



## Developing a Home Practice Handout week 3

*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.*

### **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. On an inhale take the sole of the right foot up towards the ceiling. Clasp the hands behind the thigh to support it. Begin to point and flex the foot strongly, feeling the stretch in the calf and in the shin. Then take a strap or tie, and place it around the ball of the foot, or clasp the hands behind the thigh. 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 away. Breathe into the back of the knee and hold. Repeat both steps on the left.

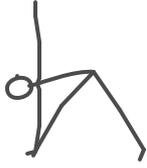
**Side Stretching:** Sit comfortably in a cross legged position. Ensuring you move only to the side, not allowing the torso to move forwards or backwards, slide the right hand out to the side, keeping the elbow soft. Gently inhale and raise the left arm over the head and stretch towards the right side. Hold for several breaths. Inhale, to centre, bringing the torso upright and lowering the left arm. Repeat on the other side.



### **Step 3: Postures – 10 minutes**

**Triangle:** Stand with the legs wide apart, three to four feet. Ensure the hips are facing forward and that the tail bone is slightly pulled under. Pull in through the

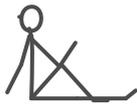
abdominals to protect the lower back. Place the hands on the hips, and turn the right foot out 90 degrees, moving the left heel slightly out for stability. Raise the arms to shoulder height and extend the right arm out to the side, not allowing the torso to drop, but stretching out to the side. Lower the right hand down to the right shin, raise the left hand straight up to the ceiling and turn the head to look up to the left thumb if this is comfortable: if not keep looking forwards. If taking the left hand up into the air is too strong bring it behind the back and reach towards the right thigh with the fingers. Hold and breathe, keeping the legs firm, and work with a count of three breaths initially, increasing gradually to eight if desired. To come up, inhale and tone through the abdominals and then lift the torso, exhale to lower the arms to the sides. Repeat on the other side.



**Cobra:** Lie down on the belly, feet slightly apart. Place the hands underneath the shoulders, palms are flat on the floor and elbows drawn in towards the sides of the body. Engage the abdominals, push out and back through the feet, and begin to lift the head off the mat, following with the chest. Push into hands, but ensure that the weight is not taken too much into them; The work is in the lower back. See if you can raise the hands off the mat whilst keeping the chest lifted. Tops of the feet push into the mat. Keep the shoulders down, moving the shoulder blades down the spine. Hold and breathe here; then exhale the nose back down towards the mat, lowering the upper body and head. Rest before repeating. Gradually increase the length of the hold from 3 – 8 breaths. *Do not do this posture if you have a lower back injury or your lower back is especially weak.*



After Cobra, 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.



**Marichyasana III:** Sage twist version III: Start in Dandasana, staff pose (sitting, legs straight out in front, see handout week 2). If the legs will not straighten, sit on a block. Bend the right knee, placing the right foot next to the left knee. Pull up through the spine, and take hold of the right foot, placing it over the left knee. Extend the left arm forward and wrap it around the right knee; OR bend the left elbow and bring it over the outside of the right knee. Right hand comes to rest behind the back, without leaning back; twist from the waist and look behind, trying to twist a little more with each out breath. Reverse back to centre and repeat on other side. *Do not practise this posture if pregnant.*

#### 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.

