the elbows bent at 90 degrees, and the forearms and palm facing the wall in front of you.

2. With an inhalation, roll through the upper-arms bones to bring the forearms down toward the floor. Keep the upper arms straight out from the shoulders and the elbows bent at 90 degrees throughout the movement.

3. Exhale to return to the starting position. Roll through the upper-arm bones to bring the hands towards the ears and the forearms toward the ceiling. Repeat 5-10 times.

Protraction and Retraction

1. Reach arms straight toward the ceiling, shoulder-width apart and palms facing each other.

2. Inhale and reach toward the ceiling, spreading the shoulder blades apart. Exhale as the shoulder blades slide back toward the floor and each other. Repeat 5-10 times.

Angel Arms

1. Begin with arms beside the body, and a few inches off of the floor with the palms facing towards the ground. Roll the shoulders open and palms towards the sky as you sweep the arms out to the sides and then up by the ears. Keep the arms straight as you reach overhead and on the exhale bring them back down to the sides of the body.

2. Repeat 5-10 times and then reverse the movement by starting with the arms by the ears with the palms up, sweeping them out to the sides as you roll the shoulders closed. Turn the palms back toward the ground, and return the arms back to the sides of the body.

General Class:

Restorative with the Breath: Legs on the chair with blanket across and lengthwise.

Attunement/Starting Pose/Supine: Morning Wake-Up Stretch, Hip Openers with Bent Legs (Small Circles Together, Circles Apart and Large, In/Out Together), Ankles/Wrists Flex-Extend

Warm-Up/Prone/Belly: Child's Pose, Walk to the Right/Left, Thread the Needle, Cat n' Cow, Balancing Cat, Child's Pose.... Heart Lifts, Up-dog/Plank/Down-Dog (your choice of four different asana in a flow), Sphinx Plank, A-Symmetrical Locust Lifts + Symmetrical,

Standing/Balance: Tree

Chair:

Savasana: Supine and Relaxed

Essential Oil: doTerra "Deep Blue"

Wintergreen, Camphor, Peppermint, Ylang Ylang, Helicrysum, Blue Tansey, Blue Chamomile Osmanthus
Please see my weekly newsletter for more details.

Music: Barbara Thompson "Songs from the Center of the Earth"

Quote: He who works with his hands is a laborer, he who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman, he who works with his hands, head and his heart is an artist." -St. Francis of Assisi

Miscellaneous:

1. Printable PDF/Link to Morning Wake-Up Stretch on my website:

https://yogatherapyalacarte.com/2018/01/20/morning_wake_up_stretch/

2. [Printable link to Attunement / warm-up](#) for all general classes.

This is the first section of each class, explained in detail, which we usually repeat every week.