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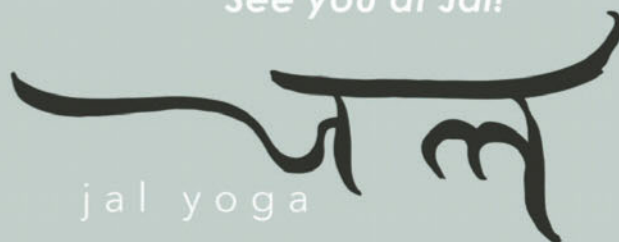
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Find out more about our  
Cover Model Ruth Tan, popular  
as @pinkchampagne13 on  
social media, on Page 51.

**cover credits** Model: Ruth Tan | Photographer: Gargi Mazumdar |  
Art Director: Anuja Bagade | Photo Direction: Shrutti Gupta |  
Wardrobe: Manduka apparel available at 'Touch The Toes' (Bra and Top), Inner  
Fire (Bottom) | Accessories: Necklace and bracelet by Aum Rudraksha Bali |  
Location: Chinese Garden, Singapore

COVER CREDITS: MODEL: RUTH TAN | PHOTOGRAPHER: GARGI MAZUMDAR | PHOTO DIRECTION: SHRUTTI GUPTA | WARDROBE: MANDUKA APPAREL AVAILABLE AT 'TOUCH THE TOES' (BRA AND TOP), INNER FIRE (BOTTOM) | ACCESSORIES: NECKLACE AND BRACELET BY AUM RUDRAKSHA BALI | LOCATION: CHINESE GARDEN, SINGAPORE



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# YOGA JOURNAL INFLUENCER **LAURA BURKHART** is coming to Singapore again!

**When: April 29, 2018**  
**Where: Details coming soon!**

## **Agenda**

Morning: ARM BALANCING TIPS & TECHNIQUES (for everyone)

Afternoon: THE ART OF SEQUENCING (for Yoga Teachers only)

*More details to follow soon.*

For now, let us know if you are interested by signing up at

<http://yogajournal.com.sg/lauraburkhart2018/>

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Laura is an E-RYT 500 San Francisco based International teacher and featured online yoga teacher for Grokker, Yoga Vibes and My Yoga Works. She is a recent two-time cover model for Yoga Journal Italy and Singapore. Outside of media, she has taught at The Yoga Journal Conference, The Bali Spirit Festival, Yoga Festival Milan, Wanderlust 108, Yoga For Hope and Yoga Rocks the Park and worked as the Yoga Director at the San Francisco Bay Club's Mind/Body Center.

Find her on social media @lauraburkhartyoga | [www. http://www.lauraburkhartyoga.com/](http://www.lauraburkhartyoga.com/)



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Dear Readers,

It's the Year of the Dog according to the Chinese calendar—my zodiac! I've set the intention, embraced happy thoughts and sent the message out to the universe—this will be a very special year to bring wellness to all. You bet!

Speaking of "intention", it is fast becoming the swiftest spreading secret around the world: from wellness coaches who urge you to read Rhonda Byrne and Gary Zukav's books, to Oprah Winfrey endorsing how intention cured her 'disease to please', to Jim Carrey's anecdote about writing it down and carrying it in his wallet. The more I read and learn, the more convinced I am of the power we all hold within us. The impetus, remember, is the deep-rooted sense of service behind your intention, steering clear of a selfish path.

Why am I doing this? What is my intention? Does it serve a higher purpose and service? These are questions to ask before setting off on an intended task. This was beautifully captured during a group discussion at a 'Being Me' retreat that I recently attended in Singapore, where a participant also asked a dilemmatic question—Do you blindly follow your intended calling or do you first fulfill your duty? The answer was earnest and erudite—set your intention towards your calling and work up a gradual path towards it, without ignoring your present duty. Often, callings are heard and intentions are set at a time when other responsibilities are at their

peak. Sometimes the journey may slow down, but your powerful intention will eventually drive you to your destination. There are tools, such as meditation and mindful breathing practices, that help you to focus and stick to your intentions. On page 52, we share with you a very strong Kundalini yoga practice that can strengthen intuition and willpower.

Our cover model, Ruth Tan, too had set her intention to share her asana practice via social media. Her intention was never selfish—it was simply to spread her love for yoga, and to learn from others. "I learnt how to do a handstand through Instagram," she said, when we met for coffee before our cover shoot. Clearly, Instagram yogis—as they are now called—started benefiting from her posts, with more than 80,000 people now following her from all over the world. Read more about Ruth, a yogini and financial advisor, on Page 51.

May you set your intention too and take steps to follow it this year, remembering to pause often and reminding yourself to tread on your journey with love and compassion. Gong Xi Fa Cai!

Enjoy the magazine!

Warm Regards,

Kavita Chandran  
editor@yogajournal.com.sg







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WELL



2018 *calendar of*  
**YOGA & WELLNESS**  
*events in and around Singapore*





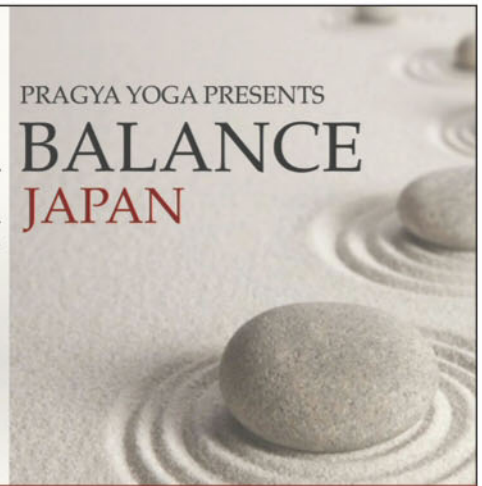
**The Yoga School**  
**March 2-3, 2018**

**Yoga as an Art of Living and Realizing the True Self**  
 with Yiannis Mukta Om, Greece.

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### Syllabus

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 Physiology of Pregnancy  
 Trimester-wise Maternal and fetal changes  
 Trimester-wise Common problems, Yogic practices and solutions  
 Understanding Labor & delivery - Yogic practices and solutions  
 Practices for back pain/sciatica/pelvic strength  
 Postnatal period – weight loss, pelvic floor strength and postpartum depression  
 Safety Tips with prenatal Yoga for High risk pregnancy  
 Fetal Talk and its impact on pregnancy  
 Yogic Advanced Techniques MSRT  
 Lactation, Diet & Nutrition, tips for managing nausea/cold  
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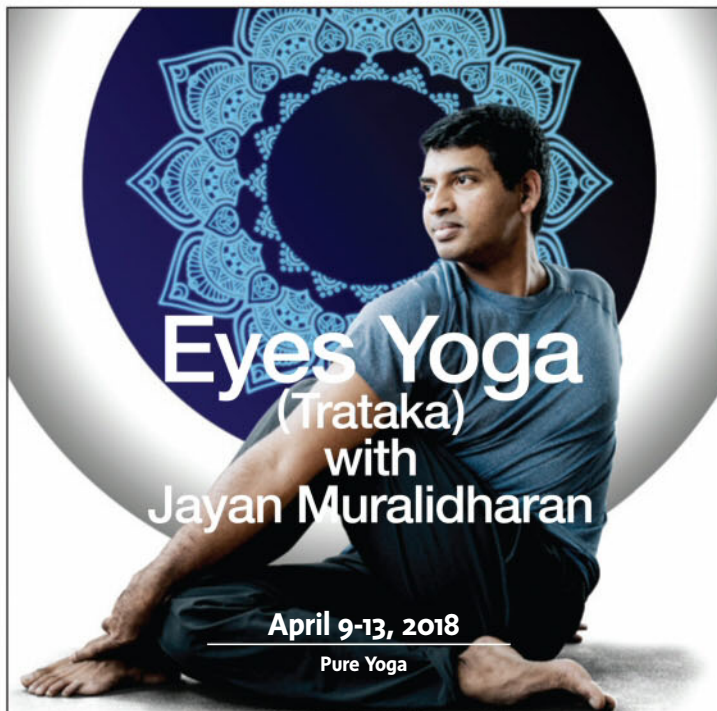
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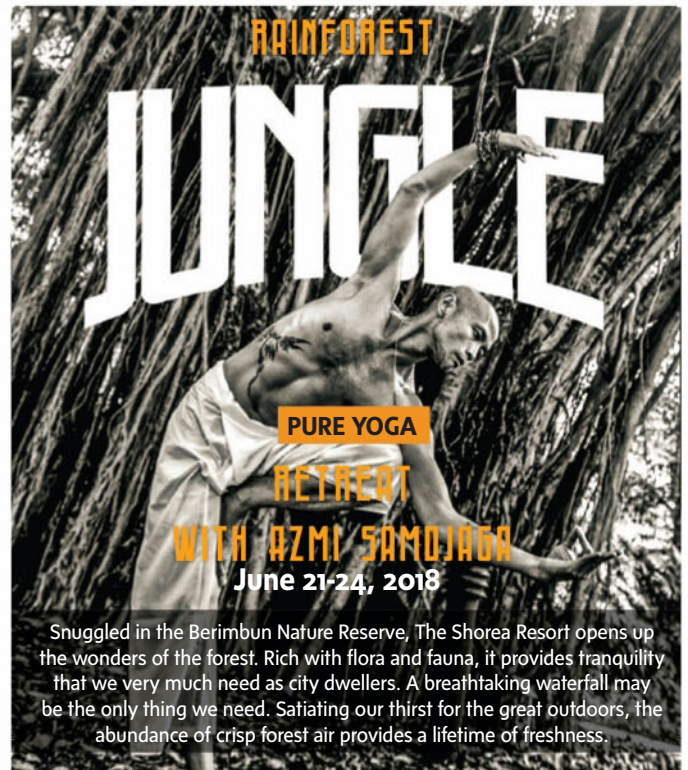


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## WHAT'S THE BUZZ IN SG?

### NEW STUDIO

**JAL YOGA** is Singapore's first studio that uses Infrared heat, which apparently is therapeutic, unlike hot yoga. This aesthetically designed and spacious studio is located in Alexandra Road and offers yoga, pilates and barre classes. A very unique addition is a room for Ayurveda. Jal, which means 'water' in Hindi, embodies the yogic philosophy of being flexible, yet strong; and rising beyond all possibilities. The studio offers unique styles, such as Angamardana (adopted by the Indian paramilitary as a compulsory fitness regimen), yoga for sports, laughing yoga, Upa yoga and Anusara yoga.

To book your trial class, go to [www.jalyoga.com.sg/](http://www.jalyoga.com.sg/)



### YOGA IN THE AIR

PURE YOGA has partnered with Cathay Pacific to offer yoga and meditation videos for passengers to do before, during or after a flight. The exercises are designed to improve circulation, enhance joint mobility and relax the mind for a comfortable and restful journey. The videos will be shown in the Lifestyle section on Cathay's inflight entertainment options, and are available in English, Cantonese, Mandarin and Japanese. So, the next time your fellow passenger nudges you to get up, she or he may not be heading to the bathroom, but to the aisle to do a forward bend!





# Fusion Maia Da Nang

After a full year of hectic work schedules, deadlines and business strategy discussions, I was desperate for a break. So, last December, my husband and I packed our bags and flew to a wellness resort called Fusion Maia in Da Nang, Vietnam. We were seeking a break; what we received was a lifestyle change.

BY KAVITA CHANDRAN

I was antsy even when we were at the airport, almost missing our flight because I wanted to send out that one last “important” email, and then another quick one after that. As I stood in line jotting down a ‘Things-to-do’ list on my phone—my forehead frown at its deepest best—the cheerful greeting of Jetstar’s ground staff pulled me back to the present moment. “It’s a full flight,” she was proudly telling my husband. “Everyone seems to want to go to Da Nang these days.” Really?—I thought, and turned around to see a busy line of tourists waiting to be called to other counters. “I thought we were getting away to no-man’s land,” I whispered to my husband, miffed. “Da Nang?” he said, just as cheerily as the Jetstar lady. “It’s the most sought-after destination

in Asia these days.” Well, I could see he had already switched his work button off, while I continued to scroll through my phone to find any email left unanswered.

The boarding process was a breeze and the flight very comfortable (food wasn’t bad either), with an equally cheerful crew. It was a late evening flight from Singapore, and Fusion Maia resort had been gracious to extend a late check-in to accommodate our arrival. The flight took us little less than three hours, where I managed to sneak a snooze, sporadically disturbed by chirpy passengers exchanging notes about Da Nang, a historical city that had witnessed the most air traffic during the Vietnam War.

Landing at Da Nang airport, I found it to be modern and clean, with ample dining and shopping options. It was the approach to Fusion Maia that transformed me immediately to a state of tranquility—natural bamboo growing its way into an arch formation, like a hidden mystical tunnel with a surprise at the end.

We were greeted by warm staff and a welcome drink—a refreshing hibiscus cold tea that switched my nerves immediately to wellness mode. The first sip of calming smoothness was an assurance that this place intends to provide tender loving care; a lot more of which followed in the next three days we were there.





Author with her husband, Rahul Budhbraja, enjoying breakfast by the poolside at Fusion Maia



Fusion Maia is a perfect example of class, elegance and the art of relaxation. The ambience is calming, yet exciting. The service is subtle, yet superior. The design is simple, yet luxurious (I was told cushions at the restaurant are deliberately purple, a color that embodies royalty as well as wisdom).

I felt special that our villa came with a pool, only to find out the next day that all villas at Fusion Maia had pools. That's what I call private pampering. There was a beautiful little carved stone that lay on our bed with the letters 'Just Breathe' and under it was a square picture card that said 'Get Social' on one side, a reminder for guests to join the resort staff for meditation the next day. I flipped the card over, and scribbled beautifully in blue over a beach picture were these words—*You are. Therefore, I am.*

## Waking Up To Yoga

I am an early riser and have always valued my morning solitude—sipping a cup of tea whilst watching colorful little birds from the balcony of our Singapore apartment, followed by my daily yoga practice in our living area—all this when the whole family, including the dog, continue with their morning slumber. So, with the fresh morning air kissing my face, I walked to Fusion Maia's yoga studio the next morning, the scent of lavender filling my senses as I passed by the Spa on the way. My husband and I had planned a 3pm massage for that day and the fragrance got me all excited about the afternoon.

The yoga teacher, Le Thi Thu Van, introduced herself as Miss Van. I was soon to find out

how gracious the entire staff was at the resort, and how each one also doubled up as a 'Fusionista'—assigned to each guest to offer personalized service and advice. Turns out our Fusionista was Ms. Van during our stay. She was a gentle, almost feather-like, dainty young woman who, after her initial yoga teacher training at Fusion Maia, had found her way to India to strengthen her practice in Rishikesh on the foothills of the Himalayas.

Ms. Van's yoga teaching every morning was gentle and slow. On my first day of yoga with her, she informed me that the 'theme of the day' was 'Balance' and 'Social Living', which also explained the card on our bed the night before. In keeping with the theme of the day, there were pink daisies all over the spa and resort, a sign that all therapists and staff members followed what is well-defined as a 'Natural Living Program'. The program divides each day into smell, emotion and motivation, focusing on the intended purpose of the day, ranging from feeling free to being active to eating well to enjoying nature.

We did slow breathing for half-an-hour followed by a few sun salutations to balance the yin and the yang. There were two couples that joined in, and the five of us listened to Ms. Van's soft voice and benevolent demeanor as she guided us through moon salutations and finally into Savasana, where we scanned our inner body to ensure its well-being. I skipped their signature warrior workout that followed—one that blended yoga, martial arts and animal movements—as my body was calling out for a good breakfast instead of an intense exercise.

## Breakfast Anytime Anywhere

At the Five restaurant where my husband and I met for breakfast after my yoga (and his sleep-in), the Vietnamese chef brigade of Fusion Maia had cooked up a healthy and organic storm—from home style grills to poached eggs to smoothies and salads—the spread was unexpectedly large and wholesome. The restaurant follows the food philosophy of catering to all five senses, hence the name, where textures and flavors have to be enjoyed mindfully.

The best part of Fusion Maia's dining experience is that the first meal of the day is served anytime and anywhere at the wellness resort—a unique selling point which attracts many honeymooners seen strolling around lazily out of their villas any time of the day for their breakfast. If you don't feel like sitting next to the buffet area, you could eat at the poolside dining or better still, reserve a spot by the beach, which is what we did for the next day.

On the first evening, we had met with some other guests at the poolside barbeque amid soft live music. One of them had commented about my glowing and healthy skin, a result of my afternoon massages and the nap that followed—a gentle reminder of the impact of touch and rest. A day after Fusion Maia slowed down our physical and mental state, and only when someone asked me about my work, did it occur to me—I hadn't checked my emails in one full day. Never in the past had I ignored this relentless habit of refreshing my inbox despite setting up an out-of-office outgoing mail. It was a very liberating feeling to surrender to a break in its very true sense.





Author with her Fusionista, Ms. Van, outside the Son Tra Linh Ung Pagoda



## Meditation And Sightseeing

After another round of morning yoga, my husband and I met by the beach for a 'Rainbow Breakfast' where we devoured smoothies, muesli and avocado toast as we watched the waves caress the beautiful sandy beach in front. A couple sat next to us, both in white spa robes, and we all watched their toddler build a sand castle mindfully, oblivious to anything but the connection to nature.

We were lucky to have Ms. Van escort us for a meditation session few minutes away at Son Tra Peninsula, where stands the masterpiece 'Lady Buddha'—a gigantic white statue of The Buddha wearing a veil—standing tall at 67 metres, overlooking Da Nang city and My Khe beach. The story goes that the statue, which some believe is the Goddess of Mercy, was built to watch over and protect the locals against typhoons, and there has never been a natural disaster in Da Nang since it was erected in 2010. We spent 30 minutes doing meditation with Ms. Van on a green patch next to the statue—she lovingly calling it the "Lumbini Gardens" after the place where The Buddha achieved Nirvana.



That evening, after a refreshing mocktail and delicious grilled fish, we escaped to Hoi An, one of the cutest and most well-preserved ancient port cities in South East Asia with Venetian canals, an iconic pagoda shaped Japanese bridge, French colonial buildings, tube houses and wooden Chinese shophouses.

When we returned late that night, we found an inviting bathtub covered with fragrant flowers and a lovely card by the side—*We would like to surprise you with this Flower Bath to add to your collection of memories here! With love, your Fusionista Ms. Van.*

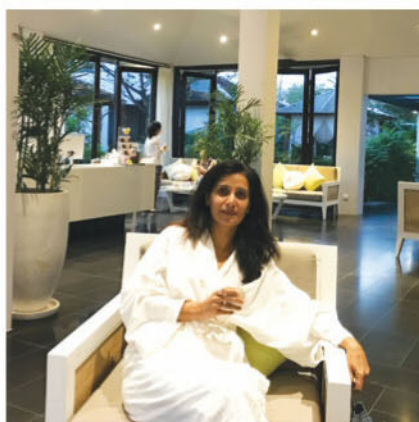
## Spa Treatments

Fusion Maia is the only wellness retreat I know where spa treatments are included in the nightly rate, with the massage menu a treat for the body and soul. Their philosophy of healing through touch and massage is holistic and fuses reiki, aromatherapy, scrubs, wraps and many other traditional therapeutic treatments—all done by trained in-house healing therapists. A frequent sight is guests walking around or snoozing by the beach, or even enjoying a nice salad in their white spa robes.

On our first day, I signed up for a harmonizing and fragrant aromatherapy massage, followed by a one-of-a-kind “Maia Energy Experience” where the therapist, Ms. Chua, performed reiki using light body brush technique and coconut oil along energy lines. My husband chose the same aromatherapy massage, followed by a long foot massage. This was the first time my husband and I were in the same room getting our massages done, and I was pleasantly surprised to discover that both of us don’t like too much chatter during the massage, each enjoying our respective time connecting with the healing given by our therapists.

Fusion Maia’s spa treatments constitute a major part of their wellness program, and no guest goes unserved in what appears to be a meticulously organized system with 18 spa rooms and 74 therapists, each trained in healing techniques.

“I personally ensure that each therapist undergoes proper training and practices on me,” the Spa and Wellness Manager, Emilie Chanon, told me. “Each therapist also practices self reiki, counseling, meditation and Tai Chi because we believe it’s important for everyone to absorb and understand what the wellness initiative means.”



Spa and Wellness Manager,  
Emilie Chanon

Ms. Emilie, a healer from France, who practices ‘accessing consciousness’ herself, strongly feels the universe beckoned her to be part of

Fusion Maia, a resort she chanced upon while traveling around the world some years ago. “The Vietnamese taught me to be humble,” she said. “They are very real people.”

I finally opened my email inbox after the Jetstar flight touched Singapore three days, six massages, 12 smoothies, lots of water, delicious salads and plentiful sleep later. And, as the messages rolled in, I switched off my phone reminding myself to check again during work hours the next day. I have since then compartmentalized my schedules and allocated themes to my days too, each a reminder to live a healthy life where wellness is ranked higher than anything else on my to-do list.

## How to spend 3 days in Da Nang: Wellness Getaway

**Day 1** – Arrive at Da Nang (the flight is barely 3 hours from Singapore) and check into Fusion Maia wellness resort. Eat breakfast by the pool. Sign up for your massages and change into your robes. A nap is a must after the massage. Take a dip in your private pool or soak yourself in a bathtub full of fresh flowers. Take a walk along the beach. Go to Hoi An in the night, walk around the canals and shop in the old quarters, make a wish and float a candle in the canal.

**Day 2** – Wake up for 7am morning yoga with Ms. Van. Eat breakfast by the beach. Laze around in the lounge chairs. Go for a meditation practice at Son Tra Peninsula and visit the ‘Lady Buddha’ statue, a 30 minute drive. On your way back, stop over at the Marble caves to see ancient statues, murals as well as bullet holes: the place was used as a secret holdout for Vietnamese troops to spy on U.S. soldiers. Return to Fusion Maia for lunch, go for your massages, take a nap and enjoy an evening by the poolside or beach bar with live music.

**Day 3** – After morning yoga and a scrumptious breakfast, take a snooze in the lounge chairs by the beach, go for a pedicure and a manicure or even a facial, read a book. Eat lunch and take a nap. Wade in your private pool with your partner and a glass of fresh coconut juice. Eat a romantic dinner at the Five restaurant.

For more, visit <http://maidanang.fusion-resorts.com/>



# practice

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## WELL

### *restore and* **RENEW**

Try practicing meditation techniques on the yoga mat to connect yourself with a secure spot that radiates positive energy. Studies suggest that meditation increases activity in areas of the brain associated with positive feelings, that it supports the immune system, and lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol. It is a natural stress reliever.

**NORA ISAACS**

# How fascia shapes us

Deepening your anatomical perspective refines your kinesthetic sense by helping you feel into your entire body—which is greater than the sum of its anatomical parts. The connective-tissue net, known popularly as fascia, weaves those parts into one integrated whole. **By Tom Myers**

IF I ASKED YOU what a heart is like, chances are you'd say it's like a pump. The lungs are often described as "bellows," the kidneys "a filter," the brain "a computer." We tend to view the body in mechanical terms because we live in an industrial age—and because the body has been described as a "soft machine" ever since the scientist René Descartes coined the term in the early 17th century.

So it comes as no surprise that most anatomy books show you body parts—this muscle, that ligament—as if we're assembled part by part like a car or an iPhone. But instead of timing belts and motherboards, we have hamstrings and biceps. An anatomy atlas is a helpful tool for learning, but the error comes when we start thinking that humans are actually built that way. What is actually going on under your skin is so different from what's in those pictures.

Your body is much more like a plant than a machine. We are grown from a tiny seed—a single cell, or fertilized ovum, about the size of a pin prick—not glued together in parts. This seed contains sufficient instructions (given the proper nourishment) to create a helpless, squalling baby, who turns into an energetic toddler, a feckless teenager, and then finally a mature adult.

By the time we're adults, we consist of approximately 70 trillion cells, all surrounded by a fluid fascial network—a kind of sticky yet greasy fabric that both holds us firmly together, yet constantly and miraculously adjusts to accommodate our every movement.

The traditional biomechanical theory of the musculoskeletal system says that muscles attach to bones via tendons that cross the joints and

pull bones toward each other, restricted by other "machine parts" called ligaments. But all these anatomical terms, and the separations they imply, are false. No ligaments exist on their own; instead they blend into the periosteum—vascular connective tissue that serves as cling-wrap around the bones—and the surrounding muscles and fascial sheets. What this means is that you weren't assembled in different places and glued together—rather, all your parts grew up together within the glue.

For example, the triceps are wedded by fascial fabric to their neighboring muscles north, south, east, and west, as well as to the ligaments deep in both the shoulder and elbow. If you contract the triceps in Plank Pose, all these other structures will have an effect and be affected. Your whole body engages in the action—not just your triceps, pectoral, and abdominal muscles.

The takeaway for yoga? When you do poses, it is useful to put your attention anywhere and everywhere in your body—not just the obviously stretched and singing bits. A release in your foot can help your hip; a change of your hand position can ease your neck.

## Fascial function

The fluid fascial network that lives between each cell in your body consists of bungee cord–like fibers made mostly from collagen, including reticulin, and elastin. These fibers run everywhere—denser in certain areas such as tendons and cartilage, and looser in others like breasts or the pancreas.

The other half of the fascial network is a gel-like web of variable mucopolysaccharides, or

mucus. Basically, your cells are glued together with snot, which is everywhere, and is more or less watery (hydrated) depending on where it is in the body and what condition it's in.

All the circulation in your body has to pass through these fibrous and mucous webs. Generally speaking, the denser the fibers and the drier the mucous, the less the fascial web allows molecules to flow through it—nourishment in one direction and waste in the other. Yoga helps both stretch and ease the fiber webbing, as well as hydrate the gel, making it more permeable.

New research shows that this web of proteins runs down through the membranes of each cell and connects both aspects of the connective-tissue web through the cytoskeleton to the cell nucleus. This means that when you're doing yoga stretches, you are actually pulling on your cells' DNA and changing how it expresses itself. Thus, the mechanical environment around your cells can alter the way your genes function.

We've known for a while that the chemical environment (hormones, diet, stress catecholamines, and more) can do this, but these new connections explain some of the deeper changes we see when people start practicing regularly.

More on that mechanical environment: Cells are never more than four deep from your capillaries, which excrete food, oxygen, messenger molecules (neuropeptides like endorphins), and more. Tension in your body—slumping your shoulders forward, for example—prompts the fibroblasts (the most common cells found in connective tissue) to make more fibers that will arrange themselves along the line of stress. These bulked-up fascial fibers will form a

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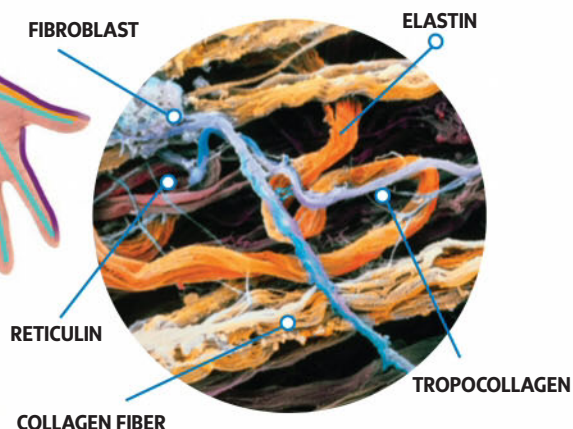


## BODY OF KNOWLEDGE:

### FASCIA 101

FASCIA IS THE BIOLOGICAL FABRIC that holds us together—the connective-tissue network. This collagenous network of gel and fiber is made up in part by an “extra-cellular matrix,” manufactured inside a connective-tissue cell and then extruded out into intercellular space. The fiber-gel matrix remains an immediate part of the environment of every cell, similar to how cellulose helps provide structure to plant cells. (Remember, we are more like a plant than a machine.)

### The fascial fibers



The Anatomy Trains body map (left) shows our myofascial, or muscle-fascia, anatomy. These 12 whole-body myofascial meridians are more evident in dissection. While most anatomy textbooks show the muscles with the filmy fascia removed, this map illustrates fascia’s deeper function—as global lines of tension, proprioception, and interoception that embed the body’s neuromuscular network, acting to keep your skeleton in shape, guide movement, and coordinate postural patterns. Understanding how these lines function can help unlock a deeper understanding of anatomy for your yoga practice. For example, in Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog Pose), you are stretching the entire superficial front lines of fascia—the green lines—from the tops of your feet all the way up to the sides of your neck to the back of your skull. You are also challenging all four arm lines. When you strike the right balance in this pose, you can feel your fascial web helping you realize tension and stability, effort and ease.

continued from page 20...

barrier that will slow or stop capillary-sourced food from reaching your cells. You'll get enough to survive, but function will slow down. In addition to a thicker barrier of fascial-tissue fibers, the mucus that completes your fluid fascial network will also become thicker and more turgid, which contributes to stopping the flow to your cells.

And because the exchange of goods from capillaries to cells is a two-way street, with cells delivering messenger molecules and CO<sub>2</sub> and other waste products back into the bloodstream, a hardened fascial network can trap unprocessed cell products (toxins or metabolites) like a stream eddy traps leaves.

The fix: deep strengthening and stretching squeezes your fascial network the way you would squeeze a sponge. Those metabolites that were trapped in the mucousy bits rush in hoards to the capillaries and your bloodstream. Many of us may feel out of sorts after we release deeply held tension—that's your liver dealing with the metabolites you squeezed from the tissues. Try an Epsom salts bath, or go back for more movement to keep the process going.

Over yoga time, fascial fibers will slowly thin out and unadhere over weeks, sometimes months, but the mucus can change to a more liquid state in as quickly as a minute, allowing more sliding, less pain, more feeling, and less resistance. Use your yoga—it's a great tool to get fluids and information flowing to their maximum sensitivity and adaptability.

## Feel Your Fascia

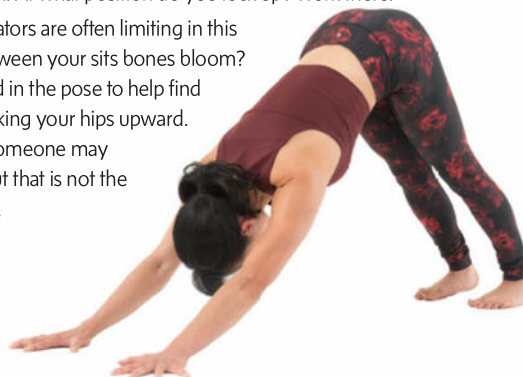
*The benefits of thinking of the body as a whole organism, instead of in parts, are profound. When we truly comprehend and feel this in our own bodies and see it in our students, we can move and teach with more integrity. That said, as yoga becomes physiotherapized, or made into a practice resembling physical therapy that helps people restore movement and function (a necessary and positive process in general), asana are often reduced to which muscles are stretched—think “Downward Dog is good for your hamstrings.” In reality, while tight hamstrings may be a common experience, your edge in this pose may be deep in your calves or butt, or along the fronts of your shoulders. It depends on your patterns—the way you were grown and what you took on.*

*Try this exercise to help you feel that your anatomy is more like a plant than a machine, and to help you move away from separating yourself into parts:*

### ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA Downward-Facing Dog Pose

Move into Down Dog. It is easy to feel your back body in this pose as you lift your hips, drop your heels from the middle of your legs, and lengthen your spine. But take time to spread your awareness and attention throughout your entire body in order to find points that lack awareness and are unique to your experience of this pose. Here are some points to ponder:

- » Track the front of your spine in this pose, as if you were rolling a warm red ball up the front of your spine from your tailbone, up the front of your sacrum and the lumbar and thoracic vertebrae, then behind your guts and heart.
- » Relax your voice box, then your tongue, then your jaw. Let your head dangle. Let yourself be silly for a moment, then re-establish the length in your cervical spine without the tension.
- » Move your breath into the back of your ribs, which can be frozen in your early work in this pose. Can you feel the ribs moving under your shoulder blades? Are you moving your lower ribs behind your kidneys?
- » Move your weight around your feet while in the pose. This can be subtle but powerful. If your heels are off the ground, move slowly, medially then laterally, on the balls of your feet. Feel how that changes the way you feel the rest of your body. If your heels are down, move slowly all around your feet like a clock: At what position do you lock up? Work there.
- » Because the deep lateral rotators are often limiting in this pose, can you let the area between your sits bones bloom? Try rotating your knees inward in the pose to help find your limitation, and keep working your hips upward. Remember, you are whole. Someone may describe you as a machine, but that is not the scientific truth—wholeness is.



Writer **Tom Myers** is the author of *Anatomy Trains* and the co-author of *Fascial Release for Structural Balance*. He has also produced more than 35 DVDs and numerous webinars on visual assessment, Fascial Release Technique, and the applications of fascial research. Myers, an integrative manual therapist with 40 years of experience, is a member of the International Association of Structural Integrators and the Health Advisory Board for Equinox. Learn more at [anatomytrains.com](http://anatomytrains.com).



# THE LUCKY BAMBOO

By YJSG Editors

You hear a lot about the luck a Bamboo plant brings, and how it increases the Feng Shui in our homes—it is a great gift during Chinese New Year. But what some people don't know is that the 'Lucky Bamboo' plant is actually not really a Bamboo. It is a type of Lily that grows in the rainforests of South East Asia and Africa. The 'Lucky Bamboo' plant has been part of the Chinese culture for more than 4,000 years, and used as a symbol for good fortune. The Chinese believe this little plant can bring good luck, wealth and happiness. It must be kept away from direct sunlight, grown in a clean container that has water and rocks to support the plant.

A real bamboo plant (as seen on our cover), on the other hand, is a perennial flowering plant (though they seldom flower) and contains hollow inter-nodal regions in the stem. The biodegradable bamboo is respected by the Chinese because it can withstand seasonal changes and lives a long life. In India, it is a symbol for long-lasting friendships. The two countries are also the largest producers of bamboo in the world.



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# How to move from Urdhva Hastasana to Adho Mukha Vrksasana

By Nikki Vilella

## Urdhva Hastasana

Urdhva = Raised · Hasta = Hands · asana = pose

Upward Salute

**BENEFITS** Teaches extension from the ground up; lengthens your side waist; strengthens your arms and shoulders

### INSTRUCTIONS

1 From standing, bring the balls of your feet to touch, leaving a narrow space between your heels. Ground down through the four corners of each foot. Lift and spread your toes—this will help you lift your arches and inner ankles and get a sense of where your midline is. Then engage your quadriceps. Maintain the lift in your arches and legs as you release your toes down.

2 Neutralize your pelvis by anchoring your tailbone toward your heels and moving the tops of your buttocks down. This helps prevent an exaggerated curve in the lumbar spine and keeps the lower front ribs from splaying out, which can interfere with maintaining a strong line of

extension in both Upward Salute and Handstand.

3 Inhale your arms out to your sides, parallel to the floor. Exhale to externally rotate from the top of your humerus bones, where your arms insert into your shoulders. Draw the bottom tips of your shoulder blades toward your spine, widen your collarbones, and broaden your chest.

4 On an inhalation, raise your arms alongside your ears. On an exhalation, root down through your feet.

5 Inhale to lengthen the sides of your waist even more and reach up through the crown of your head. Exhale to firm your arms closer to your ears and midline. Make sure your lower ribs are not splaying out. Keep your gaze at the horizon, your chin level, and your throat soft and open. Hold here for 8 breaths before exhaling your arms down.



**DON'T** let your elbows bend or your arms go wide, which will result in a loss of length in the sides of your waist.



**DON'T** let your front ribs pop out and your pelvis drop into an anterior tilt, which can create “banana back.”

An exaggerated lumbar curve in Upward Salute will cause you to lose the rooting action of your tailbone and decrease the power found in a more streamlined spinal extension.



## Modify Urdhva Hastasana as necessary to find safe alignment for your body.



If you have trouble engaging your legs and grounding through your feet...

**TRY** placing a block on its narrow side between your inner upper thighs, close to your pubic bone. Lift your toes and then firm your inner thighs around the block. Lift your quadriceps and roll your inner thighs back—as if you were trying to pass the block to someone—to create more space in your low back. Then squeeze your outer hips in and lengthen your tailbone down toward the block. The dual action of internally rotating your inner thighs and strongly rooting your tailbone will neutralize your pelvis and help you find strength in your legs. The block gives you something to squeeze into and helps you realize each of these actions. Hold for 8 breaths before exhaling to release your arms.



If your shoulders and wrists feel tight...

**TRY** Baddha Guliasana (Bound Fingers Pose). Stand in Tadasana (Mountain Pose) with your palms pressing together at the center of your chest. Interlace your fingers at their roots, so that the webbing connects and forms a fist. Invert your palms so that they face the front of the room, and extend through your elbows until the arms are straight. On an inhalation, lift your arms alongside your ears and hug them in toward your midline. When you reach up, extend all the way from the bottom sides of the waist to the heels of your palms. Do not overbend your fingers; instead, open your wrists by pressing up through the base of your palms. Hold for 8 breaths before exhaling to release your hands and lower your arms.



If you are having trouble getting your arms alongside your ears...

**TRY** working your legs, chest, and pelvis as you would in Tadasana, and bring one arm at a time into Ardha Gomukhasana arms (Half Cow Face Pose arms). Limitation in this motion could mean that you are tight in the latissimus dorsi muscles (on the mid- to lower back) and tricep muscles (at the back of the upper arms). Lift your left arm, externally rotate it, and then bend at your elbow. Use your right hand to gently draw your left elbow behind your head. Rest your left hand between your shoulder blades. Hold here for 8 breaths before exhaling to release your arms. Switch sides. Over time, this will help you to bring your arms alongside your ears.

## Find your edge

You know you are at your edge when you meet the boundaries of your comfort zone. In order to grow, you need to explore those boundaries with courage. There is an idea in yoga that the heat of an experience is what can transform you; the word that embodies this idea is *tapas*. Handstand is a pose that serves as the spark that initiates transformation and growth, which stems from a broadening of perspective. When you turn your world upside down, you are pushed to your edge in a way that insists you rediscover your center of balance in order to thrive. When you are inverted, finding and staying tethered to your center and midline take effort, but the combination of a deep, internal focus and a willingness to experiment can be the starting point.

Lengthen the hamstrings, hone midline awareness, and cultivate balance with these **prep poses** for Adho Mukha Vrksasana.

#### ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA Downward-Facing Dog Pose

**BENEFITS** Strengthens your upper body; lengthens your hamstring and calf muscles; fosters introspection and calm

**INSTRUCTIONS** Start in Tabletop. Place your palms shoulder-width apart, with your pointer fingers parallel. Ground evenly through all four corners of your palms. Externally rotate your upper-arm bones and internally rotate your forearms. On an exhalation, tuck your toes, lift your knees, and straighten your legs. Your feet should be sitting-bones-width apart. Lift your quadriceps and press your thighbones away from your chest



and arms. Reach your sitting bones up and your heels down, stretching the backs of your legs. As you press your palms down into the floor, reach your pelvis in the opposite direction and lengthen through your side waist. Avoid rounding your upper back. Smooth out your front ribs. Contract the middle and lower trapezius muscles, between and below your shoulder blades, so that you can soften the upper trapezius muscles along your neck. Stay here for 10 breaths before exhaling back to Tabletop.

Find your edge and shift your weight into your hands as you move **step by step** into Adho Mukha Vrksasana.

## Adho Mukha Vrksasana

Adho = Downward · Mukha = Face · Vrksa = Tree · Asana = pose

#### Handstand

##### BENEFITS

Energizes, builds confidence, hones attention and focus, and shifts perspective; strengthens your upper body; reverses the effects of gravity (compression and shortening) on your spine

##### INSTRUCTIONS

1 Start in Adho Mukha Svanasana. Bring your feet together at the midline; spread your palms and press them into the floor. Stretch through the sides of your waist and fortify your legs. Start to lift your heels, shifting some of your weight into the balls of your feet.





## URDHVA PRASARITA EKAPADASANA

Standing Splits

**BENEFITS** Stretches the hamstrings of your standing leg; strengthens the hamstrings and glutes of your lifted leg; cultivates balance and shifts perspective

**INSTRUCTIONS** Stand in Tadasana. Inhale to Urdhva Hastasana and then exhale to Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend). Firmly ground down through your standing, right foot and lift your right quadricep muscles. Inhale and lead with your inner thigh as you lift your left leg. Make sure you internally rotate your left leg and hug the midline with the inner seam of your leg. Don't let the left hip open or the left leg bend. Extend the spine so that the back doesn't round. Hold for 8 breaths and then release the left leg down. Take an easy Uttanasana, then switch sides.



## UTTHITA HASTA PADANGUSTHASANA

Extended Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose

**BENEFITS** Strengthens and stretches your legs; teaches the entry to Handstand

**INSTRUCTIONS** From Tadasana, draw your right knee to your chest and yogi toe-lock your right big toe. Point your left foot forward, lift your left kneecap, and press your left femur back. Keep your chest lifted. Exhale and straighten your right leg as much as possible. Roll your outer right hip down, away from your armpit. Either keep your left hand on your left hip or extend your arm alongside your left ear. Keep your pelvis neutral, and use your breath to spread your chest. Hold for 8 breaths. To come out, bend your right knee, release your toe, and hug your knee in before returning your right foot to the floor. Repeat on the other side. The standing leg becomes the first leg up into Handstand, so it's crucial that it remains straight; the lifted leg, however, can bend if necessary.



2 Step your right foot forward halfway to your hands and bring your shoulders over your wrists. Allow your right knee to bend. Keep the ball of your right foot on the floor but lift your heel. Press down firmly through your hands and lift your left leg into Standing Splits. Remember to lift your left inner thigh toward the ceiling and make your leg straight, like an arrow. Wrap your biceps forward. Push firmly down into your hands and make your arms completely straight, like pillars. Find a focal point, or drishti, on the ground, a few inches in front of your hands.

3 Keep your arms firm. Bend your right knee deeply and take a small hop off the right foot. It is paramount that as you transition weight onto your hands, you lift up through your inner left thigh (as opposed to reaching your left leg behind you). Draw your low belly in to support your pelvis. Do not aim to get your legs overhead; instead, aim to place your pelvis over your chest and shoulders. When you lead with your legs and not your pelvis, you will often backbend and find balance elusive. Eventually, you will be able to bring your right leg parallel to the floor into an inverted Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana. At this stage, don't lift the right leg higher—it will serve as an anchor and keep you from flipping over. Once you have your right leg parallel to the floor, internally rotate your thighs, drawing them



energetically into the midline. Your legs should feel like scissor blades: bolted firmly into their common point (the pelvis) and moving along, but not away from, the midline.

4 Once you have found balance, draw your legs together. Push down into your hands and actively reach up through your feet and legs. As you hug your legs into the midline, move your tailbone and the tops of the buttocks toward your heels. This will introduce length to the lumbar spine. Draw your low ribs toward your frontal hipbones to prevent any backbending. Make your body feel like an inverted Urdhva Hastasana. Grow even taller by reaching your legs strongly up and away from your rooted and stable palms. Hold for 5–8 breaths. To release, step your right foot down, then your left, and take Pada Hastasana (Foot-to-Hand Pose) to stretch your wrists.

### Stay safe

In Handstand, distribute the weight evenly from your outer palms to your inner palms by pressing equally into the mounds at the base of each finger. Avoid cupping your hands so that there is no unnecessary compression in your outer wrists. Keep your upper arms firm and your elbows straight to prevent buckling and instability. Reach up strongly through your feet, legs, and tailbone while engaging your core, so that you do not dump into your low back, creating “banana back” and compression in your lower spine. Practice at a wall until you are comfortable being upside down. When practicing without a wall, start by bringing the second leg no higher than parallel to the floor—it will act as an anchor and prevent you from falling over into a backbend.



Teacher and model **Nikki Vilella** is a senior teacher at Kula Yoga Project in New York City and owner of Kula Williamsburg in her home borough of Brooklyn. She has trained with Kula founder Schuyler Grant and Kula senior teacher Alison Sinatra; she studies Iyengar with Nikki Costello, Genny Kapuler, and Carrie Ow-erko, and anatomy with Lauren Haythe. For more, visit [kulayoga.com](http://kulayoga.com)



# A sequence to stay grounded & present

By Sesa O'Connor

WHETHER IT'S A big deadline at work, relationship issues, holiday season busyness, or some other stressor, life can certainly present challenges that turn on our fight-or-flight response. This instinctual physiological stress response can serve us well in life-threatening situations. (To wit: the oft-cited running-from-a-tiger scenario.) Yet these days, even stressors that aren't life-threatening can switch on our fight-or-flight mode—and we stay in this heightened stress state because we can't physically run away from things like deadlines or soaring daycare costs. The result? We become reactive rather than responsive, and our overall mental and physical health takes a hit. Enter this strong, balanced sequence, designed to ground you even as life's craziness swirls around you.



## 1 TADASANA Mountain Pose

Stand with your big toes touching and heels slightly apart. Lift your chest and roll your shoulders down your back, palms forward. Finish by adding the slightest tuck to the chin (Jalandhara Bandha) and lengthen the crown of your head toward the sky. Find your Ujjayi Pranayama by breathing in and out through your nose while constricting your throat. Stay here for 5–10 breaths.



## 2 GARUDASANA Eagle Pose

Reach your arms straight forward and then cross your right elbow under the left, bringing your forearms up and twisting through the wrists so your palms meet. Lift your elbows so they're in line with your shoulders, and pull your forearms forward as you glide your shoulders down the back. Shift your weight onto your right leg, and then inhale your left leg high up and over your right leg, wrapping your foot around the outer edge of your right calf. Then, sit down as deeply as you can. Stay here for 5–10 breaths.



## 3 URDHVA PRASARITA EKAPADASANA Standing Splits with Eagle Arms

Keep your arms as they are and slowly unwrap your left leg, floating it up toward the sky. Fold your torso down and dip your bound arms toward the earth. Spin your outer left hip down toward the mat to keep your hips square to the earth, and keep your left foot active by pointing through the ball mound of your foot as it lifts upward. Find a focal point a few inches in front of you and stay here for 5–10 breaths.



## 4 ANJANEYASANA Low Lunge with Eagle Arms

Keep your arms as they are and bend your standing leg, stepping your left leg way back and landing on your toes. Lift your chest and then bend into your back knee, sinking your front hip forward and down. Move toward a 90-degree angle in your front leg. Engage your abs as you move your left thighbone skyward, moving your back leg toward straight. Then, begin to pull your Eagle Arms forward and up so that your forearms and elbows point toward the sky. Stay here for 5–10 breaths.



## 5 ANJANEYASANA

### Low Lunge, variation

Unwrap your arms and interlace your fingers, cupping the back of your skull with your hands. Keeping your elbows wide, plug your shoulder blades into your heart and lift your heart to the sky. As you arch your back, allow the weight of your head to fall into your hands. This will help open your chest and reverse the hunched-forward posture most of us unconsciously slip into when we're stressed. If you feel any pinching in your low back, bend your back leg and tuck your tailbone down toward the earth to find a neutral spine. Stay here for 5–10 breaths.



## 6 PARIVRTTA ANJANEYASANA

### Revolved Lunge Pose

Lift your chest so it's directly over your hips, and bring your hands to Anjali Mudra (Prayer Pose) in front of your heart. Lean your chest halfway forward and twist your left elbow to the outside of your right thigh. Drive your left heel back and press your left thighbone up toward the ceiling; this is your anchor and will keep you balanced. Stack your elbows so you can press your palms together. You can also raise your top arm skyward and move your bottom-arm fingertips to the mat, or take a bind. Push the tips of your shoulder blades into your heart as you stay here for 5–10 breaths.



## 7 PLANK POSE

Release your hands to the mat and step your front foot back to come to High Plank: Place your feet hip-width apart and push your heels toward the wall behind you. Spin your inner thighs up toward the ceiling, keeping your hips level with your shoulder blades. Stack your wrists under your shoulders and push the earth away from you while broadening your chest so you're not rounding in the shoulder blades. Finally, pull the crown of your head forward as you tuck your tailbone toward your heels and engage your lower belly. Stay here for 5–10 breaths.



## 11 ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

### Downward-Facing Dog Pose

Keep your feet hip-width apart and bend your knees to lift your hip creases toward the sky. Lengthen your lower back, knit your ribs in toward one another, and maintain the length in your spine as you spin your inner thighs toward the wall behind you and press your heels toward the mat. Keep your head and neck relaxed, spread your fingers wide, and then press them into the mat. Hug your triceps back toward your ears and allow your shoulders to relax and drop away from your ears. Stay here for 5–10 breaths. From here, come back to Tadasana and repeat poses 2–10 on the left side, finishing in Downward-Facing Dog.



## 12 ADHO MUKHA VRKSASANA

### Handstand with Eagle Legs

From Down Dog, step your feet forward 1–2 feet, gaze between your hands, and, as you inhale, lift your right leg skyward. On your next inhale, come onto the ball of your left foot and then gently hop off your left foot. As your left heel comes off the mat, bring it in close to your butt. Once balanced, cross your legs just as you did in Garudasana. If you're practicing with a wall behind you, plant your hands about 2 feet away, and maybe even bind your legs. Then slowly begin to remove your foot from the wall by pressing away with your toes.



## 13 SUKHASANA

### Easy Pose with a Twist

After playing with Handstand, come to a comfortable cross-legged position (Sukhasana). Take the peace-sign fingers of both hands and grab your big toes, pulling them forward and out so that your feet stay wide. Sitting up tall, plant your right hand about 6 inches behind your right hip, and inhale your left hand up to the sky. As you exhale, bring your left hand to the outside of your right knee to move into a twist. On each inhale, feel yourself growing taller; on each exhale, twist a little deeper. Once you've taken about 8 breaths, come back to center, switch the cross of your legs, and twist to the other side for 8 breaths.





## 8 CHATURANGA DANDASANA

### Four-Limbed Staff Pose

Keeping all of the actions you created in Plank Pose, lean your shoulders forward so they jut out over your fingertips. With an exhale, lower your body halfway down toward the mat, hovering 3–4 inches off the ground. Think 90-degree angle in the arms; your shoulders shouldn't dip below your elbows. Do all of these movements during one exhalation. To build strength, stay here for 3–5 breaths, or more if your body allows.



## 9 URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA

### Upward-Facing Dog Pose

On an inhalation, straighten your arms, lifting the chest and pulling the heart through the gateway of the arms. Flip the tops of your feet to the mat and drive all 10 toes back, hugging your outer ankles in, lifting your shins, and bringing your knees and thighs off the mat. Do all of these actions during one inhalation, and stay here in Upward-Facing Dog for 3–5 breaths.



## 10 CHATURANGA DANDASANA

### Four-Limbed Staff Pose

From Upward-Facing Dog, lower your belly onto the mat and tuck your toes under so the balls of your feet are on the mat and your heels are pressing toward the back wall. Lift your knees off the mat, firm your thighs, and engage your lower abdominal muscles. As you inhale, push yourself up halfway to Chaturanga. On your exhale, lower your belly back down to the mat. Repeat 3–5 times to build core and arm strength.



## 14 PASCHIMOTTANASANA

### Seated Forward Bend

Bring both legs straight out in front of you and root your sitting bones into your mat. Sit up tall, flex your feet, and inhale, sending your arms straight up toward the sky. On an exhalation, lead with your heart and reach your hands toward your toes, folding your body forward and relaxing your head and neck. Keep in mind it's important to find length first and then fold forward. Stay here for 5–10 breaths.



## 15 SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA

### Bridge Pose

Roll onto your back, bend your knees, and plant your feet hip-width apart. On an inhalation, lift your hips, interlace your hands underneath you, and press the outer edges of your forearms into the mat as you roll your shoulders underneath you. Turn your big toes in slightly and spin your inner thighs down toward the mat. Soften your bottom and lengthen your tailbone toward your calves as you move your heart in the opposite direction. Stay here for 5–10 breaths.



## 16 SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA

### Reclining Bound Angle Pose, variation

Lie on your back and place one block at the low or medium height under your shoulders—the bottom of the block should rest at the bottom of your shoulder blades—and the other at the same height under your head. Let your arms open wide with your palms facing up, and then bring the soles of your feet together, sliding them up toward your groin and letting your knees fall open. (Option: Place a block or bolster under each knee for additional support.) Stay here for at least 5–10 breaths, then remove the blocks and rest in Savasana for 5 minutes or longer.







# peace of mind

by Nora Isaacs

**Y**ou're standing in Virabhadrasana I (Warrior Pose I). You actively reach through your back foot and allow your tailbone to descend away from your lower back as your arms reach up toward the ceiling. As you hold the pose you start to notice your front thigh burning, your shoulders holding tension, and your breath becoming labored. Still holding. Soon you get agitated and start to anticipate the joy you'll feel when the pose is over. Your breath becomes shallow while you await the teacher's instruction to come out of the pose. But she doesn't say anything. You label her a sadist. Still holding. You decide that you are never coming back to yoga. As your thigh starts to shake, you mentally check out. Frustrated, you drop your arms and look around the room, defeated.

Now imagine this: You're standing in Virabhadrasana I, noticing the same sensations, having the same thoughts and feelings—anger, boredom, impatience, tension. But instead of reacting, you simply observe your thoughts. You remember that this pose, like everything else in life, will eventually end. You remind yourself not to get caught up in your own story line. And, in the midst of feeling irritated while your

thighs burn, you appreciate the sweetness of the moment. You may even feel a wash of gratitude that you have the time and privilege to do a hatha yoga practice. Then you bring your awareness back to your breath and witness the ongoing sensations and thoughts until the teacher guides you out of the pose.

You've just experienced the benefits of mindfulness—of bringing your awareness into the present moment, of noticing and accepting what is happening right now without judgment or reaction. And, no doubt, it feels a lot better than the first scenario (which you might recognize as something you've also experienced). Mindfulness is something that Buddhist meditators cultivate. And it's something that all styles of hatha yoga teach, often through an emphasis on breath awareness.

Lately, a group of teachers, who independently discovered the benefits of merging mindfulness with asana, has begun to offer something we might call mindful yoga. "My experience is that when we really cultivate mindfulness in the hatha and sitting practice, it almost naturally begins to seep into our other activities," says Frank Jude Boccio, the author of *Mindfulness Yoga*.

instruction by  
Frank Jude Boccio

illustrations by  
Trina Dalziel

### THE INDIAN CONNECTION

You don't have to be Buddhist or even know much about Buddhism to learn the mindfulness practices, but it's helpful to know that yoga and Buddhism have much in common. They are both ancient spiritual practices that originated on the Indian subcontinent, and they both aim to help you liberate yourself from the small, egoic sense of self and experience oneness with the universe. The eightfold path of the Buddha and the eight-limbed path of the yogic sage Patanjali are quite similar: Both begin with ethical practices and conduct and include training in

concentration and awareness. "Ultimately, I see Buddha and Patanjali as brothers, using different languages, but speaking about and pointing to the same thing," says Stephen Cope, founder and former director of the Kripalu Institute and the author of *The Wisdom of Yoga*.

One difference, however, is that the yogic path emphasizes the development of concentration on a highly refined object, like the breath, to produce profound states of absorption. The Buddhist path focuses on a mindfulness of all events as they unfold in the stream of consciousness so you can experience what is happening without clinging to it or pushing it away. So, that shaking thigh in your standing pose? It doesn't overtake your whole experience, and you don't have to change it. With mindfulness, it just becomes one small sensation in the whole fabric of a moment.

### A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

Mindfulness has always been an essential aspect of any serious yogi's physical practice. But today's mindful yoga teachers say that Buddhism's comprehensive road map

to mindfulness has benefited them even more. That's not to say these teachers felt something was missing from yoga. For most, the integration has evolved naturally: As their interest in, and understanding of, Buddhism deepened over time, they realized that highly developed mindfulness techniques could complement their hatha practice.

"I had been practicing asana mindfully, paying attention especially to my breath and alignment," Boccio says. "But when I heard the Buddha's teaching on the foundations of mindfulness, the vista of asana practice widened before me." Instead of just practicing "mindfully" in general, Boccio followed the Buddha's teachings, which provide detailed instruction that can be applied within any pose. By systematically approaching mindfulness, he was able to identify specific behaviors of his, such as grasping for the outcome of a pose, avoiding a certain pose, or just zoning out. And once he identified them, he was able to make positive changes.

Now Boccio teaches the Buddha's foundations of mindfulness—mindfulness of the body, of feelings, of the mind, and of the dharma (truth)—on the mat. After he instructs his students in a pose, he reminds them to cultivate mindfulness by asking questions: Are you bringing awareness to your breath? Are you starting to create a mental formation by wondering when this pose will end?

Boccio explains the difference between practicing yoga mindfully and following the Buddha's mindfulness techniques: "While other forms of yoga may teach students to practice asana with mindfulness, I teach and practice mindfulness through the form of asana."

### INVITATION TO GO DEEPER

The beauty of mindfulness training is that it transcends yoga styles. Once you learn the basics of the practice, you can apply it in any class you take.

Sarah Powers's classes often begin with Yin Yoga—which consists of mainly seated postures held for long periods of time—and move into vinyasa flow. The long holds in Yin can bring up intense physical sensations, not to mention an often persistent, nagging desire to exit a pose. Powers feels this is the perfect time to remind students of mindfulness methods. "When we are called to go into the deeper places of pain, discomfort, or agitation, we need support to integrate that experience," she says. "Receiving mindfulness teachings assists this process." By the time students are ready to begin the flow portion of the practice, the stage is set for mindful awareness.



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### Savasana (Corpse Pose)

Savasana is one of the four main meditation postures taught by the Buddha; do it to start and end your practice. Lie on your back with your feet 12 to 18 inches apart, arms at your sides a few inches from the torso with the palms up. Surrender the full weight of your body to gravity.

Rest your awareness on your breath, wherever you feel it in the body. Let go of any tendency to manipulate it; simply know an inbreath as an inbreath, an outbreath as an outbreath. Open to the breath and its various qualities: deep or shallow, fast or slow, rough or smooth, even or uneven. Scan the body. Is it fully released or still holding tension? When the mind wanders, note any irritation and judgment and bring it back to the breath and the body.



# { 3 }

## Cat-Cow Pose

Come onto your hands and knees, positioning your hands directly under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. As you exhale, round your back and scoop the tailbone between your legs. Let the head tilt so you are gazing back toward your thighs. On the inhalation, tilt the pelvis forward, opening your belly toward the floor and letting your spine move into the torso, creating a gentle backbend. Reach the crown of your head and your tailbone up toward the ceiling. Be careful not to reach upward with your chin, which compresses the back of the neck. Flow back and forth for a few breaths.

As you continue to coordinate the movement with your breath, let the timing of the breath determine your pace. After going back and forth several times, notice the mind's natural tendency to wander. This is a common reaction to repetition. The mind seems to assume that having done something well, it doesn't have to know anything more and needn't pay attention. This "knowing mind" is often the biggest obstacle to intimacy with oneself and with others. When we think we know, we stop listening and seeing. Try to maintain the "don't-know mind," and you will grow in understanding and intimacy. Come back to the breath again and again; it's the thread that keeps body and mind connected.



# { 2 }

## Sucirandhrasana (Eye-of-the-Needle Pose)

From Corpse Pose, bring both feet to the floor near the buttocks, hip-width apart. Place your outer right shin on your left thigh. Draw your left knee toward your chest; reach between your legs with your right arm and around the outside of your left leg with your left arm to clasp your hands. Notice whether you held or restricted your breath as you moved into this stretch, and continue to let the breath flow naturally.

Depending on the openness in your body, you may feel stretching sensations in your right hip. You may also feel some resistance to the sensations, which causes you to tense the surrounding muscles. See if you can release this tension and observe how the sensations change as you maintain the stretch. You've just established mindfulness of the body, sensations, and mental formations. Continue this work as you release and repeat on the other side. Since we are not perfectly symmetrical beings, you may find that one hip provokes stronger sensations and reactivity than the other. Can you stay with the bare sensation, maybe even see the difference between one side and the other, without getting caught in judging or picking and choosing?

### A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Yoga class is a great laboratory for becoming more mindful because it's rife with conditions that are beyond your control. On any given day, the traffic noise might be uncomfortably loud, you may feel bored or restless, your neighbor's sweat might drip on your mat, your hamstrings may feel unusually tight. Armed with mindfulness techniques, you can reframe these conditions so that you feel less reactive about things that you usually find irritating and distracting.

For yoga teacher Laura Neal, mindfulness techniques made her aware of her tendency to push too hard in her physical practice. "Now I'm less likely to push past my limit—and also less likely to stop short of it," she says.

Michelle Morrison, a supervisor for an accounting firm in Manhattan who also teaches mindfulness yoga, feels the effects of combining awareness practice with her physical practice.

"I came to see the different kinds of things happening: where I was clinging to pleasurable sensations, what was causing the irritation, noticing my habits," she says. "I tend to be kind of hard on myself, and I've noticed that I can have those feelings and yet open myself to other options."

Cyndi Lee, who founded New York City's OM Yoga, says that, while she has always loved the physical poses, it wasn't until she applied specific Buddhist mindfulness practices that she saw the fruits of her practice go beyond the physical level. "The Buddhist mindfulness practice has a fully developed technique, which can then be modified to apply to asana," she says. "For me, that is when my practice showed up in my life as increased patience, curiosity, kindness, the potential for a letting-go of agenda, the understanding of craving, and the recognition of basic goodness in myself and others."





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## Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

Mountain Pose is too often perceived as just something to do between the more important asanas. In fact, it is foundational for all the standing postures.

Stand with your arms at your sides. Press the four corners of your feet into the ground, distributing your body weight evenly between both feet and centering it just in front of your heels. Imagine your pelvis as a bowl with its rim level, both front to back and side to side. Let the spine rise up, keep the lower ribs from jutting out, gently lift the chest, and open the heart. Relax the shoulders, with your shoulder blades moving into and supporting your upper back. Keep the chin parallel with the floor and your ears centered over your shoulders.

See what happens as you simply stand there. Be awake to all the sensations that arise: the subtle swaying of the body, the movement of the breath. Does boredom, impatience, or anticipation arise? Can you just be here? When you feel like you've been here long enough, take another 6 to 8 breaths and see what happens.

## MEDITATION IN MOTION

According to Anne Cushman, director of the Mindfulness Yoga and Meditation program at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California, the practice of moving in mindfulness is especially helpful for those who can't seem to get a sitting meditation practice going. "It's a way to open more deeply to your yoga practice and extend that feeling into the rest of your life," she says.

That's true for Rachel Lanzerotti, a social worker and yoga therapist based in San Francisco, and past participant in the course. "It has taken me further in a direction that I was already going—of slowing down deeply into the practice and truly being present with what arises." She uses the example of standing in Tadasana (Mountain Pose): "I was captivated by the feeling of my feet against the mat, and the mat against my feet, and everything rising from there," she recalls. "I was drawn into that

moment of sensation and breath and observation even as I was noticing it. I ended up standing there for minutes, and it was incredibly precious and rich."

Practitioners say that embracing mindfulness has helped them be able to deal more skillfully with the everyday stresses of holding down a job, managing relationships, and finding their place in the world. Lee says that mindfulness works because it offers a realistic approach to dealing with life's challenges. "It's very earthy, grounded, and time-tested material," she explains. "It's not about escape, creating a bliss state—and then when you open your eyes, you come crashing down into reality. It gives you a path for shifting your general scenario away from attachment or aversion, to thinking there is fundamentally no problem and everything is workable. And that is very liberating."

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## Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose)

From hands and knees, tuck your toes under, lift your hips, and straighten your legs into Down Dog. Playfully explore the pose by bringing the heels to the floor one at a time. Coordinate with the breath and notice if your mind wanders in the face of repetition.

Once you straighten both legs, remain in the pose for anywhere from 8 to 15 breaths, staying alert to sensations, mental formations, and the way the experience continuously changes. Teachers often talk about "holding" the postures, but notice how there is no fixed thing to hold on to. Moment by moment, breath by breath, the posture re-creates itself; the Down Dog of the first breath is not the same as the Down Dog of the sixth breath.

You will begin to see that this is true not only for this asana, and all the other asanas, but also for all life experiences. You will come to see that you are not the same "person" when you come out of the posture that you were when you went into it.





{ 7 }

## Paschimottasana

### (Seated Forward Bend)

Sit with your legs straight out in front of you.

Press the backs of your thighs, calves, and heels into the ground. Reach through your heels and flex your toes toward your head. Press your hands into the ground beside your hips and lift your chest. If your lower back rounds and your weight is on your tailbone, sit up on a blanket for support.

Grasp your feet or your shins, soften your groins, and slightly rotate your thighs inward. Lengthen your torso out over your legs, keeping the lower back from rounding.

Let go of “grasping mind” and be where you are. Feel the breath move within the body.

Surrender into the posture, and keep letting go of any clinging

or aversion to the ever-changing phenomena. Notice how the attempt to prolong or create pleasant feelings is itself a form of tension.

When you’re ready, rest in Corpse Pose for a few minutes, letting the experience of the practice penetrate the body-mind. After Corpse, consider meditating. Sitting after asana practice is a nourishing and satisfying endeavor. Why not try it now?



{ 6 }

## Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose II)

Reach out to the sides with your arms parallel to the floor, and step your feet apart so that they are directly under your fingertips. Turn your left foot in about 15 degrees and your right foot out 90. Without leaning forward, bend the right knee toward a 90-degree angle so that the knee is directly over the ankle. Keep your arms parallel to the ground and gaze out over your right hand.

As you breathe, stay alert to changes in the quality of the breath, its depth, and rate. As sensations begin to arise in your front thigh or your shoulders, notice how the mind reacts. Do you feel aversion to the tension accompanying the sensations? See what happens to the quality of your experience if you stay with the breath while releasing this tension. Notice the story lines that arise about what is happening, and choose to just listen without grasping at any of them. Rather than solidifying the sensations into entities with which to do battle, embrace them with awareness. Notice—if you can—their habitual, nonpersonal nature. After doing both sides, come back to Mountain Pose and scan through the entire body, being open to all that arises.

Nora Isaacs is the author of *Women in Overdrive: Find Balance and Overcome Burnout at Any Age*.



What happens

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EVERY NIGHT  
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A man with glasses and a light blue button-down shirt stands in a shop filled with shelves of glass bottles. He is holding a small bottle of juice in his right hand. The background shows rows of bottles on shelves, some with labels. A red decorative tassel hangs from the top right.

## Meet Sumit Nanda, a victim of chronic illness since childhood, who took charge of healing his body and gut with Ayurveda.

By Kavita Chandran

When I met Sumit Nanda at a wellness event in Singapore for the first time, we talked briefly about Yoga Journal, Ayurveda and his health. Standing tall with a lean frame and radiant skin, it was hard to believe he had a past that contained a daily cup filled with prescription medicines.

A week later, as we sat sipping Ayurveda-prescribed mixes at his Ega Juice Clinic at Singapore's Forum mall, he told me why he treats his food as medicine. Not too long ago, he used to be a perennial patient—migraines, ENT issues, immunity concerns, sinus, itchy throat, blood pressure, insomnia and weight-related problems.

"I would wake up every morning and take a painkiller to pre-empt a headache that could strike any time," Sumit said. "I must have gone to more than 20 ENT specialists but no one could cure the itch in my throat."

Finally, at 25, his tonsils were removed. But that too gave no respite, and doctors started prescribing allergy medicines for his incessant cough. He changed his lifestyle and did everything suggested—exercise, brown bread, egg whites, diet coke, low fat oil etc.—and yet, downhill was how his body marched.

At 35, he was diagnosed with high blood pressure. His energy levels tanked, he barely slept, and became a victim of frequent migraines. The doctors added more to his pill basket: strong painkillers for migraine, anti-depressants for sleep and ace inhibitors for blood pressure.

At 42, he flew to New Delhi to take care of his father who was hospitalized, carrying the burden of his own ill health with him. "I used to feel ants crawling all over my body." It was his brother who recommended he go to an Ayurveda clinic nearby for a checkup.

"The first time I met Dr. Ratheesh, he checked my pulse and declared my biological age to be 65," he said. "And, he asked me to throw away all my pills."

Sumit was put on a 30-day Ayurvedic diet that consisted of herbal supplements, such as turmeric, *gudduchi* (moonseeds), gooseberries and laxatives. He was told the problem lay in his gut: his food was not digesting well and nourishment wasn't reaching at a cellular level because his cells were coated with toxins.

"For the first time ever, I understood what it was like to have a full night of undisturbed sleep." Those 30 days changed Sumit's life, and learning Ayurveda became his purpose.

Now, as he nears 50, he has shed 15 kilos, bid goodbye to migraine attacks, blood pressure is normal, sleeps like a baby, and energy levels are always high. In the last six years, he studied and got certified as an Ayurveda practitioner, did *Panchkarma* (a fivefold detoxification treatment that involves massage, herbal therapy, and other healing methods), learned about healing secrets of plants and fruits, started juicing once a week, brought 'friends of Ayurveda' together at conferences held by the World Ayurveda Association, and most importantly, he went in search of Dr. Ratheesh and brought him to Singapore.

"I haven't popped in a pill in the last six years, and my pulse reading shows my biological age as 33 now," he laughs. "It's called age reversal!"

That idea and his transformation gave birth to Ega Juice Clinic—a play on age reversal (hint: read "Ega" backwards)—that he co-founded with Dr. Ratheesh. They bought fresh fruits together, and for a year, they tasted and tested fruits and vegetables to get the right mix that heals different body types. Before they knew, they were churning glass bottles every morning to a line of juicers who wanted to own their health, slowly expanding from one clinic at Cluny Court to their second in Forum mall last year. Their mission is to promote preventive healthcare "so that symptoms are corrected through diet and lifestyle rather than management with medication". Together, they check a person's body composition and prescribe juices accordingly, so much so that Sumit can now tell a person's *dosha* by just looking at them. "You are a mix of pitta and vata," he told me. "Eat sweet and avoid yogurt."

What's interesting about Ega Juice Clinic is that you get to choose your own "cleanse package" by taking a detox quiz. My quiz showed I need to "Refocus Hard" and the cleanse package suggested was a mix of pure green juices, all available at the clinic, and some specific fruits and vegetables.

Singapore climate doesn't bode well for perishable foods, so what do they do with leftover juice bottles that aren't sold?

"I actually look forward to seeing at least some left over in the evening," said Sumit with a glint in his eyes. "I drink them all up."







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# eat WELL

## nourish your PRACTICE

Whether you are making a commitment to yoga for 21 days or for a lifetime, you'll find you feel better if you eat in a way that supports your practice. Take this time to offer yourself the nourishment not only of practice but also of healthy, healing food.

In "Sound Bites" (page 42), we tell you how to eat strategically to fuel your body before practice and replenish it after. Calibrate your own snacking needs based on when you practice and how vigorous your yoga is. Then use our simple recipes and suggestions to keep food handy for when you need it most.

And with great joy we share one of our yogi secrets: the recipe for ghee. "Gold Standard" (page 45) explains why Ayurveda, yoga's sister science and 5,000-year-old medical system, holds that this is the world's healthiest, most nourishing source of fat. The making of ghee can be a meditation in action—and a way to taste divine nectar directly.

In "Diet for a Green Planet" (page 48), we help you understand how you can eat in a way that supports the environment inside and outside your body. By using beans as a main source of protein, you can reduce your own carbon footprint and improve your health. Enjoy the tastes and benefits of this lean, green protein.

Feed your practice, feed your brain...and feed your soul well. Enjoy.



# sound bites

Smart snacking brings energy to your practice and sustains you all day long.

Lunchtime yoga seemed like a great idea. But you've only eaten a light early breakfast, and you find that your practice fizzles and your mind turns crabby as your body lets you know that it needs more fuel to make it through a vigorous vinyasa class.

Or maybe you've experienced the opposite: You indulged in a hearty late lunch before an afternoon class, and now you find not only that you are sluggish but also that Sun Salutations, twists, inversions—most poses actually!—feel uncomfortable. You might even feel a little nauseated.

"No matter what type of practice, yoga works best when you can breathe fully and access your whole body's energy," says Los Angeles dietitian and yoga practitioner Ashley Koff. "That means that, ideally, digestion isn't happening in an intense way. But you shouldn't be underfueled, either."

The best approach to keep energy steady and strong for practice is to eat small portions and to eat often. So give yourself permission to snack. But if you want to fuel your body in a way that gives you sustained energy, skip the chips and sweets and choose nutritious bites.

The key to successful snacking, dietitians say, is to combine a serving each of carbohydrates, protein, and healthful fats. That's about 15 grams of carbohydrates (a handful of crackers or a piece of fruit), 7 grams of protein (found in a half cup or so of yogurt or a one-third cup of shelled edamame), and up to 5 grams of a healthful fat (a few slices of avocado or 2 teaspoons of nut butter). The carbohydrates, whether in the form of fruits, vegetables, or grains, are digested quickly and provide ready energy. The protein and fats slow





down the absorption of the nutrients so that your energy lasts as long as your 90-minute class.

What's more, there's some evidence that eating the right balance of carbohydrates, protein, and healthful fats before you exercise can help you stave off injuries. "If there are no carbohydrates in your system, the body will begin to take those nutrients from muscle,

making it more likely for a muscle to tear or pull if you're in the middle of stretching it," says Koff.

Diana Dugan Richards, a dietitian and yoga teacher and the founder of Namaste Nutrition in Watertown, Massachusetts, suggests eating 250–300 calories about two hours before you practice. That's an apple with yogurt or a handful of almonds, or a serving of crackers dipped in

hummus or bean dip. "When it's time for class, your body will be energized, but you won't have a belly full of food," she explains.

After practice, snack again with the same balance of carbohydrates, protein, and healthful fat for sustained energy all day long. Here are some ideas for fitting balanced snacking into your schedule.



## Muesli Breakfast Bars

MAKES 24 BARS

- 2 ½ cups rolled oats
- ¼ cup whole-wheat flour
- ¼ cup ground flaxseed
- ½ cup dry milk or soy protein powder (optional)
- ½ cup toasted wheat germ
- ½ cup chopped, toasted walnuts
- 1 cup dried cranberries, raisins, or a combination
- 1 cup honey
- ½ cup natural salted peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

1 Preheat the oven to 325°. Line a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with foil, or lightly oil it with olive or canola oil.

2 In a medium bowl, combine the oats, flour, flaxseed, dry milk (if using), wheat germ, walnuts, and cranberries.

3 In a small saucepan, stir together the honey, peanut butter, and olive oil over medium-low heat until warm and well blended. Add to the dry ingredients and mix quickly until well combined. (The mixture will be sticky and hard to stir.)

4 With lightly oiled hands, pat the mixture evenly into the prepared baking pan. Bake until the edges begin to brown, about 25 minutes. Let cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes and then cut into 24 bars. When cool, remove the bars from the pan and store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

*Reprinted with permission of Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research.*

Customize these bars with other dried fruits and nuts, such as golden raisins, chopped dried apricots, un-sweetened coconut, and almonds.

### IF YOU PRACTICE IN THE MORNING

You might not be very hungry first thing in the morning, but if you're doing a vigorous practice, it's important to take in a few calories beforehand, says Dugan Richards. "A piece of fruit might be fine before a gentle morning class," she says, "but if you are going to have a more energizing practice, that apple or banana is going to get used up pretty quickly once you get going."

Dugan Richards suggests a smoothie with soy milk or high-protein Greek yogurt and fruit. She'll often add protein powder and flaxseed oil, which are easy to digest and provide lasting energy. And if a smoothie feels like too much to stomach first thing in the morning, a mug of tea with honey and milk before a mellow practice can hydrate you and give you a mini-dose of carbs, protein, and fat.

**AFTER SAVASANA** Refuel your body's energy reserves with a meal like oatmeal with fruit, nuts, and soy milk. Or wrap a homemade breakfast bar in a napkin and tuck it into your bag to eat on your way to work or home from class.

### IF YOU PRACTICE MIDDAY

If you fit in a class on your lunch break, you'll want to eat something sustaining but easily digested an hour or two before you practice. Try sliced apples dipped in soy yogurt with a handful of walnuts or have some mashed avocado and sliced tomato on whole-grain toast with a drizzle of olive oil and lemon juice.

**AFTER SAVASANA** Dip raw carrots, cucumber, celery, and whole-grain pita- bread triangles in homemade fava bean hummus (*recipe on page 44*). Or pack a sandwich that incorporates fresh fruit and whole-grain bread, such as sliced peaches and yogurt cheese, ripe pear and almond butter, or strawberries and honey with hemp or sunflower-seed butter.

### IF YOU PRACTICE IN THE EVENING

Eat a late-afternoon snack and you'll be less tempted to skip class due to hunger or flagging energy. Spread a whole-grain rice cake with almond butter and top with sliced bananas, or wrap a butter-lettuce leaf around crumbled tempeh or seasoned, baked tofu

with shredded carrots and sliced cucumber.

Or mix chopped mango, red pepper, and red onion with cooked black beans, olive oil, and lime juice for a vitamin-packed salsa that stays fresh in the refrigerator for days. An hour or

two before class, scoop it up with whole-grain crackers or baked corn tortilla chips.

**AFTER SAVASANA** Ease hunger pangs after class by nibbling on a mixture of dried fruit, sunflower seeds, and dried coconut. Or have an

appetizer-sized snack of lightly dressed edamame to tide you over until you sit down to dinner.

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**Lauren Ladoceour** is a writer and editor living in San Francisco.

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## Fava Bean Hummus

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

To peel fresh fava beans, remove them from their pods, plunge in boiling water for 1 minute, and then drain and rinse in cold water. When cool enough to handle, peel away and discard second skins.

- 3 pounds fava beans, blanched and twice shelled
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 3 teaspoons fresh, chopped mint leaves
- Sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

- 1 Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add the beans and simmer for 5 minutes or until tender. Drain the beans, reserving about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cooking water.
- 2 With a hand blender or food processor, purée the beans, gradually adding the olive oil, lemon juice, and just enough of the reserved water to get a slightly chunky consistency similar to hummus. Add mint, salt, and pepper to taste.
- 3 Spoon into a bowl and serve immediately. Or cover and chill for up to 1 day.

*Recipe courtesy of Lauren Ladoceour.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

fava beans have a short season, but you can make tasty, nutritious bean spreads and dips from any cooked fresh or dried bean. Try pinto beans with cumin, white beans with thyme, or black beans with jalapeño chilies.





# gold standard

By Suzanne Vangilder

Making ghee creates a culinary treasure and a meditation on the essence of milk and life.

Even as the spring equinox approached, nature continued to dump record-breaking quantities of snow on my hometown of Madison, Wisconsin. That time of year, the weather sometimes interferes with the work of my husband, a modern-day milkman making deliveries in a biodiesel truck painted black and white to look like a Holstein cow. During an especially blustery week last spring, the weather kept him off the road and left us with 60 pints of cream packed in snow outside the back door. There are only so many ways a family of four can enjoy the luxuries of fresh cream, and I knew that if we didn't do something with it in the next few days, the luscious bounty would go to waste. That's when some friends from my yoga community suggested I turn the cream into clarified butter, or ghee.

CLARIFIED  
BUTTER, OR  
GHEE (RECIPE  
ON PAGE 46)

**Learn how to make Indian bread with potato stuffing, the taste enhanced only when made with ghee.**

## Alu Paratha

MAKES 12 SERVINGS

### Roti

- 4 cups whole-wheat flour
- 9 tablespoons ghee
- 1 cup cold water

### Filling

- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 3 tablespoons ghee
- ½ cup onions, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon garam masala
- ¼–½ teaspoon fresh green chilies, minced
- ½ cup fresh cilantro, minced
- Juice of ½ lemon
- ¼ cup ghee, melted

1 Combine flour and 9 tablespoons ghee with your hands in a large bowl until mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add water and knead until it forms a firm, smooth dough. If dry, add more water, 1 tablespoon at a time, and knead again. Cover, and set aside for 30 minutes.

2 While the dough rests, cook potatoes in a large pot of salted, boiling water until they're soft, about 20 minutes. Drain, mash, and set aside.

3 Heat 3 tablespoons ghee in a frying pan over medium heat. Add onions and sauté until soft (5 minutes). Add salt, cumin, garam masala, chilies, and potatoes. Stir until mixed well. Remove from heat. Stir in cilantro and lemon juice.

4 Divide dough into 12 evenly sized balls. On a lightly floured surfaced, roll out the dough into 4-inch circles.

5 Place about 1 to 2 tablespoons of the filling in the center of each circle. Carefully bring the edges of the dough up and pinch them together to enclose the filling.

6 Gently flatten each roti down into a 4-inch circle. Keep them covered with a damp cloth until you are done.

7 Cook roti in a dry, heavy-bottom or nonstick frying pan over medium-high heat for about 1 minute. Flip over and cook other side.

8 Brush the roti with a little melted ghee, and cook oiled side for 2 minutes. Then brush some melted ghee on top, flip, and cook for 2 minutes, until lightly browned on both sides.

*Adapted with permission from The Modern Ayurvedic Cookbook, by Amrita Sondhi (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2006).*



## Ghee

MAKES 1½ CUPS

Some recipes suggest removing the foam from the butter; others say it isn't necessary.

### 1 pound unsalted organic butter

1 Line a fine-mesh tea strainer with a piece of cheesecloth, set it over a clean pint-size canning jar, and set aside.

2 Melt the butter in a small, heavy-bottomed saucepan over low heat, stirring it occasionally, for an even melt.

3 Once it melts, you will notice foam gathering on the surface. You can scoop the foam out with a spoon or just let it be; the melted butter will eventually stop foaming and start to subside. A few milk solids will settle at the bottom and brown slightly. This process will take 15 to 20 minutes.

4 When the liquid appears quite clear, like a light-amber-hued oil, pour it through the cheesecloth-lined strainer into the jar, leaving the browned milk solids behind.

5 Set jar aside until ghee is completely cooled and then put on lid.

*Adapted with permission from 660 Curries, by Raghavan Iyer (Workman Publishing, 2008).*



Ghee is made by heating unsalted butter until it clarifies into its separate components: lactose (sugar), milk protein, and fat. Over a low flame, the moisture is removed, and the sugar and protein separate into curds that sink to the bottom and are later discarded. What's left is rich, sweet, nutty ghee—a substitute for butter or oil in any recipe. With its high smoking point of up to 485 degrees, it's perfect for frying and sautéing. Its robust flavor makes it a great seasoning for everything from oatmeal to rice, steamed vegetables, and curries. It's delicious spread over any type of bread. And it's lactose free and easy to digest.

### DOWN TO THE ESSENCE

Throughout India, ghee is a sacred symbol of auspiciousness and is a household staple in medicine cabinets, as well as kitchen pantries. Kept out of sunlight and free of moisture, ghee has a shelf life of 12 months without refrigeration, though some people do prefer to refrigerate it. In Ayurveda, India's 5,000-year-old system of healing, ghee is as much medicine as it is food, says Rima Shah, a certified Ayurvedic practitioner and co-founder of the Diva Ayurveda wellness center. "It is completely nourishing and healing," Shah explains. "It is considered the single most powerful food for increasing *ojas*, the vital life force that lives in all of us. Ojas is the essence of health and well-being."

According to Shah, ghee makes appearances throughout the ancient texts, which give glowing descriptions of its brilliance and light. In the Mahabharata, the great Indian epic that includes the Bhagavad Gita, ghee is described as an essence flowing through and sustaining the world.

In Vedic texts, ghee is a kind of metaphor for the nature of the Divine itself, says ghee maker Peter Malakoff, an Ayurvedic practitioner in Bolinas, California. "As the Divine is hidden in creation and could be considered to be the essence of creation, so ghee is hidden in milk and is considered to be the essence of milk," he says.

### THE RIGHT CHURN

In much of the United States, you can buy ghee at natural food stores—or you can order it online. But many people make their own from butter. Malakoff recommends starting with organic, unsalted butter to avoid concentrating hormones, pesticides, and antibiotics.

Of course, I had cream, so my first step was to make butter out of it. Using an old countertop mixer, I set up shop at night when I could work undisturbed. While the beaters

mixed and the bowl spun, I pattered around the kitchen, periodically checking on the cream. I was putting dishes away when suddenly the whirl of the mixer was joined by a loud sloshing sound. Liquid was spraying all over the counter and floor. I had a mess, yes, but I also had butter.

As I churned through 19 more batches, I listened for that distinct sloshing sound, signaling a newly formed ball of butter swimming in buttermilk. I didn't finish until early in the morning and fell into an easy sleep, knowing my fridge was brimming with 24 pounds of fresh butter.

### HOT STUFF

The next two evenings were devoted to transforming my homemade butter into ghee. I filled my biggest pot with butter and turned up the heat to let it melt evenly and simmer before the lactose and protein began to separate from the fat.

During the butter's time on the stove, the only thing you have to do is listen and watch. Allowed to move and roll, the butter makes a nervous frying noise. Then it quiets. While the butter is simmering, it's important to resist the urge to stir or skim the liquid. If you leave the

cool completely to prevent condensation from forming on the lid. This step, says Malakoff, helps keep moisture out so that the ghee will last up to a year. (Always using a clean, dry utensil to scoop out your ghee helps, too.) Ghee's melting point is close to room temperature, so the consistency can fluctuate between a solid like butter and a liquid like olive oil. One pound of butter makes roughly three-fourths of a pound of ghee; I collected 17 pints of the stuff, maybe 18 if you include what was lost to spillage, incomplete filtering, skin care, and sampling.

After three days of stripping down dairy to its purest form, it was easy for me to understand Malakoff's link between making ghee and connecting to the Divine. My own thoughts settled throughout the project, leaving me with the quiet, unperturbed awareness that accompanies meditation. A sense of peace comes with taking part in a process that spans millennia, and I found myself happily watching the ghee run through the filter, admiring its easy viscosity, and inspired by the sweet, unobscured flow of liquid gold.

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**Suzanne VanGilder** is a yoga teacher in Madison, Wisconsin.

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**Everything got quiet, and the bubbles were clear. The aroma was lovely, like croissants.**

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butter alone, even as it sizzles and foams, the lactose and milk protein separate naturally from the golden essence that is ghee. This can take anywhere from 20 minutes to hours, depending on how much butter you start with and the size of your pot.

It was easy to see when the ghee was ready. Everything got quiet, and the bubbles were clear. The aroma was lovely, like croissants. Then I took the pot off the heat and let it rest for about 30 minutes. Once it settled, I poured the ghee through a doubled piece of cheesecloth (an unbleached coffee filter works well, too) into clean, dry airtight containers. In India, the curds are used to make ghee lamps. In my kitchen, they became a special treat for the dog.

### DIVINE FLOW

Before closing the containers, I let the ghee

# diet for a green planet

by Karen Kelly

Make eco-licious meals by trading meat for protein-packed beans.

Like a lot of other children, my son, Bix, loves bedtime stories. Here's one you might remember: There once was a boy named Jack, whose mother could barely afford to feed the family, so she sent her son to town to sell their only cow. Instead, Jack trades in the cow for some "magic" beans. When Jack hands his mother the beans, she tosses them to the ground in disgust. Overnight, the beans sprout, and by the next morning, they have grown into a tall, thick plant that reaches the heavens. Jack climbs the beanstalk and in the end brings his mother back a small fortune.

CELLINI  
BEAN SOUP  
(RECIPE ON  
PAGE 50 )





There's a lot to be learned from Jack's exchange of a cow for simple legumes. According to United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization report, farmed livestock is responsible for 18 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions and 37 percent of the emissions of methane. In addition, 65 percent of the emissions of nitrous oxide, another greenhouse gas, come from cow manure. All together, livestock produces more greenhouse gases than the transportation sector does.

"Reducing meat, egg, and dairy consumption and choosing plant-based organic foods is one of the best ways consumers can reduce their carbon footprint," says Danielle Nierenberg, president of Food Tank, a nonprofit focused on creating a global community for "safe, healthy, nourished" eaters.

Try replacing the pork in a cassoulet with haricots blancs and substituting chickpeas for chicken when preparing a soup. Rediscover the culinary potential of these humble fruits of the earth in meals that might normally include meat

and, like Jack, give something back to your mother (that is, Mother Earth).

#### A NUTRITIONAL BARGAIN

Beans are one of the oldest-known farmed foods because people have long understood the capacity of legumes to provide energy and nutrition. "But please don't think of beans as poor-man's meat," says Donna Winham, assistant professor of food science and human nutrition at Iowa State University. Legumes, Winham says, should be celebrated as an accessible source of nutrition.

Unlike fatty animal proteins, beans are heart healthy. Winham recently conducted a study on pinto beans and found that her subjects reduced their cholesterol levels by 8 percent—a significant drop—after just eight weeks of eating a half cup of beans per day.

Winham notes, too, that beans are an excellent source of folate, especially important for women of childbearing age. Moreover, a half cup of cooked dried beans generally has

only about 120 calories and supplies as much as 29 percent of the minimum daily requirement of the B vitamin thiamine, as well as significant amounts of other B vitamins.

#### BEAN THERE

There are thousands of varieties of shell and snap beans in the world. Many appear in the bulk bins and produce sections of supermarkets and at farmers' markets. Beginning a wider exploration of beans, I half hoped to find a magic harp, but I was just as pleased to discover just how versatile beans are.

I started by making a simple white bean purée, a take on a classic Italian dish that is nothing short of sublime. I processed the cooked beans with a food mill, stirred in a bit of vegetable stock, some sea salt, finely chopped rosemary, and a tablespoon of olive oil. Delicate and splendid, this creamy concoction was at once earthy and celestial.

The next day, I made a simple salad of fresh fava beans and asparagus. After plunging the beans, pod and all, in boiling water for about five minutes and letting them cool, I slipped each bean out of its milky-white outer skin. Delicious.

Another evening, I served my family a warm lentil stew and perhaps planted a seed in my son's mind that will grow into a lifetime of caring for the planet, long after bedtime stories about a mother, her son, and some extraordinary beans.

## great legumes

**Know when to soak and how long to cook any kind of bean.**

"Bean" is the generic name for a variety of plants in the legume family (which also includes peas and lentils), says Ken Albala, a professor of history at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, and the author of *Beans: A History*. Beans have three stages of development: young, fresh-shelled, and dried. Some require lots of soaking and cooking; others come ready to serve, pod and all.

**Young beans** The first stage of bean development is when both seed and pod are tender, making the whole pod edible raw for most varieties. Look for green string, yellow and purple wax, Chinese long, and Italian flat beans throughout the year, depending on where you live. Peak season is late summer and early fall.

**Fresh-shelled beans** As a bean matures, the pod becomes tough and hard to digest, so the seeds are removed, or shelled, and cooked for a short time (from 5 to 10 minutes, depending on size). Look for lima, soy (edamame), dragon tongue, cranberry, fava, and goa beans. The season for these shelling beans is shorter than for fresh beans—generally late spring to early summer. Fresh lima and cranberry beans can be found midsummer to early fall. Edamame is available frozen year-round.

**Dried beans** The final stage is when the pods have dried on the vine or stalk and the beans move freely within the no-longer-edible pod. At this point, the beans or seeds are removed and usually soaked in cold, filtered water for several hours or overnight (or, if you're in a hurry, hot-soaked for an hour) before being cooked in fresh water for about an hour or until tender. Look for a huge variety of dried beans, peas, and lentils in bulk or bags year-round. Choose familiar favorites like chickpeas; lentils; white, black, pinto, kidney, pink, and red beans; and black-eyed peas. Or try more unusual versions like adzuki, anasazi, canary, corona, marrow, moth, scarlet runner, and steuben yellow beans.

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**Karen Kelly** is co-author of *The Secret of "The Secret": Unlocking the Mysteries of the Runaway Bestseller*.

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## Florida Butter Bean Succotash

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
  - 3 green onions, white and pale parts and some dark-green tops, thinly sliced
  - 1 ½ cups fresh corn kernels
  - ½ pound Florida butter or fresh lima beans, cooked and drained
  - Salt
  - Freshly ground pepper
  - ½ cup halved cherry tomatoes
  - 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
  - ¼ pound goat cheese
- 1 In a large saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the green onions and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes.
  - 2 Add the corn to the pan and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes.
  - 3 Add the beans and season to taste with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and toss in tomatoes and mint.
  - 4 Serve immediately, crumbling goat cheese over each portion.

## Cellini Bean Soup

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

If you like, you can carefully pour the soup over a poached egg in the middle of a warmed soup bowl to serve.

- ½ pound dried cellini or cannellini beans, soaked
  - Water
  - 4 garlic cloves, peeled
  - 1 bunch green chard
  - Salt
  - 6 slices day-old hearty bread, cut from a large loaf, crusts removed
  - ⅓ cup plus 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
  - Freshly ground pepper
  - 4 poached eggs (optional)
- 1 Put the beans and their soaking water in a stockpot and add cold water, if needed, to cover the beans by 1 inch. Put the garlic on a piece of cheesecloth, gather the corners, and tie the bundle securely. Add garlic to the pot and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat.
  - 2 Reduce the heat to low and slowly cook the beans, uncovered, until tender, 1 to 1.5 hours. Add water to pot as necessary to keep the beans submerged. Gently stir the beans once or twice.
  - 3 Meanwhile, bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Remove chard leaves from stems, reserving stems, and tear leaves into 1- to



CELEBRATE NATURE'S BOUNTY  
WITH SUCCOTASH.

- 2-inch pieces. Slice stems on the diagonal into matchstick-size pieces. Generously salt the water, add the chard leaves, and cook until tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove leaves with a slotted spoon and drain. Repeat with stems. When chard is cool, squeeze gently to remove water and set aside.
- 4 Tear bread into small pieces and toss in a medium bowl with 2 tablespoons olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Toast bread in a single layer on a baking sheet in a 350° oven until crisp and golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Let bread cool in the pan.
  - 5 When beans are tender, season with salt and pepper. Remove cheesecloth from pot and unwrap garlic. Process half the soup in a blender. Add the garlic cloves and ⅓ cup olive oil to the blender. Purée until smooth.
  - 6 Adjust the liquid remaining in the pot for thinner or thicker soup. Add the puréed beans to the pot and set over medium heat. Add the chard and stems. Taste and adjust seasoning.

- 7 Serve in bowls. Sprinkle soup with the bread, drizzle with the remaining olive oil, and season with pepper.

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*All recipes adapted with permission from Heirloom Beans, by Steve Sando and Vanessa Barrington (Chronicle Books, 2008).*

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# COVER MODEL



## Ruth Tan or @pinkchampagne13

Bright and bubbly Instagram yogini @pinkchampagne13, Ruth discovered yoga amidst a highly stressful sales & marketing job in the pharmaceutical industry. Stepping on the mat on a regular basis allowed her to find peace and calm amid chaos in her life. It also helped her tremendously through a difficult phase when she lost loved ones, and also had to make a career switch to become a financial planner. As a regular practitioner for seven years, she remains very grateful to yoga—the constant solace in her life.

Guided by Tan Hee Boon in conjunction with Yoga Vidya Gurukul, Yogapoint, in India, Ruth completed her 200hr Hatha-Vinyasa yoga teacher training in November 2015. It was through this course and her teacher that she found the passion to teach.

With a love for learning, she regularly attends workshops as well as Continued Education for Teachers (CET) trainings to further hone and improve her knowledge and teaching skills. She is also currently pursuing anatomy-

focused Yoga Medicine 500HR advanced teacher training with Tiffany Cruikshank to satisfy her inner science geek. In addition to yoga, Ruth teaches fun barre classes that have been certified by Barre Body Australia.

**You can attend Ruth's classes at Freedom Yoga, Singapore.**



# Stick to your **INTEN**





# TIONS

This Kundalini-inspired sequence can help you release bad habits and boost your willpower and well-being as you prepare to usher in amazing things in 2018.

Story and Sequence by Tommy Rosen and Kia Miller // Photography by Joe Hancock

**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME** you *really* thought about what you were doing when you reached for coffee in the morning, the candy jar at work, or your phone to check your email or social media? Odds are it's been awhile. We all run through thousands of habitual behaviors like these every day. Although you may get a fleeting boost from that hit of caffeine or sugar, by watching the latest, funniest viral video, or by having another drink, chances are you're distracting yourself from stress and pain you don't want to deal with. Removing yourself from the present moment can jeopardize your long-term health and well-being in the process.

Facing your demons is essential for breaking bad habits, but many self-help methods and treatment systems focus on addressing symptoms rather than helping you discover *why* you're reaching for distractions. The key, instead, may be to reach inward, and that's where yoga and meditation can help. Practitioners know that mind-body practices like these can foster the self-awareness, self-control, and self-realization necessary to go through a deeper detoxification—and research out of Duke Integrative Medicine helps to confirm it. One review on the efficacy of mindfulness as a complementary therapy for addiction found that mindfulness-based interventions, including yoga, may enhance addiction treatment, prevention, and recovery.

Even armed with all the benefits yoga and meditation provide, it can still feel like an uphill battle to kick a bad habit. That's because these behaviors get hardwired into our brains. Neuroscience researchers have determined that the more we do an activity that feels good—even one with bad consequences, like abusing drugs or alcohol—the less neural activity we use when deciding to engage in that activity. Instead, we act on autopilot, even if we are no longer getting that initial buzz. But that doesn't mean we're helpless. Recent findings out of MIT suggest that our prefrontal cortex, the brain region responsible for integrating past experience with present action, seems to favor new habits. The trick to making these habits stick is to rewire your neural circuitry by finding something that gives you a similar thrill, but on a deeper, healthier, and more sustainable level. Breathwork, mindfulness training, and yoga deliver on all fronts.

Kundalini Yoga, specifically, is designed to strengthen intuition and willpower. Yogi Bhajan, who brought Kundalini from India to the West, was interested in helping people break unwanted habits and addictions. He created a rehabilitation center in Tucson, Arizona, that was part ashram, part primary-care facility for those in recovery. Through asana, pranayama, mudra, mantra, and deep relaxation, Kundalini asks you to summon the physical and mental strength to mindfully maintain repetitive actions, such as using Breath of Fire while holding Half Boat Pose, or Ardha Navasana, for up to three minutes.

By committing to each movement despite your mind's desire to stop, you are training your nervous system to resist temptation (in this case, the temptation to give up), just as you might train your muscles at the gym. And it comes with some incredible benefits. Your endocrine system reacts by secreting chemicals that create feelings of balance and harmony, according to Yogi Bhajan and other Kundalini teachers. And you gain the awareness and power you need to resist the temptation to fall back into those bad habits you're resolving to break for good next year. Start with the sequence on the following pages.

## A MEDITATION TO RELEASE STRESS AND CLEAR PAST EMOTIONS

Come to a comfortable cross-legged sitting position. Place your fingertips together, forming a tepee with your hands, fingers pointing up and thumbs pointing toward your heart center. Look at the tip of your nose and inhale for 5 seconds, hold the breath for 5 seconds, then exhale for 5 seconds. Continue for 11 minutes, then relax. If your breath is unsteady and shallow, it sends a signal to your body that its needs are not being met. This meditation creates a steady breath rhythm so that your body and mind can release stress and habitual ways of being.

# Advanced Abdominal-Strengthening Kriya

**ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL** Kundalini *kriyas*, or sequences, for finding the strength to break bad habits is a series of 13 poses called the Advanced Abdominal-Strengthening Kriya. In part, this combination of movements and breathwork gives you an exceptional core workout. On a deeper level, it activates the third chakra, the energy center at your navel that is the source of willpower, where transformation and empowerment start. When this energy vortex is active and balanced, you feel grounded; the need to reach outside yourself to feel better is quieted.

Try the practice on these pages every day for the next 40 days—the amount of time it takes to encode a new pattern of behavior, according to Kundalini theory. Mornings are best, before you get pulled into the drama of the day. Make this kriya your new habit and you will see negative thinking,

self-doubt, procrastination, and resentment—the feelings often underlying addictive behavior—slowly melt away and become replaced by contentment, fulfillment, freedom, and the strength to follow through on whatever resolutions or changes you want to make and keep in the new year.

Begin by chanting the Kundalini Adi mantra three times: *Ong namo guru dev namo* (“I bow to the divine creative consciousness within; I bow to the teacher within”). Start slow, taking rests when you need to and gradually building up to the times given for each pose. Keep the eyes closed and focus on the third eye—the chakra or energy center between your eyebrows. Deepen your focus by mentally repeating *Sat* (“truth”) as you inhale, *Nam* (“identity”) as you exhale. Make sure to pause for at least 30 to 60 seconds after each pose.



## 1 ALTERNATE LEG LIFTS

Come to your back. Inhale slowly as you pull the low belly in and lift your left leg to 90 degrees, toes pointed toward the ceiling. Exhale slowly as you lower it down. Place your hands under your hips if you need extra support for your lower back. Alternate left and right legs, and continue for 3 minutes. This pose begins to spark energy at the navel point.

## 2 CROSS CRAWL

Stay lying down, with your legs out in front of you and your arms by your sides.

Inhale and bend your left knee into your chest as you bring your right arm up over your head. Exhale and straighten your left knee, lowering the leg and right arm back to the floor. Switch sides and continue to alternate, using long, deep breaths, for 3 minutes. Concentrating your awareness at your navel point helps to build energy around your third chakra.





### 3 ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

Downward-Facing Dog Pose, variation

Come into a variation of Downward-Facing Dog Pose with your thumbs touching and fingers angled slightly out. (Place your hands shoulder-distance apart if you have a shoulder injury.) Keep your feet hip-distance apart. Engage the core to draw the hips up and back, and lift the weight out of the shoulders. Take long, deep breaths for 3 minutes. This inversion allows energy to flow toward the brain.



### 4 BHUJANGASANA

Cobra Pose

Come to lying on your belly. Place your hands under your shoulders, fingers spread wide. While grounding down through your pelvis and the tops of your feet, firm your legs and reach your tailbone toward your heels. Inhale and lift the chest, keeping a slight bend in the elbows, the chest open, and the shoulders relaxed. Hold for 2 minutes, taking deep breaths. This pose draws energy toward the spine and opens the chest.

### 5 YOGA CRUNCH

Come onto your back, bend your knees, and place your feet on the floor hip-distance apart. Interlace your hands behind your head with the elbows wide. Exhale and count to 6 as you come into a crunch, pulling the low belly in. Inhale to the count of 6 as you slowly lower back down. Repeat for 2 minutes. This pose continues to build energy around the third chakra, the seat of willpower.



## 6 STRETCH POSE

Extend your legs in front of you, arms resting by your sides. Lengthen the back of your neck. Lift your upper chest, head, and arms off the ground and draw your chin in. Direct your fingers and gaze toward your toes. Keep your lower back flat against the floor as you lift the legs 6 inches off the floor, toes pointed. (If your lower back bothers you, keep the heels lightly resting on the ground or place your hands underneath your sacrum or sitting bones.) Hold for 2 minutes while doing Breath of Fire: First, inhale by relaxing the upper abdominal muscles, allowing air to fill the lungs. Then exhale by quickly drawing the navel point and solar plexus in and up toward the spine as you force the breath out. Take even inhales and exhales, and build to 2–3 cycles per second. (Don't do Breath of Fire if you're pregnant or menstruating.) Stretch Pose with Breath of Fire can be calming and rejuvenating. By working on the third chakra, it boosts resolve and self-esteem.



## 7 PISTON THE LEGS

Stay on your back and bring both knees toward your chest. Arms are alongside your torso, with the palms facing down. (Place the hands underneath the sacrum or sitting bones if you need to support your lower back.) On an inhalation, thrust the right leg out until it's a few inches off the floor. Exhaling, bring the knee back into the chest. Switch your legs in a piston-like movement for 2 minutes. This pose balances the energy of the navel and lower chakras.

## 8 DHANURASANA

### Bow Pose

Come back onto your stomach, arms alongside your torso. Bend your knees and reach for the tops of your ankles or feet. Inhale and kick your shins back, lifting your thighs and chest off the ground. Keep the back of your neck long and hold for 2 minutes. Exhale and release. This pose draws energy into the spine and improves digestion by stimulating energy at the navel point.





## 9 USTRASANA

### Camel Pose

Come up so you are standing on your knees and shins, torso upright. Place your hands on your hips. Draw your abdomen in to support your lower back. Relax your shoulder blades down and press them gently into your back. Inhale and lift your chest. Keep your hands on your hips or release them back to your heels. If it's comfortable for your neck, release your head back. Hold for 1 to 2 minutes. This pose lifts the energy we have been cultivating toward the heart center, allowing a feeling of expansion and brightness.

## 10 REST ON STOMACH (NOT PICTURED)

Rest on your stomach, arms alongside your torso and head turned to one side. Relax and breathe for 1 minute.

## 11 BALASANA

### Child's Pose (NOT PICTURED)

Press back into Child's Pose (Balasana) with your knees together, your hips on your heels, and your forehead on the ground. Extend and rest your arms in front of you with hands shoulder-distance apart. Relax here for 1 minute, returning to your natural rhythm with your breath.



## 12 CHILD'S POSE, VARIATION

Move into Child's Pose with your knees open, hips on your heels, forehead on the ground, and arms alongside the body. Relax here for 1 minute, letting your breath return to normal.

## 13 SAVASANA

### Corpse Pose (NOT PICTURED)

Lie on your back with your legs extended in front of you. Let your palms turn up and your arms and legs relax. This pose allows you to fully integrate the energy of the practice and reset the nervous system. It's like hitting "save" when we have written an important document! Stay here for 5 to 7 minutes.

Author and model **Tommy Rosen**, pictured on page 52, is a yoga teacher, addiction-recovery expert, and the author of *Recovery 2.0: Move Beyond Addiction and Upgrade Your Life*. His partner, author and model Kia Miller, is certified in the Ashtanga vinyasa flow tradition, as well as Kundalini Yoga. Her own style of yoga, called Radiant Body Yoga, is a potent combination of breathing, movement, stretching, meditation, chanting, and relaxation. (The Advanced Abdominal-Strengthening kriya is by Yogi Bhajan, as documented in *The Art, Science, and Application of Kundalini Yoga* by Nirvair Singh Khalsa.)







in the

# BAL//ANCE

Seeking more equanimity and happiness in 2018? Here's how to tap into the *purusharthas*—or yoga's four aims of life—to reach your goals and usher in more joy.

By Hillari Dowdle

**AS THE NEW YEAR APPROACHES**, it's a good time to ask yourself an important question: Am I leading a well-balanced life? And while it's easy to get bogged down in the details—for example, you might set goals that relate to how you think you want to look or act in this world—consider bypassing those particulars this year. Yoga philosophy offers the key to a deeper approach that can reshape your whole life in a positive way: the *purusharthas*, or four aims of life.

The *purusharthas*—which include *dharma* (duty, ethics), *artha* (prosperity, wealth), *kama* (pleasure, sensual gratification), and *moksha* (the pursuit of liberation)—are the blueprint for human fulfillment. You can think of them as signposts that point us to a successful, balanced existence in the world, and working with them can help you create a satisfying life at the deepest and most holistic level.

"We all have a desire for a meaningful life. The *purusharthas* are the means that can help us achieve it," says Rod Stryker, founder of ParaYoga and author of a book about the *purusharthas* called *The Four Desires*. "They are, in a larger sense, what practice is really all about," he says, adding that the *purusharthas* offer a yogic perspective on how to engage skillfully in the world.

## Cosmic Clues

The *purusharthas* are elaborated upon extensively in the Mahabharata, the epic Indian poem that contains the Bhagavad Gita, and are interwoven with yogic philosophy at the deepest levels. But they have their roots in the Rig Veda, the most ancient and revered of Hindu scriptures. "What

the Rig Veda suggests is that the *purusharthas* are the inherent values of the universe," says Douglas Brooks, a tantric scholar and professor of religion at the University of Rochester. "The cosmos is considered a living being, and the issues of law, prosperity, desire, and freedom belong to it. These are not just human concerns or psychological concepts. When we engage them as human beings, we are aligning the microcosm with the macrocosm. The cosmos is all laid out for you; your job is to get with the program."

To fully grasp the *purusharthas*, Stryker says, it pays to parse the meaning of the word itself. *Purusha* means, roughly, "soul"—the essential Self that is unchanging, that isn't born and doesn't die but belongs to the universe. *Artha* means "the ability" or "for the purpose of." Taken together, Stryker explains, *purushartha* means "for the purpose of the soul," and the very concept asks that you take the broadest view of your life. Are you managing the day-to-day in such a way as to support your inner work?

"The *purusharthas* are a sophisticated way of living in balance," says Sally Kempton, a master teacher of meditation and tantric philosophy. "But they demand reflection. You have to constantly ask yourself, 'Which of these areas am I emphasizing too much? Am I having a good time but not being as ethical as I could be? Am I a great yogi but haven't yet figured out how to make a living? Am I incredibly ethical but still at the mercy of every passing feeling or thought? Am I so rigid in my practice that if I can't do 90 minutes my day is ruined?' Anything you don't deal with will come back to bite you later," says Kempton.

Each one of the *purusharthas* has many scriptures dedicated to it (the Kama Sutra, the Dharma Shastras, and the Artha Shastras, among others), and truly understanding all four would require a lifetime of study. Still, learning the fundamentals is useful, especially to the contemporary practitioner who's looking to find more joy and meaning in life. Here, a guide for working with the four aims: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*. Once you have an understanding of the individual components of each of the *purusharthas*, you can assess the role they play in your life by contemplating the questions related to each one. Then you can begin to analyze how well balanced they are in your life.

# 1 DHARMA // DUTY

**LET'S JUST SAY IT UPFRONT:** Dharma is a big word. It's translated to mean "duty," "ethics," "righteousness," "work," "law," "truth," "responsibility," and even the spiritual teachings related to all of the above (as in the Buddha dharma or the Hindu dharma). The meaning of the word is synonymous with your very purpose in life—with having the strength to get up each day and do what needs to be done.

"The easiest way to define dharma is to look at the verbal root, which really means 'to make firm,' 'to establish,' or 'to create structure,'" says Brooks. "It's about that which gives life order—about stepping up to your own responsibilities, about working within the structure to serve yourself and society."

There is a universal dharma, known as *sanatana dharma*, which is thought to underlie the very structure of existence. It is the source of the fundamental ideas of right and wrong that are deeply embedded in human consciousness. But along with that universal order, we each have our own unique, individual dharma, or *svadharma*, the result of our birth circumstances, karma, and talents, and the choices we make in life as it unfolds for us.

"Dharma [refers to] the actions that you are engaged in, in this life, and there are many different levels," says Gary Kraftsow, Viniyoga founder and the author of *Yoga for Transformation*. "As a father, my dharma is to raise up my son. As a yoga teacher, my dharma is to show up to class, to give interviews, and to transmit these teachings. As an American, part of my dharma is to pay my taxes. Whatever you are doing, your dharma is to do it well, to serve yourself and serve life in the present moment, to keep moving forward toward a sense of personal fulfillment."

For some, our dharmas reflect a clear calling: farmer, teacher, activist, parent, poet, president. For others, not so much. But you don't need to have a calling to have dharma, Kraftsow says. Dharma means sustaining your life, meeting your family obligations, participating in society—and sometimes even a low-level McJob can enable you to do all that. "If you hate your job so much that it's sucking the life out of you, it may not be dharmic for you," he says. "But realizing your dharma sometimes means accepting where you are."

Still, dharma can be a moving target, especially here in the West, where—in our ideal world, at least—we're not bound by caste, family, gender, or racial roles (those, too, are forms of dharma). And it generally involves honoring your ethics—doing right by yourself, your family, your community, the world. Your dharma should govern your every action and decision in life, says Kempton.



# 2 ARTHA // PROSPERITY

**DEFINED AS** "material prosperity," "wealth," "abundance," and "success," artha is the material comfort you need to live in the world with ease. In short, it's the stuff—the capital, the computer, the business suit—you need to get your dharma done and support your life's mission.

Artha refers to things—your apartment, your car, your pots and pans. It can also mean the knowledge, understanding, or education you need to get along in the world—something you certainly need to pursue the dharma of a doctor, for instance. It also means good health and, of course, it means money.

Like dharma, artha can be a moving target. "When I used to teach the purusharthas, artha meant food, clothing, and shelter," says Kraftsow. "Now it means food, clothing, shelter, a cell phone, and Internet access."

That's a little joke, of course, but it also points to a fundamental truth: What you need depends on who you are. "What artha means for a beggar is the begging bowl; what it means for a business executive in Los Angeles

is driving a Lexus," says Kraftsow. "If you're doing a business deal, it means wearing a nice suit or a good watch to look professional. The yoga community shouldn't get the message that you can't have a nice car or a watch. You might need those things to play your role."

Just don't get carried away by the notion that artha is everything, or that more is always better, says Brooks, who adds that a perceptual shift may be needed to deal skillfully with artha.

"What artha asks us to do is learn to live in a world of material objects that exist for our benefit," he says. "It's not about rejecting the world, but about figuring out how to be content with the things you own, borrow, or steward. And it requires that you ask: What do I see as truly valuable?"

Brooks asserts that we are not human without artha; Kempton agrees. "Artha is the skills we develop to live a successful life," she says. "I've found that if human beings don't get artha together in one way or another, they feel bad about themselves. Artha is one of the basic human dignities."



# 3 KAMA // PLEASURE

**ACCORDING TO ROD STRYKER**, kama, or the desire for pleasure, is what makes the world go round. "Desire for pleasure is what drives all human behavior," he says. "Kama can be sensuality, but it's also art, beauty, intimacy, fellowship, and kindness—it's what brings a sense of delight to our lives. There can be pleasure even in sacrifice."

Kama gets some bad press, Stryker notes, possibly because it's the purushartha most likely to run amok. Excessive kama can lead to overindulgence, addiction,

sloth, greed, and a whole host of other "deadly sins." But it is good, and indeed necessary, when it exists to support dharma. "If we set kama in the context of dharma, we understand it to be a part of the richness of life," Stryker says. "Every accomplishment has been sought for the pleasure that it provides. We live in service to a higher purpose, but along that path there is the pleasure we take from family and friends, art, love, and harmony in the world around us." Brooks agrees, saying that whether we deal with it skillfully

or not, there is no life without kama.

Shining the light of awareness on your desires can help you focus on the ones that honor the true essence of life. "The conscious pursuit of kama is a profound yogic practice," Kempton says. "To practice kama yogically means to practice being fully present with whatever you're experiencing. There are many levels of pleasure, from eating a pizza to finding a meditation practice that allows your heart to expand. As a yogi, you learn

to distinguish. You know which pleasures are saturated with consciousness and are drenched in the ecstasies of the soul, and which ones leave you depleted or lying to yourself about what is really going on."

Brooks notes that focusing on the right kinds of pleasure can lead you toward your dharma—and help you fulfill it with passion. "Passion is never the problem," he says. "Passion is the solution." Find your own solution by inquiring deeply about your own pursuit of pleasure.



# 4 MOKSHA // FREEDOM

**MOKSHA, OR LIBERATION**, is widely considered to be the pinnacle of the purusharthas. In its broadest, most elevated sense, moksha means achieving nirvana, or the complete liberation from the cycle of incarnation. "Moksha is about getting off the wheel of *samsara* [the cycle of suffering caused by birth, death, and rebirth]," Kempton explains. "You can be a good person who is living a dharmic life, taking care of yourself and your family, enjoying your family life and your career, but all of that will be ultimately unsatisfying unless you are also doing the practices that can lead to moksha."

Yet moksha doesn't have to be some other place and time or some exalted state to be reached only once and to the exclusion of the human experience. "The question with moksha is whether it is a goal or whether it is your nature," says Brooks. "In other words, do you become free or are you born free?"

One view is that moksha is a kind of otherworldliness—the opposite of dharma. The other argument is that freedom is your nature, that it's here and now. Every time you look into a baby's eyes, you get a hit of moksha. You don't feel confined by that responsibility of being a parent; you feel that it offers you the deepest sense of your own freedom and choice.

Simply taking time to remember your own inherent freedom, in other words, gives meaning to your dharma—and everything you do. Practicing yoga, in a very real sense,

is practicing moksha. "You are as free as you experience yourself to be," says Brooks.

## Balancing Act

The key to working with the purusharthas paradigm is to constantly examine not only the essential concepts and their role in your life, but also how well balanced they are. Are you working so hard to put your kids through school that your life feels like an endless grind? (That's too much dharma, not enough kama.) Are you so trapped in pleasure that you're neglecting your duty to your friends and family? (Too much kama, not enough dharma.) Have you become so focused on making money that you have no time to meditate? (Too much artha, not enough moksha.) Are you spending so much time getting blissed out at the yoga studio that you can't swing this month's rent? (Too much moksha, not enough artha.)

The balance between them will constantly shift—by stage of life, by month, by week, even by the minute. A young mother, for instance, will naturally emphasize the dharma of raising her children, and her artha will be about providing for it. An elderly man facing the end of life will turn toward moksha, ready to leave artha and dharma behind. A business executive entering contract negotiations will focus on artha and dharma; a college student on summer break will indulge in more kama. All that is as it should be. The work of balance isn't literal—it's an effort to face the world with all of your pieces intact, to live in a conscious way that leaves no part of your Self behind.

That work, of course, starts on the yoga mat. "Yoga is virtuosity in being human," says Brooks. "The purusharthas tell us that we must meditate on our roles in the world, our values, relationships, and passions. These are not concerns to cure, extinguish, or transcend.



## Fine-tune your life

*The four aims are the pillars of a fulfilling life. In this self-inquiry practice by Sally Kempton, you'll consider where your current priorities lie and how you need to shift them to create a deeply satisfying life. Don't worry about getting your whole life in order at once; do the exercise each week, and you'll become more in tune with yourself, more present with the world around you.*

They are simply part of being human, and embracing them is loving life."

» **Find 30 minutes** in which you can be alone and undisturbed. Settle in to a cozy space with a journal, a pen, a candle, and a comfortable seat.

» **Light the candle** to signify that you are in a sacred space. "A candle symbolizes the flame of the inner witness," says Kempton. Breathe deeply, close your eyes, and relax for a few minutes.

» **Begin to think** back over your activities of the preceding week. Consider all of the things you did related to your *dharma*. How did you serve your family, your community, and yourself? What were your obligations? What ethical tests did you face, and how did you deal with them? Record the answers in your journal.

» **When you've exhausted** your thoughts about *dharma*, consider artha. What did you do this week

for the sake of your livelihood? What did you do to maintain your health? Write the answers in your journal; note your concerns.

» **Next, think deeply** about *kama*. What actions did you take solely for the purpose of creating more joy in your life and in the world? What were your greatest pleasures? What were your strongest desires? Were you able to realize them? Write down your thoughts.

» **Then, record the activities** you engaged in for the sake of *moksha*. These might include yoga, meditation, prayer, chanting, spiritual reading, or self-inquiry. Did you find a feeling of freedom? Which areas of your life feel constricted or burdened? What do you need to do to liberate yourself? Write down the answers.

» **When you've gone through each purushartha** individually, analyze the balance between them. Looking at what you've written, see where your emphasis

was in the past week. Which parts of your life were unattended to? Are you working too hard—or not hard enough—in one area? What are the consequences of your priorities? Formulate a simple statement about the way the *purusharthas* manifested themselves in your life. It might be something like, "This week, I worked hard to meet my obligations, but I felt burdened. I took the most pleasure from my friendships. I didn't find time to work toward liberation."

» **Finally, set an intention** for the coming week. You might relate it to each of the *purusharthas*, or you could focus on one or two that need more of your attention. Record the intention in your journal. Then say it to yourself—first out loud, then inwardly. Close your journal, blow out the candle, and ease back into your day with a new understanding of your soul's priorities.



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# STRONG

## FOR LIFE

Want to ensure a healthy, pain-free yoga practice for years (and years) to come? This fun and simple three-part plan is for you.

**ASK SEVERAL YOGIS** what motivates their practice, and you're sure to get a range of responses, from "stress relief" to "spiritual growth." What you probably won't hear: "a strong skeleton."

But new research shows that yoga is surprisingly protective when it comes to staving off fractures and helping to prevent osteoporosis, a bone-thinning disease that will cause approximately half of women age 50 and older to break a bone. (Men get osteoporosis too, but 80 percent of sufferers are female, likely because

women typically have smaller, thinner bones and because production of estrogen—a female hormone that protects against bone loss—drops off sharply at menopause.) The hard truth is that by the time you hit the age when your skeleton becomes more brittle, it's much more challenging (though not impossible) to build protective bone mass. Which is why the best time to focus on increasing your bone mass reservoir is *now*, says Loren Fishman, MD, a Columbia University physiatrist specializing in rehabilitative medicine who studied under

B.K.S. Iyengar.

Ready to be more proactive about protecting your bones? Our three-part plan reveals which yoga poses may be particularly beneficial, regardless of your age, as well as new thinking behind the role of nutrition and high-impact, weight-bearing exercises on bone health. Read on for the latest research-backed ways to strengthen your lovely bones.

**Story by Leslie Goldman**  
**Photography by Paul Miller**

# YOGA

**GREAT NEWS:** As a yogi, you're already protecting your frame in a few major ways. For starters, each time you practice a pose, you're potentially building new bone. "When you hold a pose like Supta Padangusthasana (Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose) or a twist, you're opposing one group of muscles against another, like the quadriceps against the hamstrings or the gluteal muscles against the shoulder muscles, respectively," says Fishman. That opposition creates a force that physically stimulates osteoblasts, bone-making cells that initially live on the outside of the bone and turn into osteocytes, which are cells that become embedded within your bone. "You're actually laying down new bone," he says.

Yoga may also help reverse or stall the bone-weakening effects that come with age—which is relatively new thinking in the medical world. Doctors used to believe that women's ability to accrue new bone basically ended once they entered menopause and their levels of bone-protective estrogen and progesterone plummeted. "The new research shows that yoga can outweigh the hormonal effects of age," Fishman says. His 2015 study, published in *Topics in Geriatric Rehabilitation*, found that 80 percent of older participants, most of whom had osteoporosis or its precursor, osteopenia, who practiced 12 yoga poses (often modified) a day showed improved bone density in their spine and femurs (see "Poses to boost bone health" below).

## Poses to boost bone health

*Practice poses from Loren Fishman's bone-health research using the instructions at right from Terry Roth Schaff, C-IAYT, who collaborated with Fishman on the study. The sequence takes at least 12 minutes to complete and can be incorporated into your regular home practice or practiced on its own. Breathe slowly as you hold each pose for about 30 seconds per side.*



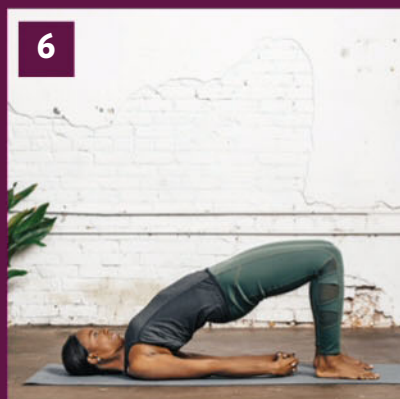
**VRKSASANA** Tree Pose

Stand in Tadasana. Bend your right knee and rotate your right thigh outward without turning your pelvis. Lift your right foot and place it above the ankle or knee of your left leg (but not against the knee itself). Bring palms in front of your chest.



**UTTHITA TRIKONASANA**  
Extended Triangle Pose

From a wide stance, rotate your left leg so your foot and knee turn out 90 degrees. Lengthen your torso over your left leg. Place your left hand on your left shin, the floor, or a block. Stretch your right arm up.



**SETU BANDHA  
SARVANGASANA** Bridge Pose

Lie on your back with knees bent, heels in line with your knees. Press into your feet as you lift your hips and torso. With your arms extended, interlace your fingers and come onto your outer shoulders.



**SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA I**  
Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose I

Lie on your back. Hook a strap around the ball of your left foot; hold an end of the strap in each hand. Straighten your left leg, drawing it up toward the ceiling without lifting your left sitting bone.



These findings apply to younger women with healthy skeletons, too. “There is strong evidence that young osteoblasts do respond pretty vigorously to the forces generated by muscles, which is likely to put off osteopenia and osteoporosis until later in life—if it were to appear at all,” Fishman says.

Finally, there’s the vital role yoga plays in preventing fractures by building stability and agility. “Yoga improves your physical balance and flexibility, which means you’re less likely to fall and break something—and if you do start to fall, your agility may help you catch yourself,” says Lori Rubenstein Fazzio, DPT, C-IAYT, clinical director of the Yoga Therapy Rx Practicum at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) and part-time faculty in LMU’s Master of Arts in Yoga Studies. Equally important, yoga enhances your *mental* balance, too. “It makes you more present and focused,” Rubenstein Fazzio says, and alert people are less likely to slip on an ice patch or trip on a staircase. More surprisingly, yoga’s calming qualities help lower levels of cortisol, a stress hormone that breaks down bone when it’s chronically elevated, says Lani Simpson, DC, a certified clinical (bone) densitometrist and host of the PBS show *Stronger Bones*,

*Longer Life*. In this way, even passive poses like *Savasana* and *Sukhasana* can play a role in preventing bone loss.

Whatever your physical practice, slow and steady win the race for strength. “Strength builds as you hold each pose, which you should do for as long as you comfortably can,” says Rubenstein Fazzio. Aim to hold each pose between 12 and 72 seconds, when possible, because that’s the range needed to stimulate osteocytes, says Fishman. But don’t do it at the risk of form—good alignment is key. In *Vrksasana* (Tree Pose), for instance, make sure your pelvis is level and your standing leg’s knee is facing forward. “If your hip is jutting out or your standing knee is collapsing inward, you’re probably just hanging on your ligaments and joints and not using your muscles,” Rubenstein Fazzio notes, and if your muscles aren’t pulling on that hip bone, no meaningful bone-strengthening will occur. “You want to feel your muscles tensing; that’s how you know you’re engaging—and building—them. And when you build muscle, you build bone.”



### VIRABHADRASANA II

Warrior Pose II

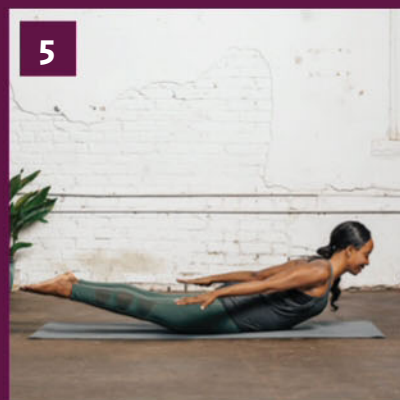
From a wide stance, rotate your left leg so that your foot and knee turn out 90 degrees. Bend your left knee over your left heel. Reach your arms actively out to your sides at shoulder height.



### UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA

Extended Side Angle Pose

From Warrior II, lengthen your torso and lower your left forearm onto your left thigh. Reach your right arm up and over your right ear. Stretch from your right outer heel through your fingertips.



### SALABHASANA

Locust Pose

Lie face-down on your mat with your arms alongside your torso. Lift your chest forward and up as you raise your legs and stretch them out behind you. Lift your upper body and legs without straining, streaming your arms along your torso.



### SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA II

Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose II

From Supta Padangusthasana I, hold both ends of the strap in your right hand. Keep the left side of your body grounded as you extend your right leg out to the right side and lower it toward the floor.



### SAVASANA

Corpse Pose

Lie on your back with legs hip-distance apart, heels under your knees. Press your shoulder blades into the floor. Rest your hands on your lower belly. Stretch each leg out in front and let each foot fall open. Open each arm, palms turned up.

### BONUS MOVES

Twists like *Parivrtta Trikonasana* (Revolved Triangle Pose), *Marichyasana III*, and *Ardha Matsyendrasana* (Half Lord of the Fishes Pose)—the three remaining poses from Fishman’s study—help stimulate bone growth by gently tugging on your spine and hip bones. But if you have osteoporosis or are new to yoga, start by practicing seated twists in a chair to avoid overdoing it, advises Schaff. Sit in a chair with your heels under your knees and maintain length in your torso as you gently twist to the right, starting from your low back and moving up your spine. Keep both sides of your chest open and twist only to the point where you can maintain length in your spine (don’t round your back). Repeat on other side. Then, practice the same twist with your legs crossed.

# CARDIO & STRENGTH TRAINING

**YOGA IS AMAZING**, but it's not enough if you want to give your bones the best fighting chance against loss and damage—for that, you'll need to add some weight-bearing cardiovascular fitness to your routine (think jumping, running, walking, dancing, hiking, and aerobics). "It has to do with the impact of your feet on the ground and how that impact radiates up through your body," says Simpson. "Bones are dynamic and alive. When you jog or jump, it puts pressure on the bone, which sends a message to the osteoblasts: 'We need to get these bones stronger.'" That's one reason astronauts lose an average of 1 to 2 percent of their bone mass per month while in outer space: No gravity equals no bone-building impact. Rubenstein Fazzio recommends adding three 30-minute sessions of high-impact cardio to your weekly workout routine, including brief bursts of vigorous effort. Running and aerobics are especially good, plus they're heart-pumping moves, so you'll enjoy the cardioprotective effects, too.

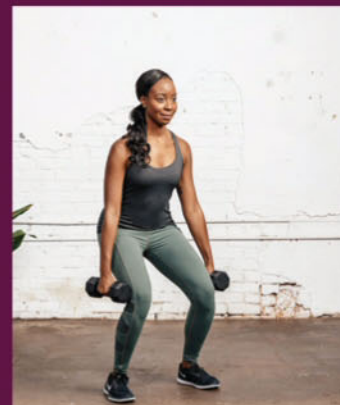
If 30 minutes is too much of a commitment, short spurts of jumping or jogging count, too. (Note: If you have osteoporosis, avoid jumping.) Research from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, showed that when women ages 25 to 50 jumped as high as possible 10 times, twice a day, for 16 weeks, their hip bone density increased by 0.5 percent on average. This may sound negligible, but the women who didn't jump *lost* about 1.3 percent of their bone density on average during the same period. Study author Larry Tucker, PhD, recommends jumping as high as possible 10 to 20 times—resting for 30 seconds between jumps—twice a day, and spacing out the two sets by about eight hours to prevent your bones from becoming desensitized to the impact.

The final fitness key to bone fortification: strength training. Hoisting dumbbells or doing lunges or squats places a higher load on your skeleton, and bones respond by growing stronger. When choosing weights, don't go too easy on yourself. "Pick a challenging weight that you can safely manage without strain, and do fewer repetitions," advises Rubenstein Fazzio; that added stress is what sets bone-forming cells into action. Aim for two to three sets of 8 to 12 reps per body area, twice a week. To make it super simple, slip some of Rubenstein Fazzio's favorite strength-training moves into your regular yoga practice (see "Pump up your practice").

## Pump up your practice

For efficient bone building (and fun!), add these exercises from Lori Rubenstein Fazzio, DPT, C-IAYT, into your yoga practice.

1



### DUMBBELL SQUATS

Stand with your feet hip-distance apart and hold a 2- to 10-pound dumbbell in each hand, arms by your sides and inner wrists facing your hips. Gently squeeze your shoulder blades together to activate the muscles of your upper back. Maintain this as you exhale and bend your knees into a squat position, keeping your upper back mostly vertical and your knees tracking directly over the middle of your feet. Hold for 1–5 breaths. Straighten your knees and return to standing. (As your endurance builds, you can raise your arms out to your sides or in front of you as you lower into the squat). Repeat 2–3 times.

4



### BICEP CURLS

Stand with your feet hip-distance apart and hold a 2- to 10-pound dumbbell in each hand, arms by your sides. Gently squeeze your shoulder blades together to activate the muscles of your upper back. Slowly bend your elbows, rotating your palms upward as you bring the dumbbells in front of your chest. Slowly bend your elbows to lower your arms to your sides. Repeat for 8–12 reps.





### DYNAMIC WARRIOR III

Stand with your feet shoulder-distance apart, holding a 2- to 10-pound dumbbell in your right hand. Step your right foot back into a High Lunge, bending your left knee until it's directly over your left ankle. Squeeze your shoulder blades together as you hinge forward at your hips and begin to raise your right leg behind you. Lean forward until your trunk is parallel to the floor and your right leg is aligned directly behind you. Maintain a slight bend in your standing knee. Hold here and lift the weight in a rowing motion until it's directly under your armpit. Slowly lower the weight toward the floor. Repeat for 10 reps. Return to High Lunge. Switch sides; complete 1–2 sets of 10 reps on each side.



### BRIDGE POSE WITH LEG EXTENSIONS

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Gently press the backs of your upper arms into the floor. Isometrically pull your knees toward one another to activate the inner-thigh muscles, and then isometrically push your feet apart to activate your outer-thigh muscles. Continue pressing your upper arms against the floor as you lift your hips. Gently contract your abdominals and buttocks, and maintain a level pelvis as you exhale and lift one foot off the floor and straighten your knee. Repeat with the opposite leg, alternating 5 times per leg.



### WARRIOR III TRICEP EXTENSIONS

With a 2- to 10-pound dumbbell in each hand, move into Warrior III (see instructions above). Bend your elbows 45 degrees, then reach toward the wall behind you with your palms facing your body. (If you struggle to maintain balance or feel strain, try the extensions from High Lunge, hinged slightly forward, instead.) Repeat for 2 sets of 10–15 reps.

# NUTRITION

## ALL THE YOGA AND WEIGHT-BEARING

activity in the world will be for naught if you're not bathing those new bone cells in the right nutrients. Calcium has long been considered king, of course, and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends that adults between the ages of 19 and 50 consume 1,000 mg per day; it's advised that women over 50 and men over 70 get 1,200 mg. (Individuals with osteoporosis may require more.) Dairy products are typically the easiest way to meet these goals: A cup of milk or yogurt, or an ounce of cheese, provides about 300 mg.

But calcium isn't the whole story, says Amy Joy Lanou, PhD, professor of health and wellness for the University of North Carolina–Asheville and co-author of *Building Bone Vitality*. "There are at least 17 other nutrients that are important to bone health, including magnesium, potassium, zinc, and vitamins C, D, and K," she says. All of these nutrients work together in various ways to support bone health. Vitamin D, for example, helps move calcium from the blood into the bone, and vitamin C helps create the collagen matrix of bone. (Collagen fibers twist around each other to create a type of inner scaffolding on which bone minerals get deposited.) Getting all 17 nutrients can seem complicated, but following a few simple guidelines can make it easy.

First, focus on a plant-based diet rich in leafy greens and beans, says Lanou; both are loaded with calcium, magnesium, vitamin C, and other key nutrients. (Exceptions include spinach and chard: They hold on to their calcium so tenaciously that it's not easily absorbable.) Keep in mind that produce is not as high in calcium as dairy—a half-cup of cooked broccoli contains only 40 mg compared to 150 mg in the same amount of milk—so you'll need more of it; aim for six to nine servings a day.

As for vitamin D, only a few foods provide it—mainly oily fish like salmon, certain brands of UV-B-light-boosted mushrooms (like Monterey), eggs, and fortified dairy or juice—and you'll need magnesium to access it. "Magnesium helps convert the vitamin D we get from food into its active form," says Rebecca Scritchfield, RD, author of *Body Kindness*. Good magnesium sources include pumpkin seeds (about 190 mg per cup), halibut (121 mg per 4 oz), and navy and soy beans (120 mg and 147 mg per cup, respectively). Lanou suggests asking your health care provider for a vitamin D blood test; if your results are lower than 50 mg/mL, you may want to discuss a supplement. One pill-free way to boost your D levels: Practice the bone-building sequence (on pages 46–47) outdoors when weather permits; exposing your bare skin (without sunscreen) to sunlight for about 10 to 15 minutes a few times a week is your body's most efficient way of producing vitamin D, according to Harvard Medical School.

A few more tips: Limit your sodium intake, which pulls calcium out of bone—the maximum daily value is 2,400 mg per day, but lower is better. Also, avoid calcium supplements. They can easily push you past the recommended 1,000 mg a day, which has been linked with increased heart attack risk. And follow a Mediterranean diet that's heavy on produce, nuts, beans, whole grains, olive oil, and fish, and light on meat and dairy. A 2016 *JAMA Internal Medicine* study found that postmenopausal women who closely adhered to this diet were less likely to experience hip fractures than those who were more lax.

That's a lot to remember, we know, but it's not as hard to hit the dietary mark as it might seem. Need some dinner inspiration? Try the delicious, bone-healthy recipe at right.

## crunchy sesame- cabbage salad with salmon

SERVES 4

*This Mediterranean-inspired meal from chef Jennifer Iserloh supplies almost half your daily calcium and is a rich source of bone-supporting vitamin D (salmon) and magnesium (navy beans).*

- olive-oil cooking spray
- 16 oz wild-caught salmon, sliced into 4 fillets
- 6 dried apricots, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 orange, zest and juice
- 8 cups baby kale
- 4 cups broccoli florets
- 4 cups red cabbage, thinly sliced
- 1 cup canned, unsalted navy beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 tbsp sesame oil
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp garlic salt
- ¼ cup almonds, chopped or slivered
- 2 tsp sesame seeds

Heat oven to 400°.

Coat an 8-by-11-inch baking dish with cooking spray and place salmon in dish, skin-side down. In a bowl, combine apricots, garlic, and zest. Spoon mixture over salmon and bake until apricots brown and salmon flakes when pressed with a fork, 12–15 minutes.

In a second bowl, combine baby kale, broccoli, red cabbage, and navy beans. In a third bowl, whisk together orange juice, sesame oil, mustard, and garlic salt; pour sesame dressing over vegetables and stir until evenly coated. Divide vegetables among four plates. Remove skin from salmon and place fish over vegetables. Garnish with almonds and sesame seeds; serve immediately.

**NUTRITIONAL INFO** 517 calories per serving, 22 g fat (3 g saturated), 47 g carbs, 14 g fiber, 37 g protein, 404 mg sodium

**Leslie Goldman** is a Chicago-based writer specializing in health, parenting, and women's issues.

**Model Lesley Pace** is a yoga teacher in Denver who focuses on creating inclusive spaces for students.







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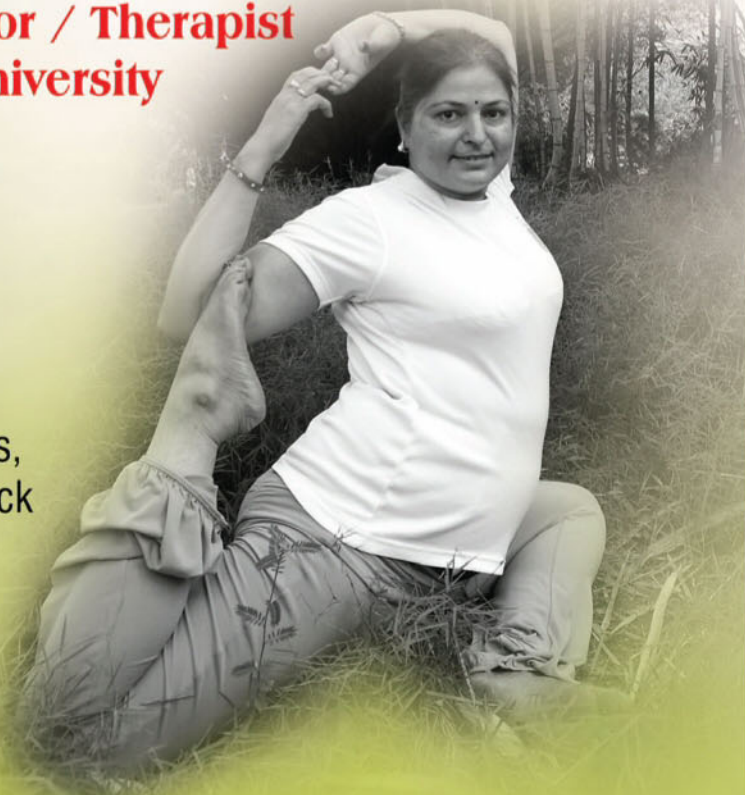
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# connect

## Rodney Yee

"All spiritual practice comes down to applying teachings to your own self, going inside, and listening to your body and heart," says Rodney Yee, who has been practicing and teaching yoga for more than 25 years. With more than 30 DVDs and several books to his name, Yee co-chairs the 'Urban Zen Health and Wellness Foundation' founded by Donna Karan, with his wife Colleen Saidman Yee. He is a former gymnast and ballet dancer, now based in New York, where he teaches regular classes at Yoga Shanti in the Flatiron District.

**Website:** <http://www.yeeyoga.com/>  
**Facebook:** @RodneyYeeYoga

Paulina Buck is a yoga teacher who has lived in many countries, faced several injuries and recoveries, and believes in the power of turning inward, observing and connecting with her body. Here, she shares her story and the power of yoga to heal the body physically and mentally.

BY PAULINA BUCK



Why do we practice yoga, or why do we teach yoga? There are many answers to this question, but for me, there is only one: to stay healthy. Yoga has helped me learn how to prevent injuries, to heal, and to keep my mind at peace and on an even keel. I strive to transfer this learning to my students.

I am 52 years old, and have been practising yoga for 18 years. In August last year, as I was walking down the stairs, my husband pointed out that they were slippery. He was right! I slipped, with my arm behind me grasping the banister as I tumbled down 3 steep steps. I didn't feel anything much at the time apart from the bang to my tail bone as it smashed against the stairs. I continued as if nothing had happened until the next day, when I was in agony because of my back. But the impact to my back, whilst painful at the time, was not the long-lasting injury from my tussle with the stairs.

Fast forward to April/May, I started to get some pain doing *Paryankasana* (Couch pose) but was able to manage it once I did some stretches after coming out of the pose. However, as time went by, I started to get pain in the inner part of my upper arm doing *Adho Mukha Svanasana* (Downward Facing Dog pose), and that's when I realized there was something seriously wrong.

I am a firm believer that I can use my practice first instead of going for more conventional

treatments immediately. But this time the pain just got worse. Even lifting my handbag or opening a door was painful. So, I went to the physiotherapist who sent me for an MRI and the diagnosis came: Left rotator cuff PASTA, where P stands for a partial tear of tendon, A for articular (which refers to the inner side of the tendon), ST for supraspinatus tendon, and A for avulsion (which refers usually to a traumatic injury). And a side order of type II SLAP tear (Slap stands for superior labral tear from anterior to posterior). On top of it, I was diagnosed with Buford complex (an anatomical variation on the glenohumeral ligaments and the labrum).

I was devastated. I had just signed up to attend a one-week retreat with a teacher who has greatly influenced me and taught me so much. I was also due to lead a two-week retreat in October and really felt like I was letting my students down. I am not that young anymore. This injury was a major blow to me.

For a month I continued to agonize over whether to risk the surgery or try and soldier on with the pain, but finally, I went in for the surgery. It was a two-hour procedure, after which I was kept in the hospital overnight and discharged the next day. But 48 hours after that, I was back practising.

I had to modify everything, find variations for poses and movements that I had previously taken for granted—but most of all I had to be





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kinder and more patient with myself. I did not realize how frustrating it is not to be able to do simple things like getting dressed!

I was adamant that I was not going to take painkillers as I didn't want to dull my senses and lose awareness of my boundaries. I went back to teaching a week after the surgery with my arm in a sling (which I had to wear for a month), but I was only teaching a couple of classes a week. I started to go for physiotherapy but it was largely restricted to massaging the area. While my surgeon was keen that I move my arm gently from the very beginning, the physiotherapist, from the kindest of hearts, was always telling me to be cautious. Fear started to creep into my mind. I wasn't sleeping well as I was told if I had pain it was because I had done too much and negated the point of the surgery. I was fearful that nothing I was doing was helping—but at the same time my instincts were telling me I was on the right track.

I decided to trust myself and my knowledge of my body, but most of all, my 18 years of practising yoga. I persevered with my own yoga-centric conceptualization of rehabilitation for a month. During that time, I went on a holiday and kept doing everything I could to bring more movement to my arm. I was still not allowed to put any weight on my shoulder, so to do a plank, I belted myself to a tree to hold my hips and bring my weight further back onto my legs than usual. I kept using the tree

for as many poses as I could whilst keeping the weight off my shoulder and the back healthy. We tend to forget the very important connection that shoulders have to the back—and trees make for good props! I kept doing my pranayama, and continued to move the arm as much as I could, slowly and carefully.

As soon as I got back to Singapore, I went to the physiotherapist who had helped me with a previous surgery (yes, I had shoulder surgery back in 2010; it was a labral tear as well due to an old injury from water skiing). She and my surgeon were amazed at how much movement I had only two months after the surgery. The physiotherapist encouraged me to keep doing what I was doing, gently reminding me to give myself time to heal, but not to be scared either.

I don't take my rehabilitation and my progress lightly. I've been extremely lucky to have had an amazing surgeon, a very supportive physiotherapist, students who encourage me, and colleagues who cheer me on. But apart from that, I've worked hard because I believe in what I do.

I don't advise people to bypass the professional attention and help that the medical profession can give, but I do recommend the great benefits that can come from working in conjunction with them and one's yoga practice. If you want to use the practice to help you heal, the solution is not to

pop in to a class expecting immediate results, especially if you have never practiced yoga. Instead, talk to the teacher, and depending on how severe your condition is, consider taking private lessons before you join the public ones.

Yoga works if we allow it to work. It will not hurt if we practise it with an understanding that less is more, if we practise with someone who can explain the process through which the body can access what we are trying to achieve, and if we practise without trying to emulate someone or something. Yoga is a beautiful process, but only if we stop to understand and see the beauty of it, without trying to push it onto ourselves.

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**Paulina Buck** teaches at Kate Porter Yoga in Singapore. Read more about her at [www.kateporteryoga.com/paulina-buck/](http://www.kateporteryoga.com/paulina-buck/)

## Ashtanga

ashta = eight · anga = limbs

BY SHERRIANN MELWANI

### DHYANA

The Seventh Limb of Ashtanga

*Dhyana is Meditation: the continuous flow of cognition (or sustained focus) toward the object of concentration.*  
Yoga Sutras 3:2

The ability to direct the mind to concentrate on one point (*dharana*), leads to a state of prolonged concentration or meditation (*dhyana*), and then bliss (*samadhi*) follows. These last three limbs are the higher inner practices that are born organically from the practice of the initial preparatory five limbs: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, and *Pratyahara*.

An old zen saying goes: "You should sit in meditation for 20 minutes a day, unless you're too busy; then you should sit for an hour". It is on those very days when we are overwhelmed with life that we need meditation even more to help us feel balanced and healthy.

Compare *dhyana* (meditation) to the process of pouring oil from one container to another: there is no distinction between the two containers and the flow connects them together as one without any interruption. The same is with the mind during *dhyana*.

When the mind experiences uninterrupted focus and merges with the object of meditation, it experiences peace. Think of a time when you were very thirsty, and when you finally drank water, you were completely immersed in the moment, your mind merging and losing the concept of separateness between you and the water. In that moment, you become one with the water—this union you experienced is *dhyana*.





## Meditation or Dhyana

*When meditation is mastered, the mind is unwavering like the flame of a candle in a windless place. — Bhagavad Gita*

Meditation is not really something that can be performed. Rather, it is a state of being that is achieved when certain conditions exist. We can compare the state of dhyana to falling asleep. You don't know the actual moment when you fall asleep—it just happens when the body is relaxed. The same is with meditation: it is a state of being, rather than something that you “do”.

We practice methods of concentration, dharana, to discipline the mind and steer it into such a state. Consider the second Pantanjali sutra, “Yoga chitta vritti nirodhah”, which translates to “Yoga is the settling of the mind-stuff into silence.” When the mind settles into silence, then we can taste meditation.

Meditation is different from prayer. Prayer is when the mind speaks, often asking for different things and sometimes expressing devotion and gratitude. Meditation is when the mind is gently guided via dharana & dhyana techniques into stillness. Wisdom is attained when we are quiet, not when we speak. Whatever wisdom you seek, you find it in silence.

## Benefits of Dhyana

- **Activates brain waves:** Meditation promotes Alpha and Theta waves in the brain which are known to reduce anxiety, improve memory, boost creativity, reduce pain, and support a relaxed and focused mind.
- **Cultivates healthy gut flora:** Lower levels of stress hormones have been shown to contribute to a healthier microbiome which affects our quality of life and mental health. When we experience stress, our survival mechanism response switches on and all the energy normally used for digestion is rerouted to the brain in order to prepare ourselves for “fight or flight” mode. Our gut is then deprived of its much needed prana and we experience distress such as gas and bloating which encourages unhealthy bacteria to grow.
- **Stimulates relaxation response:** Meditation is a wonderful way to relieve tension by offering us time for stillness and reflection. When we meditate, the parasympathetic nervous system sends out signals communicating the message to the brain that we are safe and relaxed. During stressful situations, we tend to attach messages of danger that are recorded in our nervous system. The continual attachment to a stressful event—often much after it is over or had never even occurred—is harmful to our mind and body. Through meditation, we reprogram such negative thoughts by stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system which turns on the relaxation response.
- **Elevates perspective:** Often we find answers to questions and solutions to problems when we give ourselves time and space for meditation. The stillness we cultivate reorganizes our thoughts and offers an elevated perspective so we learn not to “sweat the small stuff”.
- **Helps with Self Knowledge:** When we make time for our meditation practice, we are also providing space to connect with the higher self. When we learn how to train the mind from a higher perspective of the true self, then we experience meditative bliss.
- **Boosts Intuition:** Meditation techniques bring awareness to the Third Eye which corresponds to the pineal gland in the brain. By stimulating this part of the brain, we can activate our higher senses of perception, which helps us to act and make decisions using our ‘sixth sense’ or intuition, instead of the ego.

## 7 Tips to create a habit of Dhyana

- 1 **Keep it Simple:** Don't get too fancy with your rituals to set up a meditation space. Sometimes the rituals take longer than the actual time you spend sitting. Instead, select a couple of quick go-to techniques that can effectively get you into your peaceful zone, and then commit to sitting and focusing your mind on a single point or “seed meditation” (using a mantra, a color or a sound) for some time.
- 2 **Keep it Short (to start anyway):** It is better to have a consistent practice of 2 minutes every day than 2 hours once a week. In the beginning especially, it is easier to create a realistic short habit, and also more manageable in a busy life.
- 3 **Strategic Timing:** I have found that it is best if you choose the same time every day, like soon after you brush your teeth. This will train the mind to get a routine. Creating a log sheet will help you track your progress.
- 4 **Be Kind to yourself:** If you miss a day, just try again the following day. Resist the urge to give up just because you had an off day or two.
- 5 **Be Patient:** Allow your mind to be chatty. Everyone has a busy mind in the beginning. Remind yourself that just as with everything, meditation requires discipline and constant practice if you want to be effective. With practice, you can gain control of your mind.
- 6 **Have a Purpose:** When we know why we are doing something, especially when it has an effect on others, it motivates us to stick to the routine and be disciplined. Don't do meditation just for yourself. Do it with the intent that your practice will somehow in some way also help others. This will motivate a daily practice.
- 7 **Stay Committed:** Finally, write a personal contract for daily practice and sign it in the presence of someone who you trust and can help you stay with your goal.

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**Sherriann Melwani** is a yoga teacher who shuttles between Hong Kong, Bali and Singapore, and is a freelance writer for Yoga Journal Singapore. Read about ‘*Samadhi*’ in the next edition.

# Bhanu Pratap Singh

Iyengar Yoga Teacher, Pure Yoga

Shine a light on  
your teacher!

Send nominations  
to [letters@  
yogajournal.com.sg](mailto:letters@yogajournal.com.sg)



## What made you start yoga?

Yoga was not something I wanted to pursue long term, but after secondary school, all my classmates got admitted their chosen degree courses but I had no idea what to do or where to go. Then my uncle, a yoga teacher in Singapore, suggested to my dad that I should be sent for a one-month course to a yoga university in Bangalore. That is how it all started.

## What inspired you to become a yoga teacher?

I did my first yoga teacher training at Swami Vivekananda Yoga University, Bangalore, where I received my Bachelor's degree in 2008. The initial idea behind teaching yoga in Bangalore city was to earn a

living, for which I used to travel on bike from house to house to teach 1-on-1 yoga sessions. Now I teach to share my experience.

## What is your main focus when you teach yoga?

It is to be able to connect to each student present in the class, and help protect them from injuries while practicing. I always tell students not to have expectations and not to pre-define the outcome of the practice—instead use the memory from their last practice to improve something today and see if some new knowledge can come each time. If not, the practice becomes monotonous and boring.

## How has the Singapore yoga scene changed in the last few years?

I have been teaching in Singapore since 2013 and the number of yoga practitioners is increasing day by day. I am glad to say that my students' perspective towards yoga has changed from just a fitness routine to understanding their own patterns and behavior (physically, mentally and emotionally), which has helped them to look within.

## Who is your guru and what was the biggest learning for you?

I have many gurus who have guided me through my yoga path, and still do. I am connected to all and try to see them once or twice a year. The continuous guidance I get now is from H.S. Arun, a senior Iyengar yoga teacher in Bangalore, and my biggest learning from him is to experiment well on myself before teaching others.

## What is the most important thing about Iyengar yoga that everyone should know?

Guruji B.K.S Iyengar's method of yoga practice was to integrate all seven limbs as taught by Patanjali. The eighth limb, Samadhi, is the ultimate state of enlightenment in yoga which cannot be taught. In Iyengar yoga, one has to practice with the body and use the mind to reflect on every action, whether right or wrong. Then, intellect has to guide the body to make necessary adjustments. This means asana cannot be done by the body alone, but also requires the consciousness.

## in the DETAILS

### Some of his favorite things...

#### Fav Yoga Pose

Thankfully, I don't have a favorite pose!

#### Fav Meal

No favorite meal. I eat home cooked food prepared by my wife.

#### Fav TV Show

I do not watch TV. We do not have TV connection at home.

#### If you weren't a yoga teacher, you'd be?

I do not think about it.

#### What do you do when you're not teaching yoga?

I do self-practice and spend time with friends and family. I also enjoy reading books on yoga by BKS Iyengar.





## REFLECTION

# Grace notes

By Mark Nepo

I LEARNED TO PLAY PIANO AT 41. I worked my fingers long enough that the uncanny dimension of being played appeared briefly: In those moments, beyond all logic, my hands started to behave more quickly than my mind, which was trying to read the notes and position my fingers. My teacher noticed this and thought I was ready to tackle my first piece by Bach, a minuet known as “Bach’s Notebook for Anna Magdalena.”

In the eighth measure of that minuet, a note smaller than the rest appears. Almost ghostlike, it hovers very near the others like a barely seeable angel or a hummingbird whose path is more readily seen than its body. It surprised me. My teacher called it a grace note—a note that, though played and heard, takes up no time; a note that matters, though it is timeless. And therein lies its grace.

Now, 20 years later, I realize this is another way to understand the paradox of epiphany, of moments that open and transcend their sense of ordinary time. In truth, every glimpse of eternity I’ve ever encountered has been a grace note that has affected how I see and hear, though it has taken up no time in the measure of my struggle. I find over and over that the instant that we’re washed open by the swell of the Universe is such a note of grace. And the wisdom of mystics and sages reverberates in the timeless space their presence holds open.

When these moments occur—when the mind is touched by something larger than its ability to understand, when the heart is moved by something deeper than its capacity to dive, when the impulse to speak is stirred by the presence of something that can’t be named—things happen that defy the boundaries of time. Such moments confirm that we’re part of a unity that’s always present but seldom clear, and to be touched by that presence changes our lives.

Moments like the moon—full and stark—rising over the garage between the oak and the maple in a friend’s backyard as we barbecue. Suddenly, the moon is calling in its white silence, drawing the smoke and fragrance out of the meat into the sky, and we, without a word, feel coated with a film of light from another world, the same as cavemen preparing their game at the mouth of their cave.

Moments like the morning of my annual CAT scan on the other side of cancer. When I realize that in the tenderness of being torn open by life, we’re like these small, red birds splashing themselves with water as the sun comes up, hoping we will heal without sealing our hearts over.

Moments like watching my friend’s 20-year-old cat adjust to being blind. All at once, the cat trying to make its way feels like our sense of being lost, no matter how we fill our calendars.

Moments of soft, relentless grace like one the other night, celebrating a birthday. The cake on the table; the lights off; all of us caught watching the sparkler on the cake. Each of us peering from our own personal seat of darkness, gathering as we do, fixed by the hiss of light flaring between us. Feeling the sparks fly, afraid one might burn us, hoping that it does.

Adapted from *Things That Join the Sea and the Sky: Field Notes on Living* by Mark Nepo. Copyright © 2017 Mark Nepo. Published by Sounds True in November 2017.

**Mark Nepo** is a poet and philosopher who is devoted to writing and teaching the journey of inner transformation and the life of relationship. He has been teaching poetry and spirituality for more than 40 years and is the *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Book of Awakening*.

# Lynda Scott

Lynda Scott, Principal of the Infant School at UWC South East Asia (UWCSEA) Dover in Singapore, has another role that she performs to a T—teaching yoga to students, faculty and parents. Here, she shares with Yoga Journal what it is that fascinates her about yoga.



**My earliest memory of doing yoga** was as a child in the early 1970s in Australia, following what Swami Sarasvati did on TV, and it was ever so mysterious and exotic! As an adult, I started practicing yoga in the early 90s with a group of friends. We'd wake up early and do an outdoor session as the sun began to rise. It was a time in my life of deep reflection and transition. Yoga grounded me and gave me clarity.

**I knew yoga was incredibly beneficial** to me as an adult and I was convinced that there was a place for yoga at school. There wasn't a great deal of research to support my thinking back then, but as an early childhood teacher I had successfully introduced yoga to my students. In 2005, I finally completed the training and became a certified children's yoga teacher through the Radiant Child Yoga organization. Now, as the Infant School Principal at UWCSEA Dover, I introduce yoga to our youngest learners (aged 4-7 years) once a week as part of our activities programme.

**We should all practice yoga!** The benefits of this ancient practice are well documented—yoga, breathing techniques and meditation are a holistic fitness package. Yoga leads to improved health, physical strength and flexibility; it supports mental health and enables clarity of thought; and is a great stress reliever that can promote inner peace.

**Yoga both energizes and grounds me.** It helps me to focus and find balance not only on the mat but in work and life as well. A gentle restorative session in the evening stills my mind and helps me sleep.

**I love the Child Pose.** There's something about *Balasana* that is nourishing and nurturing, especially as a resting pose during a more challenging flow sequence. It opens the hips and elongates the lower back, great for runners!

**I can see what children appreciate**—they love the time and permission to just slow down, to still their bodies and minds. Our children are such busy beings and having time dedicated to yoga and mindfulness gives them a space to reflect on their day. A growing body of research indicates that yoga helps improve focus, memory, self-esteem, academic success and general classroom behavior. It can reduce anxiety and stress in children, while also nurturing mind-body awareness, self-regulation and overall physical fitness.

**I am grateful** to be working in a school that prioritizes mental health and well-being, not only for students but the entire school community. Our UWCSEA curriculum specifically addresses these areas, and personal and social education is an essential component of our learning programme.

**One of my favorite days** was when we celebrated World Yoga Day in conjunction with the United Nations International Day of Yoga at Dover Campus. We ran an outdoor yoga session for 300 children aged 4-7 with the support of parents and High School students. The theme was 'warriors for peace and harmony' which tied in beautifully with our UWCSEA mission, "to make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future". It was such a beautiful day!





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