



Developing a Home Practice Handout week 9

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 on the inhale, and letting go of tension on the exhale.



Step 2: Preparatory work – 5 - 8 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. Then separate the knees and circle them in opposite directions, warming the hip joints. Reverse direction.



Hamstring Stretching: 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. Breathe into the back of the knee and hold. Repeat both steps on the left. 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. Breathe into the back of the knee and hold. 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 the mat, allowing right hip to come up. Take the right hand out to shoulder level along the mat. 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

Parsvokanasana, side angle pose: From Tadasana bring legs into same position as for Warrior II (see handout week 1) starting right toes out to 90 deg. Stage 1) Bring the right elbow to the right thigh, ensuring the kneecap is pointing in the same direction as the middle toe. Rotate torso upwards and straighten left arm, stretching fingers to ceiling. Breathe and hold. Stage 2) bring the right hand to cup the floor near the little toe behind the foot. With the left hand overhead bring the palm over to the direction you are bending, forming a straight line from left foot to left hand. Build holding from 3 to 8 breaths. Repeat other side.



Virabhadrasana III, Warrior III balance: Stand facing a wall, and place the palms on the wall at waist height. Walk the legs back till your body is parallel to floor and legs are vertical. Raise one leg up, foot flexed, and without tipping the pelvis to the side. Gently push away from the wall with the hands and balance, pushing strongly into lower foot and extending sole of raised foot out and back. When you are confident in the balance, try to come into it from the centre of the room by raising the hands above the head, palms facing. Shift weight to one foot and allow the other to come up and back in line with the arms and body, as you swing forwards into the pose like a pendulum. To lessen the work in the back, come into the pose with the arms by the sides, as illustrated. Hold and breathe deeply for 3 – 5 breaths.

Upavista Konasana, Straddle pose: Begin in Dandasana, seated with legs straight out in front of you. Separate the legs to wide position, but not too wide. If your lower back rounds in this position sit on a block or folded blanket. Ensure knee caps are pointing up to ceiling. From here stretch up out of the lower spine, tone the abdominals and gently bring the hands in front of you, leaning forwards. Begin to walk forwards with the hands as far as you can without allowing the spine to round. Ensure the pubic bone is tipping down towards the floor and the tailbone back and up. Hold and breathe. Ultimately you are aiming to get the chin, and then the chest on the floor. Be VERY mindful that you do not push yourself too far in this posture, just do what you can and work to your intelligent edge.



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.

