

strength * spirit * solace

Newsletter

February 2004

Dear friend...

What is yoga all about, if not the vital process of stretching yourself to become fully you? In this ever-changing state of growth and renewal, feelings of compassion and loving intentions may spontaneously begin to arise within you. After a while, it may begin to seem like love is *always* present in your life.

As you develop your yoga practice, you begin to stay more in the present moment, to fully receive the moment just as it is, and you experience more loving intentions (even towards difficult people), and ultimately, you begin to feel less separation from mankind as a whole. Loving-kindness is the intention of goodwill towards yourself and others. In the Buddhist tradition, the terms “loving-kindness” and “compassion” refer to qualities of both the mind and heart. When fully realized, loving-kindness and compassion can greatly enhance your yoga practice and your daily life.

Keep up the great work and let your light shine on!

Namasté,
Sara Delaney

Spiritual Readings

There's a Hole in My Sidewalk

By Portia Nelson

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost.... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend that I don't see it.
I fall in again.

I can't believe I am in this same place.
But, it still isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I *see* it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit ... but, my eyes are open.
I know where I am.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

I walk down another street.

Poses You Can Do at Home

Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog)

Upward-Facing Dog challenges you to lift and open your chest.



Benefits

- Improves posture
- Strengthens the spine, arms, wrists
- Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen
- Firms the gluteus
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Helps relieve mild depression, fatigue, and sciatica
- Therapeutic for asthma

Contraindications/Cautions

- Back injury

- Pregnancy

Step by Step

1. Lie prone on the floor. Stretch your legs back, with the tops of your feet on the floor. Bend your elbows and spread your palms on the floor beside your waist so that your forearms are relatively perpendicular to the floor.
2. Inhale and press your inner hands firmly into the floor and slightly back, as if you were trying to push yourself forward along the floor. Then straighten your arms and simultaneously lift your torso up and your legs a few inches off the floor on an inhalation. Keep the thighs firm and slightly turned inward, the arms firm and turned out so the elbow creases face forward.
3. Press the tailbone toward the pubis and lift the pubis toward the navel. Narrow the hip points. Firm but don't harden the gluteus.
4. Firm the shoulder blades against the back and puff the side ribs forward. Lift through the top of the sternum but avoid pushing the front ribs forward, which only hardens the lower back. Look straight ahead or tip the head back slightly, but take care not to compress the back of the neck and harden the throat.

Beginners Tip

Actively draw the shoulders away from the ears by lengthening down along the back armpits, pulling the shoulder blades toward the tailbone, and puffing the side ribs forward.

Deepen the Pose

To increase the strength and lightness of this pose, push from the backs of your knees along the calves and out through the heels. The tops of your feet will press more firmly against the floor; as they do, lift the top sternum up and forward.

Nutrition

Are you getting enough calcium in your diet?

Approximately 25 million American women have some degree of osteoporosis; the disease will affect one-third to one-half of post-menopausal women, and 5 million American men suffer from osteoporosis.

Calcium is the mineral in your body that makes up your bones and keeps them strong. Ninety-nine percent of the calcium in your body is stored in your bones and teeth. The remaining 1% is in your blood and soft tissues and is essential for life and health. Without this tiny 1% of calcium, your muscles wouldn't contract correctly, your blood wouldn't clot and your nerves wouldn't carry messages. It is mainly the calcium in your diet that spares, or protects, the calcium in your bones. In addition to their structural role, your bones are your emergency supply of calcium. Your body actually tears down

and builds bone all of the time in order to make its calcium available for your body's functions. If you don't get enough calcium from the food you eat, your body automatically takes the calcium you need from your bones. If your body continues to tear down more bone than it replaces over a period of years to get calcium, your bones become weak and break easily. This leads to the crippling bone disease called "osteoporosis."

Here is a recipe for a natural and delicious way to get more calcium in your diet!

Tomato Basil Soup

- 8 ripe plum tomatoes or 1 16-oz can of tomatoes (drained)
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 pinch ground red pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil or 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 2 cups skim or 1% milk
- Salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- Fresh basil leaves for garnish, optional

In a large pot of boiling water, blanch the ripe tomatoes for 10 seconds. Transfer to colander; cool slightly. Peel off skin. Cut tomatoes in half; remove seeds and chop. In a medium saucepan cook the onion in olive oil over medium heat, stirring frequently, until golden brown, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute longer. Add the chopped tomatoes. Cook uncovered over medium heat for 20 minutes. (If using canned tomatoes, decrease cooking time to 10 minutes.) Spoon $\frac{3}{4}$ of mixture into food processor or blender container; puree until smooth.

Return to saucepan. Add red pepper, basil and milk to the soup. Heat until hot but do not boil. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Divide the soup into two warm bowls and serve immediately. Garnish with fresh basil leaves, if desired. Yields 4 cups. Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 220 calories, 11 grams protein, 28 grams carbohydrates, 8 grams fat, **300 mg calcium!**

Your Questions Answered!

Do you have a question? Email it to me at question@saradelaney.com.

➤ **Q:**

My doctor recently diagnosed me with IBS. What is it exactly, and what can I do naturally – through yoga and diet – to alleviate my symptoms? I don't want to go on a daily prescription pill. Please help!

A:

Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, affects 30 million adults in the U.S., and is a problem that affects mainly the bowel (also called the large intestine). IBS can cause cramping, bloating, gas, diarrhea, and constipation. Sometimes a particular food or an allergy triggers an episode, but generally no one factor can be blamed.

Many experts recommend regular stress reduction and exercise, like yoga, as a more effective way to prevent recurrences over the long run. Abdominal breathing, in particular, has proven helpful in IBS sufferers, and deep inhalations and exhalations may benefit those who breathe shallowly when stressed or swallow air while eating or talking, trapping air in the stomach.

IBS sufferers often battle bowel patterns that are painful and unpredictable. During a flare-up, concentrate on yoga postures that provide a soothing effect. Many forward bends and spinal twists are good for the digestive system, and may help soothe a hyperactive bowel or stimulate a sluggish one.

But yoga is just one component to fighting IBS. When symptoms recur, experts have found that IBS responds best to a care plan that incorporates anxiety relief, exercise, and a diet that eliminates aggravating – treatment that respects the whole person. Below is a simple list of remedies I have found to be helpful for my students, as well as for myself.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome	
Remedy	Helpful Notes
Omega fatty acids (flax seed oil)	Have both a healing and a cleansing effect. They help protect the intestinal lining. Take 1-2 tablespoons of flax seed oil daily.
Garlic	Helps with digestion and to eliminate toxins in the colon.
Lactobacillus acidophilus	Friendly bacteria needed for good bowel and colon health.
Alfalfa	Has vitamin K, which is needed to build intestinal flora for good digestion.
Ginger	Herb that helps with IBS. May be taken in the form of an herbal ginger tea.
Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend)	Uttanasana can be used as a resting pose. Stay in the pose for 30 seconds to 1 minute. The compression between the upper and lower body is good for digestion.
Parivrtta Trikonasana (Revolved Triangle Pose)	Stay in this pose anywhere from 30 seconds to one minute. Exhale, release the twist, and bring your torso back to upright with an inhalation. Repeat for the same length of time with the legs reversed, twisting to the left.

Contemplate...

Anjali Mudra – visualize the image of a person in a meditative pose known as siddhasana (seated cross legged), palms placed together in the position of prayer. This hand gesture or seal is known as the “anjali mudra” that connects the meditator to the divine within. The fingertips point upwards, indicating a special reverence and prayerful countenance as well as channeling energy upwards. This physical posture is often performed to complete one’s yoga practice, sealing in all the good efforts within the body. This form of yoga, also known as the “yoga of devotion,” instills our yoga practice with a conscious spirituality. The person embodies a feeling of gratitude. This person is you...



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*"When you come to the edge of all that you know, you must believe one of two things:
There will be earth upon which to stand, or you will be given wings to fly."*