

**Cancer Exercise
Specialist®
YOGA PROGRAM**



By Stephanie N. Adams, ERYT 500 & ACE Certified PT

This book and its work is dedicated to two people:

*My mother, Joyce Cecilia Kelley,
who died of lung cancer on April 19, 2009.
Thank you for teaching me the importance
of love and compassion.*

*Andrea Leonard, who has been dedicated
for more than two decades to serving those
recovering from, and in treatment for, cancer.
Your dedication inspires all whose lives you grace.*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 – Yoga and Cancer	7
Chapter 2 – What is Yoga?	17
Chapter 3 – Hatha Yoga Styles	23
Chapter 4 – Asana Alignment Guidelines	25
Reference Sheet Muscle/Joint Action—Hatha Yoga	26
Highlights of the Biomechanics of the Spine Related to Hatha Yoga	28
Chapter 5 – Relaxation Response	29
Chapter 6 – Foundational Poses	33
Chapter 7 – Introduction to Kriyas, Flow, & Improved Autonomic Response	103
Chapter 8 – Common Postural Deviations and Corrective Exercises	107
Chapter 9 – CESYoga Practice/Class Sequence	117
Restorative Yoga for Healing	119
Lymphedema Prevention and Management	124
CESYoga Practice for Recovery and Core Integration	129
Chapter 10 – Dharana—Meditation	135
Chapter 11 – Yoga Language	137



INTRODUCTION

How to Use this Book

This book is an addendum to CETI's Cancer Exercise Specialist Advanced Qualification Handbooks where the essentials of postural assessment and specifics related to 27 different types of cancer are contained. These two books, combined, are the entirety of CES-Yoga's comprehensive approach to yoga asana as a healing tool for cancer. Think of them as Volume 1 and Volume 2.

In order to be prepared for sharing yoga with those in cancer treatment please read and re-read both books in their entirety. The online certification exam focuses on the information in both books as well as all online content.

The following pages contain highlights/important things to remember from the CES Handbook that specifically apply to teaching yoga.

Considerations for Working with Students/Clients in Cancer Treatment or Recovery

- Remember to move limbs through pain- and strain-free range of motion (ROM) without compensation. Don't focus on long strength-focused holds in limited ROM. Regaining ROM is important – slow, dynamic flowing flexibility takes priority over strength-focus when ROM is limited.
- It is important to focus on small, obtainable, and positive physical challenges and changes. "With a cancer diagnosis you will never be the same again, but that doesn't mean you can't be better."
- If a student comes to you with bad news, how do you respond? "I am so sorry." Take a moment to just BE with them. Then, you might say, "I am here for you."
- Remember, when engaging in this sort of service/teaching, that for however long a patient/client lives or thrives, you have made a positive impact on their life.
- Make relationships with the medical community, including Oncology programs and departments, Physical Therapists, and more. Focus on community and service.
- 8-12 week sessions work better than "drop-in" type classes. From start to finish, create progressive and functional programming. Perform assessments at beginning/end, if possible.
- Health History Forms, Waivers and Medical Clearance Forms are highly recommended.
- Offer a couple poses that students can come into anytime they experience fatigue—teach them to everyone at the beginning of class (Childs/Balasana, Baddha Konasana/Butterfly, Baby Pose, and/or Savasana). Fatigue may last, or intermittently recur, for up to three years.
- Limit active poses/vinyasa flows to 20-30 minutes. Breathwork, meditation, restorative poses and/or relaxing stretches can accompany this 20-30 minutes of active practice.
- Those who have experienced chemotherapy, radiation, hormonal therapy, or bone cancers may be at high risk for Osteopenia/Osteoporosis. Make sure you have waivers and medical clearance for all students and also place them near a wall or sturdy chair.
- Peripheral neuropathy can be a common side effect of certain cancers and/or treatments. This can affect whether it will be comfortable to bear weight on the hands or feet and also can affect balance. Make sure you have waivers and medical clearance for all students and also place them near a wall or sturdy chair.

- Remember that many will be immunocompromised and sterility is very important. Have students bring their own water bottles, towels, props and mats. Wear socks to/from their mats.
- If acute diarrhea/vomiting, avoid exercise of any kind for 24-36 hours—especially at risk for dehydration. If treatment is causing chronic diarrhea/vomiting, then exercise benefits outweigh the risks. Low-intensity yoga classes are recommended, if dehydration can be managed with water and electrolytes.

Surgery can be an important and effective form of cancer treatment. However, loss of ROM, pain, swelling, nerve damage, muscle imbalance, loss or redistribution of muscle/skin, and “guarding” can result.

In determining the effects of surgery on a student/client’s practice, gather as much information as you comfortably and appropriately can:

1. Where are the incision sites? This will affect ROM, strength and muscle balance for that area.
2. Was it open incision (larger and more sutures) or laparoscopic (minimally invasive)?
3. Were lymph nodes removed? If so, where? Upper or lower body or both?
4. To regain and/or improve posture, core strength and overall muscle imbalance, practice should be low-intensity, basic, and progressive.
5. Do you notice “guarding” in the student’s posture? Focus on breath to calm the nervous system and begin to let go of the imbalances being created from fear/protection.
6. If a muscle and/or skin flap was used, where was muscle/skin taken from and moved to?

CHAPTER 2

What Is Yoga?

The word “yoga” literally means “to yoke”. Its deeper meaning is to **unite** the practitioner with their most authentic self (their most true nature). Another way of thinking about this is uniting the practitioner with their body, mind, breath, and heart or spirit. So, the purpose of yoga is a practice to help us discover more about who we really are.

Most people in the west think of yoga as a series of stretches. That style/path of yoga is called ***hatha*** yoga, or the physical practice of yoga. The Sanskrit term ***asana*** more accurately describes that practice of yoga; it is just one of the Eight Limbs of Yoga as described by the sage Patanjali in his yoga sutras.

Yoga Poses/Asana

Many people think that the physical practice of yoga is just stretching; however, it is so much more than that. **Hatha Yoga is about balancing the vital energy in the body, mind, breath and heart.** In our muscles we create balance, strength, and flexibility. With deep breathing, we energetically tone the nervous system to calm the mind and body. The poses can be done quickly to create more heat and to develop a cardiorespiratory benefit, and/or the poses can be held longer for strength and stamina or for deep passive stretching.

What is Sanskrit?

Sanskrit is the second oldest language on earth that we know of. It is also the language of yoga and originated in ancient India. It is considered a “dead” language because it is not used in normal conversation, although many of the ancient teachings like yoga, Tibetan Tantra, Buddhism, and other traditions that arose from ancient Vedic culture, use Sanskrit. We will be using both English and Sanskrit in this training manual, so that you can become more familiar with the language of yoga.

Patanjali's Eight Limbs Yoga (Ashtanga Yoga)

In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, written in approximately 400 BC, the yogic sage recommends an 8-limbed system referred to as Ashtanga Yoga to rid oneself of Kleshas/obstacles (YS 2:29):

1. **Yama:** guidelines for living Yoga that are related more to the external and our relationships with others.
2. **Niyama:** observance – the “me” yamas are guidelines for living that we apply more to ourselves.
3. **Asana:** posture, seat.
4. **Pranayama:** breath/awareness of life force/vital energy – harmonizing/balancing breath.
5. **Pratyahara:** withdrawal of the senses – drawing your attention inward instead of allowing your senses to draw you away from Now.
6. **Dharana:** concentration – meditation using techniques or effort.
7. **Dhyana:** meditation – spontaneous or effortless meditation.
8. **Samadhi:** This cannot be taught, only experienced. Some describe it as contemplation/absorption, bliss, or super consciousness (realization of Yoga/Union/Connection ~ you are not alone or separate).

1. Yamas / 2. Niyamas

Yamas and Niyamas are unifying principles similar to the guidelines of living taught in other cultural, philosophical and spiritual texts. Patanjali emphasizes ahimsa as the most important, non-harming, or kindness in word, thought and deed. All forms of prejudice are seeing “others” as different. When we see our self in “others” and treat our “self” with kindness and compassion, we are practicing ahimsa. The more we are kind, the more we see kindness in others.

The yamas consist of non-harming, right communication or truthfulness, noncovetousness or non-stealing, moderation, and non-greediness.

Niyamas consist of cleanliness, contentment, austerity/removal of impurities in our physical and mental environment, self-study, and self-surrender.

3. Asana

The third limb of Patanjali's suggested practice means the posture that brings comfort and steadiness (YS 2:46). Realizing that requiring the body to sit still in any one posture requires a healthy body. Moving through postures designed to bring health to the body, prepares that body and mind to find a posture where we can be still.

Because our senses want to experience pleasure and avoid pain, we load the system with toxins – food, stimulation, noise, pollution, etc. Awareness in the body can improve mindfulness; however, there are lots of temptations that feel comfortable or familiar that may pull our senses away from awareness. We become disturbed or distracted. Through practice, we learn to lessen the natural tendency for restlessness. (YS 2:47) Once we can make a posture steady and comfortable through practice we are neutral and not disturbed by dualities (hot/cold; praise/ criticism). (YS 2:48)

4. Pranayama

Once we have learned to acquire a comfortable, steady posture (asana), inhalation and exhalation can be controlled. (YS 2:49) Breath is an amazing tool for becoming deeply aware of our prana, or vital energy. This awareness allows us to bring our attention to our breath to balance our energy.

CHAPTER 5

Relaxation Response

Savasana and deep breathing are always the most beneficial part of our practice in terms of overall health and well-being. Stress is now believed to be the culprit of 75 – 90% of all doctor visits. Physical, emotional, and environmental stress is wreaking havoc on our entire energetic systems. Dr. Ralph LaForge of Duke University in a workshop at ACSM's Conference in Reno, Nevada in about 2001, stated, after studying over 300 articles on the health benefits of hatha yoga, that the most important parts of a yoga class for overall health and well-being are breath and savasana. He also taught that just 30-40 seconds of deep belly breathing can eliminate or reduce all physiological symptoms of stress. Given the number of doctor visits believed to be stress-related, this is a simple and highly beneficial technique we can do anytime, anywhere.

Extensive research shows the Relaxation Response is known to offer following benefits:

- Lowers stress hormones,
- Increases arousal from the drowsy state,
- Lowers blood pressure,
- Helps in relieving pain,
- Increases motivation and productivity,
- Improves decision making,
- Helps in curing sleep disorders,
- Lowers anxiety and irritability.

A regular yoga practice can improve your reactivity to stress both on and off the mat and invoke a relaxation response, or the parasympathetic nervous system. Each time we meet a mental or physical challenge with breath and calm, we are improving what is called our “autonomic response.” Experts are now teaching us that instead of simply trying to avoid stress in our lives, we should practice responding to stress with deep belly breathing and calm minds. The effects of stress on our health are directly related to how we respond to, and perceive, a situation.

WHOLE-BODY-MIND AWARENESS

Another way to think about this is to really contemplate the power of the mind-body connection. If we are simply the flesh and bone material that we see and we can't see the interconnectedness of our physical, neurological, and energetic connection, we now know (and yogis have always known) that we are missing something. Author Tom Myers discusses the core concepts of *Anatomy Trains* and the implications for our understanding of the interconnectedness of the body:

The nervous system, the circulatory system, and the fascial system are never separate in a human being. They develop together, and they work together. So when the fascial system changes, everything else changes.

For example, think of someone who's depressed...depression has a fascial effect as well. It also is expressed as a specific look and shape of the body. You really don't see people with their chest puffed out going around saying, “I'm so depressed.”

So we've gone after the talk therapy solutions to depression, and we have more recently gone after the chemical reactions to depression. But I think we really ought to be looking at how people hold themselves and how they shape themselves.

Fascia is the organ of form. We have to change the connective tissue, change things at that level. And that in turn changes people's breathing, and when their breathing changes, their chemistry changes and their outlook changes. So, again, people have been paying a lot of attention to the chemistry and neurology of conditions like depression, and not much attention to shape. But shape is hugely important, and that's where yoga and bodywork really shine.

Mindful movement moves lymph, glides muscle, and improves circulation. Dynamic and functional strength and flexibility using your own body weight as resistance is a great way to keep the energy flowing and the body healthy, so we are able to breathe more fully and enjoy our lives.

PRANAYAMA – BREATH FOR ENERGY BALANCE

Breath work oxygenates the blood to improve nerve function, strengthens the central nervous system, and calms and relaxes nerves.

Whisper breathing (Ujjayi Breath)

Whisper breath is used while holding poses or during any “Within” time throughout the yoga class with the exception of Savasana pose. Sometimes, called Ujjayi or “Ocean” breath, nose breathing can be helpful to:

- focus attention,
- oxygenate the blood,
- retain heat within the body,
- control the volume and flow of air,
- make an audible sound that allows the student to self monitor the quality and length of the breath.

Using a loud whisper, say the word “HAAAH” as though you were trying to blow out a candle. Now close the lips and make the same sound through the nose. Work on creating the same feeling on inhale through the nose. Use a slight constriction at the base of the throat and warm the back of the throat with the breath. Don't force the breath, tense the chest or head, or make the sound too loud. It should sound like a gentle wave against the shore inside your head.

Gradually lengthen your breath using Whisper Breath. Use the sound of the breath as a centering device during difficult poses or when the mind starts to wander; allow the mind to bring its focus back to the breath.

You can show the students why it's important to breathe through their noses. First, explain the importance of warm muscles for building strength and flexibility without injury. Then, in Sukhasana/Easy Seated Position, take a big deep breath in and breathe out through your mouth with one hand in front of your mouth. Ask the students to notice the heat coming out through their mouths. Next, take a big deep breath in and breathe out through your nose with the other hand in front of your nose (lips staying closed). Notice how much cooler the breath through the nose is. Talk about how much heat we lose through our mouth and how that's important if we are running outside on warm days (I use the example of a dog with breathing his mouth wide open, tongue hanging out, to cool down).

Alternate Nostril Breath (nadi shodhana)

Alternate nostril breath can be used during any part of class and is especially useful for either after warm-up breathing or at the end of a class, before Savasana pose.

Alternate nostril breath has a calming and balancing effect on the mind. This Left/Right breathing technique is believed to balance the Left/Right hemispheres of the brain – helping to balance our more creative and more technical aspects of our selves, and helping to calm by coordinating the opposite sides of the body and brain. Some academic teachers have found it effective when transitioning a class from a more structured, technical (left brain) activity such as math problems to a more creative (right brain) activity such as writing or art.

CHAPTER 6

Foundational Poses

The poses in this manual are some of the most common taught in hatha yoga. They are some of the most beneficial—the roots and trunk of every class.

Sun Salutations/Vinyasa/Kriya are warming and create vital energy in the body/heart/breath. *Surya* (sun) *Namaskar* (sacredly bowing) has been classically practiced in the morning facing the East – the sun. There are many other vinyasas (poses linked together by prana/vital energy/breath) or kriyas (action that are repetitive to move you beyond thought into the Now).

The poses listed below create most of the sun salutation options and variations we practice today. Beginning our classes with these poses creates warmth in the muscles and connective tissues to more safely strengthen and stretch. These rhythmic poses also help to clear the mind as we surrender to flow. (Also see Kriya section.)

SURYA NAMASKAR POSES

Mountain
Standing Forward Fold

Lunge
Downward Facing Dog

Plank
Four Limbs Pose

Heart-Opening Cobra
Upward Facing Dog

Additional Poses often integrated in Surya Namaskar, Vinyasa, of Kriya options

Chair
Childs
Cat/cow/Chakravakasana options

Mountain (Tadasana or Samasthiti)

Category: Surya Namaskar



Alignment Highlights:

- Feet can be sealed together or hip width apart.
- Finding foundational feet with arches lifted (pada bandha), inner thighs and pelvic floor active (mula bandha), which activates the deep low abs (uddiyana action). This engages the core midline from the arches of the feet to the physical center of the body (uddiyana point).
- Shoulders/blades are gently back & down to open the chest yet balanced by bhandas and rectus abdominus keeping the front lower ribs from popping forward.
- Chin parallel to the floor, head in line with the spine (jalandhara bandha).

Common Postural Misalignments:

Anterior pelvic tilt (hyper lumbar lordosis) causing ribs to pop forward, or posterior pelvic tilt (less lumbar curve) which can cause shoulders and head to come forward.

Knees hyper extended or arches collapsed.
Both of these errors (and most in asana) can be remedied by activating the bandhas.

Alternative ROM options:

Can be done seated on a Chair.



Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Arm Mtn)

Category: *Surya Namaskar*



Alignment Highlights:

- Start by externally rotating from the shoulders turning palms open to the sides. Drawing hands/arm down to create space in the shoulder (avoiding impingement), begin circling the arms up.
- If teaching in a crowded room, another good option is to bring hands to the heart and reach arms up into an open-hearted “V” shape and then bring hands back to the heart and bow with knees bent – bowing to the wisdom of your own heart – om namah shivaya.

Common Postural Misalignments:

Anterior pelvic tilt (hyper lumbar lordosis) causing ribs to pop forward, or posterior pelvic tilt (less lumbar curve) which can cause shoulders and head to come forward.

Knees hyper extended or arches collapsed. Both of these errors (and most in asana) can be remedied by activating the bandhas.

Alternative ROM options:

Arms can be moved through pain-free ROM: for many, this may be just up to shoulder level and/or hands toward the heart.



Pose Benefits/Inspiration/Energetics:

Standing tall we feel as if we are growing from the earth toward the sky like a mountain.
Feeling an energetic connection of earth to sun.
Bhandas/Energetic seals are ignited in this pose.
Strengthens core/midline and postural muscles.

ADVANCED ANATOMICAL ALIGNMENT

Muscles Isometrically Active for Optimal Alignment:

Tibialis Posterior/Peroneus Longus (pada bandha)
Adductors, Pelvic Floor & Transverse Abdominus (mula bandha & uddiyana action)
Quadriceps
Posterior Deltoids
Triceps
Lower Trapezius/Rhomboids (balanced with Rectus Abdominus drawing ribs down for balance)

Major Joint Action when transitioning from Standing Forward Fold (Uttanasana):

Knee Flexion to Extension – Hamstrings, Quadriceps
Hip Extension – Hip Extensors (Gluteus Maximus, Hamstrings)
Shoulder Abduction – Medial Deltoids

CHAPTER 8

Common Postural Deviations and Corrective Exercises

We can assess a student's posture either in a detailed individual session or in a class. We learned about how to assess postural deviations in the CES Handbook. Once we know what we are looking to correct, we can choose from this section yoga exercises (asana, kriya, or vinyasa) that will bring balance to the body. Working privately with a student, you can design a personal practice using the poses from this section.

In a class practice, experienced teachers can both assess and correct postural deviations, as well. There are a few ways you can do this. First, you can ask your students at the beginning of class if there is an area of their body that they are wanting to focus on, or are healing. Second, you can observe your students when you first bring the class into foundational poses like Tadasana/ Mountain. If you notice several students with the same postural deviations you can incorporate some of the following corrective exercises into your class. Finally, you can give individual alignment correction cues to those exhibiting postural deviation misalignments in poses.

ROUND SHOULDER SYNDROME OR HYPEREXTENSION OF THE SHOULDER

The goal with this client will be primarily to stretch the chest and strengthen the upper back. Most people who present with RSS, have a combination of **tight** pectoralis major/minor and latissimus dorsi as well as **weak** rhomboids, middle/lower trapezius, teres minor, and infraspinatus.

Typically following a mastectomy/reconstruction, there will be excessive scar tissue and/or adhesions across the chest wall, leading to the rounding forward (protraction) of the shoulders. This is certainly not limited to breast cancer patients. You will come across this postural deviation with the majority of clients you work with; young and old. This puts excessive strain on the upper back and neck muscles and can lead to a painful imbalance.

*** Avoid “pushing” type exercises that may shorten the pectorals and exacerbate round shoulder syndrome.**

The following yoga poses are excellent options for balancing the shoulders and helping to alleviate RSS:

Locust/Shalabasana with palms facing down to focus on strengthening posterior shoulder muscles

Progressing to:

Heart-Opening Cobra/Anahata Bhujangasana

Progressing to:

Half-Bow/Ardha Dhanurasana

Camel & Chest Expansion/Ustrasana

Bridge/Setu Bhandasana with palms facing each other (thumbs up) or hands clasped

Reclining Throne, Restorative Fish

Additionally, you can add the following option to traditional standing poses:

Scapular Squeeze with Elbow Flexion in Tadasana (Mountain) or Virabhadrasana (Warrior 1 or 2)

- Stand with elbows bent, shoulders at a 45 degree angle from body
- Maintain this position
- Squeeze shoulder blades together and hold for 3-5 seconds (make sure not to hold breath as this will raise blood pressure and is contraindicated for clients with hbp).



LORDOSIS (ANTERIOR TILT)

Once your client is standing erect, there is a good chance that the area that was once tight and bound down will give way to muscle weakness from the absence of the rectus abdominis (in the case of the TRAM flap), or muscle over-compensation in other cases. Most people have varying degrees of lordosis to begin with; however, it may be exacerbated by the lack of support in the abdominal wall. An anterior tilt is typically caused by **tight** iliopsoas, rectus femoris, erector spinae, and latissimus dorsi and **weak** gluteus maximus/medius, transverse abdominus/pelvic floor, and rectus abdominis. The low back may begin to compensate by going into painful spasms. Your student will need to focus on core strengthening options like Mula Bandha/Uddiyana Action while also learning appropriate back stretches and back strengthening poses.

The following yoga poses are excellent options for balancing the hips and pelvis:

Mula Bandha/Uddiyana Action for pelvis/spine stability

Cat Pose/Chakravakasana

Kneeling or Full Plank focusing on neutral spine

Forearm Plank focusing on neutral spine

Uddiyana Kriya (lying deep abdominal circles)

Downward Facing Dog

Butterfly/Baddha Konasana

Lying Down Spinal Twist

Warrior 1 with short stance and focus on back leg alignment

Restorative Fish

Reclined Butterfly

Hip Flexor Stretch in Anjaneyasana/Lunge

- Begin by having your student stand in lunge position with the front knee lined up over the ankle (or slightly behind the ankle if knee pain) – they can use a chair for support and added balance.
- With hands in prayer position, lower yourself down toward the ground (stop if you begin to feel knee pain).
- Squeeze the buttocks on the back leg, draw in your abdominal muscles, and push the hip forward (while keeping erect) – think “Cat back” from your lowest abs.
- Hold and breathe for 5-10 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



RESTORATIVE YOGA FOR HEALING

Restorative poses also help us to “rest and digest” by helping us to learn to relax—invoking a relaxation response (parasympathetic nervous system). Insomnia and digestive dysfunction are common symptoms of stress. This is why we’ve grouped these poses together and why they are commonly practiced at the end of class.

Yoga can work for many different types of bodies, many different stages in life, and for each person’s many different moods. While for some a Power Yoga class may seem like the way to go, for others a gentle restorative or Yin Yoga class may be optimal. For some people their needs change daily. However, the restorative effects of yoga should never be overlooked, no matter what age, and sometimes slowing down the practice, going deeper in poses, and just feeling the restorative power of them does wonders for the body.

Benefits of Restorative Yoga

Restorative Yoga focuses on relaxing the body in restful postures. Note that ‘rest’ is different than sleep. Rest provides the body an opportunity to renew and heal. Countless studies have proven the physical and emotional benefits of this.

Restorative yoga, as well as other forms of yoga, help to trigger the parasympathetic nervous system also known as the PNS. The PNS is responsible for balancing the body and bringing its response system back into equilibrium. Stimulating the PNS helps to lower heart rate and blood pressure; it helps to healthily stimulate the immune system and keep the endocrine system operating healthily. When this system gets out of whack, or when the Sympathetic nervous system, SNS gets over-stimulated, the PNS helps to bring all back in balance. It is believed that if the PNS is tapped out or under-active, illness pervades. Thus, forms of relaxation, such as yoga and meditation, that help to stimulate the PNS are generally beneficial for overall body health.

David Spiegel, M.D., author of *Living Beyond Limits*, reports, “In medicine, we are learning that physical problems, such as high blood pressure and heart disease, can be influenced by psychological interventions, such as relaxation training. Indeed, the Food and Drug Administration issued a report recommending these non-drug approaches as the treatment of choice for milder forms of hypertension. Mind and body are connected and must work together, and this should be a powerful asset in treating medical illness.”

When we are experiencing stress (SNS is overstimulated), the following systems get shut down:

- Digestion
- Elimination
- Growth
- Repair
- Reproduction

Just a Few of the Benefits of Restorative Yoga

- Promotes Healthy Digestion
- Deeply relaxes the body, invokes Relaxation Response and its benefits
- Stills the mind and improves healthy sleep, relieving symptoms of insomnia
- Improves capacity for healing and balancing energy
- Balances the nervous system
- Boosts the immune system
- Develops qualities of compassion and understanding toward others and self
- Enhances mood states, relieving symptoms of mild-moderate depression
- Due to many of the above benefits, can enhance fertility

Recommended Props for Restorative Yoga

The more your body is supported in poses the deeper the sense of relaxation. With props it is easier for the body to get into certain poses, and thus, surrender to the pose. Essential props can include: Yoga block, strap, blankets, bolster, chairs, wall, eye pillow (note, not all of these need to be used in every class).

When to Practice

Restorative yoga postures can be practiced at any time of the day. Ideally, one would start their day with restorative poses and breath work. It is a great way to wake up the body and clear the mind before launching into the day. It is also beneficial to practice restorative postures at the end of the day, before bed. This can slow the body and mind down, and prepare the body for sleep. Many who practice restorative postures (at any time of the day), find that they sleep better, digest their food better, and their energy levels are higher. Remember to incorporate deep belly breathing for maximum benefit. Given that 75-90% of all doctor visits are now believed to be stress-related, this practice is profoundly beneficial for our health and well-being.

Viparita Karani:

Legs Inverted Pose is a gentle way to do an inversion for the lower body. This pose improves circulation in the whole body and can be very beneficial for lower body lymphedema.

- If you have a blanket to fold to support your spine and head, place that down first.
- Next, place a small yoga bolster or folded a blanket a few inches from the wall so you can center your sacrum on it with your legs up the wall, creating a support for your hips/lower back.
- Its easiest to come into this pose from fetal position/baby pose on your side with your hip on the edge of the blanket/bolster. Roll onto your back and sweep your legs up supported on the wall.
- If the cervical spine is not comfortable, you can place a blanket or towel underneath the head so the spine can stay neutral and comfortable.
- Either rest your hands on your belly, rest your arms on the floor angled at about 45 degrees from the sides of your torso, palms up, or out to a “T” to stretch the chest, or up to a “V” to stretch the chest & lats.
- If a client chooses one of the open arms option, he/she may need props for comfort. Those recovering from surgery of the chest, breast, lung, shoulder or anywhere in the upper body may want to rest their hands on their belly, or have blankets, pillows or bolsters under their arms.
- Stay here for anywhere from 3-5 minutes remembering to focus on deeply relaxing breath.



CHAPTER 11

Yoga Language

In our experience, we have observed the power of language to create a powerful connection. Here are some of the ways teachers do that using language:

- **Acknowledging** – Connecting with compassion and empathy by acknowledging your experience of Yoga and relating it to life and your student’s experience. In asana, describing how alignment adjustments may feel and where someone may feel stuck or tense in the body and helping them find an option that brings them to *sthira sukha*.
- **Appreciating** – Expressing gratitude for the energy and sacred space we share together as a yoga community.
- **Allowing** – Empowering our students to be their own teachers. Using language that helps them to connect to their inner teacher. To listen to the wisdom of their breath. To find the place between “ouch” and “aaaah” in every pose.
- **Humor** – Laugh at yourself first **with love**. This is such a great way to lighten the energy of the room and show your whole-hearted vulnerability. Humor should be intermittent, not overwhelming. We aren’t doing a forced stand-up comedy with expectations for laughter from an audience, but we are allowed to laugh and smile in Yoga and life.
- **Clarity** – Direct, confident, precise universal cues. So, there are individual, diverse cues that apply to different bodies, there are also universal cues that apply to every body. With those universal cues, speak them directly and confidently. Make sure, when giving options, that your language and tone doesn’t come across confused or hesitant.
- **Silence** – Making room for stillness and silence intermittently throughout class. Turning down or off music during these quiet introspective moments.
- **Sacred Inspiration** – Sharing quotes or stories from the Masters and the lineage of teachers before us.
- **Connection** – Our classes are a combination of time we spend consciously merging energy (“with” time) and time we spend consciously developing deep inner awareness (“within” time). When moving and breathing together use connecting words like “we, let’s, our, community, shared energy” to create a sense of union or community. When we are asking students to go deep within, use words like “your, inner, inside, listen to the wisdom of your heart/breath/body”.
- Changing voice tone and volume with energetic shifts in class.
- Connecting through music, poetry, and yogic teachings that energetically match the class.

Which of these feel authentic to you?

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