

This weeks asanas:

Strap under back....let's test the core/torso strength.

Lying on your back with the knees bent, place a strap under your body beginning either up by the bra strap/under the arm pits or down low by the buttocks (but do not lift the butt to put the strap under).

Have another person gently start pulling the strap out from under you as you engage and learn which muscles you need to activate to hold the strap in place. Then you sequentially move the strap from top to bottom or reverse, a few inches at a time to check out your strength at different sites along the back, it will be a different experience in each location. You can do this yourself gently pulling on the strap with either hand.

The object is to learn to engage more muscles than you would if you did it quickly and also to build strength as this is isometric work and you are in control.

Take it slow and don't forget to breathe.

Dolphin/Ardha Pincha Mayurasana

Alternative Dolphin:

Begin on all fours in table pose, keeping the shoulders broad, widen through your collarbones. Lengthen your tailbone away from the pelvis and press it towards the sitting bones.

Forearms on the mat, elbows under the shoulders but not as wide, hands interlaced (pinky pulled in).

Gazing back at your feet, on an exhale draw the head back through the arms so you can feel the stretch along the sides of the body.

On the Inhale bring the head/torso forward as far as possible with the forehead/nose leading the way to the hands and possible over the hands towards the floor (don't go so far forward that you can't get back). Breathe and continue doing 3 sets of 6 Dolphins.

This is considered an alternative version.

Full Dolphin:

Continue as in the alternative but lift the knees off the mat and walk the feet slightly forward.

Continue the movement but do not expect to go as far forward or back as you did with the knees on the mat. Be patient, move slowly, less is more.

Pigeon/Kapotsana/Eka Pada Rajakapotsana

An especially challenging pose which I decided some time ago not to teach in my classes, but due to numerous request this week I taught everyone the alternative variations and demonstrated a full pigeon as much as my body will allow. I caution doing any form if you have serious knee issues or hip replacement, move slowly and listen to your body.

Chair Alternative/Seated Pigeon Posture:

Sitting up straight in seated mountain posture in a chair.

On the exhale bring the right knee directly upward holding the outside of that knee with your right hand and the outside of your right heel with your left hand.

Place the outside of your right ankle on top of your left thigh just above your left knee, drop your right knee down towards the floor to a comfortable level. Stay for a few breaths and then repeat on the other side.

This is the usual male form of a seated posture with cross legs.

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Alternative #1: Sitting on your mat with your legs wide open, slowly bringing the right heel into the groin. Turn the left leg inward/down towards the mat and then bend it naturally back taking the left heel towards the buttocks. Inhale and lift at the heart turning towards the right thigh, as you exhale release the torso over the right thigh (can put blankets etc. on thigh) resting and releasing until the chest is supported and possible the head is resting on the forearms or a blanket/pillow. Enjoy and repeat on the other side.

Alternative #2 (more difficult): Beginning in table pose slide your right knee forward to the left wrist sliding the right foot toward the left side of your mat (to the outside of the left leg) supporting yourself with both hands. Slowly release your body down to the mat as if sitting on the outside of the right thigh and right buttocks, you can also extend the right knee if feeling any discomfort. Lengthen the left leg and try to bring the knee face down as much onto the mat as possible and the toes pointed directly back (this may not at all be possible, accept what is). With the body resting on the right thigh and right buttocks, turn as straight forward towards the top of your mat as possible/over the right thigh, reaching forward and down with the upper body resting on the mat and if not possible just release onto the right shoulder and side of the head resting on the mat. Relax, breathe and feel the stretch in the right buttocks. Switch sides.

Full Pigeon: Beginning in table pose slide your right knee forward, pass the center of the body in the direction of the right wrist. Bringing the right foot towards the left side of the body. You can rest your right foot underneath your pubic bone or out to your left side, which ever is possible, honor your body. Slide your left leg straight behind you. The top of your left foot should rest on the floor. Gently lower/release your pelvis down/towards the floor making sure to keep both hips squared to the front. If your right hip cannot reach the floor you can place a folded blanket under your hip for support.

Slide your hands forward along the floor and lower your elbows to the floor, continue sliding until your arms are straight but elbows are not locked. Exhale as you lower your chest toward the floor and rest your forehead on the floor, if possible and maybe only eventually with practice. Gently press your left hip toward the floor to help keep your hips square. Breathe, hold for up to 1 minute. Repeat on the other side.

Readings:

A 5 minute Body Check-In from the book "Breathing Space" -12 Lessons for the Modern Woman by Katrina Repka and Alan Finger

Just an excerpt from the reading:

How relaxed are you at this moment in time?

Where is the tension in your body?

If you're like most people, you're more aware of your bank balance or the time of day than you are of your own body, even though you're riding around in it.

And that's the problem, isn't it? etc...ending with....

Tell your body, "It's okay; we don't need this tension or this soreness anymore. We can let it go."

Savasana: Breath Focus: Release

A guided meditation (10 minutes in class but suggested 15-20 minutes) inspired by the same book as mentioned above but adapted/individualized by myself from subsequent readings over the years, adding the option of color, heat, weight etc.

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Music: Deuter “Earth Blue”

Quote: Lao Tzu

“Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power”

‘I have just three things to teach: simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures.”

Miscellaneous:

Book Recommendation

Important Disclaimer

The news, suggestions, information, exercises and other items in this list are intended for informational purposes only. Not all exercise is suitable for everyone. To reduce the risk of injury, please consult your Doctor before engaging in any physical and/or therapeutic exercise program. Nothing is intended to be a substitute for professional medical care.

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