

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

General Class: Core Strength

Before we begin reviewing the class lets first look into some details/tidbits and facts:

What & Where is the core?

- A soft body of organs and muscles beginning below the respiratory diaphragm and ending on the pelvic floor.
- Bordered: posteriorly by the lumbar spine and sacrum, laterally by the ilia/ilium of the pelvis and the ribs, anteriorly by the sternum and the pubis.
- Housing the organs of digestion, assimilation, elimination and procreation (the heart and lungs are the only organs located above it)
- Usually when we talk about the core we refer to the entirety of the torso between the sternum and the pubic bone. The abdomen is only one small part of it.
- The word abdomen describes the anatomical aspect of the area while the word belly describes the metaphysical of philosophic aspects of the abdomen.
- The abdomen can be generally rounded and yet strong, it does not need to be flat and hard in order to work well as strong and tight are not the same thing
- The belly is the site of an intuitive awareness that can be used to enhance life.
- Science agrees: the second brain is throughout the abdomen and the chest where there are neurological sites which respond to neurotransmitters the same way that the brain does. Let's call it the **“belly brain.”**
- Eastern Belly Philosophy:** In the same region is the Manipura Chakra -the third Chakra at the energetic center located at the level of the navel where our agni/fire of digestion resides. This area is seen as the home of apana/female energy which is increased by exhalation and moves downward in the body.
- A Yogi practice: The Bandha (meaning ‘to lock-to hold-to tighten’) of this region is the Uddiyana (to fly like a great bird). engagement of the abdominal muscles. Exhaling strongly as the diaphragm ascends and the abs are strongly contracted toward the spine. The exhalation is held and the ribs are lifted up and out. so the abdomen appears hollow and the pressure on the organs is greatly increased.
One effect is encouraging the prana to enter the energy channel of the spine and create a higher state of consciousness as the chakras are stimulated. Another effect is to create an internal and eternal energy allowing us to use physical movement in concert with the breath to mindfully create lasting change.

What are its functions?

Structurally we will notice that this part of the body does not have many bones, except for the spine and some floating ribs, yet it contains many important internal organs that need to be kept safe and sound.

Without the bony structure to rely on, the entire area needs to be wrapped up tightly to maintain the integrity of its contents. It is best to think of our core musculature as a tightly wrapped package protecting the internal organs. Here you have muscles running across the body (transverse abdomens =TA's), diagonally (external and internal obliques) and from top to bottom (rectus abdomens at the front =RA's and quadrates lumbar QM's and erectors at the back). Because of the way our core is organized (vertically, horizontally and diagonally), it allows a great range of movement in the trunk. bending forward, backwards, sideways, twisting and doing combinations of those.

So this is the first purpose of your core musculature – **organ containment and protection.**

Another function/purpose is **stabilization of the top part of the body over the bottom part.** It may seem like no big deal but actually being able to walk on two feet instead of four IS a big deal especially since the top part is heavier (head, rib cage, arms, top part of the spine, plus brain and organs). We don't just want to stand but to move without toppling over and that is why the core part of the body needs to be stable to provide adequate support for the spin that takes on the bulk of the load. Since the bony support is lacking here, testability needs to come from both muscle tone and muscle balance from front to back and side to side and this is why no one muscle is more important than the other. They all have to work together to get the job done, especially when the body is in motion.

Another important element is that **your core controls the positions of your pelvis** which has the capacity to tip forward or back, depending both on your inherent structure and the way you use the body in the day-to-day life. Extreme pelvic tilting/tipping one way or the other can create problems over time, so can lack of mobility of the pelvis. Your core muscles are the ones that regulate both, how much movement is possible between the pelvis and the lumbar spine and where the position of your pelvis will end up on that spectrum. So we use our core musculature to consciously control the position of the pelvis during movement to train the body not to go into extremes.

And why should I work on the core?

Besides some of the reasons stated above there are the following: improved posture, increased protection and bracing of the spine/back, greater balance and coordination, greater power and speed.

A thought:

Health and exercise programs focus on movement to tighten and harden the belly with little awareness directed toward what feeling is alive there. We see the belly as a part of ourselves that needs to be strictly controlled. In a short period of time while watching the TV one sees advertisements for nausea, indigestion, constipation and diarrhea: all symptoms of problems with the belly. Perhaps these maladies are a general expression of the stress levels of modern day life. Could it be that part of the problem stems from being out of touch with the 'belly brain?'

General Class:

Restorative with the Breath: Legs on the chair with blanket: 1. across 2.lengthwise of upper torso.

Attunement:

Supine: Morning Wake-Up Stretch (see printable link below)

Hip Openers (Small Circles Together, Circles Apart and Large, In/Out Together)

Ankles/Wrists Flex-Extend

Prone: Child's Pose, Cat n' Cow

Class Sequence for Core Strength:

Prone

1. Balancing Cat/Hunting Dog/Ruddy Goose – Classic Static finding you 'still point' for 30 sec + Dynamic challenging the balance with extremity movement.

Supine

2. Reclined Twist Static + Dynamic x6 R/L

Belly

3. Dynamic A-Symmetrical Locust Pose x6 R/L Symmetrical: Lifting everything.

4. Sphinx Plank Static for 30 sec + Engaging: Belly, Pubic Bone, Curl Toes Under, Lift Knees in sequence.

5. Cobra Pose Various versions with hands on mat – under shoulders, forward and behind/forearms on the mat and lifting 30 sec + Low to Up-Dog slowly with control.

to Down-Dog then walk the hands to the feet and come up to Tadasana – leading with the heart.

Sitting – Hero Pose on the Bolster with upper body arm swings (to support reclined and seated twist plus standing poses with a twist)

Standing

6. Triangle Classic – Alternative: Chair, Wall

7. Half Downward-Facing Dog Classic: Static Using the wall or the back of a chair.

8. Extended Side Angle Pose Classic – Alternative: Chair, Wall

Sitting

9. Boat Pose Classic – Alternative: On Forearms, Single Legs, Different Holds

10. Sage Seated Twist Static & Dynamic

Supine

Savasana: Reclined Supta Bhaddha Konasana Cobbler's Pose with Bolster/Blocks

5-10 minutes of complete relaxation in supine (only possible in my studio where I have the bolsters)

Miscellaneous: A little Yoga Philosophy (see below under quote)

Music: Deuter – “Space” – Endless Horizon

Quote:

The Yoga Sutras:

Sutra #1.3 United in the heart, consciousness is steadied, then we abide in our true nature —joy.

Yogah Chitta Vritti Nirodahah – Yoga is the uniting of consciousness in the heart.

The **lotus flower** has long been a symbol for the unfolding of spirituality.

It is one of the most elegant illustrations of the meshing of our humans and Divine natures.

The lotus seed is planted and grows in muddy waters, below the surface of the lake, far from the light. Though the light is murky and unclear, the flower blossoms by drawing energy from within. As the bud passes through the muddy waters, it lifts its face to the sunlight and finally emerges. Miraculously, not a trace of soil remains on the flower.

It lives in the mud yet is unaffected by it. This is an example for us to be in the world but not be adversely affected by it. The lotus flower teaches us that no matter how muddy the water of our consciousness may become, clarity can always emerge from our spirit if the Divine Light guides us – even if it is only one tiny lotus blossom at a time.

“I looked in Temples, Churches and Mosques. I found the Divine in my heart.” -Rumi

An exercise in experiencing the Diving Spirit within:

In a softly lit room, sit as comfortably possible to a mirror.

Take a few deep breaths in and let them out slowly.

Allow yourself to relax.

Take a moment to look at your own familiar face.

Allow thoughts to drift away. Bring awareness to your eyes.

Keep your eyes soft as you gaze deeply into them.

At first you may feel uncomfortable. (We rarely, if ever, look ourselves in the eye.) But the eyes are the windows of the soul, so take a look into your own.

Continue to relax and soften the gaze.

Find yourself going deeper within until you get a glimpse of the Divine Light that is every present.

repeat either to yourself or aloud, "I am a Divine Being."

Start by doing this for one minute, and build to five minutes or more.

As you allow your eyes to close, be still and experience any feelings that surface.

What did you experience? Could you feel the depth of consciousness within?

Practice two times a day for one week and observe how your newfound feelings and thoughts influence and vision of your true nature and other people's as well.

Each time you pass a mirror or think of yourself in any way, reaffirm, "**I am a Divine Being.**"

Essential Oil:

OREGANO from doTerra (see details etc. in weekly newsletter under separate e-mail)

Misc. Asana Information:

Printable Link to Morning Wake-Up Stretch on my website:

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