



## Developing a Home Practice Handout week 5

*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.

**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.

### **Step 3: Postures – 10 minutes**

**Standing Yoga Mudra:** Stand in mountain pose, feet together, pulling up through spine, arms down by the sides. Clasp hands behind back or take hold of a strap or



belt. Lift the arms on an inhale, straightening the elbows and expanding the chest. On an exhale fold forward from the hips, allowing the arms to come upwards towards the top of the head and then allow them to relax over the head towards the ground. Stay and breathe for up to eight full breaths, then come up very slowly, head last. Keep arms raised until you are upright, then exhale to release hands towards the body. *Precautions: any shoulder joint issues or high or low blood pressure only fold forward if you can do so without discomfort.*

**Dancer's pose (Natarajasana):** Begin in mountain pose. Bend the right knee keeping it in contact with the left knee, and take hold of the right foot with the right hand, without twisting to do so. If this is not possible hook a strap around the foot and take hold of the strap. Encourage the foot gently towards the buttock. As you inhale raise the left hand forward and begin to arch the back, pulling the right foot upwards and backwards. Steady yourself against a wall with the left hand if necessary to get your balance. Keep the chest and torso facing front, do not twist towards the right side of the body. Breathe and hold as long as is comfortable. Exhale and reverse out gently. Repeat on other side.



**Lying Twist (Jathara Parivartana):** Lie on the floor with your knees bent in towards the buttocks, feet on the floor. Raise the arms to shoulder height on the floor, placing the palms down. Take an inhale, and as you exhale pull the navel in towards the spine to engage the core and begin to lower the knees towards the right side, allowing the torso to twist and the left hip to come off the mat. Keep both shoulders in contact with the mat. Take the knees down towards the floor with control, keeping them together if possible. Gently pull in through the abdominals, inhale and come back up to centre. Repeat on the other side. For a more challenging version, begin with the feet in the air, shins parallel to the floor and maintain this position as you lower and then raise back up. Ensure the lower back remains on the floor throughout by pulling the navel back towards the spine.

#### 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.

