



Developing a Home Practice Handout week 2

The following practice should take approx. 15 minutes if you include the focus and the relaxation, or 10 minutes if you exclude these elements.

Find a quiet space where you have enough room to work on your mat and you won't be disturbed. Ensure you leave 2 hours after a meal before practicing, and follow the precautions mentioned in this handout. *If at any time you feel uncomfortable or unwell please stop immediately and seek appropriate advice.*

Step 1: Centering the mind – 1 minute

Come to a comfortable seated position and focus into the breath. Breathe in and out through the nostrils and be aware of the rise and fall of the chest and abdomen as you breathe. Observe how you feel. Do not force the breath, but allow it to come and go gently and smoothly as you concentrate on drawing in energy in the inhale, and letting go of tension on the exhale.



Step 2: Preparatory work – 5 minutes

Apanasana: lying on your back, bend the knees and draw them in towards the chest. Keep them together. Take the hands around the shins, and begin to gently circle the knees in one direction. Take the circle in the other direction. 



Hamstring Stretching: Still lying on the back, take the feet and place them on the floor a little way away from the buttocks. Clasp the hands behind the raised thigh to support it. On an inhale take the sole of the right foot up towards the ceiling. Begin to point and flex the foot strongly, feeling the stretch in the calf and in the shin. Then bring the knee in towards the abdomen and place the thigh on the abdomen. Maintaining this contact, begin to stretch the foot away over the head, gradually straightening the leg. Breathe into the back of the knee and hold. Keep the pelvis level and pressing into the floor. Repeat both steps on the left.

Knee Down Twist: Lie on your back, with your legs straight. Place the arch of the right foot over the left knee. Take the right knee with left hand and encourage it down towards mat, allowing right hip to come up. Take the right hand out to shoulder height. Stay here if your shoulders are very stiff: otherwise, begin to make circles by tracing the right arm up and around and back again, without lifting the fingers off the mat. Repeat on the other side.

Step 3: Postures – 10 minutes

To begin, sit with the legs as wide apart as is comfortable in straddle. Gently rock backwards and forward from the pelvis, keeping the back straight and the head up.

Janu Sirsasana: (Head beyond Knee pose) Sit in Dandasana (staff pose), legs straight out in front, feet and knees together, pulling up through the thighs and the spine. Bring the right foot towards the left upper thigh, and then allow the right knee to drop out to side. Pad the knee with a cushion if it doesn't reach the floor. The right heel is pulled in towards the perineum. Twist the pelvis to face the extended leg and hook a strap over the ball of the left foot. Fold forward from the hips, bringing the abdomen and chest towards the thigh: you should be reaching forwards, not down, so that the head comes beyond the knee. Try not to round into the back. Only go as far as is comfortable, then stay and breathe into the back of the extended knee. Repeat on the other side.



Table Top: Start in Dandasana (see above). Place the hands approx 8 ins behind the back, fingers facing towards the buttocks. Ensure the feet are hip width apart, and placed under the knees. Push strongly into the hands and the feet, raising the hips. Try to raise the hips higher than the knees. Hold for three to eight breaths. If this is too strong do not hold, instead come in and out of the pose dynamically.



Tree: Begin in mountain pose: feet slightly apart, standing tall, pulling up through the legs, tail bone slightly pulled under and head and neck lifting upwards. Transfer the weight to the right leg, and raise the left foot to rest on the right calf or thigh. Ensure that if your foot is near your knee you are not resting on the joint: the arch of the foot can come over the joint but do not rest the heel or the ball on the side of the knee. Raise hands to the chest in prayer as you fix on a point in front of you and gaze. If you are comfortable here, raise the arms above the head in prayer. Hold for as long as you can, and come out with control.



Rest in child's pose: kneeling, bring the forehead towards the mat and take the hands down to the sides of the knees extending backwards. Hips stay on the heels: if they do not place a block or cushion under the hips. If your forehead doesn't reach the floor rest it on two fists, one placed on top of the other.



Step 4: Relaxation.

Ensure you put on an extra layer or cover yourself with a blanket. Lying onto the back, take your feet mat width apart. Take the arms slightly out from the sides, palms turning upwards. Support the head and neck if desired, and ensure you are completely comfortable. Allow the eyes to close and focus into the breath, concentrating on the breath and letting any outside thoughts go. Focus on letting go with every out breath. Stay for 3 minutes, or longer if desired. Namaste.

