

Help Your Health - The Weekly Review - #06 Spring 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:

Chair Pose/Awkward Pose/Utkatasana

Tadasana with Balance/Hips

Name: Chair Pose/Awkward Pose/Utkatasana

This standing pose strengthens your lower body and torso as well as stretches your shoulders and opens your chest.

As you bend your knees to lower your hips in this pose, allow your torso to lean slightly over your thighs. However, at the same time your torso should remain mostly upright with the shoulders slightly forward from the hips, keeping your head aligned with your spine. You can deepen Chair pose by lowering your hips a bit further, but you should not feel any strain in your knees or lower back. Make sure you do not lower your hips below your knees or allow your knees to extend past your toes. You should be able to look down and see your toes at all times.

While performing this pose, make sure you keep your feet firmly planted on the floor. Your legs should feel stable and grounded.

Try to concentrate on breathing deeply and evenly to help release any tension in your legs or any other part of the body.

Description:

1. Begin in Mountain Pose
2. Inhale as you raise your arms above your head (full version-not done in class only for advanced work), with your palms facing each other, shoulder width apart. Make sure your shoulders and arms are relaxed. Your arms should be straight, but your elbows should not be locked.
3. Exhale as you bend your knees as if you were about to sit in a chair until feeling a comfortable stretch in the front of your thighs. Make sure your heels stay on the floor.
4. Slightly tuck your tailbone under to protect your lower back from arching. Engage your belly and making sure your knees do not extend past your toes and your knees are hip width apart (you can always put a block between your knees for proper tracking).
5. Point the crown of your head toward the ceiling and gaze straight ahead.

Hold for 10 seconds or 1 minute/1-5 breaths.

To come out, inhale as you straighten your legs then exhale as you bring your arms back down to your sides returning to Mountain Pose.

Physical/Mental Benefits:

Lengthens the spine. Strengthens the feet, ankles, calves, knees, buttocks and thighs, open the chest, Stimulates the digestive, circulatory and reproductive systems. Builds focus, develop willpower, stimulates the mind and reduces stress.

Cautions/Contraindications:

Be mindful if you have hip or knee injury/problems, insomnia, low blood pressure.

Adaptations/Variations:

You can perform Chair with the following arm variations:

1. With your arms extended in front of you
2. Out to the sides and slightly back
3. Hands on the top of your thighs
4. Interlacing the hands overhead then rotating the wrist so your palms face the ceiling then stretching your arms towards the ceiling.
5. Thumbs at the heart.

If you have difficulty with the balance in this pose you can go to the wall being approximately a foot from the wall. As you bend your knees to move into the pose, your tailbone should lightly touch the wall. You may need to adjust your distance from the wall to ensure you are in a correct position.

Difficulty in bringing the arms along side the ears can be caused by shortness in the latissimus dorsi muscles. Overly arching the lumbar spine or overly flexing the hips can happen because of a collapse into gravity. Gravity, rather than muscles working against each other, should be the source of resistance in the pose. This is an interesting pose to explore, a balance between effort and release.

Twisting Chair Pose with hands to the heart or straight on the outside of the opposite knee.

1. Begin in Chair Pose with arms above head.
2. Inhale as you lengthen your spine and join your hands in a prayer position in front of your heart.
3. Keep your hips square as you exhale and twist to the right, bringing your left elbow to the outside of your right thigh and your knee into your elbow.
4. Inhale to lengthen your spine, letting your belly move outward, and then exhale to twist as your navel draws strongly back toward the spine. Hold for 1-5 breaths.
5. Inhaling coming to the center and reach your arm upward. Exhale as you begin to twist toward the left side bringing your right elbow to the outside of your left thigh to repeat.
6. Other version would not bring the hands into prayer position but instead take the straight left arm and bring it to the outside of your right thigh/near the knee with the right arm reaching above.

Avoid rounding your shoulders as you twist, twisting with your hips or letting your left knee jut forward as you twist to the right and vice versa.

Name:

Tadasana: How to use Mountain Pose to train your balance and work the hips.

Description:

1. Lifting on to the toes, hold for the count of 2-3, lower until almost touching, hovering. x15 or more
2. Marching in place, bringing the knees high, keeping the torso in line, do not lean forward. R/L x10
3. Right knee forward, cross midline, open wide, back to forward, switch legs. x5
4. Bending leg and reaching back for ankle, hold. Continue taking it back keeping the torso erect. Can continue to Dancer if so desired, don't lean too much forward. Switch legs.
5. Hands on wall, walk away from wall and lift one leg straight back and up, parallel to body. Can eventually take hands off the wall while working on balance hold and breath. Switch legs.
6. Right leg, small circles to opposite of other leg, returning to behind that leg. x5
Larger knee circles as if you were stirring a large pot but only half of the pot. x5 Switch legs.
7. Tree R/L

Physical Benefits:

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Working on Flexion, Extension, Adduction and Abduction, Rotation and Balance.

General Class:

Supine:

Class Warm-UP #1
with 3 part Diaphragmatic Breathing

Prone:

Thread the Needle

Down Dog with stretches and stacking

Standing:

Breath of Joy
Uttanasana
Utkatasana
Sun Salutations with/wo the Chair (see website for downloadable PDF or DVD)

On Belly:

Heart Lifts from the Forehead with a piece of fruit under the chin, don't let it drop.
Locust A-Symmetrical R/L + Symmetrical with arms progressively opening from hips to overhead

Supine:

Bridge

Pranayama:

Breath of Joy with additional sounds.

Essential Oil:

Serenity or Pep Talk

Music:

Deuter

Quote:

Joy is not a thing, it is in us.

-Richard Wagner, German composer

Miscellaneous:

“The Book of Joy” by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu