

Help Your Health – The Weekly Review Fall Session 2018 – #5

General Class: Yoga for Balance Part II

This past week we have again been working on balance, challenging and stressing our limits of stability through ‘controlled instability’.

In your yoga practice we will be moving from simple to complex, progressing from known to unknown, static to dynamic, stable to unstable, eyes open to eyes closed and emphasizing quality over quantity.

What is Balance? (see WR #4)

How Aging Can Make a Change on Your Balance

Vestibular System

-this function gradually declines with age as the inner ear hair cells are unable to repair themselves and gradually die off. You can only compensate for these losses by working other aspects of balance, including your somatosensory system and your four essential physical skills

Vision System

-changes to the lenses of your eyes make it harder to focus quickly. Also cataracts, loss of peripheral vision, glaucoma and macular degeneration negatively affect vision.

Other Senses

-aging can gradually slow the relay of information between your brain and body affecting both your sense of touch (taking in information about the surface you’re balancing on) and your proprioception (where you are in a space)

-lack of sensitivity in your feet maybe having worn shoes too much in your lifetime

-sedentary lifestyle or lack of variety in movement

Strength

-muscle atrophy causes loss of strength over time

Flexibility

-muscles and joints become stiffer with age so range of motion is reduced leaving you not being able to move from one position to another

-being knocked off balance more easily and having a harder time moving back into balance afterward.

Nervous System

-age-related changes to your nerves causing the relay of information to be slower between your brain and your body, a slower reaction time can affect your coordination and speed of movement.

-the postural responses that keep you upright are a result of information sent to your brain from your eyes and inner ears, the pressure sensors on your feet and your proprioceptors and so our postural reflexes can gradually slow down.

How Yoga Helps

Fortunately balance is a skill that you can cultivate, and the modern asana practice is one of the best disciplines known for improving it. In addition, to working on strength and flexibility (which we will be doing after our week break) both of which are necessary for good balance – you can practice balancing itself in a wide variety of poses.

Plus the safety of your yoga space allows you to challenge your balance in a controlled environment before you face real-world challenges.

For the times you may fall – and it happens to the best of us – your practice will increase your chances of falling ‘well’. As many students have testified their reaction times seem faster and they had the ability to choose how and where to fall. Often when they began to fall, they ‘caught themselves’ before actually going all the way down.

Balance Poses

-balancing is a skill you can learn and relearn, just doing these poses helps improve your balance. This part of your practice includes poses where you balance another parts of your body besides one or two feet, possible one or two hands, on your shins, on your sitting bones and so on....

-beginning with what is appropriate for your needs if your balance is poor and gradually adding more challenging postures and situations.

Standing Poses

-placing your feet and your body in different positions – Warrior I and Triangle

-improving your proprioception, sense of touch, postural reflexes and creation times s well as focus and confidence.

Sense of Touch and Proprioception

-practicing in bare feet improving the sense of touch on the bottom your feet, just spending more time with your shoes off

-changing the surface of the floor from wood to a thin mat to a foam surface further improving your sensitivity

-practicing with a mirror once and awhile or using the wall

Nervous System

-a regular practice improves blood flow to your sensory nerves receptor and increases space around your nerves

Confidence and Mental Focus

-practicing over and over sometimes when no one is looking

-moving through flow sequences trains your mind as you focus again and again on balancing

-meditation in movement forms along with the breath

-in class use the distracting environment of others near by just to focus more

General Class:

Restorative with the Breath:

Legs on the chair/or up the wall: with/wo blanket: 1st -across the torso at base of shoulder blades

2nd -lengthwise along spine of upper torso including under the head but not under the buttocks

both with arms in Cactus if possible or a variation of which is possible.

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 -keep the legs and arms still and not moving in the same circles

Prone: Child's Pose

Cat n' Cow

Balancing Cat-Hunting Dog Chair – Classic Static for 30 sec + Dynamic with challenge

Getting up from the mat to standing: from Child's Pose to Prone to Down-Dog

-walk the hands to the feet and gracefully come up bringing the hands at the heart.

Make sure that the feet are wide so you can be stable, from beginning to end. Lead with your heart and not your head, no self induced dizziness.

Standing behind or Sideline of the Chair

Please have a chair within easy reach of your hands for balance safety.

When appropriate, do both right and left sides and always a version with eyes opened and closed, holding on and not.

Engage the muscles of the lower torso with the core strong, standing strong and tall.

1. Finding your Center of Balance

Do the following in sequence until you find where you challenge your balance and from there continue.

Each time going through the sequence with eyes open/Drishti and eyes closed, when necessary a hand on the chair.

Do not proceed to the next level until you can do the movement without touching the chair, eyes open.

The arm movements will challenge your balance with each movement, take a breath between, forgiving limbs.

Begin with:

- 1-hands hanging in neutral
- 2-hand on hips
- 3-arms level with shoulders/palms facing up
- 4-arms over head

Sequence:

- 1- Standing in Mountain Pose
- 2- With one leg slightly forward, knee bent but toes touching floor (stiletto heel)
- 3- **Advanced:** Same position as #2 but toes not touching floor

Shake it and stretch it out.....

2. Chorus Line

- Extended arms – swing leg forward and back
- flex/extend and circles with ankle on the forward swing
- do not bend torso, stay strong and upright, engage core

3. The Slide

- Begin standing on one foot, bottom of toes and heel touching shin above ankle.
- sliding foot up and down the calf with only the toes/pointed touching the leg
- keep the knee externally open but the torso facing forward

4. Ballet Class

- Standing in a strong Mountain Pose
- point foot/toes slide forward then out to the side
- interior rotate heel slightly as you continue the semi-circle and slide the pointed toes to the back (as if you would smudge fresh toenail polish-all five toes)
- go from pointed toes to toes curled under and be on the bottom of your toes -strong foot
- slightly soften both knees and bring the foot forward to the beginning point...continue
- Advanced:** Not touching the floor with the toes and not touching the chair to eyes closed

5. The Slide

- Begin with the toes flexed and the bottom of the foot on the side/towards the front of the shin
- arch of the foot over the ankle
- as you slide the foot up and down the leg try to move the heel away from the shin so only the tip of the big toe is touching the leg

6. Raising one arm overhead while lifting opposite knee

- upward towards the level of the hip if possible
- if you need to touch the chair, do so with the same sided hand as the lifted leg
- go slowly for more effect with eyes closed, hold and breathe

7. Penguin for Balance

-Shifting like a stiff piece of wood or waddle like a Penguin from side to side.

1 – Shifting your weight to the right side, pointing the left foot, heel down to shift, point other foot continue....

2 – Add to the point, a flexing of the ankle(until toes are slightly off the floor), to point again to shifting

Advanced: by holding the flex longer and closing the eyes during the entire sequence

Continue from side to side. Do not bend the knees or swivel the hips. Feet should be wide apart as much as is necessary to keep the legs straight, strong and engaged.

8. Warrior I to Warrior III R/L Static + Dynamic

– to be repeated in class this session

9. Warrior II to Extended Side Angle to 1/2 Moon with Chair – Flow Static + Dynamic x6

– to be repeated in class this session

At the Wall:

Heel Lifts – Facing the wall lifting off the heels to stiletto foot.

– **Advanced:** on books or bottom step of stairs bringing the heels lower than the toes

Tree – Free standing or using finger tips on the wall for balance.

Sitting in a Chair:

Elevator – Sitting on the front third of the chair, lifting an increasing incremental amount off the chair to the first, second and third floors (skipping the remainder of the floors)

– with the 4th lift to the roof top and standing. x6.

– **Advanced:** on the way down stop at the same floors

Positioning: Feet (back verses forward), torso (leaning forward verses shoulders over hips) and arms (from being on legs/knees to freely neutral next to the body), placement gradually making these movements more challenging.

Sitting/Prone on the Mat:

Side Plank on Wall or Floor R/L

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

Savasana with Bolster and Blocks – Enjoy!

Quote:

All conflict springs from the false perception of duality.

Living your yoga: You can only fight with someone if you see him/her as separate from you.

Today remember that the belief in separation is the root of suffering.

Choose to see the other's point of view.

No one is really separate from you.

-Judith Lasater Ph.D.

Music: Deuter

Essential Oil: Purity/Purify the Cleansing Blend from doTerra

Ingredients: Lemon Peel, Siberian Fir Needle, Citronella Grass, Lime Peel, Melaleuca (Tea Tree) Leaf, Cilantro Herb.

Primary Benefits: Refreshing aroma, replaces unpleasant odors and clears the air, protects against environmental threats.

Misc. Asana Information:

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

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