



Demystifying the Elusive Bandhas

A Four-Week Online Program
for Yoga Teachers and Sincere Practitioners

*with Tania Jo Ingrahm, eRYT
and Rupali Embry, eRYT500*

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Today's navigation

- You'll be clicking through your own slides.
- The slide number is at the bottom of the screen.
- If you're on the replay, you can either watch the slides in the "Events" section or download them and watch on your computer.
- Ask a question by EITHER typing it into the chat box or by 'raising your hand' in the chat box.



Course overview

- **Weekly course materials**
Released on Mondays: April 6, 13, 20 and 27
- **Four weekly live group calls with Q&A**
Tuesdays: April 7, 14, 21 and 28
- **Discussion on the learning platform**
Leave questions and comments to add to the community's collective learning



How to make the most of this course

- Bookmark the course link!
- Read over the materials on Monday, before the call.
- Write down your questions.
- Be on the call.
- Contribute in the comments section each week.



Let's get started: Definitions

- Bandha means bind, fetter, tie, chain, fasten, restrain—but most commonly it's translated as 'lock.'
- May also be compared to the damming of a river or the building of a bridge.
- ***Moola Bandha - The Master Key:*** "A vehicle to traverse the ocean of samsara, worldly existence, and to reach the other shore of enlightenment."



The Layers

- Physical contraction of muscles
- The energetic aspect as you stimulate the flow of energy
- The psychic effects as your practice goes deeper



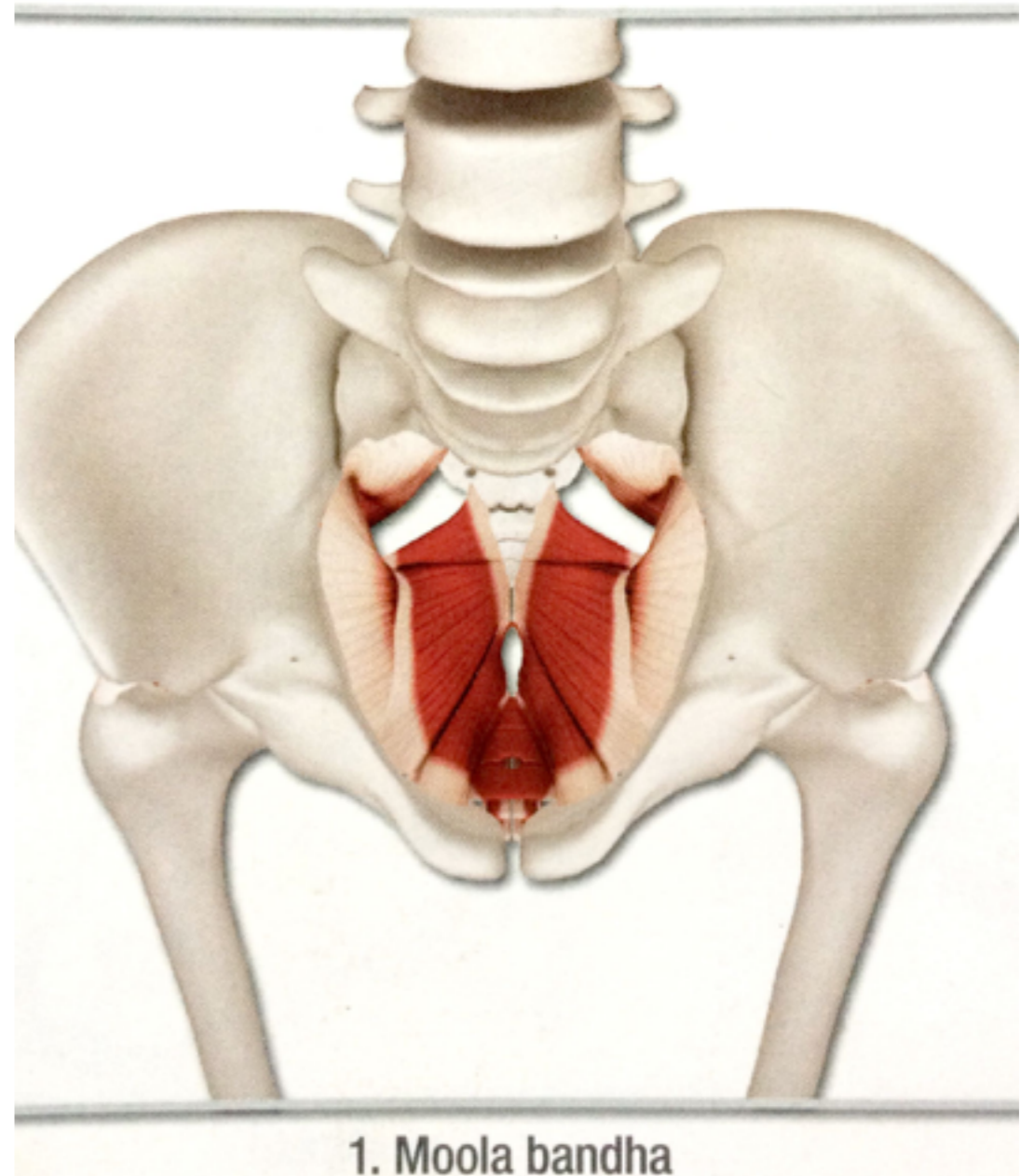
Purpose & Practice

- Vigorous forms of yoga (Ashtanga and Vinyasa) employ the bandhas throughout, but they can be used in any style of yoga.
- During meditation and pranayama to enhance these practices.
- Provides a job for your monkey mind, allowing it to draw into stillness and increases your ability to focus.



Mula bandha Anatomy

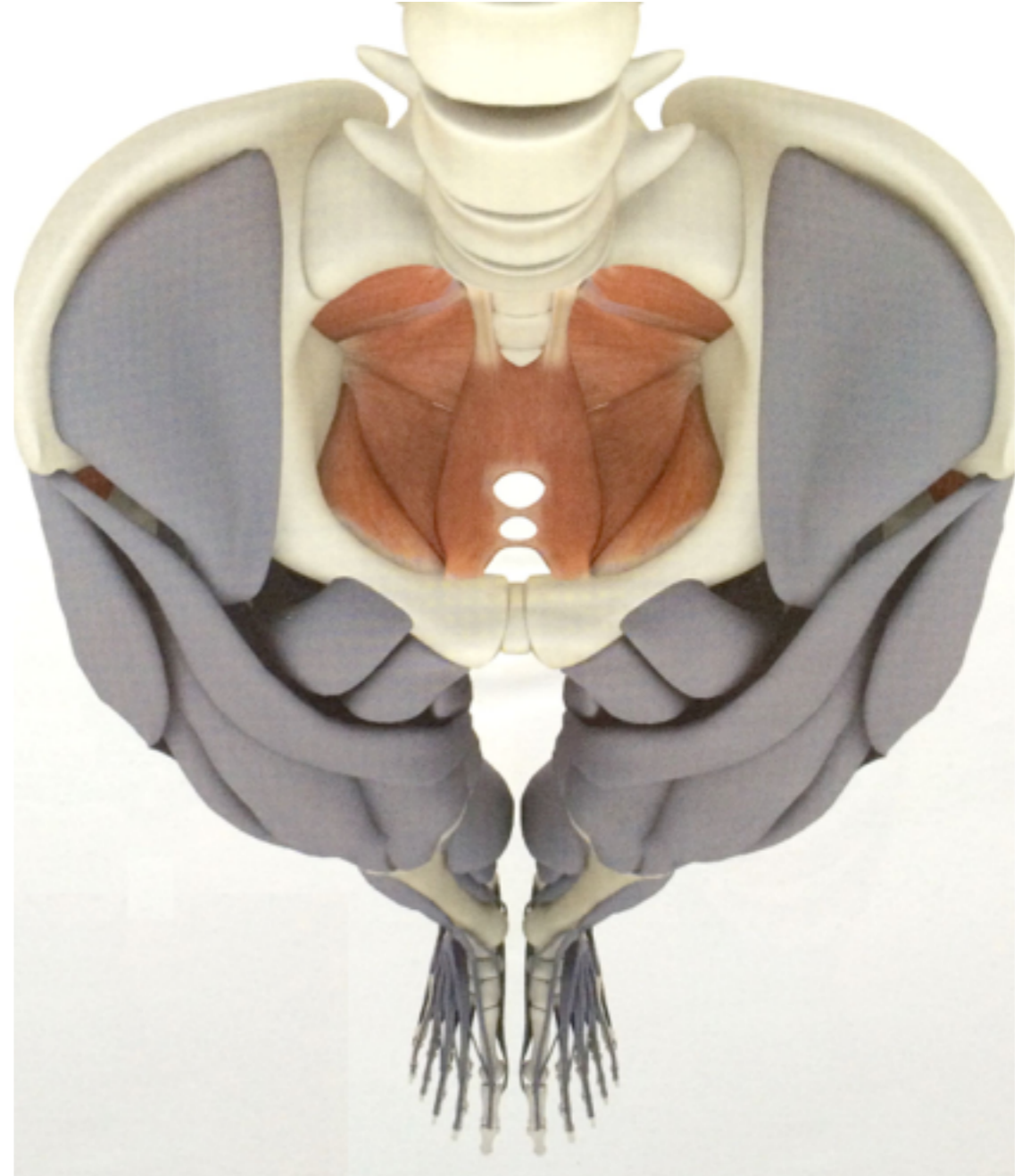
- Involves the area between the naval and the floor of the pelvis
- Specifically the perineum, the muscular band between genitals and anus.





The muscular engagement

- Start with a gross muscular engagement of the pelvic floor
- **Sahajoli mudra** in women (similar to Kegel exercises); **vajroli mudra** in men
- Then squeeze the anal sphincter—**ashwini mudra**
- What you've done is engage in front and behind mula bandha



Slide from *The Key Muscles of Hatha Yoga*
by Ray Long, MD BandhaYoga.com



Mula Bandha Location

- With practice you'll be able to just lift the perineum.
- At first a muscular engagement is required and will give you a taste of the power of mula bandha.
- With practice you'll be able to engage the perineum.
- Engage mula bandha as you begin the exhale. Feel the floor of the pelvis drawing upward?



The Two Triangles

- The pelvic floor has two triangles
- Engage each triangle separately
- Practice to build your proprioception
- Mula bandha is between those two triangles
- Try lifting just that area

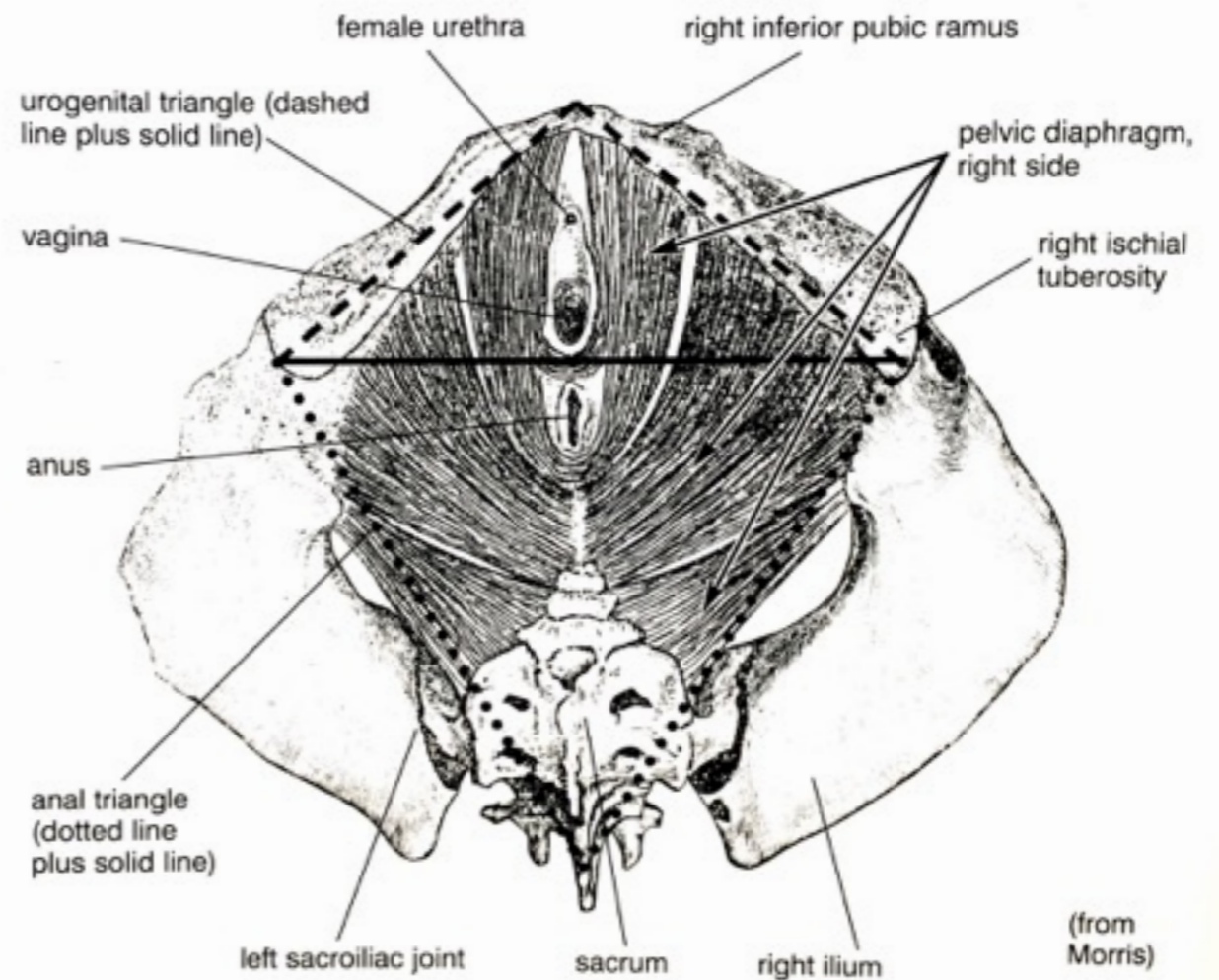


Figure 3.27. A deep dissection of the pelvic diaphragm of the female (view from below). The superficial muscles and external genitals (see figs. 3.28-29) have all been removed, revealing the underlying hammock-like pelvic diaphragm (see figs. 3.24-26), as well as the urogenital and anal triangles (see also fig. 3.4). A comparable male dissection is almost identical, except that a cross-section of the penis and male urethra is substituted for the vagina and female urethra.

from *Anatomy of Hatha Yoga*
by H. David Coulter



A Different Location in Women?

The various locations cited for women's mula bandha:

- deep core muscles
- iliopsoas
- muscles around the cervix

But where is it REALLY???



A Respected Opinion

“...for females it is essential not to mistake mula bandha for a contraction of the cervix.

This contraction tends to occur especially during strenuous activity. Should a woman do this on a daily basis when engaged in two hours of yoga practice, she could experience difficulty in giving birth.”

*~ Gregor Maehle,
Ashtanga teacher and
author, Ashtanga Yoga Practice and Philosophy*



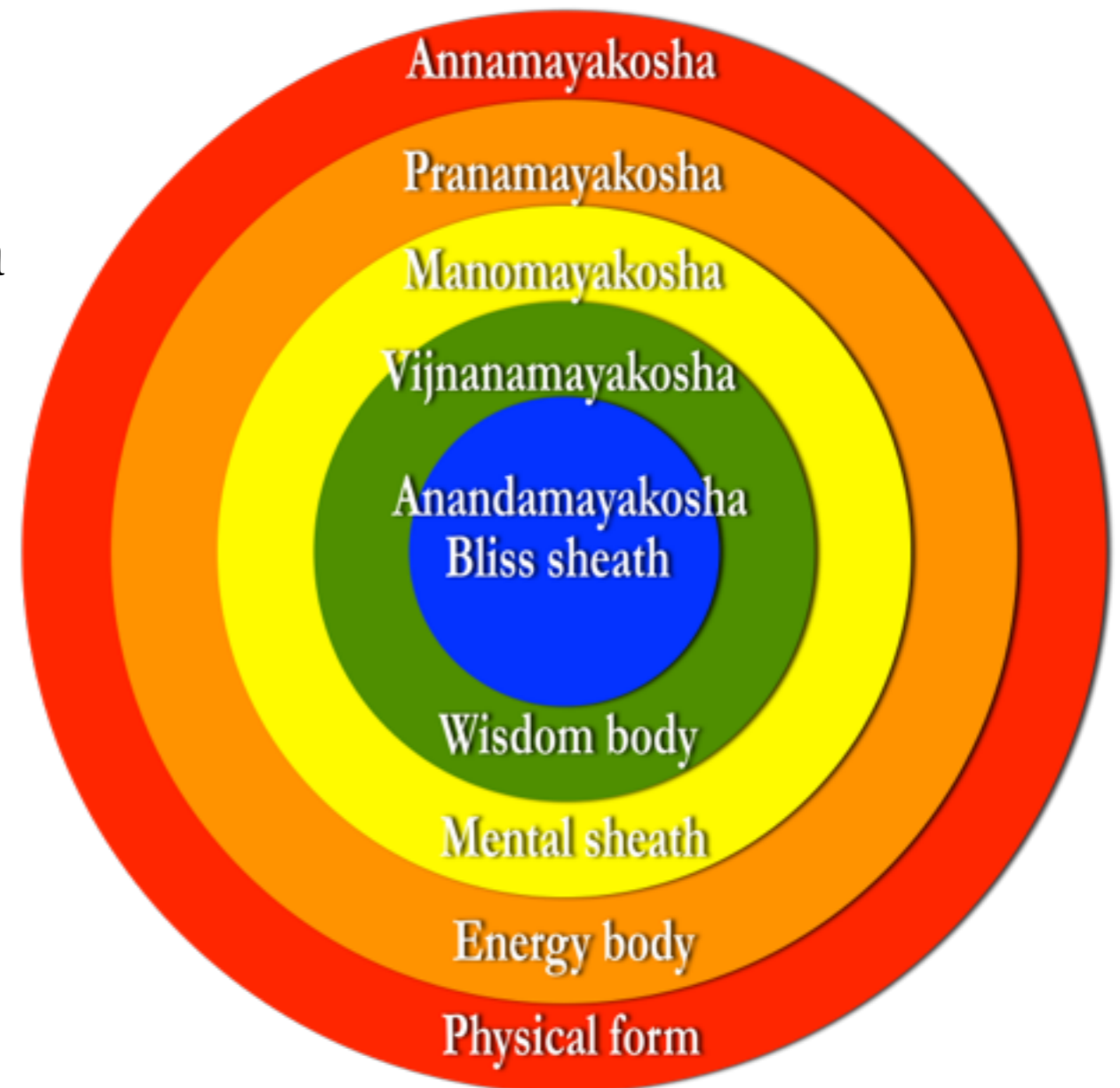
Disruption of Apana

- Too much physical contraction can disrupt *apana*, the downward flow of energy in our body
- Apana rules exhalation, elimination and the menses



Unlocking the Deeper Layers

- The deeper energetic and psychic layers unfold gradually
- You move from annamayakosha to pranamayakosha
- Eventually affects the manomayakosha
- The vijnanamayakosha and anandamayakoshas are naturally affected through sustained practice





Benefits

- Stimulates and tones the digestive, excretory and reproductive systems
- Helps with digestive ailments (toning intestinal peristalsis)
- Good for treating depression
- By directly manipulating mula bandha we influence the brain's neurological and endocrine functions positively



Even More Benefits!

- Affects behavior, personality and mental state.
- Instills a sense of calm and relaxation in the body and mind due to the affect on our parasympathetic nervous system
- Lowers blood pressure, slows respiratory rate and heart rate
- Increases our energy throughout the body by stimulation of muladhara and swadhisthana chakras



Contraindications

- Late-term pregnancy
- Menses
- Too much = disruption of apana
- Balance with times of complete release and relaxation
—too much of a good thing is still too much



Finding & Refining

- Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the ground.
- Alternate contracting your belly and glutes, then release those and contract the muscles in the front, then the back triangle of the pelvic floor.
- Release those muscles and try just the perineum. This may feel impossible at first, but just give it a try.
- Soon you'll be able to refine the contraction to just the area between genitals and anus.
- Try this same exercise in puppy stretch—gravity may help!



More Exercises

- Sit upright in a comfortable position.
- As you begin the exhalation, visualize the breath from the nostrils down through the chest into the belly and finally hook it into the pelvic floor (contracting this slightly).
- With the inhalation you'll naturally feel a lift upwards of breath and energy. Keep the connection with the pelvic floor and feel the inbreath draw up on mula bandha, maintaining that connection throughout the breath cycle.



Standing Position

- Repeat for several breaths, playing with the physical connection and notice if there is any energetic sensations.
- Give this a try in goddess pose: alternate between no engagement of pelvic floor, engaging front triangle, then back triangle.
- Then release those and connect the exhale to mula bandha and draw it up on the inhale. Can you relax the larger muscles of thighs and hips? Take several breaths, then release mula bandha. What do you notice about your goddess pose?
- Try again with eyes closed.



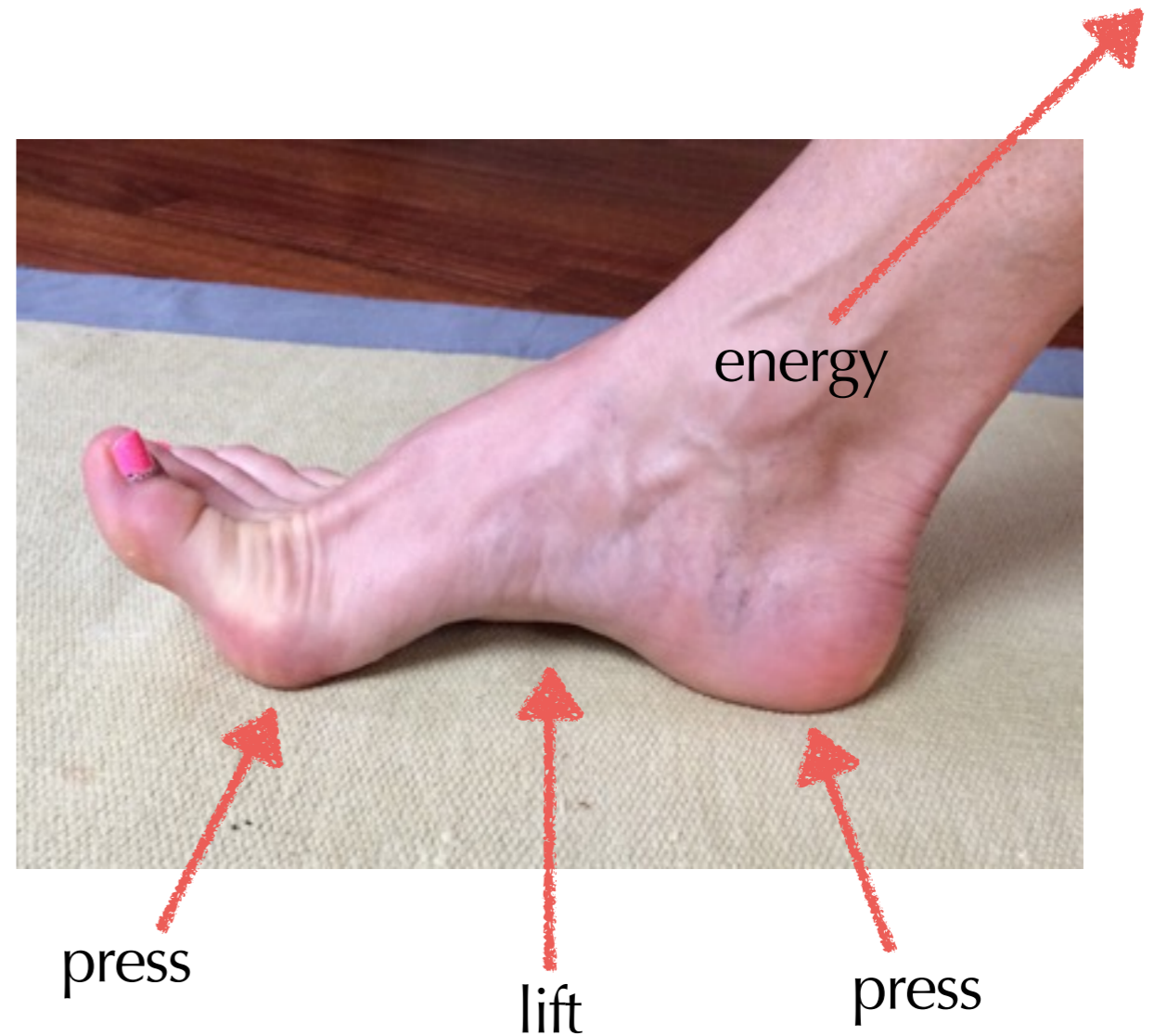
Pre-Work Question

Where do the bandhas begin?



Pada Bandha: From the Ground Up

- The arches of feet can be thought of as the base of the bandhas
- Pada = foot; bandha = lock
- Good lift in the arches is integral to building asana from the ground up
- Find the key points in the sole of the foot: base of the big toe, base of the pinky toe and center of the heel





How to Activate Pada Bandha

- Anchor the three foot points into the mat and slightly lift the toes to activate your arch.
- Relax the toes down, keeping the arch lifted.
- You may notice your arch flatten (especially if you are a flat-footed yogi).
- Reconnect with the three points, drawing up on the arch.
- Feel the energy draw up the inner legs connecting to mula bandha.
- Breathe and play with the connection of pada and mula bandhas.



Awarenesses

- Notice how solid your balance on two feet is when you draw the lift up the inner legs into the pelvic floor.
- Does your balance change? The feeling of groundedness and extension through the chest points and crown?
- A relaxed flexible foot provides a solid base for the body. Overworking the toes creates tension that isn't helpful.
- Try a balance pose or a standing pose and play with the connection of pada and mula bandha.



This Week's Homeplay

- Once a day (if possible) try the exercises we covered today.
 - Slide #9 & #10 - engagement of **Sahajoli mudra** and **ashwini mudra**, then just the **perineum**.
 - Slide #11 - lifting the **two triangles**, then between them.
 - Slide #19 - finding and refining when lying on your back and in puppy stretch.
- Become aware of any shift or change in the body as you practice.



More Homeplay

- Once a day (if possible) try the exercises we covered today.
 - Slide #20 - hook breath to pelvic floor.
 - Slide #21 - try the above contractions/lifts in goddess pose.
 - Slide #24 - pada bandha practice.
- Observations???
- Make notes and share what you find in the discussion section of the course. Hearing each other's experiences is a great way to learn.



Reminders

- We'll release your next module on **Monday, April 13.**
- Next week: Uddiyana bandha and more about the energetic aspects of the bandhas.
- Videos will cover **full uddiyana bandha** and **uddiyana bandha agni sara.**
- We'll dive into more detail on the call.



Teaching platform reminders

- Please leave comments or questions in each week's module.
- Set up your notifications so you'll be aware of new comments from the group and Rupali and me.
- Let's keep the enthusiasm going by connecting with the community.
- Bring your questions to next week's call.