

Help Your Health – The Weekly Review Spring Session 2018 – #5

Asana this week:

Cross Crawl

Mini Sun Salutation

Name: Cross Crawl

Description: Opposites moving, all extremities at the same time. Either for stretching, slowly and with intention, the breath leading the way, or, quicker for cardio work but with either option be mindful that you do not arch the back it should remain with and engaged abdominal area and flush with the floor during any extremity movement.

The exercise has two parts which you should practice separately before you attempt them together. Both parts are done on the floor, knees up, feet apart and flat.

1. Arm Switches: Put one of your arms straight up overhead, hands slightly cupped with fingers and palm pointing up. If your shoulder bother you, put a block/pillow/blanket above, not under, your head to limit the downward descent of your arm and relieve shoulder stretch. Inhale and with one arm still overhead and your other arm down at your side, start you exhale and squeeze your lower back down, pressing it into the floor. As you continue to exhale, switch arm positions. When you've finished exhaling, relax your back and inhale. Exhale again you with arm positions.

2. Knee Switches: Start with your arms relaxed at your sides and bring one of your knees up toward your shoulder as far a you can comfortably go. Inhale with your knee still help p toward your armpit, and start to exhale slowly as you squeeze your lower back down, pressing it into the floor. As you continue to exhale, slowly switch your knees. When you've finished exhaling, relax your back and inhale. Exhale again a you switch leg positions.

3. Combining the switches together: After you feel comfortable with each of these individual exercise, you can combine them so that you are doing one leg and the opposing arm at the same time. Don't let frustration to arise. Think to yourself, "Opposites Up", as you make the arm/leg switch. Inhale leaving your arms and legs at rest, start your exhale, switch your arm and leg positions and finish as you complete your exhale.

Physical Benefits: The Cross Crawl (according to Sherry Brourmann P.T.- "Walk Yourself Well") exercise is especially good for preventing, and even eradicating, low back and sciatic pain. It strengthens the abdominal and spinal muscles and stabilizes the trunk. Conditioning is necessary especially if particular muscles have become weak from disuse.

Precautions/Adaptations/Variations: For the more advanced student, when it is possible to keep the spine flat on the mat during the movements, one an extend the leg so the heel touches the floor. For even more work you can chose to hover the leg an inch or so above the mat but being aware if the back arches then you have over taxed the muscles and you are not ready for this version, rather build gradually and safe. You can also add hand and/or leg weights in small increments to begin with and gradually increasing.

Name: Mini Sun-Salutation

Description:

1. Begin in Hero Pose, sitting on your heels, with hands to the heart in Anjali mudra.

2. Inhale, reaching out and up over head with your arms as you come up onto your knees (for those with a knee issue this can be your first position).

3. Exhale, while lowering your arms to the floor reaching them way out in front of you while you sit back on your heels in Childs Pose/Salaam Pose.

4. Inhale, coming onto your hands and knees into an Upward Facing Dog (straight arm Cobra). Let your hips flow forward as you move the chest up and between the arms. The arms remain straight, and your hips now lower to the ground. Your legs are straight behind you. Toes can remain tucked under or, for more challenge, point the toes away from you. Fill your lungs and open your heart. Look up.

5. Exhale, return back onto hand and knees to Downward Facing Dog. Lengthen the arms and the spine and turn the tailbone high in the air. Be a happy puppy – wag your tail! Root your paws deep into the earth. Linger there for a few breaths, if you like.

6. Exhale completely and return to Hero's Pose, your first position, with hands at the heart.

Repeat ...

Physical Benefits: Strengthening and stretching the entire body, flowing with the breath. A short version of the Sun Salutations which can be learnt on first practice, go for it!

Precautions/Adaptations/Variations: Start where it works best for your knees and end in a partial Down-Dog if necessary. Instead of a full Up-Dog you can come to a partial which may feel better for the back or you can instead of Up-Dog, do a Plank.

General Class:

Restorative with the Breath: *Legs on the chair with blanket across and lengthwise.*

Attunement/Starting Pose/Supine: *Morning Wake-Up Stretch, Hip Openers with Bent Legs (Small Circles Together, Circles Apart and Large, In/Out Together), Ankles/Wrists Flex-Extend*

Warm-Up/Prone: *Child's Pose, Walk to the Right/Left, Thread the Needle, Cat n' Cow, Balancing Cat, Child's Pose....*

Prone: *Heart Lifts, A-Symmetrical Locust Lifts + Symmetrical, Mini Sun Salutation*

Supine: Cross Crawl

Standing/Balance: Warrior II, Lunge with Dips, STOP/Shoulder Stretch

Chair: Pranayama "Bhramari Bee's Buzzing"

Savasana: Supine and Relaxed

Pranayama: Bhramari "As you exhale, make the sound of a female honeybee." -the following is from Dr. Timothy McCall author of "Yoga as Medicine"

This week we started with "Basic Bhramari Shanmukhi Mudra Variation" version (see below), not using all the fingers and addressing all the senses but only one finger and sound. We will cover all the versions during the next few weeks.

Getting Started:

In a comfortable seated position, either on the floor or in a chair, with the thighs angled down and your natural curve of your lumbar spine honored. Always balance effort and ease.

Making a buzzing sound of moderate volume, but never forced.

Keep your facial muscles loose, your lips lightly touch, and your jaw relaxed (this is most important for resonance)

With the upper and lower rows of teeth slightly separated, tongue free and loose.

Prolong the buzzing sound on the exhalation as long as it's comfortable and you can still inhale smoothly,

without gasping for air.

If you start to feel agitated, back off and return to normal breathing.

Basic:

Sitting comfortably and allowing your eyes to close.

Take a breath or two to settle in and notice the state of your mind.

When you are ready, inhale and buzz for the entire length of your exhalation, make a low-to medium-pitched humming sound in the throat.

Notice how a wave gently vibrates your tongue, teeth, and sinuses .Imagine the sound is vibrating your entire brain (it really is).

Do this practice for 6 rounds of Bhramari and then, keeping your eye's closed, return to your normal breathing. Notice if anything has changed.

Basic with Shanmukhi Mudra (Variation):

One way to intensify the effects is to use the thumbs to close the ear canal but placing them on the tragus (a piece of cartilage/like a bump on the cheek side of each ear).

Continue with the low-medium pitch buzzing sound on the exhale, do 6 rounds.

This reminds me of swimming under water with ear plugs or laying in a float tank.

Basic with Shanmukhi Mudra (Traditional):

Sit up straight and place your hands on your face with one 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 love the lip and the pinkies just elbow. Be sure to place only very light pressure on the eyeballs. Do six more rounds of low-to medium-pitched Bhramari, lower your hands, and notice the effects. If you suffer from anxiety depression, or claustrophobia, you may not enjoy Shanmukhi Mudra and should probably skip it.

Silent Bhramari

Begin as usual with six rounds and then switch to silent Bhramari, in which you imagine the buzzing sound on each exhalation. Notice whether you can still sense vibrations in your face and sinuses.

Benefits: Can relieve insomnia, sinus issues/infections, nasal congestion, thyroid problems and stress.

The 'noise' of Bhramari's buzzing can drown out the endless mental tape loops that can fuel emotional suffering, making it a useful starting point for those who are too 'busy' to meditate.

A safe, easy to learn practice has tremendous therapeutic potentials. Like other Pranayamas, its power comes partly from its effects on the Autonomy Nervous System (ANS). Lengthening the exhalation relative to the inhalation activated the calming Parasympathetic brand of the ANS. For those who suffer from anxiety or anxious depression, the practice can begin to quiet a person within a few breaths.

Bharami Rx from Dr. Timothy McCall: Where the sound resonates – as well as the energetic effects of different pitches and volumes – can suggest which variation of Bhramari 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 know what you are doing.

Essential Oil: doTERRA “Balance” -the Grounding Blend of Spruce Leaf, Ho Wood, Frankincense, Blue Tansey, Blue Camomile Flowers

Music: Kamal/Quiet Earth

Quote: “*Many of us need to be given permission to switch from the doing to the being mode, mostly because we have been conditioned since we were little to value doing over being.*”

-Jon Kabat-Zinn, Professor of Medicine Emeritus and creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Miscellaneous:

Book: “Walk Yourself Well” by Sherry Brourmann P.T.

Float Therapy Spa: <http://www.floattherapyspa.com/>

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Floatation therapy provides a remarkable way to calm the mind, relax the body and amplify the spirit. The experience involves lying on your back in an enclosed float pod, which is filled with 200 gallons of water heated to skin temperature, infused with 1,200 lbs of pharmaceutical grade Epsom salt. This incredible amount of Epsom salt provides effortless buoyancy of the body. Some of the anti-gravity benefits are decompression of the spine, elimination of pressure points on the body, and efficient blood flow which produces natural dopamine levels and lowers cortisol. Once comfortably relaxed in the water, the sensation of where the water begins and your body ends are integrated into one, leaving you feeling euphoric.