



## Developing a Home Practice Handout week 4

*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 Stretch:** 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.

**Reclined Cobblers:** Remain lying on the back, bringing the soles of the feet together. Allow the knees to fall out to the sides, gradually letting go in the groin area as the knees come nearer to the floor. Try not to arch in the lower back. Arms are by sides, palms facing downwards. After a few breaths begin to take the arms up and over the head on an inhale, and back down to the floor on an exhale. Repeat several times.



**Cradle Stretch:** Lying on back, bend the right knee and place the right foot on the floor. Bring the left ankle over the right leg just below the knee joint. Lift the right foot off the floor and clasp the hands behind the right thigh, left hand going through the space between the legs. Encourage the right

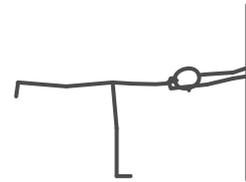
thigh towards the abdomen, whilst pushing out in the opposite direction with the left knee.

### **Step 3: Postures – 10 minutes**



**Crescent Moon Lunge:** Come to a high kneel up in middle of mat. Lightly pad the knees if necessary by placing a folded blanket underneath. Place right foot in front so that there is a greater than 90 degree angle between the thigh and the calf. Ensure the stance is stable, knees at approx. hip width apart. Place hands on hips, keep tailbone tucking under and pull up through spine. Top of left foot and shin are pushing into mat. Bend right knee forward sinking into hips, allowing left hip to stretch. Track the knee directly over the toes, not allowing it to fall inwards or outwards. Weight is into the front thigh. Stay here, or STAGE 2 raise hands above head to prayer and look up, arching back slightly, engaging the abdominals. Hold three to five breaths, building up to eight, then repeat on other side. Do not hold if you suffer high blood pressure, but come in and out instead.

**Shoulder hang with Leg Raises:** Go to a wall, place hands shoulder width apart at shoulder height. Walk feet back till legs are at a right angle to the body. Keep arms where they are and “hang” into to the pose, head between arms. Raise one leg to pelvis height, keeping pelvis level. Hold for five breaths. Repeat other side.



**Pigeon:** From all fours, bring the right knee to the right wrist, taking the foot towards the left hand so that the right shin forms as near a straight line as possible from right wrist to left wrist. Slide the left leg back, as you lower both hips close to the floor. If right buttock does not rest on floor put a block or folded blanket underneath. Lift up through chest and out of lower back. Let front of right thigh lengthen as hips gently ease down. Breathe and settle into the position. Feel the stretch through outer right hip and inner left hip. Stay for several breaths then come into downward facing dog before repeating on other side.

### **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.

