

## Help Your Health - The Weekly Review - #04Spring 2017

### **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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### **Asana this week:**

#### **Dolphin (Static/Wrist/Block version) Front Hip Strengthening (1 of 3 Series) Lunge Mountain Pose/Tadasana**

#### **Name: Dolphin (Static - Wrist version with block)**

##### **Description:**

1. Rest forearms on a yoga mat and place a yoga block in between the wrists along the pinky side of the hands, pressing hands/wrists, down and towards the block.
2. Spike the hips upwards forming an upside down "V" shape with the body, bending the knees if the hamstrings are tight.
3. Attempt to press the thumb side of the hand into the floor and feel the traction of the stretch deeply within the muscles of the forearms as the spine extends away from the rooted forearms.
4. Feel the fresh blood and newfound energy in the top of the forearms after you release the stretch.
5. Holding for a series of breaths and repeating.

##### **Physical Benefits:**

The top of the forearms are even more neglected than the underside of the forearms.

The long muscles of the top of the forearm oppose the flexors, and they need to be strengthened in order to balance the overwhelming power of our gripper muscles.

##### **Adaptations/Variations:**

Just slightly lift the knees (or one knee at a time) off the mat, gradually increasing as strength builds.

#### **Name: Front Hip Strengthening**

The Muscles surrounding the hip joints and pelvis are dense due to the fact that they must bear the weight of the entire upper body. We have both deep hip flexors, muscles that run from the front of the spine to the top inner thigh and superficial hip flexors, which run from the hip bone to the knee.

Walking develops these muscles and they benefit greatly from being stretched.

##### **Description:**

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1. Place your hands on your hips, and step forward with your left foot.
2. Stand with one leg forward and both knees slightly bent.
3. Pull the belly slightly in and take the tail bone down as you tilt/tuck the pelvis.
4. Lifting the back/right heel up and bending that leg even more.
5. Leaning back onto the toes of your right foot to isolate the muscles at the front of the hip.
6. Hold for 3-6 breath cycles, release and repeat on the other side.

### **Physical Benefits:**

This stretch targets stretching the deep and the superficial hip flexors. Countering the hours one spends sitting which brings these muscles into a shorten and tighten position.

### **Name: Lunge**

### **Why is this asana considered a yogi treasure?**

Because we live in a couch-potato age which adds to a certain tightness in the hip area. Although sitting is not the only ingredient adding to this tightness, as walking, running and climbing stairs also tightens muscles in the leg and pelvis, unless these movements are counterbalanced by stretching.

If we do not stretch there will be gradual restriction of hip movements and lunge pose, as it stretches the hip flexors, can reverse this tendency and help restore a natural range of motion.

This week in class we took a big step and went through variations plus a partial pigeon stretch and hamstring stretches. We will continue in the weeks to come with some very basic versions, some using the wall and others the chair.

### **Description:**

1. Start out kneeling on all fours.  
The hands should be positioned directly under the shoulders, the knees should be directly under the hips, toes are curled into the ground.
2. Step forward with the right foot, placing it between the hands. Make sure the knee is directly over the ankle. creating a ninety-degree angle with the floor (tracking-this protects the knee).  
Short version is hip over back knee, long version is sliding knee back as far as possible which creates the stretching in the hip area.
3. Lift the left knee off the ground and press the left heel backward.
4. Feel the opposition created by pressing the left heel back and the right knee forward.

### **Benefits:**

Counteracts the tightness that occurs from frequent, everyday hip flexion.

Stretches the quadriceps and psoas.

Supports the stabilization of the knee joint.

Helps establish a comfortable seated meditation pose.

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### **Variations:**

#### **Low Lunge**

The variation will help the legs gradually strengthen so they can support your weight in a full lunge.

5. Lowering the back knee down to the floor.

6. Place the hands on the front thigh as you sink the hips forward and down toward the floor to stretch the groin. (in class this week we additionally reached back, with same side hand to grab the back foot and lift)

#### **Supported Lunge:**

Here, the legs are working harder to keep you upright.

5. Move both hands to rest on the front knee.

6. Work to bring the torso directly over the hips. Try not to lean the torso forward over the front thighs.

#### **Full Lunge (Alana):**

Now you are ready for the full pose.

5. Take both arms up into the air above your head with the palms facing each other.

6. Lengthen the arms through the inner elbows and feel energy stretching to the fingertips.

7. Drop the shoulders away from your ears.

### **Name: Standing Mountain/Uttanasana**

Mountain Pose a basic standing pose establishing a sense of poise for creating contemplation on being centered and grounded while slowing and modulating your breathing. Do not be tempted to rush through the pose, instead take time to relax and remain still, breathe evenly, receiving the full benefits of the pose.

#### **Description:**

Standing on your mat, close your eyes or partially close the lids, your choice.

Continue with the AUDIO and enjoy your Mountain Pose.

#### **Physical Benefits:**

Aligns the spine, tones the abdominal muscles and buttocks, opens the chest, improves posture, stability, balance, strengthens the arches, ankles, knees and thighs.

#### **Mental Benefits:**

Improves focus, develops willpower, reduces mild anxiety.

#### **Adaptations/Variations:**

Use a chair or wall for balancing if necessary.

### **General Class:**

#### **Supine:**

2x blanket rolls (across at base of shoulder blades/lengthwise from tailbone to head/do not put it under the buttocks) with chair

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Morning Wake-Up Stretch  
Hip Circles/Flex/Extensions  
Feet/Ankle-Hand/Wrist Circles/Flex/Extensions  
Cat/Cow  
Balancing Cat R/L  
Child's Pose

In the future this sequence will be referred to as **“Class Warm-UP #1”**

### **Kneeling:**

Dolphin (static/wrist/block version) also reviewed Flexor Stretch with palms on mat/fingers facing knees.  
Lunge Series (from Chair to Free Standing)

### **Standing to Sitting**

Front Hip Stretch/Side Hip Cross Stretch/Sitting Leg Cross (can be near the wall for support with the standing part of this series.

### **Pranayama: Bhramari with Shanmukhi Mudra (Traditional)**

Standing Mountain/Tadasana.....to Down Dog to Prone

### **Prone:**

Cobra... DD/UP-Dog...  
Sideways Hip Stability/Inner & Outer Thigh Strengthening

### **Attune: Tidbit for Brain Health**

#### **#2 Go Away.**

Every brain needs time away. If the simple idea of a vacation doesn't reduce stress, consider one of America's great thinkers.

If Thoreau doesn't leave Concord, Massachusetts and go into the woods, would he ever have become a celebrated writer and environmentalist?

Thoreau was away from his normal routine as a tutor and handyman. And in those two years, he was his most prolific and arguably successful as a writer. You don't have to go far or spend a lot of money. He was two miles from home living of selling a few crops. But that's not the only evidence that going away was good for his brain. When you read Walden, you realize being away, he had the time of his life.

### **Pranayama:**

#### **Bhramari with Shanmukhi Mudra (Traditional)**

Sitting up straight and placing your hands on your face with thumb on each tragus, the index fingers lightly touching the inner corners of your eyes, the middle fingers on the sides of the nose, the ring fingers above the lips and the pinkies just below. Be sure to place only very light pressure on the eyeballs or under the eyebrows and the fingers can bend.

Do six rounds of low-to medium-pitched bhamari, lower your hands, and notice the effects.

If you suffer from anxiety, depression or claustrophobia, you may not enjoy this version of bhamari and should probably skip it.

### **Brahmari Rx-**

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Where the sound resonates - as well as the energetic effects of different pitches and volumes - can suggest which variations of bhamari will most likely help in specific situations.

### **Insomnia:**

A quiet, low-pitched sound, perhaps with the addition of Shanmukhi mudra, could be soothing to the nervous system and mind.

### **Sinus Infections or Nasal Congestion:**

A more forceful medium-to high-pitched sound might be a better choice to open the passageways.

### **Thyroid Problems:**

Try a medium pitched sound and add Jalandhara band (chin lock) to direct the sound waves to the throat.

### **Stressed Out:**

Use the silent variation, at work or in public, so no one around you knows what you're doing.

### **Essential Oil:**

Gray Matter: Peppermint & Roman Camomile

### **Music:**

Music for Three Pianos: Harold Budd, Ruben Garcia & Daniel Lentz

Steven Halpern: Music for Yoga

### **Quote:**

**The Salutation to the Dawn** -a Sanskrit poem, written ca. 1200 B.C.

*Listen to the exhortation of the dawn,  
Look to this day for it is life, the very life of life,  
In its brief course lie all the verities...and realities of our existence,  
The bliss of growth...the splendor of beauty,  
For yesterday is but a dream...and tomorrow is only a vision,  
But today well spent makes every yesterday ...a dream of happiness,  
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.  
Look well therefore to this day.  
Such is the salutation of the dawn.*