

# Intelligent Sequencing



## Teacher Training

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## The Art of Intelligent Sequencing

### Section 1

#### Objectives

1. Understand how to prepare students both anatomically and systematically for the flow of your class.
2. Explore the sequences of many popular styles of yoga including Ashtanga, Baptiste Power Yoga, and Bikram Yoga.
3. Understand the rationale and benefits of these styles and sequences.
4. Learn to use this information to intuitively create our own organic, transformative, multi-dimensional yoga flow.
5. Learn to build classes around peak poses, chakras, philosophical themes, a category of asana, an alignment principle, opposing heart qualities (such as willpower and playfulness), and more!
6. Learn to sequence both energizing and relaxing classes depending upon your students needs!
7. Study parallel poses. Learn how to introduce advanced postures through a more simplistic and attainable flow.
8. Learn safe and effective therapeutic principles to incorporate in your class sequencing from the perspective of a full time Physical and Yoga Therapist.

#### Definition

A sequence is the order in which things are arranged, the pattern that is created by the logical flow of pieces to create a whole. Sequencing is the art of creating a sequence, deciding not only which specific asanas should be practiced during a class or home practice but the order in which they should be performed.

#### Purpose

- To create balance within a yoga practice; physically, energetically and mentally
- To provide a direction and purpose for the students in order to enhance their experience
- To prevent injury and promote healing

#### Sequencing a Class is Similar to Writing a Piece of Music

You can make many different yoga practices from the same group of asanas, but the order in which they are practiced will define the experience you will have and how you'll feel when you walk away from your mat.

- Composed of individual notes (asanas and pranayama practices)
- Each note is important in and of itself, yet a part of the entire musical composition

- Notes are not randomly placed together, the sequence of each note's placement and the length of the note, as well as the combination of notes together are all orchestrated to create a resonant whole
- Each piece of music you compose (class that you sequence) will have it's own purpose, inspiration and feel, much like a piece of music or a song creates a certain feeling or experience in the listener

## Considerations for Sequencing

- **Time of Day:** The time of day for the class dictates the energy the class may want to create:
  - Early morning: Gentle warm up leading into standing poses; leading into backbends and inversions to leave the practice more energized
  - Mid-Day: Consider a more balanced sequence, and note whether you have eaten prior to the practice or will eat afterwards.
  - Evening: Consider sun salutations and challenging standing poses early in the practice, leaving plenty of time for relaxing poses towards the end of the practice to get ready for bed.
- **Client Population:** It is essential to consider what type of clientele you will be serving. Have ready in your mind Plan B to accommodate persons who may come to your class who might not be in your typical client demographic.
  - Have modifications and variations available so every one feels successful. stick to the descry
  - Stick to the descriiption provided by the studio. If the schedule says Bikram, the students should take responsibility for knowing the type of practice they are entering, the instructor should stay true to the format described.
- **Season/Geographical Location:** Be aware of the seasons and the energetic and emotional effect they will have on your students.
  - Hot/Humid climates/Summer : Add more forward bends and seated poses to balance the external heat and promote cooling.
  - Cold Climates/Winter: Practice sun salutations, backbends and inversions to energize and ward off seasonal depression due to longer nights and shorter days.
- **Length of Practice:** Consider the amount of time you have and instead of jamming in too many poses, be sure to have balance within the practice
  - Always include breathwork and warming the body
  - Never shorten Savasana to less than 5 minutes

## Basic Sequence Format

Every sequence should have a clear beginning, middle, and end point. To achieve this, the following “formula” will help you to prepare your sequences:

1. Grounding-Meditation
2. Warm Up Movements

3. Flow-Sun Salutation
4. Standing Poses\*
5. Seated Poses\*
7. Reclined Poses (Supine)\*
8. Inversions\*
9. Savasana-Relaxation

\*Within our discussions, the order of these elements sequencing may vary; however all components will most likely be included in some manner.

“There are also different types of sequencing: (1) sequencing movements within a pose, (2) sequencing from one pose to another within a family, and (3) sequencing from one family of poses to another. All of these variables make asana sequencing a truly complex topic” Brad Priddy, Iyengar Instructor

## **First Things First: Effects of Various Postures According to BKS Iyengar**

Iyengar also describes the science of yoga as similar to the art of music

- Rhythm within the body maintained by attention to each step of each asana and progression between asanas
- Must be a physical, physiological, psychological and spiritual rhythm
- The body is a sensitive and receptive instrument; its vibrations are affected by the asana

## **Standing Poses**

- Promote emotional stability and strength
- Develop overall strength and flexibility
- Mildly stimulate the cardiovascular and respiratory system
- Accustom the nervous system to a range of body positions that are otherwise ignored
- Increase suppleness and strength of the spine
- Improves bilateral coordination and left/right brain integration

## **Seated Poses**

- Brings flexibility to the hips, knees and ankles
- Removes tension in the diaphragm and throat improving breathing

## **Forward Bends:**

- Calming and cooling
- Stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system decreasing blood pressure and heart rate
- If the student is flexible, can fold deep enough to stimulate the sympathetic nervous system through compression of the internal organs, enhancing digestion and assimilation of food stuffs, helping constipation
- Decreased stress on the heart since body is in a horizontal position

## **Twists**

- Improves suppleness of the spine, exercising muscles asymmetrically

- Pelvic and abdominal organs are squeezed and then released, flushing them with blood and improving circulation
- Improves nutrition to the intervertebral discs
- Detoxifying effect

## **Backbends**

- Anti-depressive/elevates mood
- Stimulates the sympathetic nervous system in a slowly progressive way
- Heart works harder as it is pressed against sternum, increasing heart rate
- Fully stretches liver, spleen and other internal organs

## **Inversions:**

- Increases efficiency of cardiovascular, respiratory, lymphatic and endocrine systems
- Increase energy and engender equanimity
- Generally, Sirsasana/Headstand is heating and Sarvangasana/Shoulderstand is cooling, however it depends on the level of the practitioner.

## **Heating Poses:**

- Standing Poses
- Unsupported inversions
- Arm Balances
- Backbends
- Active Twists

## **Cooling Poses:**

- Forward Bends
- Lying Down Big Toe /Supta Padangusthasana
- Gentle Twists
- Lying Down Butterfly/Supta Buddha Konasana
- Supported Inversions
- Supported Backbends
- \*Poses with Chin Lock/Jalandahara Bhandha such as  
Shoulderstand/Sarvangasana, Plow Pose/Halasana, Bridge/Setu Bhandha, Lying  
Down Staff/Viparita Karani

\* Not recommended to do any heating poses after poses with Jalandahara Bhandha as this is very cooling.

## **General Physical Principles of Sequencing:**

### **1. Standing poses are good preparations for forward bends and backbends**

Standing poses warm all the muscles of the body, especially the larger muscles groups in the legs, freeing the hips for the forward and back bends

### **2. Downward Facing Dog is a good prep for all poses and a good warm down for backbends and twists**

Downward Dog is a symmetrical pose which stretches the back body and keeps energy flowing. Consider it as a “home base” pose to return to to bring symmetry and focus to your students.

### **3. Don't alternate back and forth between forward bends and back bends.**

It is true that one good way to wind down from a session of back bends is to use a few gentle forward bends to recover and refresh the spine. However, one way that yoga was taught in the West, especially in the early days of yoga in the West, was that you should alternate "pose and counter-pose," moving back and forth between a forward bend and a back bend to move the spine in both directions. Generally this is not a good practice, a strict arrangement of "pose and counter-pose" is not a skillful way of sequencing. Generally one pose should lead you into the next pose by means of its similarity with the next pose, not by means of opposition. That being said, be sure to complement a backbend or deep forward bend with the opposite pose somewhere afterwards during your practice.

### **4. After deep forward bending sequence, incorporate a few twists to balance and release spinal muscles**

Try not to end the practice with a twist due to asymmetry effects, be sure to move into at least one symmetrical pose (Apanasana/Knees to Chest) prior to moving into Savasana

### **5. After an active backbend sequence, warm down skillfully**

- Bring back to neutral mode: ex Downward Dog or EXTENDED Child's pose
- Then move into a gentle forward bend (Standing Forward Fold/Uttanasana with knees soft if standing, Seated Forward Fold/Paschimotannasana if Seated, Happy Baby//Prasarita Upavista Padasana if supine)
- Light lengthening twists are good, be sure not to arch spine in your twist (that's a backbend)
- Lying Down Big Toe or Half Plow/Halasana or Knees to Ears Pose/Karnapidasana

### **6. Include variations of arm asanas to balance the flexibility in the shoulder girdle**

Classical yoga postures did not include a large variety of arm asanas. Western society has developed an inadvertent amount of rounded upper back posture with tightness into the shoulders. Including a variety of arm asanas within your sequencing is a wonder addition

Examples: Eagle Arms, Cow Face, Chest Expansion, Reverse Prayer, Universal Arm Asanas : Rack/Dvi Bhuj Ustrasana, One arm Pigeon/Eka Bhuj Kapotasana, Virasana for the Shoulders/Dvi/Eka Bhuj Virasana , Roll onto Extended Arm/ Eka Bhuj Swastikasana

## Section 2 ~ Ashtanga Yoga

Developed by Sri Pattabhi Jois, student of Krishnamacharya



### **Purpose:**

Ashtanga Yoga is a Vinyasa style practice that follows a set series of poses. The first or primary series, called Yoga Chikitsa, is described in Yoga Mala. Yoga Chikitsa, which means yoga therapy, realigns the spine, detoxifies the body, and builds strength, flexibility and stamina.

The series of about 75 poses takes an hour and a half to two hours to complete, beginning with sun salutations (surya namaskara A and surya namaskara B) and moving on to standing poses, seated poses, inversions and backbends before relaxation.

The intermediate or second series is called Nadi Shodana, meaning nervous system purification. It cleanses and strengthens the nervous system and the subtle energy channels throughout the body. This series is only introduced when the primary series is strong. It follows the same progression (sun salutations, standing, sitting etc.) as the primary series, but introduces new poses and variations.

The four advanced series are called Sthira Bhaga, which means divine stability. Pattabhi Jois originally outlined two intensive advanced series, but later subdivided them into four series to make them accessible to more people. These series emphasize difficult arm balances and are only appropriate for extremely fit and accomplished practitioners.

- Only advance to next series when you have mastered the one before
  - Sun Salutations A and B (Surya Namaskar)
  - Standing Postures
  - Intermediate or Advanced Series (if appropriate)
  - Seated Postures
  - Backbending Postures
  - Finishing Postures
- Vinyasas between each posture to maintain heat in the body, build strength, prepare nervous system for next posture
- Each pose held for 5 breaths
- Ujjayi Breath is utilized to maintain heat within



- Bandhas are engaged (inner body engagement of the core) In asana, use Mula Bandha with Uddiyana (lifting of the belly) \* See Ashtanga manual for in depth explanation of bhandas and energetic implications
- Drishti (eye gaze) is specific for each posture \* See Ashtanga manual for more in depth explanation of drishti purpose and effects
- Each pose has a breath count, no time for adjustments. Importance is vinyasa, not depth of pose (initially)
- Poses and breath don't change, YOU change.

## **Primary Series:**

- Referred to as Yoga Chikitsa or Yoga Therapy
- Predominantly forward bends and hip openers
- Purpose: cleansing and toning of the “kanda” (low back, sacrum, hips and solar plexus area) This is the source and meeting place of the Nadis.
- Focuses on first and second chakras, develops qualities of third charka
- Balances seat of emotions: either to gain more control or free them

## **Intermediate Series**

- Referred to as Nerve cleansing practice
- Predominantly backbends, back strengtheners and heart openers
- Focuses on the nerve center of the physical and energetic bodies
- Third and fourth chakras

## **Benefits of Ashtanga Sequence**

- Set sequence shows progress
- As yogis memorize sequence, they are more able to move into pratyahara (sense withdrawal)
- Pose progression provides systemic way to create strength and flexibility required to move into more complex poses, when you are ready
- Incorporation of breath, bandas, drishti creates an energetically balanced practice for mind, body and spirit
- Vinyasa repetition (Downdog, chattarunga, updog) builds upper body strength.
- Creates steadiness and ease in the body, increased awareness in the mind and openness of the heart.

## **Possible Disadvantages**

- Primary sequence has a lot of emphasis on forward folds, which can be too much for people with hyperflexible hamstrings and lack of flexibility work for shoulders with emphasis on strength of shoulders.
- Lack of time for adjustments/modifications can set up a chance of injury
- Primary series is extremely challenging for beginning students, who may force themselves into poses they are not yet ready to practice
- Rigidity of instruction and cuing may not resonate with some students

## Section 3 ~ Baptiste Power Yoga

### Sequence Outline

#### 1. Integration Series: Presence

Chils's Pose (begin ujjayi breathing)  
Downward Facing Dog  
Right leg lift (on inhale)  
Left leg lift (on inhale)  
Lunge leg or walk forward (exhale)  
Forward Bend / Ragdoll (5 or more breaths); bring toes to touch  
Tadasana (inhale)  
Hand to heart center (exhale)  
3 oms

#### 2. Sun Salutation Series: Awakening

Sun A: Repeat 2-3 times (surya namaskara A from Ashtanga Yoga)  
Samasthiti  
Mountain (inhale)  
Forward Bend (exhale)  
Halfway Lift (inhale)  
High Plank (exhale)  
Lower Push-Up (exhale)  
Upward Facing Dog / Cobra (inhale)  
Downward Facing Dog (exhale and hold for 5 breaths)  
Walk / Jump Forward (empty all air and come forward)  
Halfway Lift (inhale)  
Forward Bend (exhale)  
Sun B: repeat 2-3 times, last time add Warrior 2  
Utkatasana/Chair/Thunderbolt (inhale: 5 breaths each time, 1<sup>st</sup> time lower hips for 1 addition breath)  
Forward Bend (exhale)  
Halfway Lift (inhale)  
High Plank (exhale)  
Low Push-Up (exhale)  
Uowrd Facing Dog / Cobra (Inhale)  
Doward Facing Dog (exhale)  
Warrior 1 right, left (exhale fott forward, inhale up; hold five breaths 1<sup>st</sup> time)  
Last time: Warrior 2 (5 breaths)

oUpper Plank (exhale)  
Low Push-Up (exhale)  
Upward Facing Dog (inhale)  
Downward Facing Dog (5 breaths)  
Jump / Walk Forward (exhale completely then come forward)  
Halfway Lift (inhale)  
Forward Bend (exhale)  
Utkatasana / Chair (inhale)  
Samasthiti (exhale) (optional or go on to warrior series)

### 3. Warrior Series: Vitality

Vinyasa to Downward Facing Dog  
Raise right leg (inhale)  
Bend Knee (exhale)  
Flip Dog (optional) back to 3 point (inhale)  
Upper Plank (exhale)  
Side Plank: spin heels to the right, left had to the sky (inhale)  
Vinyasa  
Crescent Lunge right (exhale foot forward, inhale up 5 breathes)  
Crescent Twist right (hands to heart center, inhale lengthen, exhale twist 5 breaths, optional open arm, last breathe look down, hands to inside of the front foot)  
Warrior 2 (inhale up)  
Side Angle (exhale, hold 5 breaths)  
Side angle with half/full bind (5 breaths)  
Vinyasa and repeat on the left side  
Utkatasana (5 breaths)  
Chair Twist right (hands at heart center, inhale lengthen, exhale twist, then open arms)  
Forward Fold: gorilla; halfway lift (inhale) and fold (exhale, hold 5 breaths)  
Bakasana / Crow (bring hands to floor and set up)  
Vinyasa to standing, samasthiti

### 4. Balancing Series: Equanimity

(Note: Always begin with eagle and end with tree – the book ends of the balancing series)  
Eagle x 2 (inhale arms out to the side, exhale wrap arm/legs; 5 breaths)  
Uttiha Hasta A: tight knee or big toe hold (inhale; hold for 5 breaths)  
Uttiha Hasta B: leg to the side, hand on hips, gaze over opposite shoulder (5 breaths)  
Come back to center, hands to hips, raise leg (point / flex optional)  
Dekasana / Airplane (5 breaths, then hands to prayer)  
Half Moon (exhale hand down, inhale up, 5 breaths) optional side bow; look to the ceiling

Repeat Utkatasana A through Half Moon left side

Dancer (5 breaths) each side

Tree (5 breaths) each side; hands to heart center, interlace palms facing up, press palms to sky

Vinyasa to Downward Facing Dog

## 5. Triangle Series: Grounding

Warrior 1 right side (inhale up)

Warrior 2 (exhale)

Reverse Warrior (inhale, hold 5 breaths), straighten knee then come up

Triangle (inhale extend, exhale hand to shin or outside foot on block / floor; inhale lifted hand brings you up)

Prasarita Padottanasana A (wide legged forward bend) (right side): hand to heels, inhale chest / chin upward, exhale fold, chaturanga arms on the floor, crown of head toward the floor; optional tri-pod headstand (hold for 5 breaths)

Halfway lift (inhale)

Hand to Hips (exhale)

Flat spine come up to standing (inhale)

Arms out wide, find reverse prayer (up or down) or elbows

Pivot toes, shorten stance, square hips to front; inhale lift heart to ceiling

Namaste forward bend (exhale, 5 breaths) Parsvottanasana also known Intense Leg Stretch

Inhale up to standing

Twisting triangle (inhale arm to sky hand to hip, exhale reach forward flat spine & fold; 5 breaths)

Chaturanga

Repeat hole triangle series, left side with Prasarita Padottanasana C on left side (interlace fingers behind back)

Vinyasa to Upper Plank lower to floor 5 counts

Resting ear to floor then opposite ear to floor

## 6. Backbending Series: Igniting

Locust: any variation x 2 (deep exhale, inhale up 5 breaths)

Dhanurasana: Bow x 2 (one leg or both) exhale out, inhale up five breaths)

Table top transitioning to:

Camel x 2 (one leg or full) (inhale, 5 breaths) down dog between camels

Down dog jump to sitting

Bridge (inhale up, 5 breaths, rest 1 breath)

6 more back bends: bridge or wheel (inhale up, 5 breaths, rest 1 breath)

Supta Baddha Konasana (reclining bound angle) Supta = reclining, Baddha = bound, Kona = angle

Happy Baby (hold a while)

## 7. Abdominal Series: Stability

Scissors: pulse 10 counts each side x 2

60/30 Lift x 2

Bicycle: x 10 each side

Inhale to center (legs bent, knees 90°)

Hold

Exhale straighten and spin.

Repeat opposite side

Bicycle: above but take center hold out x 30

Boat: Navasana x 3-5 times (exhale up, hold each five breaths, inhale hands to floor and lift)

Supta Baddha Konasana (5 breaths)

## **8. Inversion Series: Rejuvenation**

Happy Baby, Shoulder Stand, or Viparita Karani 10 -20 breaths

Plow (5 breaths)

Deaf Mans Pose (build up to one minute hold)

Vinyasa to Downward facing Dog

## **9. Hips: Opening**

Right leg 3 point to half pigeon (5 breaths)

Stay in half pigeon or take double pigeon (5 breaths)

Vinyasa to downward facing dog

Repeat left side

Frog: 25 breaths

## **10. Forward Bending**

Janu sirasana right foot forward, left knee bends (inhale lengthen, exhale fold, 5 breaths)

Repeat left side

Paschimottanasana (straight legged seated forward fold) (inhale lengthen, exhale fold, 10 breaths)

Table Top (inhale up, 5 breaths) legs straight or bent

Fish: legs straight or at lotus position (5 breaths)

## **11. Surrender to Gravity**

Dead Bug : 5 breaths

Supine twist each side (5 breaths)

Savasana 10 minutes

Fetal position right side

Sit up, eyes closed, hands to heart center

3 Oms ~ Namaste

Encourage class to clap: acknowledge themselves and each other

## Philosophy of Baptiste Power Yoga

Baptiste power yoga universal principles for stepping up to your edge

- 1) We are either here now or nowhere
- 2) Be in the now & you'll know how
- 3) GROWTH is the most important thing there is
- 4) Exceed yourself to find your exceeding self
- 5) In order to heal you have to FEEL
- 6) Think less, BE more
- 7) We are the sum of our reactions
- 8) Don't try hard, try EASY

~ "Journey Into Power" by Baron Baptiste pg. 32-43

Baptiste Power Yoga Laws of Transformation

- 1) Seek the truth
- 2) Be willing to come apart
- 3) Step outside your comfort zone
- 4) Commit to growth
- 5) Shift your vision
- 6) Drop what you know
- 7) Relax with what is
- 8) Remove the rocks
- 9) Don't rush the process
- 10) Be true to yourself
- 11) Be still & know
- 12) Understand that the whole is the goal

"Remember, breakthroughs come at the moments of perceived failure. If your ego says no, let your spirit say yes! Willingness, repletion, and consistency will lay the groundwork for true transformation." ~ "Journey Into Power" by Baron Baptiste pg. 71

### 1) Integration Series: Presence

- "step out of the world & into yourself... out of your head & into your body.
- Brings you into the present moment
- Body & mind unite through ujjayi breath
- Ujjayi breath lights the internal fire
- Calm the mind-chatter (drop what you come in with)
- Develop focus (on here & now)
- Set your intention for practice

## 2) Sun Salutations

Full body warm up

Gets your heart pumping, boosts circulation

Prepares the body for the practice by taking joints & muscles through full range of motion

Set the pace, breathing rhythms, & flow of the student's yoga practice

Focus continues to build inwardly

Ignites healing heat as movement is linked with breath

Shifts energy: from scattered/disparate energy to flow & focus

## 3) Warrior Series

Increases heart rate

Gets energy flowing more vigorously

## 4) Balancing: Equanimity

Presence

Breath

Drishti/focus

## 5) Triangle Series: Grounding

Works body toward symmetry, stability, & poise

Strengthens the legs, hips, & back

3 of 4 triangles are asymmetrical, requiring strength, focus, & balance

## 6) Back Bending Series: Igniting

Sculpts & strengthens the back

Most of our physical orientation is forward: shoulders & back are rounded; spine "exiting" the body

Back bending redresses the "forward" tendency & brings the spine back home into the body

"You are only as young as your spine is supple" ~Baron Baptiste

Back bending brings the spine back into the body, restoring the integrity of its naturally occurring curves & its flexibility all of which is rejuvenating

Bending backward represents going backwards into the past & coming forward into the present

Dissolves stuck energy in the spine, heaviness in the heart, & dullness in the mind

## 7) Abdominal Series: Stability

Strengthens core: brings us into our power

Stabilizes all movement

Brings you into the seat of your power

Strong abdominals are needed to take unnecessary pressure off the back

Poses are more accessible when they come from a strong core- they feel lighter & easier

## 8) Hips: Opening

Hips are the mother of all movement

The "emotional depot" of the body

## 9) Inversion Series: Rejuvenation

Inversion: any pose where your head is below your heart

Flushes head & organs with oxygenated blood

Creates vitality, vigor, overall radiance while also calming the nervous system (body doesn't have to work as hard to circulate blood)

## 10) Forward Bending: Opening

Calming

Focus inward

## 11) Surrender to Gravity: Deep Rest

Letting go

Shift from "doing" (right brain) to "being" (right side)

Letting the practice settle into the body

Brain waves shift to creativity: from what "is" to what "is possible"

Trust in the process

"The edge is where we come up against ourselves & what we can do & be. It is the boundary between where we are & where we grow, the place of comfortable discomfort, where all growing & healing happens. The edge is the point in every pose when you are still within your capacities but are challenging yourself to go just a bit farther. Stepping up to this edge & daring to leap is how you break through & thus break with old ways of being." ~ "Journey into Power" page 30

"Yoga practice gives you the opportunity to create a gap between stimulus & response that gets wider & wider, & in that gap you have the option of choice to change your response, rather than zooming into autopilot. A world of different ways to handle things opens up to you. Suddenly you can read into situations instead of just launching into action or reaction ( which is really just an automatic repetition of an old action.) this is how we ultimately learn to manage & transform our emotional states, & how stress can make us better rather than bitter." ~ "Journey into Power" page 41

"The health benefits are multilayered, going beyond just the external. All the internal bodily systems are activated & improved as well. Your nervous system is soothed or energized as needed (through deep rhythmic breathing); your glandular system is balanced creating hormonal harmony (from inversions); your cardiovascular & circulatory systems are invigorated (as a result of the flow); your digestive & metabolic systems are stimulated (from sweating from the movement of the lymph, the body's sewage system.) Every single cell in your body benefits. ~ "Journey into Power" page 50

"There are five fundamental pillars of my power yoga: breath, heat, flow, gaze, & the abdominal lock. All are essential pieces of a dynamic & healthy power yoga practice. Each one of these enables you to have the deepest experience every time you get on our mat. When integrated together, they launch you into new dimensions." ~ "Journey into Power" page 50

"Ultimately, yoga is about creating space: space within your spine; space within those secret pockets of tightness; space between your muscle fibers, bones, & joints; space between your doubts & beliefs; space between emotions & reactions; & most important, space between your ears. With new space we become an open vessel to receive new insights & inspiration." ~ "Journey into Power" page 59



## Section 4 ~ Bikram Yoga

Developed by Yogaraji Bikram Choudhury. Bikram trained at Calcutta's Bishnu Gnosh, brother of Parmahansa Yogananda (author of Autobiography of a Yogi).



### **Bikram's Claims and Requirements for Practice**

- 26 postures claimed to systemically work every part of the body; “gives all the internal organs, all the veins, all the ligaments, and all the muscles everything they need to maintain optimum health and maximum function. Each component takes care of something different in the body, and yet they all work together synergistically, contributing to the success of every other one, and extending its benefits” Bikram.com.

How does this work according to Bikram:

- 105 degrees Farenheight with 40 percent humidity to further the inherent cleansing properties of Hatha Yoga. “when you sweat, impurities are flushed out of the body through the skin.” Bikram.com

The room is kept at this temperature or more for the following:

1. Keeping the body from overheating (contrary to popular misconception)\*  
Dangers related to exercising in high heat and humidity:
  - Heart has to work harder to send blood to the muscles and skin during exercises
  - Muscles do not extract oxygen as efficiently as they do at lower temperatures
  - Energy production and force of muscular contraction is decreased
  - When core temperature is too high, the circulatory system suffers, limiting the heart's capacity to deliver oxygenated blood to the muscles and skin in a timely manner
  - Recommendation : gradually acclimate the body to exercising in the heatBenefits to exercising in heat and humidity
  - Body works harder to expend more calories
  - Resting metabolic rate increases
2. Protecting the muscles to allow for deeper stretching\*
  - Heating the muscles, connective tissues and ligaments helps improve the extensibility of these tissues for increased flexibility.

- Need to be careful not to overstretch joints, as ligaments which are over stretched cause the joint to be less stable. Alignment is key.
- 3. Detoxing the body (open pores to let toxins out)
  - Sweat does contain trace amounts of toxins which are eliminated
  - Opening the pores through sweating cleans out the pores of the skin
  - Sweating does NOT clear body of toxins such as mercury and other metals, this is done by the liver.
  - Compression and release of the internal organs such as the liver and kidneys may improve their function to help with de-toxification
  - Dehydration impairs the efficiency of the liver and kidneys, be sure to stay hydrated
- 4. Thinning the blood to clear the circulatory system\*
  - Loss of fluid (dehydration) actually thickens the blood, making it more likely to suffer from low blood pressure and blood clots.
- 5. Increasing heart rate for better cardiovascular workout
- 6. Improving strength by putting muscle tissue in optimal state for reorganization\* (stretching?)
- 7. Reorganize the lipids (fat) in the muscular structure\*
  - Only explanation I could find regarding what this means is that by increasing the heat in the body, it acts similarly to when they heat the fat cells in liposuction to resculpt the fat. The fat being heated is more malleable by the yoga poses. For example; doing backbends while the fat is heated will help re-sculpt the belly. There is not scientific proof of this, only anecdotal reports of cellulite disappearing.
- “By the tourniquet effect: stretching, balancing (using gravity), and creating pressure all at the same time. The blood supply in arteries and veins is being cut off, creating pressure. When released, a lock gate effect is created, causing blood to rush through veins and arteries, flushing them out. Also, pressure is applied to the heart by its relative position to the rest of the body.”
- Claims that the hormonal glands are compressed and released, internal organs the same; stretching etc. all claims which are sound, but achieved through any balanced vinyasa practice
- Claims that Bikram Yoga balances the emotions due to balancing the nervous and hormonal systems as well as self control, determination and patience.

## Precautions:

- High Blood pressure and Heart Patients:
  - Hold poses for only 5 seconds at first, 10 counts after two weeks
  - Rest between each set
  - Breathe normally, do not do pranayama techniques
  - Be cautious with backbending postures (such as Bow) as they exert pressure on the chest and the heart
- Back pain (slipped disc)
  - Bikram says moving the spine helps and to “endure the pain”\*
  - Later he says “At the beginning, learn to fold forward safely. Experiment gradually increasing the strength of your pulling on your

heels in forward bends. Do not cause pain with this pulling--you must back away from pain” Contradicts himself a bit...

Tips to enhance your experience with Bikram Yoga:

- Recommends drinking 64-80 ounces of H<sub>2</sub>O for several days prior to class in ADDITION to the 64 – 80 oz. of H<sub>2</sub>O already recommended for hydration each day prior to the 90 minute practice. Also consider taking sea salt and potassium tablets prior to class to prevent the symptoms of dizziness and nausea which come from profuse sweating. **Caution:** Taking sodium and potassium has effects on the heart, do not follow this recommendation without consulting with your doctor.
- Dress as light as possible to enhance release of heat from the body
- No food 1-3 hours prior to class
- Bring a large towel, yoga mat and water bottle

Expectations after first Bikram Yoga Class:

- May experience extreme fatigue; Bikram says it is a sign of the body detoxifying
- May feel extremely energetic and have difficulty sleeping; Bikram says it is a sign that the yoga has energized you.
- Soreness and Stiffness secondary to the physical practice
- Skin irritation due to the toxins being washed out, shower immediately after class

Recommended Practice Regimen:

- Every day for two months until you can do 80 per cent of the postures fully except for Standing Bow Pulling and Stretching Pose.
- Minimum 10 classes per month to achieve benefits, one of which is weight normalization

## The Practice

Pranayama:

80-20: In this method of breathing, you take in a full breath. Go to the posture and continuously let out 20 percent of the air through your nose with your mouth closed. In postures that require 80-20 breathing, you need oxygen in the lungs to do the posture, so you will be able to maintain proper strength while performing the posture.

Exhalation: In exhalation breathing, you take in a full breath and exhale the breath completely when you achieve the posture. While you are doing the posture you should continue exhaling.

With either breathing technique, you should not strain. In the beginning, your lung capacity will not be large enough for you to sustain yourself with the above breathing methods. To prevent straining your lungs, take another breath as needed and continue with the breathing method. As your lung capacity improves and you improve doing your Yoga postures, you will find that following these breathing methods becomes as natural as doing the Yoga postures themselves.

## Bikrim Yoga Pose Sequence



1. Pranayama - Standing deep breathing
  - a. Bound Hands to Chin/Throat
  - b. Exhale - Head Back, Elbows Together in Front and Parallel to Floor
  - c. Inhale - Head Neutral, Elbows up By Ears
2. Ardha Chandrasana with Pada Hastasana – 2x each side
  - a. Hands Clasped Above Head with Pointed Indexed Finger
  - b. Lean to Left and Then Right But Stay Upright (Not Leaning Forward)
3. Utkatasana - Chair
  - a. Hands in Front – Feet Flat - Lower
  - b. Up on Tip Toes – Lower
  - c. Up on Tip Toes Heels Apart – Lower
4. Garurasana - Eagle pose
  - a. Eagle with Bound Arm Twist – 2x Each Side
5. Dandayamana Janushirasana - Standing head to knee pose
  - a. Bend Knee & Lift Leg – Arch Back and Round Down to Grab Foot without Lifting Foot
  - b. Once Grab Foot Stand and Straighten Leg
  - c. Bend Over Leg (Head to Knee)
6. Dandayamana Dhanurasana - Standing bow pulling pose
  - a. Dancer – Grab Foot, Ankle, Shin
7. Tulandandasana - Balancing stick pose or Warrior III with Bound Hands
  - a. Hands Clasped Above Head with Pointed Indexed Finger
  - b. Lean Forward – Warrior Three with Clasped Hands
8. Dandayamana Bibhaktapada Paschimottanasana - Standing separate leg stretching pose
  - a. Face side of room and spread legs wide.
  - b. Bend over and Grab your heels from behind or the arches of your foot and pull down

9. Trikanasana - Triangle pose – Swivel toes and repeat each side 2x
  - a. Warrior II to Triangle
10. Dandayamana Bibhaktapada Janushirasana - Standing separate leg head to knee pose or extreme leg stretch
  - a. Angle toes to front and step foot up to manageable distance and bend over
11. Tadasana - Tree pose
  - a. Can do this with foot on calf, high upper thigh or in hip crease of leg
12. Padangustasana – Toe stand
  - a. From Tree try to stand on toes and bend down until your butt lands on your heels with hands at prayer
13. Savasana - Corpse pose – Half Way – Don't Stay Long
14. Pavanamuktasana - Wind removing pose
  - a. Lay Down and Pull Knee into Arm Pit (to side of body)
  - b. Repeat other side
  - c. Pull both legs in
15. Sit-up
  - a. From Laying Down – Fast Move Sit Up with Double Breath Out and Forward Fold to Grab Toes – Don't Hold Position
16. Bhujangasana - Cobra pose
  - a. Hands under shoulders lift with no pressure in hands feet on ground
17. Salabhasana - Locust pose
  - a. Arms under body chest with palms down
  - b. Chin or Forehead on mat
  - c. Lift one or both legs
18. Poorna Salabhasana - Full locust pose
  - a. Release Arms and Point fingers towards heels
  - b. Lift chest and feet
19. Dhanurasana- Floor bow pose
  - a. Reach back and grab ankles
  - b. Lift Head and Feet
20. Supta Vajrasana - Fixed firm pose
  - a. On ground Knees together Feet to Side (by your butt) and lean back as far as can
21. Ardha Kurmasana - Half tortoise pose
  - a. On ground Knees together feet bend forward as in child's with palms together arms straight and forehead to the ground
22. Ustrasana - Camel pose (2x)
23. Sasangasana - Rabbit pose
  - a. Stay on ground sit on legs reach back and grab heels, lean over to put top of head to ground, lift but without pushing head into ground
24. Janushirasana with Paschimottanasana - Head to knee pose with intense stretching posture
  - a. Seated - One leg straight one leg folded in to inner thigh
  - b. Grab foot and fold pull with bend arms
  - c. Other side
  - d. Both Legs Straight in Front
25. Kapalbhata in Vajrasana - Blowing in firm pose
  - a. Breath of Fire Normal Pace
26. Kapalbhata in Vajrasana - Blowing in firm pose
  - a. Breath of Fire Fast Pace

**Section 5 ~ Tools for Sequencing**



**TIPS FOR CREATING SEQUENCE FLOW**

- Place poses together that flow easily
- Limit up and down from the floor
- Consider the level of the class (Mandala classes are more difficult for beginners)
- Move from all sides of the mat (for example, don't enter every sequence from one leg down dog!)
- Be sure not to stay on one leg for too long (2 -3 poses max)
- Try not to stay with straight leg or bent leg too long, alternate straight with bent to release muscles
- Be careful about staying in too many lunges

**PARALLEL POSES**



**What are Parallel Poses?**

**Big Toe Hold ~ Reclining Big Toe Hold Variations**

<b>Big Toe Hold</b> <b>(Utthita Hasta Padangustasana)</b> Yoga Anatomy Page 44-45	<b>Reclining Big Toe Pose</b> <b>(Supta Padangusthasana)</b>
 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARIN SCONDUTO</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">RORY EARNSHAW</p>

Notes:

**Headstand ~ Mountain Pose**

<p><b>Handstand (Adho Mukha Vrksasana)</b></p>	<p><b>Mountain Pose or Tadasana with Hands Raised</b></p>
 <p>DAVID MARTINEZ</p>	 <p>DAVID MARTINEZ</p> <p>The alignment in Handstand is exactly the same as it is in Mountain, the only difference being in the position of the arms.</p>

**Sun Dial ~ Revolved Head-To-Knee Pose**

<p><b>Sun Dial (Adho Mukha Vrksasana)</b></p>	<p><b>Revolved Head-To-Knee Pose (Parivrtta Janu Sirasana) Yoga Anatomy Pg 88</b></p>
 <p>DAVID MARTINEZ</p>	 <p>MARTY SCONDUTO</p>

Peak Pose: Visvamitrasana (Side angle while holding leg extended in front)

1. Down Dog with Twist
2. Revolved Side Plank
3. Extended Side Angle
4. Wide Legged Forward Fold Down Dog Arms, Add Twist looking under arm
5. Warrior I with Shoulder Bind under front leg
6. 1/2 Flying Split
7. Visvamitrasana

For advanced practice, can add other complex parallel poses:

8. Sundial
9. Bird of Paradise with Sundial Bind

## Peak Pose: Handstand

1. Extended Mountain Pose (Mountain with Arms Overhead)
2. Tree
3. Warrior 3
4. Standing Split
5. Handstand

## Parallel Poses: Simple to Complex

- Triangle/Half Moon
- Standing Forward Fold/Seated Forward Fold
- Chattarunga/Arm Balances
- Cat Pose/ Crow Pose/Firefly
- Camel/Wheel
- Standing Big Toe with Leg to Side/Bird of Paradise
- Rabbit/Knees to Ear
- Warrior Two/Side Angle
- Standing Split/Handstand
- Revolved Triangle/Revolved Half Moon
- Lying Down Spinal Twist/Standing Spinal Twist
- Tree/Bird of Paradise
- Dolphin/Forearm Balance
- Locust/Dekasana (Warrior 3 with a Backbend)
- Gate Pose/Triangle
- Dancer with Arms overhead/Wheel
- Monkey Pose/Seated Staff Pose
- Standing Squat/Butterfly pose
- Malasana/Crow Pose



## 1. COUNTERPOSE GUIDE

It is important that when you sequence a practice you balance the body to some degree with a counter pose later in the practice. Below you will find recommendations per Iyengar Yoga guidelines as to which poses serve as counterposes to the other.

POSE	COUNTERPOSE
Side Bends	Forward Bends and Twists
Standing (Lateral Bend)	Forward Bends
Standing (Forward Bend)	Standing (Lateral Bends)
Backbends	Twists followed by Forward Bends
Inversions	Forward Bends
Twists	Forward Bends
Forward Bends	Twists and Inversions/Savasana

As a group, come up with some examples of poses and their counter poses. Remember, the counter pose is usually not directly after the pose, just later in the practice.

POSE	COUNTERPOSE

**2. PEAK POSE SEQUENCING GRID**

**PEAK POSE: Wheel**

<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Strength</b>
<b>Abdominals/Obliques</b>	<b>Back Extensors</b>
<b>Side Body</b>	<b>Obliques</b>
<b>Shoulder Flexion/Abduction</b>	<b>Shoulder Adduction/Upper Back</b>
<b>Hip Flexors/Quads</b>	<b>Gluts</b>
<b>Outer Hips/Hip Abductors</b>	<b>Hip Adductors</b>

**WARM UP**

<b>Flexibility Poses</b>	<b>Strength Poses</b>
<b>Sun Salute with Reverse Prayer w low lunge</b>	<b>Sun Salute B (has Warriors and Chair)</b>
<b>Lateral Flexion</b>	

**LEVEL ONE : SIMPLE PARALLEL POSES AND PREPS**

<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Strength</b>
<b>Crescent Lunge, Warrior I</b>	<b>Crescent Lunge with Chest Expansion</b>
<b>Extended Side Angle</b>	<b>Locust</b>
<b>Eagle Pose with Cow Face Arms</b>	<b>Intense Leg Stretch</b>
<b>Revolved Side Angle</b>	

**LEVEL TWO: MORE COMPLEX PARALLEL POSES and PREPS**

<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Strength</b>
<b>Dancer</b>	<b>Warrior 3 with Chest Exp</b>
<b>Super Pigeon (passive) Balancing Half Moon with Half Bow (Active)</b>	<b>Bow</b>
<b>Bound Side Angle to Bird of Paradise</b>	<b>Revolved Triangle Intense Leg Stretch with Reverse Prayer</b>
<b>Prone Pect Stretch</b>	<b>Revolved Side Angle with Open Arms</b>

**POSE PREP AND ENTRY**

<b>WHEEL</b>
<b>Incline Plank or Reverse Table</b>
<b>Bridge Pose with one Leg Up in Air</b>
<b>Wheel Pose</b>

**COUNTERPOSES (will be opposite Peak Pose)**

<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Strength</b>
<b>Deep Squat/Malasana</b>	<b>Boat/Canoe</b>
<b>Wide Legged Forward Fold with Eagle Arms</b>	<b>Butterfly</b>
<b>Maricyasana 1 and 2</b>	
<b>Plow</b>	<b>Shoulderstand</b>

**3. SEQUENCE FLOW VARIATIONS**

- Classical: Vinyasa between each side of the mini sequences
- Mandala Style
  - Incorporates turning 360 degrees on the mat
  - Logical progression of going deeper and deeper into each posture
  - Classical Mandala encourages a balancing of energies by being sure you turn in each direction an equal amount of time
- Add On Variations
  - Starts with a simple sequence of 5-8 poses
  - Repeats sequence with same poses, just adding a more in depth or complex variation
  - Usually builds to a peak pose
- Active/Passive
  - Perform 1-3 Active Poses: Working against gravity
  - Follow with Passive Pose : Working with gravity, releasing to gravity
  - Huge component of Universal Yoga (plus including Mandala style)

**4. Additional Options**

- Spiritual Focus
  - Mantra
  - Sutra
  - Story
- Pranayama
  - Choose to fit theme or style of class
- Music
  - Pace of music
  - Lyrics or no Lyrics
  - No music option

## Section 6 ~ Types of Sequencing

1. **Teach a set sequence** (Ashtanga, Baptiste, Bikram)
2. **Balanced Practice** based on Ashtanga/Baptiste Sequence incorporating creativity
3. **Peak Pose** Class: Develop a sequence which leads to a peak yoga pose
  - Sequence a progression preparing the body physically to move into a more complex pose
  - Include “prep” poses and parallel poses
  - Include counter poses to balance out preparation for peak pose

Sample Sequence for Peak Pose: following Basic Sequence Format

Peak Pose: Sundial

Pranayama: Breath of Fire

Warm Up: Cat/Cow with Flowing Knot

Down Dog to Forward Fold

Half series (Mountain to forward fold to half forward fold to forward fold to mountain ) repeat 3-4 times

Standing Half Moon to each side

Sun Salute Variation: Kneeling Side Angle

Flowing Half Split-Low Lunge

Twisting Low Lunge

Side Plank

1/2 series

Repeat 2-3 times

Standing Poses

Down Dog to Intense Leg Stretch

Intense Leg Stretch to Grounded Lunge Flow :3-4 times

Straight Plane Style

Revolved Side Angle with Extended Arm

Side Plank to Star Plank

1/2 series

Repeat other Side

Main Sequence

Standing Forward Fold

Step Back to Warrior 2

Stepping Back

Add Chest expansion Forward Fold to Warrior 2

Wide Legged Forward Fold with Downward Dog Arms

Add Twist with one arm overhead

Walk to lunge toward back

Mandala Style

Step to Mountain Pose

Tree Pose with Side bend

Forward fold

Step back to face side of mat

Squat Pose with Cow Face Arms

Triangle towards front Leg-Option to extend arm overhead

Lunge to Downward Facing Dog

Move onto Belly

Locust Series with arms overhead

Extended Childs Pose

Downdog to Forward Fold

Repeat Main Sequence on other Side

Second Belly Sequence:

Option to do Bow instead of Locust

DownDog to Warrior One

Warrior One to Humble Warrior

Standing Split with Option for Bound Standing Split

Step back to Side Angle

Bound Side Angle

Transition to seated with bind      Option to move into Cradle the Baby if unable to bind  
etc.

Place hand down for SunDial

DownDog

Repeat Other side

## Seated Poses

Seated Forward Fold

Incline Plank/Reverse Table

Boat/Canoe

Marichyasana 1

Seated Spinal Twist

Repeat

Lying Down Staff Pose

Choice of Inversion (Happy Baby/Plow.Shoulderstand)

Knees to Chest

Savasana

Activity: In small groups, pick a peak pose and design a class sequence. Document why you chose each pose (i.e. what does that pose do: prepare for peak pose, counter balance the pose, build strength, balance the class)

## 4. Area of Body Class

- Focuses on a particular area of the body to strengthen or increase flexibility
- Allows the students to give input to the instructor as to what they want to “work on”
- Having several types of sequences prepared in your mind ahead of time allows you to teach to the student’s needs that day.

General Guidelines for Poses which focus on areas of the body

### **BackBends Class**

#### Increase Flexibility:

- Side Body  
Ex:
- Quads and Hip Flexors  
Ex:
- Shoulder Flexors/  
Ex:
- Chest  
Ex:
- Twists to open obliques  
Ex:

#### Strengthen/Activate

- Low Back  
Ex:
- Upper Back  
Ex:

### **Hip Opening Class**

#### Improve Flexibility

- Low Back/Gluts  
Ex:
- Hamstring  
Ex:
- Outer Hips/IT Band  
Ex:



- Hip Flexors  
Ex:
- Inner Thighs/ Hip Abductors  
Ex:

## Activate/Strengthen

- Inner Thighs/Hip Adductors  
Ex:
- Outer Thigh/Hip Abductors  
Ex:
- Hip Extensors/Gluts  
Ex:

## **Shoulder Strengthening/Arm Balancing Class**

### Flexibility

- Low Back  
Ex:
- Hip Opening depending on the chosen arm balances  
Ex:

### Strength

- Chattarungas  
Ex:
- Core S  
Ex:
- Inner Thigh/Hip Adductors  
Ex:

## Sample Hip Opening/Core Class

## Mandala Style/Add on Variations

Mountain (Use block between thighs to active adductors)  
1/2 Series with Chair using Block between thighs  
Lunge with Jump Switch

DownDog-elbow plank-DownDog  
Jump to Boat  
Incline Plank  
Down Dog

One Leg Dog-Cheetah-Warrior One  
Step to Chair  
Step Back to Warrior 1 other leg  
Wide Legged Forward Fold with Chest Expansion  
Triangle to Back  
Warrior I to Back  
Step to Twisting Chair  
Step Back To Warrior 1  
Wide Legged Forward Fold with hands Down  
Triangle to Front  
Step to Eagle with Prayer  
Warrior 3  
Mountain  
Vinyasa  
Repeat Other Side

Dog to Cheetah to Warrior I  
Step to Chair-Crow Pose-Forward Fold  
Step Back to Warrior 1  
Wide Leg Forward Fold with Big Toe Hold  
Intense Leg Stretch to back with Reverse Prayer  
Warrior 1 Step to Tree Pose  
Step Back to Warrior 1  
Wide Legged Forward Fold with Turtle or to Tripod Headstand  
Intense Leg Stretch to Front with Reverse Prayer  
Step to Flying Chair then transition to Dekasana (Warrior 3 with backbend)

Repeat other Side

One Leg Dog to Kneeling Lunge with Quad Stretch (super Pigeon)  
1/2 split with twist or Revolved Triangle  
Pigeon  
Butterfly  
Double Pigeon

Bridge Pose  
Happy Baby  
Lying Down Spinal Twist  
Knees to Chest  
Savasana

**Activity:**

In a small group: Come up with a sequence to focus on one of the above themes.  
Balance your sequence with counter poses.

**5. Theme Class**

- Choose a theme to focus upon and match pose choices/flow
  - a. Chakras
    - Root Chakra: Balancing Poses
    - Root and Sacral: Hip Openers
    - Naval, Solar, Heart and Throat BackBends
    - Solar and Heart: Arm Balances
    - Third Eye: Forward Folds
    - Crown: Inversions

**CHAKRA SALUTES**

ROOT: Dog to child (no chattarunga)

NAVAL: PRAYER OVERHEAD

Lunge on forearms

Dog to cat/cow Cobra

SOLAR: SIDE BEND OVERHEAD

FOLD

W1, W2 DOG REPEAT

FOLD MTN/PRAYER

HEART: WING TADASANA

CHEST EXP FFOLD

LUNGE W/ CHEST EXP

DOG TO HALF DOG/SPHINX

THROAT: PRAYER/PALMS CLASPED FACE UP OHEAD

FOLD, LUNGE W/ ARMS CLASPED OVERHEAD

CAT WITH LION'S BREATH

LUNGE AGAIN

THIRD EYE: STEEPLE HANDS BBEND

STEEPLE LUNGE

Half dog on forearms

CROWN: ARMS OPEN BACKBEND

FOLD W/MONKEY

Lunge w/ arms open

Dog to Dolphin

Locust

## b. Energizing/Calming

- Choose a predominance of poses which are either energizing or calming

### Energizing

Standing Poses  
Unsupported Inversions  
Arm Balances  
Backbends  
Active Twists

### Calming

Forward Bends  
Lying Down Big Toe  
Gentle Twists  
Lying Down Butterfly  
Supported Inversions  
Supported Backbends  
Poses with Chin lock

## c. De-Toxification

- Focus on poses which provide compression then release of internal organs (Twists/Forward Folds/Backbends)
- Utilize warm environment to enhance skin detox

## Sample of De Tox Pranayama and Poses

### Kriyas/Pranayama

Kapalabhati Breath  
Lion's Breath  
Dog Breath

### Poses

DownDog  
Forward Fold  
Chair Twist  
Revolved Side Angle  
Revolved Triangle  
Wide Legged Forward Fold  
Locust  
Bow  
Seated Staff  
Forehead to Knee  
Bound Angle  
Marichis Twist  
Half Lord of Fishes  
Legs Up the Wall  
Shoulder Stand  
Restorative Supported Back Bends

**Activity:**

In a small group, design a class that focuses on one of the above suggestions for a themed class.

## 6. Type of Class Choice:

- Dynamic/Vinyasa
  - Movement and flow within an asana or between two asanas
  - Vinyasas between asanas
  - Additional Vinyasas:
    - Belly Up: Table to Lifted Seated Staff
    - Side Vinyasa,: Side Plank to Hip lowered to floor
    - Add Handstand to traditional vinyasa
    - Add chattarunga push up to traditional vinyasa
  - Types of Asana will be more challenging
  - Greater amount of standing poses than floor poses
  
- Strengthening/Endurance
  - Hot Class/Hot Vinyasa/Slow Flow
  - Emphasis on asana
  - If warm environment, need less vinyasa within and inbetween to create internal heat
  - Utilize more balancing poses, longer holds
  - More time for adjustments for alignment and cuing
  
- Active/Passive or Yin/Yang Class
  - Do several active poses (2-3) and then follow with passive pose
  - Focus on strengthening/activating a muscle group and then releasing it

Example of Active/Passive Combination

Warrior One with Chest Expansion/Warrior 3 with Eagle Arms/Forward Fold

Bound Side Angle/Balancing Half Moon/Side Lunge with arms forward (to other Side)

Eagle Pose/Dancer/Super Pigeon/Half Split

Think of some more examples:

## Section 7 ~ Creating A Theme For Practice

Adapted from Rolf Gates

### **RATIONALE:**

- helps our students to connect the feelings from the hatha practice to their lives
- helps them to apply yogic solutions to their issues in life
- allows us to share universal values in a way that is not preachy or judgemental

### **PROCESS FOR MOST EFFECTIVELY USING THEMEING**

Beginning of Class:

#### **1. Name it**

- Beginning of class: students are in Beta wave state, thus they need to hear the theme from a Left Brain perspective. Introduce the theme, perhaps connect to a Sutra or Gita passage; short and sweet
- Students are “in their heads”, not in their bodies yet
- Set up follow through with a word or phrase that can be repeated and elaborated on, a simple mantra such as “letting go”

#### **2. Personalize it**

- Tell a story, how this theme has helped you, someone you know or someone “known” in their lives. Telling stories about others victories shows us how to find joy and inspiration in the world around us
- Nothing too deep, still in left brain/Beta state, so keep it practical

#### **3. Universalize it**

First 30-45 minutes of class

- Moving into alpha brain wave state as they warm the body and move with breath, (pacing), students get out of their head/intellect and into their body/feeling
- Allow students to focus on moving with the breath, not listening to your stories
- Use short succinct phrases or single words to reiterate theme “sound bytes”

Last 30-45 minutes of class

- Class is fully in the Alpha state. Right Brain rules
- Revisit the theme in sentences during floor work during holds
- Universalize it by connecting to yoga: In yoga, it says..... use sutras, yogic texts, great teachers etc. in order to legitimize what you are saying
- Use stories and examples from everyday life
- Whatever comes up from your intuition is probably what the class needs to hear
- Don't try to intellectually connect it to your theme, it will connect
- Open up your creativity-teach from your Alpha State

#### **4. Embody it**

Throughout class:

- Use particular postures to embody the theme: ie chest openers to demonstrate compassion/love
- Incorporate mudra which expresses essence of the theme
- Incorporate chants within the music of your class or at the beginning/end to express the essence of the theme



## **Savasana**

Coming full circle; Introduced the theme with a left brain explanation, in savasana we share a right-brain interpretation of the theme, speaking from our heartfelt connection to the theme

- Use imagery, visualization, poetry and symbols. Students are fully in alpha state and receptive to suggestion
- Silence is golden
- You don't have to tie it up in a bow, it will happen

### **Example of process:**

#### **1. Name it**

Theme: Surrender to Brilliance

#### **Mantra: Gayatri Mantra**

*Om Bhur bhuvah svaha  
Thath savithur varaynyam  
Bhargo dheyvasya dhimahih  
Dhyoyonah pratchodhay-yath*

We salute the word that is present in the earth, the heavens, and that which is beyond. By meditating on this glorious power that gives us life, we ask that our hearts be illuminated.

**Mudra:** Cin Mudra Seal of Consciousness

**Yoga Sutra II 45: By total surrender to God, Samadhi is attained.** (read interpretation bottom of pg. 150-151)

#### **2. Personalize it**

Perhaps tell a story about a time in your life or someone's life when they surrendered and found brilliance/success/happiness

#### **3. Universalize it**

Sound Bytes: Letting Go Go with the Flow Ride the Wave Release  
Connect with Yoga Sutra or teaching: See above Sutra choice

#### **4. Embody it**

See under Name it: chant, mudra

Surrendering poses: Crescent Moon, Pigeon, Forward Folds, Child's Pose

Savasana: