



THE YOGIC WAY OF COPING WITH ANXIETY

Heaven on Earth Yoga Institute
Yoga Therapist Training

500 Hour YA Certification for
RYT-200's

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DESCRIPTION

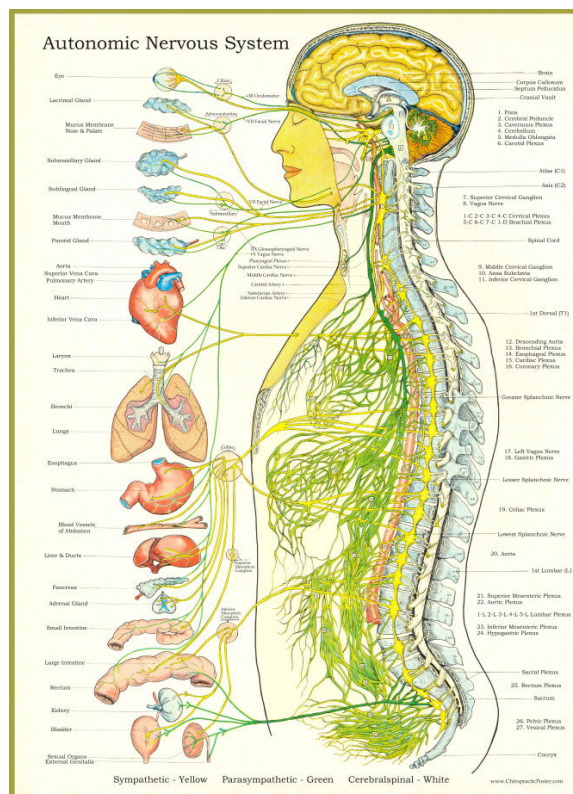
The root meaning of the word anxiety is 'to vex or trouble'. The absence or presence of psychological stress or anxiety can cause feelings of fear, worry, restlessness and griseness. As a psychological and physiological situs anxiety is characterised by somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. As assumed to be a normal reaction to stress, anxiety may help an individual to deal with a hard position by stimulating some inner qualities to cope with it. When anxiety becomes excessive, it may fall into the classification of an anxiety disorder.

As known anxiety also can be provoked by a chemical imbalance of one or more neurotransmitters. In other words, development of anxiety disorders depends on a person's biochemistry, environment, history, and psychological profile.

A person with anxiety is biologically exposed to stress and is thus more sensitive to environmental stimulus than others.

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF ANXIETY

When sensing danger, the brain triggers the **autonomic nervous system**. As the two branches of the autonomic nervous system, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nerves systems control the body's energy level for preparing someone for action.



The **sympathetic** nervous system controls ones **fight or flight** response and releases energy to prepare individuals for action.

The **parasympathetic** nervous system acts as the body's **relaxation/recovery system**. It returns the body into a normal state when the danger is over.

The sympathetic nervous system is an **all-or-none** system. That means, when it becomes activated, it quickly turns on all of its component parts, which is a great way for an **emergency response system** to operate.

Symptoms of anxiety seems partly the same just like symptoms that are shown by a tired person. Increased pulses, heartbeats, mouth going dry, quickening in breathing and perspiration are noted on the physiological side. Diarrhea, tachycardia, phobias, sweating and collapsing are also observed. Some symptoms are classified as below;

Ⓢ Rapid Heart Rate, Rapid Breathing

The alarm reaction heightens the heart rate and breathing rate so that one is alert and the muscles are ready for action. These changes also leads to ensure that the muscles and brain will filled with enough oxygen and energy for defense reaction. In the mean time, blood flow to the skin diminishes, which reverts people from losing as much blood if we they are wounded.

Ⓢ Sweating

Sweating helps cooling the body during excessive effort, making it more thrifty. “Cold sweat” is what some people feel when sweating occurs at the same time that blood flow to the skin dips.

Ⓢ Tight Chest, Tingling, Numbness, Hot Flushes, Trembling

Hyperventilation happens when breathing rapidly but do not spin out the energy with muscle action. This can lead to feelings of tingling and numbness, hot flushes, and swelled sweating. When speed chest breathing and muscle tension take place at the same time, people feel chest pain, breathlessness, and choking.

Ⓢ Upset Stomach, Diarrhea

Digestion is not needed during times of danger, that’s why the sympathetic nervous system shuts it down, leading to dry mouth and an upset stomach. Since there is no need for over weight in times of acute danger, the body may reject the lower digestive rail, which causes diarrhea.

Ⓢ Blurred Vision, Derealization, Depersonalization

It is common for the pupils to widen during times of danger. Although this uplifts night vision by expanding the amount of light that can get into the eye, it may also cause blurred or brighter vision during the day. This kind of changes in visual perception, especially combined with the other unusual physical sensations given above, can brings feelings of unreality, such as derealization and depersonalization.

However, it will not persist forever. The parasympathetic nervous system is a built-in recovery system that shuts down the sympathetic nervous system from becoming beared away. It is associated to the same places as the sympathetic nervous system, but it’s cautious: it goes on somewhat slower in case danger comes back.

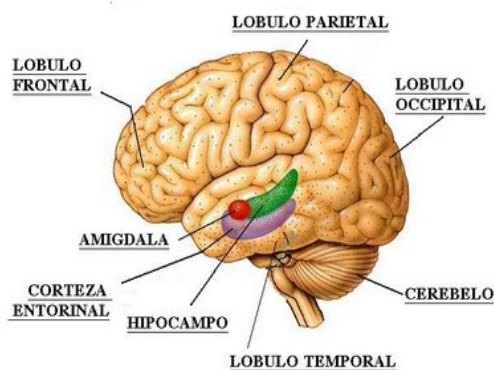
Summarizing in which way the organs function, when having anxiety in a table gains an appearance as below;

Area of The Body	Emergency Response System (Sympathetic Nervous System)	Recovery System (Parasympathetic Nervous System)
Heart	beats faster & stronger	beats slower & normally
Lungs	breathe faster & more shallow	breathe slower & deeper
Muscles	Tighter, more tense	more loose & relaxed
Stomach	decreases digestion	increases digestion
Sweat Glands	increase perspiration	decrease perspiration
Adrenal Gland	increase adrenaline	decrease adrenaline
Immune System	becomes suppressed	functions normally

A closer look at what happens in the brain can help to appreciate how anxiety is triggered. As known the brain has two memory systems that are activated by traumatic memory.

One memory system accumulates conscious memories about the who, what, where and when of the event. These are the details that can be recalled. Neuroscientists think that these memories are stored primarily in the hippocampus as the part of the brain responsible for learning and remembering and aspects of temporal lobe of the brain.

The second memory system reserves unconscious memories about how the body reacted to past experiences that are performed by the amygdala, which leads fear and the nerves that engaged to them. This is what actuates the sympathetic nervous system's fight and flight response, which one feel as fear. As an instinctual, hormonal process the fight and flight response allows people to run or take another action for saving their lives. Instead of being only a psychological response, it is a complex neurophysiological response embracing several organs and areas of the brain.



Changes in the amygdala portion of the brain, also known as the 'fear center', is the focus of research with regards to anxiety.

The amygdala regulates memory, as well as fear and other emotions. It also starts a chain reaction that generates physical responses to stressful events, such as increases in heart rate and blood pressure.

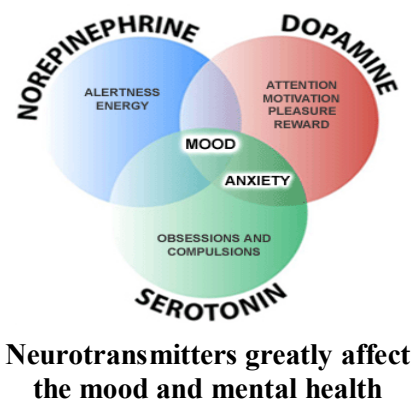
In the brain the amigdala has four jobs as follows;

1. Receive information from the outside world
2. Determine its significance
3. Then trigger the fear response
4. Send the message of fear to the cortex so one can assess the situation and decide what to do.

As determined in some researches, the amygdala of a person with an anxiety disorder is very sensitive to unfamiliar situations and responds aggressively. That brings a great explanation why a person with an anxiety disorder may experience phenomena such as heart palpitations, hyperventilating, and sweating during times that other people may find uneventful.

Imaging studies have found that those with PTSD ‘Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder’, a type of anxiety triggered by a traumatic even, have lower hippocampus volume. The hippocampus is a region of the brain that deals with emotion and memory storage.

The brain’s busyness in making thoughts is called brain wave activity. The time at which one produce thoughts can be measured. The brain wave activity is analysed through EEG ‘Electro Encephalo Graph’ testing. The examined thought wave activity during anxiety can be named as beta waves. That means one is generating thoughts at a rhythm of thirteen to thirty cycles per second.



On the other hand, several studies seem to note the imbalance of certain neurotransmitters as a participator to anxiety disorders. Especially, the neurotransmitters dopamine, serotonin, GABA, and epinephrine play an important role for it. That is the reason why we will have a short look at those below.

Dopamine

The dopamine neurotransmitter is generated in several parts of the brain. It also works as a neurohormone released by the hypothalamus. Dopamine has multiple functions, ranging from sleep and mood to voluntary movement. Drugs that inhibit the activity of dopamine have been

signified to negatively affect motivation and the ability to experience pleasure. People suffering from social anxiety disorder have been shown to have low receptor-binding levels for a certain type of this neurotransmitter. The effect is similar to having not enough dopamine in the brain.

Serotonin

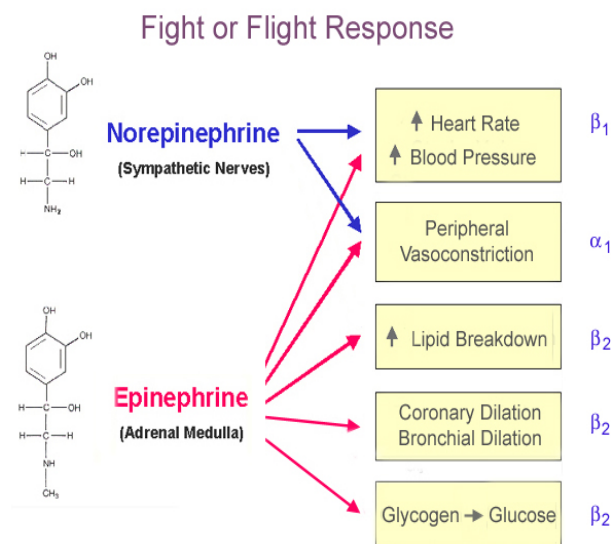
Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that influences sleep, appetite, and metabolism.

OCD ‘Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder’ runs with the abnormalities in a specific pathway of nerves. This pathway of nerves may also be related to the secretion and absorption of serotonin, which is a major player in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Changes in serotonin and dopamine have also been seen in those with social anxiety disorder. Serotonin levels are believed to be altered in cases of anxiety by another neurotransmitter, which is called CRF ‘Corticotropin-Releasing Factor’.

Epinephrine

Epinephrine, also known as adrenaline, is a highly potent hormone that has a critical role in “fight or flight” response. It is secreted by the adrenal glands when danger or an emergency is perceived. Epinephrine secretion can be triggered by environmental conditions such as high noise and bright light.



Epinephrine works by enhancing the supply of oxygen and sugar to the brain and muscles. It also shuts or lowers down non emergency somatic functions such as digestion. Epinephrine can raise heart rate and blood sugar as well as constrict arterioles of skin and GI tract and dilate arterioles of skeletal muscles. High epinephrine levels lead to anxiety, palpitations, headaches, hypertension, tremors and other physiological reactions.

Norepinephrine is a neurotransmitter and a precursor of epinephrine. Its effects are similar to that of epinephrine.

Gaba

GABA is a neurotransmitter in the brain that stops neurons from firing and prohibits nerves from over-firing. A reigning theory is that GAD come in existence when GABA cannot connect well to receptor cells or when there are too few GABA receptors. Therefore the neurons fire excessively evoking the person not to receive 'stop' messages often enough. As a result of qualifying anxiety symptom a person gets excessively worried or upset.

SOME OF THE MOST COMMON ANXIETY DISORDERS

From time to time most of the people suffer from anxiety. Anxiety is a state of worrying or fear, mostly a causation of it stays unknown. While mild anxiety is pretty much normal, it can be fatal in its excessive levels. Rigorous anxiety may lead to conditions like nausea, pitfall in breathing, palpitations, fatigue, restlessness, and even head and chest pains. It will also cause an extreme state of stress on the body and mind.

Nearly half of people with panic disorder or generalized anxiety have close relatives with the disorder. The chances of inheriting a phobia are between one in four and one in three. There may also be defective genes that regulate neurotransmitters such as serotonin that can explain the heredity of this problem.

Anxiety manifest itself in various circumstances as different disorders. Some times abnormal defense mechanisms are set up automatically as a result of apparent anxiety. Here are some of the anxiety disorders commonly noticed.

📌 Panic Disorder or Panic Attack

It is a sudden impulse of fear and discomfort go with sweating, trembling, breathing difficulties, and dizziness. Panic attacks usually don't last for more than 30 minutes.

📌 PTSD 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder'

Mainly that kind of anxiety is being faced as a result of negative past experiences that creates feelings of helplessness or fear. One who suffers from PTSD may also suffer from insomnia, nightmares, flashbacks of a particular event, and depression.

📌 OCD 'Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder'

OCD is specified by an obsession or in other words repetition of thoughts for things that have to do with a certain fear, like the fear of getting robbed, fear of catching an illness or fear of hurting other people. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder's sufferers often perform different tasks - some of which may seem abnormal to other people - to relieve them of their particular fears.

🕒 **Phobia**

This is a stiff, relentless, and even irrational fear of people, objects, events, situations, and other things. A phobia's main symptom is the excessive and unreasonable desire to avoid the thing associated with the said fear.

🕒 **GAD ‘Generalized Anxiety Disorder’**

This kind of anxiety is classified by extreme and inescapable worry about general daily things such as one's job, family, and health, and even more common things such as exams, clean clothing, and being on time for certain appointments.

YOGIC TOOLS

Generally, psychotherapy and some anti-anxiety medication seems to be the most used healing approaches for the anxiety. In the meantime, the process of recovery may also be aided by Yoga practice. Yoga is a combination of slow physical movements, meditation, relaxation with gentle and deep breathing exercises that are useful by lowering muscle tension, relaxing the nervous system and decreasing heart rate, thereby relieving anxiety.

Yoga is also a tool that can be used by developing a stronger state of mind, therefore overcoming the fears and preventing the dangers of anxiety come to an ease. The under mentioned topics serve people in dealing with anxiety with their benefits as pointed out;

- 🕒 Practicing Asanas to maintain a healthy nervous system,
- 🕒 Pranayama to gain better self-awareness and acquire a more peaceful state of mind, and
- 🕒 Meditation for a stronger concentration and focus of the mind that can eventually lead practitioners away from their fears.

Excessive anxiety can be diminished through a slow, gentle yoga practice focusing on asanas that calm the heart and the mind, balance the emotions, and release the body tension. Pranayama ‘yogic breathing’ and meditation will also be helpful to calm the mind and body, and to reduce stress and negative thinking.

Besides the calming effects of a general yoga practice, restorative poses, inversions and forward bends are especially calming to the body and mind, helping to reduce and prevent excessive anxiety.

The brain is constantly creating new neurons. In 1998, Fred Gage from the Salk Institute for Biological Studies and his colleagues discovered that if the human beings exercise physically, they have the capacity of growing new nerve cells lifelong. Physical exercise expands the growth of new brain cells in the hippocampus, which is the essential part for learning and remembering of the brain. That means that exercising, walking, and practising the physical postures of yoga daily not only helpful for reducing the accumulated stress in the body but also support the brain.

One of the most useful yogic tools in these cases is a good asana practice, which burns off the nervous energy that can contribute to anxiety.



The following poses are known to be especially calming: child, shavasana, crocodile, supine bound angle pose, seated forward bend, and seated head to knee.

Simple inversions such as downward dog, standing forward fold, standing yoga mudra, shoulderstand, plow and supine staff pose create a temporary rise in blood pressure in the head that actuates the body's natural calming mechanisms, enlarging the blood vessels and decreasing heart and breathing rates. If symptoms of fatigue, heart palpitations and depression are present, the qi or energy of the heart center may be weak, and heart opening poses such as Cobra, Pigeon, Fish, Boat, Bow and Bridge would both strengthen and calm the heart chakra.

Emotions play a very important role in anxiety disorders. Excessive feeling of fear, worry, irritability, anger and depression can all add and exaggerate the anxiety level. Twists, hip opening poses and sidebends are the useful tools for balancing emotions, and thus help to lower down the feelings of anxiety. Twists and hip opening poses harmonize the nervous and endocrine systems, the two primary systems which regulate humans emotional health. Side bending poses activate the Liver meridian, the energy channel known in Chinese medicine with its regulating effects on the emotions. The following poses will be specifically helpful for harmonizing the emotions: prayer squat, standing angle, supine bound angle, half circle, revolved head to knee, seated angle, seated twist, knee down twist, and prayer twist.

Some of the poses that are used by relieving anxiety are given below;

Bridge : “ Setu Bandhasana ”



1. Lying on the back, bend both knees and place the feet flat on the floor hip width apart. Slide the arms alongside the body with the palms facing down.
2. Press the feet into the floor, inhale and lift the hips up, rolling the spine off the floor. Lightly squeeze the knees together to keep the knees hip width apart.
3. Press down into the arms and shoulders to lift the chest up. Engage the legs, buttocks and mula bandha to lift the hips higher.
4. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths.
5. For releasing, exhale and slowly roll the spine back to the floor.

Benefits

Bridge pose builds core and lower body strength, lengthens and strengthens the spine, energizes the body, and stimulates the endocrine and nervous systems.

Contraindications

Recent or chronic injury to the knees, shoulders or back.

Modifications

Use a yoga block under the hips to support the body weight.

Variations

Interlace the hands together behind the back, walk the shoulders in and press down with the arms and shoulders.

Downward Facing Dog : “ Adho Mukha Svanasana ”



1. From Table position, tuck the toes under, press into the hands and begin to lift the hips up towards the ceiling.
2. Spread the fingers wide apart with the middle finger facing forward, and the palms shoulder width apart. Press the out through the fingers and edges of the hands.
3. Using straight, but not locked arms, press the hips up and back reaching the chest towards the thighs. Lift up through the tailbone to keep the spine straight and long.
4. Have the feet are hip's width apart with the toes facing forward. Press the heels into the floor feeling a stretch in the back of the legs. The legs are straight, or you can have a small bend at the knees to keep the back flat.
5. Let the head and neck hang freely from the shoulders or look up at the belly button.
6. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths.
7. For releasing, bend the knees and lower the hips back to Table position, or come all the way down to child pose.

Benefits

This pose deeply stretches the back, opens the chest, builds upper body strength and stimulates the brain and nervous system, improving memory, concentration, hearing and eyesight.

Contraindications

Recent or chronic injury to the back, hips, arms or shoulders, unmediated high blood pressure.

Modifications

- a. Use blocks under the hands or head.
- b. Place a folded towel under the wrists.
- c. Press both heels against a wall.

Variations

Dolphin pose, Half Down Dog, Down Dog Twist.

Child Pose : “ Balasana ”



1. From Table pose, exhale and lower the hips to the heels and forehead to the floor. Have the knees together or if more comfortable, spread the knees slightly apart.
2. The arms can be overhead with the palms on the floor, the palms or fists can be stacked under the forehead, or the arms can be along side the body with the palms up.
3. Breathe slowly and deeply, actively pressing the belly against the thighs on the inhale.
4. Breathe and hold for 4-12 breaths.
5. For releasing, place the palms under the shoulders and slowly inhale up to a seated position.

Benefits

Child pose calms the body, mind and spirit and stimulates the third eye point. It gently stretches the lower back, massages and tones the abdominal organs, stimulates digestion and elimination.

Contraindications

Recent or chronic injury to the knees.

Modifications

- a. Place a blanket under the hips, knees and/or head.
- b. If pregnant, spread the knees wide apart to remove any pressure on the abdomen.

Variations

Open the knees wider to slide the arms between the legs reaching under the body and turn the head to the side.

Half Lord of The Fishes : “ Ardha Matsyendrasana ”



Ardha Matsyendrasana A



Ardha Matsyendrasana B

1. From Bound Angle or Easy pose, extend the right leg straight out in front of the torso, cross the left leg over the right, placing the left foot flat on the floor close to the right knee.
2. Wrap the right arm around the left knee and pull the knee in towards the chest. Press down through the hips and up through the crown to lengthen the spine.
3. Inhale the left hand up and as you exhale reach the arm around the back placing the palm on the floor fingers facing back. Press the arm into the back to keep the back straight. Look over

the left shoulder towards the back wall. For a deeper twist, place the right elbow to the inside of the left knee.

4. As inhaling press the hips down and reach the crown up to lengthen the spine. As exhaling use the arms to gently deepen the twist. Relax the shoulders down and press the chest open.
5. Breathe and hold for 4-7 breaths.
6. To release, inhale the left hand up and exhale untwisting the body, facing the front. Repeat other side.

Benefits

Half Lord of the Fishes pose opens, lengthens, nourishes and realigns the spine. This pose stimulates the nervous, digestive and reproductive systems.

Contraindications

Recent or chronic hip, back or shoulder injury or inflammation.

Modifications

Place a yoga block under the hand behind the back.

Variations

- a. For a deeper twist, Ardha Matsyendrasana B.

Bound-Angle Pose : “ Baddha Konasana ”



1. From a seated position, bring the bottoms of the feet together with the knees bent out to the sides, and interlace the fingers around the toes.
2. Inhale and press the hips down and reach the crown of the head up towards the ceiling. Drop the shoulders down and back and press the chest towards the front. Press the knees down towards the floor to open the hips.
3. Keeping the back flat and the chest open, exhale and gently pull the torso forward. Close the eyes and stare up at the third eye, the sixth chakra.
4. Breathe and hold for 3-8 breaths.

Benefits

Bound angle opens the hips and chest, lengthens the spine and stimulates the reproductive, nervous and respiratory systems.

Contraindications

Recent or chronic knee or hip injury or inflammation.

Modifications

- a. Place folded blanket under the hip bones.
- b. Place folded blanket under the knees.

Variations

- a. Round the back, bringing the forehead towards the toes, relaxing the head and neck.
- b. Slide the feet 1-2 feet forward and bring the arms under the ankles and interlace the fingers around the toes. Round forward, pulling the forehead towards the toes with the arms.

Head to knee pose : “ Janu Sirsasana ”



1. Seated in Bound Angle or Easy pose, extend the right leg straight out in front of the torso, place the bottom of the left foot against the right thigh. Pull the right leg in to square the hips to the front wall.
2. Inhale the arms up and reach out of the waist lengthening the spine.
3. Keep the length as exhaling forward, bending the right knee enough to interlace the fingers around the foot and to place the head against the knee.
4. Work the posture by pressing the head towards the knee, sliding the right heel away, lengthen the right leg. Keep the head pressed to the knee while straightening the leg as much as possible. For a deeper stretch in the leg, press the heel away and pull the toes towards the head.
5. Relax the shoulders, neck and face. Make sure the shoulders are parallel to the floor. Use the arms only enough to keep the head in contact with the knee.
6. Breathe and hold for 3-6 breaths.
7. To release, inhale the arms up over the head, exhale them to the floor. Repeat with other side.

Benefits

Janu Sirsasana not only stretches the back, it deeply stretches the back of the legs as well. It calms the mind and emotions, stimulates the nervous, reproductive, endocrine and urinary systems.

Contraindications

Recent or chronic back or knee injury or inflammation.

Modifications

- a. Use a yoga strap around foot of the straight leg and hold with both hands.
- b. Use a blanket under the bent knee to reduce straining the knee joint.

Variations

If there is enough flexibility, reach the hands in front of the foot, clasping hand to wrist. A more advanced variation on this pose is Half bound Lotus Forward Bend.

Supine Hero pose : “ Supta Virasana ”



1. From a seated position on the heels, walk the feet out so that the buttocks can rest on the floor with the heels next to the hips.
2. Slowly and carefully walk the hands behind you, lowering the back towards the floor.
3. Come as low to the floor as comfortable, first lowering to the elbows, then to the crown of the head, and eventually on to the back of the neck.
4. Rest the hands along side the head palms facing the sky.
5. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths.
6. To release: hold on to the ankles or feet and press into the elbows using the arms to lift the head and torso back off the floor. Walk the hands back to the hips, coming back to a seated position.

Benefits

Stretches the abdomen, thighs and deep hip flexors (psoas), knees, and ankles, Strengthens the arches, relieves tired legs, improves digestion, helps relieve the symptoms of menstrual pain and also helps by relieving anxiety.

Contraindications

When having any serious back, knee, or ankle problems, has to be avoided unless having the assistance of an experienced instructor.

Modifications

- a. If not to able to recline fully on the floor, set a bolster or one or more folded blankets behind to fully support the spine and head. Use as much height as needed to make the position reasonably comfortable.
- b. To help release the groins, lay some weight across the creases of the top thighs where they join the front pelvis. Start with a 10-pound sandbag and gradually over time increase the weight to 30 pounds or so.

Variations

Before doing Supta Virasana start with its halfway variation, Supta Ardha Virasana. To sit in Ardha Virasana, draw just the right leg back into Virasana. Keep the left knee bent with the foot on the floor, or straighten the left leg by pushing out through the heel. Then recline as described above, either onto a support or the floor, following all the cautions. Come out as recommended for Virasana, then repeat with the left leg back.

By practicing any of these poses at least once a day the anxiety that cause discomfort feeling on the body and mind can be reduced and feelings of deep relaxation embraces one's whole being.

Pranayamas

The breath plays a major role in many cases, when anxiety is excessive. With feelings of anxiety, the breath becomes shallow, rapid and constricted, which in turn reinforces the nervous system's state of anxiety. The most obvious and appropriate way to feel less anxious is by changing how one breathes.

Breathing is governed by the autonomic nervous system, which is influenced by the voluntary nervous system. Chronic anxiety and tension strongly condition the breath, so much so that sometimes, even when sleeping, the breath doesn't return to optimal breathing.

Shallow, quick breathing and anxiety run in a closed-feedback loop of communication; that is the anxiety causes shallow breathing and the shallow breathing triggers anxiety. The breathe of anxiety is a form of hyperventilation, which is faster or deeper breathing, or both, that causes a decrease of carbon dioxide in the blood. This can cause light-headedness, numbness or

tingling in the hands or feet, dizziness, chest pain, and slurred speech. If one has panic attack, hyperventilation is more severe, and if suffering from anxiety, the breathing is probably a soft form of cronic hyperventilation.

As known, the autonomic nervous system, probably governed by the hypothalamus, is responsible for rotating the breath from one nostril to the other. If one is healthy, from right to left nostril dominance alternates approximately every two to three hours. In case of anxiety this natural rhythm becomes disrupted and therefore right-nostril breathing prolongs. That interesting fact highlights the fragil interference of the moods, breathing and physical body.

When practicing pranayama ‘the yogic breathing exercises’, the nervous system naturally becomes calmed and soothed. With a consistent practice one may learn how to consciously maintain a slow deep breath at all times to prevent and reduce excess states of anxiety. The practice of Dirga and Nadi Sodhana Pranayamas will be the most strongly calming to the body. If there is excess heat in the body, with symptoms of agitation, restlessness, impatience, craving, compulsions and poor sleep, then Sit Cari and Shitali pranayamas will be helpful as well.



Beside these a number of breathing practices, including abdominal breathing and lengthening the exhalation relative to the inhalation, help reduce symptoms of anxiety.

Scientific studies suggest that left-nostril breathing can effectively reduce symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder (and it’s probably also useful for less extreme forms of anxiety).

In addition, the regular practice of both asana and pranayama leads to greater internal sensitivity, which can allow students to detect the first glimmer of an anxiety or panic attack and respond with yogic tools that might head off the problem. The earlier in the process you can intervene, the greater the likely efficacy.

The loud breathing : ‘Ujjayi Pranayama’

This consists in drawing air in through both nostrils with the glottis held partially closed. Ujjayi translates as "what clears the throat and masters the chest area". This partial closure of the glottis generates a sound like that heard in sobbing, except that it is continuous and unbroken. The sound should have a low but uniform pitch and be pleasant to hear. Friction of air in the nose should be avoided; hence no nasal sounds will be heard. A prolonged full pause should begin, without any jerking, as soon as inhalation has been finished. Sealing of glottis, use of chin

lock and closure of both nostrils are standard. Prolong the pause as long as possible; but it should be terminated and exhalation started smoothly and slowly. When correctly executed, exhalation goes on slowly and continually through the left nostril with the glottis partially closed as in inhalation. One may start to exhale with release of air power by raising the finger from his left nostril, loosening the chin lock and then partially opening the glottis. Exhalation has to be completed.

Ujjayi breathing has many variations. For example, we can breathe in through the throat, then completely close one nostril and breathe out through the other nostril, which is only partly closed. This technique is called an anuloma ujjayi.

In a pranayama technique called viloma ujjayi, it is necessary to breathe in through the nostril and breathe out through the throat. This technique is used for lengthening the inhalation. In ujjayi pranayama it is important following the rule; when regulating the breath through the nostril, never try to breathe through the throat at the same time.

Even though the total length of time required for a single cycle of breathing will vary from one to another, certain ratios of the periods needed for inhaling, pausing and exhaling are suggested. The period lasting by breathing out has to be about twice as long as that occupied by breathing in. Practice inhaling and exhaling without a full pause. Then, when feeling ready, hold the breathing for a pause which is serene. With remained practice, this pause can be widened to a duration which is double that of the breathing out or equal to that of the exhalation. Advanced practitioners of yoga hold their pauses to four times the duration of inhalation and double the duration of exhalation.

Alternate Nostril Breathing : ‘Nadi Sodhana Pranayama’

The name alternate nostril breathing is on the verge of the fact that alternating between the two nostrils when breathing. From the yogic point of view that technique helps to clean and rejuvenate the vital energy channels. So the name nadi sodhana has the meaning of purification of nadis or channels.

With Nadi Sodhana Pranayama, it is necessary breathing only through one nostril at a time. The logic behind this is that normal breathing does alternate from one nostril to the other at various times for the whole day long. Normally, a healthy person alternates the breath between two nostrils approximately every two hours according to the yogic sources.

Just because of the reason most of the human beings aren't in optimum health, the duration differs between people and further the vitality diminishes. Regarding to the yogic principles, when the breath continues to flow in one nostril for more than two hours, it will have

an adverse effect on the health. If the right nostril is involved, the result is mental and nervous disturbance. In other case when the left nostril is involved, the result brings chronic fatigue and decreased brain function. Summarizing these as a main rule one can say the longer the flow of breath in one nostril, the more people faces serious illnesses.

Medical science has recently discovered the nasal cycle, something that was known by the yogis thousands of years ago. Scientists have recently found that we do not breathe equally with both nostrils. Regarding this argument one nostril is much easier to breathe through than the other at any particular time and this changes about every three hours.

Scientists also discovered that the nasal cycle corresponds with brain function. The electrical activity of the brain was found to be greater on the side opposite the less congested nostril. The right side of the brain controls creative activity, while the left side governs logical verbal activity. The research showed that when the left nostril was less obstructed, the right side of the brain was predominant. Test subjects were indeed found to do better on creative tests. Similarly when the right nostril was less obstructed the left side of the brain was predominant. Test subjects did better on verbal skills.

The yogis went one step further. They observed that a lot of disease was due to the nasal cycle being disturbed; that is, if a person breathed for too long through one nostril. To prevent and correct this condition, they developed the alternate nostril breathing technique. This clears any blockage to air flow in the nostrils and reestablishes the natural nasal cycle. For example, the yogis have known for a long time that prolonged breathing through the left nostril only will produce asthma. They also know that this so-called incurable disease can be easily eliminated by teaching the patient to breathe through the right nostril until the asthma is cured, and then to prevent it recurring by doing the alternate nostril breathing technique. The yogis also believe that diabetes is caused to a large extent by breathing mainly through the right nostril.



1. Closing the right nostril with the right thumb, inhale through the left nostril.
2. Immediately close the left nostril with the right ring and little fingers, and at the same time remove the thumb from the right nostril, and exhale through this nostril.
3. Inhaling through the right nostril to the count of four seconds, close the right nostril with the right thumb and exhale through the left nostril. That is one full round.

4. Start by doing three rounds, adding one per week until you are doing seven rounds.

Alternate nostril breathing should not be practiced by having cold or if the nasal passages are blocked in any way. Forced breathing through the nose may lead to complications. In pranayama it is important to follow this rule: under no circumstances should anything be forced. If you use the nostrils for breath control they must be unobstructed. If they are not, you must practice throat breathing.

Meditation

The mind plays an important role in most states of long-term anxiety. Continual focus and obsession with thoughts of fear and worry only generates additional levels of anxiety. Yogic tools and especially meditation allow humans to gain control over their thoughts through mental detachment and the ability focusing the mind on the present experience. The benefits of a constant meditation practice are known to cover the reduction of stress, tension, anxiety and frustration.



Through meditation perhaps more than any other yogic tool, one may start to see how busy the mind is, and also gain insight into some of the tricks that it plays.

Many people may not realize how repetitive thoughts, of which they are usually barely aware, may be expanding their worries.

Yoga, pranayama and meditation are all powerful tools in the reduction and prevention of excess states of anxiety. All of these practices cultivate the mental faculties of faith, self-control, concentration, determination, and patience. And when practiced together will create an even stronger effect on calming the mind and emotions.

When using the above mentioned yogic practices, it is important to avoid any of these yogic practices scare anyone or make them feel unsafe, as this may actuate the body's fight-or-flight response, which in turn will increase feelings of anxiety.

Heart Chakra Meditation

This heart chakra meditation is a simple technique to release sadness and fear and to bring compassion and love into the life.

1. Sit in a comfortable position, either cross-legged on the floor or in a chair.

2. Sit up tall with the spine straight, the shoulders relaxed and the chest open.
3. Inhale the palms together and lightly press the knuckles of the thumbs into the sternum at the level of your heart (feeling a little notch where the knuckles magically fit is necessary).
4. Breathe slowly, smoothly and deeply into the belly and into the chest.
5. Soften the gaze or lightly close the eyes.
6. Let go of any thoughts or distractions and let the mind focus on feeling the breath move in and out of the body.
7. Once the mind feels quiet and still, bring the focus to the light pressure of the thumbs pressing against the chest and feeling the beating of the heart.
8. Keep this focus for one to five minutes.
9. Gently release the hands and rub the palms together, making them very warm and energized.
10. Place the right palm in the center of the chest and the left hand on top of the right.
11. Close the eyes and feel the center of the chest warm and radiant, full of energy.
12. See this energy as an emerald green light, radiating out from the center of the heart into the rest of the body.
13. Feel this energy flowing out into the arms and hands, and flowing back into the heart.
14. Stay with this visualization for one to five minutes.
15. After feeling completely soaked with heart chakra energy, gently release the palms and turn them outwards with the elbows bent, the shoulders relaxed and the chest open.
16. Feel or visualize the green light love energy flowing out of the palms and into the world. Directing it towards specific loved ones in the life or to all sentient beings, end the meditation.
17. As inhaling the arms up towards the sky, connect with the heavens.
18. As exhaling and lowering the palms lightly to the floor, connect with the earth.
19. Take a moment or two before moving on with the rest of the day.

Inner Peace Meditation

This meditation is a simple technique to reduce stress, tension and anxiety and to promote a calm and tranquil mind.

1. Sit in a comfortable position, either cross-legged on the floor or in a chair.
2. Sit up tall with the spine straight, the shoulders relaxed and the chest open.
3. Rest the hands on the knees or in the lap with the palms facing up.
4. Relax the face, jaw, and belly.
5. Let the tongue rest on the roof of the mouth, just behind the front teeth.

6. Allow the eyes to lightly close.
7. Breathe slowly, smoothly and deeply in and out through the nose.
8. Let the inhale start in the belly and then rise gently up into the chest.
9. As the breath slows and deepens, let go of any thoughts or distractions and allow the mind to focus on the breath.
10. Drawing the focus deeply inside the body, to its very core, find a place of stillness, quiet and peace.
11. Breathe deeply into this center filling it with the awareness.
12. Feel the place of inner peace being nourished with the breath and awareness, slowly beginning to grow and expand outwards.
13. Feel the place of inner peace expand to fill the entire being.
14. Feel the inner peace completely saturating the body and radiating outwards into the world.
15. Practice this meditation for 10-20 minutes.
16. To end, gently let the eyes blink open, inhale the palms together in front of the heart, exhale and gently bow.
17. Take a moment or two before moving on with the rest of the day.

Yogic Relaxation Techniques

The practice of yoga relaxation has been found to reduce tension and anxiety. The autonomic symptoms of high anxiety such as headache, giddiness, chest pain, palpitations, sweating, abdominal pain respond well. It has been used to help soldiers from war cope with PTSD.

Except when being in physical danger, the health and the sense of wellbeing depends on the body's relaxation response. Herbert Benson first described in his book entitled "The Relaxation Response" that being relaxed is a whole body experience. This response diminishes the stress response, and, like the stress response it is initiated in the brain.

The relaxation response covers the under given topics;

- a. The heart rate slows down and the blood pressure stabilizes.
- b. The immun system is boosted.
- c. The brain waves slow down.
- d. The digestive processes normalize.
- e. The quality of sleep improves.
- f. A sense of well-being is experienced.

Corpse pose : “ Savasana ”



Corpse pose or Savasana is another great pose for soothing anxiety. This is a great way to relax whether in the quiet atmosphere or with a gentle relaxing music playing in the background.

1. Lay down on the on the floor and allow the feet to fall out.
2. Let the hands to fall aside and face upward.
3. Relax the body and soften the face.
4. Soften all the muscles in the facial area.
5. Keeping the breath flowing naturally and freely relax all the body parts.
6. With each exhaling let go all the unneeded tension.
7. For coming out of the pose, bring the knees towards the chest and rock gently back and forth.
8. Using your own time roll to the right side of the body and grounding the palms into the earth support the belly and come to a comfortable sitting pose.

Yoga Nidra

Yoga-nidra may be rendered in English as "yoga sleep". It is a sleep-like state that occurs with some practitioners of meditation, details of which have been handed down by guru-to-disciple transmission (parampara) within the Indian religions. These aspects may include relaxation and guided visualization techniques as well as the psychology of dream, sleep and yoga. Yoga-nidra should not be confused with hypnotic states, known as "yoga tandra".

Yoga Nidra brings an incredible calmness, quietness and clarity. That is one of the deepest of all meditations, leading awareness through many levels of mental process to a state of supreme stillness and insight. It is a state of conscious Deep Sleep.

In Meditation, a person remain in the Waking state of consciousness, and gently focuses the mind, while allowing thought patterns, emotions, sensations, and images to arise and go on. However, in Yoga Nidra, a man leave the Waking state, go past the Dreaming state, and go to Deep Sleep, yet remain awake. While Yoga Nidra is a state that is very relaxing, it is also used by Yogis to purify the Samskaras, the deep impressions that are the driving force behind Karma.

Yoga Nidra has been known for thousands of years by the sages and yogis. Of the three states of consciousness of Waking, Dreaming and Deep Sleep, as expounded in the Upanishads,

particularly the Mandukya Upanishad, Yoga Nidra refers to the conscious awareness of the Deep Sleep state, referred to as *prajna* in Mandukya Upanishad. This is the third of the four levels of consciousness of AUM mantra, relating to the state represented by the M of AUM. The four states are Waking, Dreaming, Sleep, and Turiya, the fourth state. The state of Yoga Nidra, conscious Deep Sleep, is beyond or subtler than the imagery and mental process of the Waking and Dreaming states. As a state of conscious Deep Sleep, Yoga Nidra is a universal principle.

The 3 distinct aspects to the Yoga Nidra practice:

1. A systematic method of inducing complete mental, physical and emotional relaxation while maintaining awareness at deeper levels.
2. A way to manifest any desire, be it physical, mental or spiritual.
3. A method of altering karma and finding Moksha (Liberation).

The 8 distinct stages of the Yoga Nidra Practice;

1. Internalization / Relaxation : preliminary preparation of the body.
2. Affirmation ‘Sankalpa’ : A personal goal previously decided upon is declared silently.
3. Rotation of Consciousness : the consciousness is taken on a tour of the whole body in a structured fashion.
4. Respiration awareness : a period of awareness of the breath at special positions in the body.
5. Manifestations of Opposites : pairs of feelings and emotions are experienced.
6. Creative Visualization : Various Archetypal images are visualized mentally.
7. Affirmation ‘Sankalpa’ is repeated and, now in a highly suggestible state of consciousness, is programmed into the subconscious mind.
8. Externalization / Return to Full Awareness : a careful and gradual return to a normal state.

Yoga Nidra helps in restoring mental, emotional, and physical health by way of relaxation, and makes the mind more conducive to *pratyahara* -withdrawing senses from their objects, *dharana* -concentration, and meditation. Such a practice helps harmonize two hemispheres of the brain and the two aspects of autonomic nervous system (sympathetic and parasympathetic). The impressions in the subconscious are brought to surface, experienced and removed. Thus, the fixation of awareness on the body is replaced with the awareness linked to subtler aspects of prana (the life force) and spiritual dimensions allowing for maximizing of the pure yet unmanifested potential within.

Benefits

- a. Everyone can practice. Even beginners who are stiff.
- b. Physical stresses and tensions are removed.
- c. Mental stresses and unwanted impressions are removed.
- d. Emotional balance is restored.
- e. The unconscious is focused on a personal goal so that it can be achieved more easily.
- f. Advanced practitioners can achieve a state of self-realization in Yoga Nidra.

Mudras

The use of the mudras is quite common in the Hindu Poojas, Tantric worships, Yoga and also in Classical Indian dances.

Mudras, along with asanas (reflecting the body), mandalas (reflecting the spirit) and mantras (reflecting speech) all present proper means in achieving enlightenment.

Each finger symbolizes one of the five elements;

- g. the thumb is agni 'fire',
- h. the forefinger is vayu 'air',
- i. the middle finger is akash 'ether',
- j. the ring finger is prithvi 'earth' and
- k. the little finger is jal 'water'.

There are two types of mudras, single-hand and double-hand. There are 28 'Aasanyukta's or others said single-handed mudras and 23 'Sawyakta's in English double-handed mudras.

Some Mudras using for reducing anxiety are as given below;

Dhyana Mudra in Padmasana



In South East Asia, this mudra is frequently used in the image of the seated Buddha, the joined thumbs do not form a "mystic triangle" and are placed against the palm. The position of the Samadhi mudra with the joined thumbs forming a triangle is symbolic of the Tiratana 'Three Jewels' namely the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The triangular form also indicates the firmness of the body and of the mind.

1. Sit in padmasana 'lotus' pose, or a simple cross legged pose.
2. Place the open right palm over the left palm, facing upwards, letting the tips of the thumbs touching each other.
3. Block out all noise and disturbances and concentrate on the subtle sound that is created when the nostrils open up and there is a slight friction with the air.
4. Listen attentively.
5. For not getting distracted initially; just draw the mind back gently.
6. Stay in the dhyana mudra for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Benefits of Dhyana Mudra in Padmasana

1. This asana helps to take things as they come, without getting overtly disturbed.
2. It reduces mental chatter and confusion.
3. It also greatly raises the power of concentration.

Surya Mudra



1. Sit down comfortably with the back and neck straight.
2. Join tips of ring fingers at the root of the thumbs and press with the thumbs.
3. The rest three fingers has to be straight.
4. Keeping the hand at the folded knee, remember facing the palm up.
5. Put a little pressure in the palm and rest of the hand would be in relax position.
6. Practice it daily twice for 5 to 15 minutes.

Benefits

1. It sharpens the center in thyroid gland.
2. It reduces cholesterol in body and helps in reducing weight
3. It reduces anxiety
4. It corrects indigestion problems

Anjali Mudra



The sacred hand position, which is named Anjali Mudra is known as a gesture of greeting and adoration, veneration, honor or celebration, the diamond handclasp.

1. Sit comfortably in Siddhasana or stand in Tadasana. Inhale and bring the palms together and rest the thumbs lightly on the sternum.
2. Press the hands firmly but evenly against each other. Make sure that one hand (usually the right hand by right-handed ones, or left if a person is left-handed) does not dominate the other. If finding such imbalance, release the dominant hand slightly but don't increase the pressure of the non-dominant hand.
3. Bow the head slightly, drawing the crease of the neck toward the center of the head. Lift the sternum into the thumbs and lengthen down along the back of the armpits, making the back elbows heavy.
4. Hold hands over the heart and draw the forearms parallel to floor.

Practicing Anjali Mudra is an excellent way to induce a meditative state of awareness. Starting the practice sitting in meditation in Anjali Mudra for 5 minutes will be very useful. This hand position also can be used in Tadasana prior to beginning the Sun Salutation sequence, contemplating the "sun" or light of awareness. The yogis say it is resident in the heart.

Benefits

1. Invokes connection between our light and the light within others.
2. This mudra evokes an offering of good feelings of one towards another.
3. It can also indicate veneration if it is made at the level of the face.
4. Redirects the prana emitted by hands back into body.
5. It helps to reduce anxiety.

Kalesvara Mudra

This mudra calms the mind. It is powerful and can change characteristic traits and eliminates addictive behavior.



1. Place both palms together pairing thumbs and all fingers at tips.
2. Fold index, ring, and pinky fingers downward.
3. Middle fingers are extended outward and middle fingers of both hands should touch at the tips..
4. Point thumbs toward the body. The first two joints of the index finger and the thumbs should touch.

YOGA PHILOSOPHY



In fact, seeing clearly can be helpful for anxiety and panic attacks in a variety of ways. It is also useful in dealing with more run-of-the-mill anxiety. Most people who are anxious will accept, if they're honest and paying attention, that much of what they worry about never happens. And even if it does, the consequences are often not as negative as they would have foreseen. Sometimes, when looking back, they realize that the thing they feared the most was exactly what needed to happen for them to grow or learn or get out of a bad situation, in other words, it was finally a good thing.

For students who are open to them, bhakti practices such as prayer, chanting, and devotional singing may be highly therapeutic for anxiety.

In the longer term, meditation and self-study (*svadhyaya*) also offer the hope of getting at the deeper causes of the problem.

There is a big need for keeping it in mind that anxiety can be a useful symptom, and the ability to get anxious has survival value. Thinking about potential threats, and planning how is it possible to lower the risk or respond properly, can be extremely useful, even lifesaving. Going over the same worry dozens or even hundreds of times, when the loops bring no new insight, isn't helpful and may make one miserable.

This is where yogic philosophy can be useful. It often helps people simply to understand that panic is at its core an emotional, not a physical, problem. It teaches that, ultimately, no one can control what's going to happen. Despite ones best efforts, some bad things undeniable will come to existence. All one can do is try to plan intelligently, give the best effort, let the universe take its course, and, when it does, respond as well as one can. When a person realize that he/she

at last do not have control over the future, it can take the pressure off and that alone may diminish anxiety.

Here are the great 20th-century master Ramana Maharshi's words; "Take care of the present, and the future will take care of itself".

Yogic Philosophy also shows the way how to live harmoniously with others by mentioning the first and second limbs, the so called Yamas and Niyamas. These guidelines help individuals to manage their primitive survival instincts that can easily go awry and cause many problems including perpetuating trauma and chronic fear.

The first two limbs 'Yamas and Niyamas' are the fundamental ethical guidelines, that can also be determined as universal morality and personal observances. When Yama can be defined as the attitude of one's towards things and others, Niyama is that how one is dealing with his/herself inwardly. Both of them are mainly related with using the energy of one's during communications with others and his own self.

As yamas are broken down into five wise characteristics like ahimsa 'non-violence', satya 'truthfulness in word, thought and deed', asteya 'non-stealing', brahmacharya 'continence, moderation in all things' and aparigraha 'non-coveting and non possessiveness', the niyamas are also summarized in five sections as follows; saucha 'purity', santosa 'contentment', tapas 'burning desire for union with God, austerity', svadhyaya 'study of the Self' and isvarapranidana 'dedication to the Lord'.

YOGA SEQUENCE FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

Iyengar recommends the following yoga sequence for coping with anxiety:

1. Tadasana Samasthithi "Standing Upright Pose"
2. Tadasana Urdhva Hastasana "Mountain Pose, Raised Arm Pose"
3. Uttanasana "Standing Forward Bend Pose"
4. Prasrita Padottanasana "Spread Legs Pose"
5. Adho Mukha Svanasana "Dog Stretch Pose"
6. Salamba Sirsasana "Headstand Pose"
7. Uttanasana "Standing Forward Bend Pose"
8. Utthita Trikonasana "Extended Triangle Pose"
9. Ardha Chandrasana "Half Moon Pose"
10. Viparita Dandasana "Legs Up the Wall Pose"

11. Ustrasana “Camel Pose”
12. Virasana “Hero Pose”
13. Adho Mukha Virasana “Downward Facing Hero Pose”
14. Janu Sirsasana “Head-Knee Pose”
15. Paschimottanasana “Seated Forward Bend”
16. Upavista Konasana “Seated Wide Legged Straddle Pose”
17. Baddhakonasana “Restrained Angle Pose”
18. Supta Virasana “Supine Thunderbolt Pose”
19. Setubandha Sarvangasana “Bridge Pose”
20. Viparita Karani “Legs up the Wall Pose”
21. Savasana “Corpse Pose”
22. Ujjayi Pranayama “Victorious Breath”
23. Viloma 2 Pranayama “Alternate Nostril Breath”

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