

## Help Your Health - The Weekly Review - #04 Summer 2016

How is your Rocking doing?

### **The Rocking Exercise**

*(Be mindful if you have any spinal issues if this is for you.)*

#### **Why:**

Stimulating the flow of nervous energy through the spinal cord and establishing a better connection between the central nervous system and the rest of the body.

It is often said in the yogi world, that one is only as old as ones spine.

#### **When/Where:**

Suggested that this movement will help overcome the drowsiness and stiffness that one so often feels on waking in the morning with the added benefit that your vertebrae will experience an agreeable and invigoration sensation due to the massage, also limbering the spine. Not only would I suggest doing this in the morning upon waking but also in the evening if you are having any problem going to sleep or would like to sleep a little deeper.

The mattress would be where to begin and eventually down on your mat. This is a very simple movement and in a few days of doing you should be able to do it without difficulties regardless of age, stiffness and weight.

#### **Technique:**

Sitting down towards the bottom edge of your mat or bed (to make sure there is plenty of space behind and that you do not hit anything rolling back).

Draw up your knees and bend your head down. Put your hands under your knees.

Now, keeping your spine rounded, release back and forth, in quick successive movement imitating the swinging motions of a rocking chair.

If you hesitate when back, open the body or release the arms you will experience difficulty in coming forward, you will get stuck. Rock not too slowly or you will use the momentum to come forward.

In the beginning you may feel clumsy or awkward but that will pass as you relax and become more familiar with the movement.

Just image you are a rocking chair in motion and enjoy the fun of it. See if it doesn't produce a smile on your face!

### **Squatting (Utkasana)**

*(If the knees are stiff or have issues be careful how far you go down in a squat and where you do it.)*

#### **Technique:**

Stand with feet wide apart and toes facing same direction as knees. (the wider the easier)

Take a deep breath while rising up on your toes and while exhaling start lowering the body so that eventually you are sitting on your heels. Slowly rise again to standing keeping the back straight.

**Therapeutic Alternative:** holding the doorknobs of an open door (properly installed) on each side of the door with your two hands, now proceed to squat beginning where you body is, either with heels up (if achilles are tight) or heel down. Can lean away and also let the arms work as you go up and down. Don't forget that the breath is the mover.

**Alternative:** same as above but without raising you heels from the ground, sitting with the buttocks almost touching the floor (can sit on a block), the body slightly bent forward and the thighs pressing against the abdomen.

**More difficult:** bringing the legs closer together (hip width or closer) coming down without raising the heels, using arms for balance.

### **Exercises for the Neck:**

Can be done at numerous intervals during the day, while waiting, listening, at your desk etc.

#### **Begin:**

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Drop your head forward as much as is comfortable, and keeping the contact to chest if possible, just slide it a few inches to the right and left of center line, slowly with the breath.

### **Precautions:**

If you hear nothing and have full movement, congratulations. If you hear crackling noise or grinding there could be issues developing or it could be a question of lubrication. Usually the trouble in the neck begins with the joints or rather their linings which are inadequately lubricated and begin to stiffen from accumulation of calcium deposits, especially as the body ages. Sounding a little like you are eating gravel? If this is accompanied with pain then you should seek medical attention.

### **Technique:**

Sitting comfortable with good posture either in Easy Pose or in a chair. Do each 4x.

1. Close your eyes and gently let your head drop forward and then bring it backward, keeping the facial muscles relaxed.
2. Rotational turn to the right on the exhale, back to center, turn to the left exhale, return.
3. Lateral release of the right each to the shoulder on exhale, return and release left side, return. (this is the one movement I suggest that you do looking into the mirror as we have a tendency to bring the chin either down or up, also do not move the shoulders)
4. Turtle- stick your neck out as far as you can and then draw it back again.
5. Pat/tap the chin, under and sides including the neck with your palms and finger tips.

These movements will loosen up the tension in your neck muscles and keep them relaxed and elastic and improve the flow of fluids for lubrication.

### **Exercises for the Eyes:**

Sitting is a good upright position, hands lying on the thighs, keeping the entire body motionless, nothing must move except the eyes. Each exercise should be done in 4 sets and followed by a squint of the face, a few blinks, and then complete eye relaxation. Breathing should be normal.

### **Technique:**

1. Raise your eyes and find a small point above which you can see clearly without straining, without frowning, without becoming tense. Do the same looking down.
2. Now use the far right point to the far left point using your extended arms to the sides as point of focus.
3. Now far right upper corner to the far left lower corner, reverse sides. You can also do this with the eye lids partially closed. This series can also be done in reverse, beginning at the bottom and then traveling to the top opposite corner.
4. Slowly rolling the eyes clockwise and then counterclockwise. Slowly making a full vision circle.
5. Shifting the focus from close to distant points, either using a pencil or your finger just shortly in front of your nose where you can clearly see it without a blur.
6. Palming -warm up the hands and place them on the face. Taking your elbows and resting them on your legs. Relax and stay in this position for a nice version of Eye Savasana, keeping the neck straight.

-Placement: the fingers of the right hand should be crossed over the fingers of the left hand on the forehead

### **Readings:**

"Finding a Teacher" from Max Strom "A Life Worth Breathing"

Try practicing with virtually every teacher in your area. You will find someone you resonate with - someone who will be just the right person to help you on your journey. A yoga teacher should be knowledgeable, kind, considerate, a great communicator, and show interest in your practice. Avoid yoga teachers who are vain and self-centered. If the teacher isn't kind, move on. If they are not moral, move on. If they miss these two precepts, they are misunderstanding the purpose of yoga.

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Also, you should avoid teachers who tend to literally push students deeper in the poses with aggressive hand-on adjustments. Hands-on adjustments are very useful, but only when done gently and mindfully. Most injuries are caused by the ego of the student, pushing themselves too far, and the ego of the teacher, pushing the students beyond their limits. Before class starts, inform any teacher you are working with of any preexisting injuries; this way they can look out for you and perhaps even customize your practice to better help you.

-Thank you George for reading this to us in class.

### **Music:**

Anne Queffelec: Eric Satie, Arturo Sandoval "A Time for Love", Ben Leinback "The Spirit of Yoga"

### **Quote:**

There is only one thing more painful than learning from experience and that is NOT learning from experience. - **Archibald MacLeish**

### **Miscellaneous:**

We talked about Indra Devi (<http://www.amazingwomeninhistory.com/indra-devi-mother-of-western-yoga/>) the Mother of Western Yoga/The First Lady of Yoga who passed at the age of 102 in 2002. This link is a brief history of her life. Some of this weeks asanas were inspired by her book "Yoga for Americans".

You can find numerous books written by her in the internet.

**Mexican Blankets at SoCo**, the indoor shopping part of the complex(near Portola).

The shop is called "Local Fare" ( 3313 Hyland Avenue A5 Costa Mesa )and they were priced at \$15. (80% Polyester/20%Cotton) If you walk around you will also see them at another shop where they are marked as 'Beach Blankets" for \$34. very similar, possibly a little wider but the shop could not find the material content.

P.S. Just there this Sunday morning and Local Fair has a new shipment of blankets in the store as they sold out last week.