



strength * spirit * solace

Newsletter

June 2004

Dear friend...

In Sanskrit, one of the words for perfection is *purna*, usually translated as “fullness or wholeness”, meaning that everything in this world arises from and is contained inside one single energy. This energy is always complete, perfect and joyful, and it is present in all forms, thoughts, and states of being.

Contrast that definition of perfection to the American idea of perfection. In our everyday speech, the word perfect means flawless. We live in a society where every billboard, magazine and TV show insists that we should pay the price for perfection. When we can't make things perfect, then there must be something wrong with us.

Our idea of perfection (which arises from the ego's need to explain and control almost everything) inevitably keeps us from the true experience of perfection. Our striving for “perfection” blocks our view of the very perfection we are searching so hard to find. When our perfectionism exhausts itself, it leaves us suddenly open to the startling truth of what we already have.

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

Namasté,

Sara

My Yoga Class Schedule

Currently, I am only teaching yoga for The Children's Hospital employee yoga program. However, I am available to teach private yoga classes to you in your home. You can contact me at yoga@saradelaney.com to schedule an appointment. Watch for an expanded studio class schedule in the fall!

Meditations

Looking Inside

I will dive down deep within myself. In the quiet of the moment, I will let my mind wander and come to a restful place. Whatever helps me do this, I will do. I will cultivate the quiet within myself from where I draw strength. I can nourish myself if I take the time to sink into quiet and meditation. There is a secret world within me – a world to get to know, to explore, and to be in. This is the world that is mine and only mine, but that paradoxically connects me with all that is infinite and divine. Through this inner world I connect with the spirit that dwells within me and around me. All that I need to arm myself for my journey through life begins here.

Poses You Can Do at Home

Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose)

Bound Angle Pose, also called Cobbler's Pose after the typical sitting position of Indian cobblers, is an excellent groin- and hip-opener.



Benefits

- Stimulates abdominal organs, ovaries and prostate gland, bladder, and kidneys
- Stimulates the heart and improves general circulation
- Stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knees
- Helps relieve mild depression, anxiety, and fatigue
- Soothes menstrual discomfort and sciatica
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Therapeutic for flat feet, high blood pressure, infertility, and asthma
- Consistent practice of this pose until late into pregnancy is said to help ease childbirth.

Contraindications/Cautions

- Groin or knee injury: Only perform this pose with blanket support under the outer thighs.

Step by Step

1. Sit with your legs straight out in front of you, raising your pelvis on a blanket if your hips or groins are tight. Exhale, bend your knees, pull your heels toward your pelvis, then drop your knees out to the sides and press the soles of your feet together.
2. Bring your heels as close to your pelvis as you comfortably can. With the first and second finger and thumb, grasp the big toe of each foot. Always keep the outer edges of the feet firmly on the floor. If it isn't possible to hold the toes, clasp each hand around the same-side ankle or shin.
3. Sit so that the pubis in front and the tailbone in back are equidistant from the floor. The perineum then will be approximately parallel to the floor and the pelvis in a neutral position. Firm the sacrum and shoulder blades against the back and lengthen the front torso through the top of the sternum.
4. Never force your knees down. Instead release the heads of the thighbones toward the floor. When this action leads, the knees follow.
5. Stay in this pose anywhere from 1 to 5 minutes. Then inhale, lift your knees away from the floor, and extend the legs back to their original position.

Variation

Exhale and lean your torso forward between the knees. Remember to come forward from the hip joints, not the waist. Bend your elbows and push them against the inner thighs or calves (but never on the knees). If your head doesn't rest comfortably on the floor, support it on a block or the front edge of a chair seat.

Beginners Tip

It can be difficult to lower the knees toward the floor. If your knees are very high and your back rounded, be sure to sit on a high support, even as high as a foot off the floor.

** Poses You Can Do at Home are from Yoga Journal.*

Nutrition – What does alcohol do to the body?

It's summertime! Sometimes, nothing sounds more refreshing than a tropical alcoholic drink enjoyed with friends on a sunny patio! However, the next time you mix up your favorite fruity rum drink, consider this: there's a lot going on in the organs and systems whenever alcohol is going through the body. The following information will help you better understand the effects of alcohol on the body as well as its inability to process and absorb vital nutrients for proper health.

Liver

Since alcohol is so toxic, clearing it out of the system is a priority. And when the liver gets busy getting rid of alcohol, it gets behind in other functions, like maintaining stable

blood-glucose levels to the brain. It takes a pounding in the process, too. Cirrhosis is a common result of long-term drinking, and one of the main killers of older drinkers.

Stomach

Alcohol irritates the stomach lining, and vomiting is a particularly visible result. Heavy drinking can lead to stomach problems and ulcers.

Central Nervous System

Alcohol depresses almost every brain function, from balance to breathing. And even though effects lessen as booze leaves the body, regular drinking raises tolerance, so that heavier drinkers can drink more without getting drunk. They do, that is, until liver damage reverses the process, which speeds up damage to the brain and the rest of the body.

You Are What You Drink

One of the biggest hidden problems in drinking involves the tendency of booze to drain the body's stores of critical vitamins and nutrients.

And while some of the secondary problems arising from a vitamin deficiency can be reversed with daily doses of supplements, others can't be turned around as easily, particularly when they're undetected or untreated.

Here are some of the most common:

B Vitamins

Alcohol depletes supplies of B-complex vitamins, which are essential to basic body processes. Vitamin B deficiencies can harm the heart, liver, and other organs, and cause muscle and nervous tissue damage, anemia, even beriberi (a disease involving nerve degeneration, muscle weakness, and heart problems).

Vitamin A

Carotene (vitamin A) deficiency reduces the body's resistance to disease and impairs vision, particularly the ability of the eyes to adjust to darkness.

Vitamin C

Alcohol also blocks absorption of vitamin C, and can lead to anemia, reduced resistance to disease, and over stimulation of the adrenal gland.

And, finally, alcohol's interference with essential nutrients carries a double whammy: Not only does it drain vitamins already in the body, but it also slows absorption and retention of new nutrients. Cheers! ☺

Questions about nutrition? Email me at sara@saradelaney.com.

Your Questions Answered!

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

Q:

Why are women not supposed to do inversion yoga poses during their menstrual cycle?

A:

First of all, there is no consensus on whether to avoid inversions during a woman's menstrual cycle. The two opinions are basically divided between those who think that no women should practice inversions during menstruation and those who feel the choice varies from woman to woman.

Those who ban inversions state that certain physical problems may arise. Until recently, increased risk of endometriosis was considered the most common risk. But since more is known now about that disease, the idea has been thrown out. There is also a theory that inversions may cause "vascular congestion" in the uterus resulting in excessive menstrual flow. If true, this risk is probably most relevant for women who hold inversions a long time. Some teachers say that since a woman's energy is low during menstruation, high-energy poses such as inversions should be avoided. This makes sense, yet not all women experience low energy during menstruation; indeed, many feel quite energized.

Since menstruation affects each woman differently and can vary from cycle to cycle, I believe that each woman is responsible for making her own decision. Pay attention to how you respond to inversions during your period. A short Headstand may be fine while a longer one isn't; maybe you will find that backbends or twists adversely affect your period. If your energy is very low, restorative poses may be what you need, though you may find a more active sequence of standing poses alleviates cramps and the blues. You really won't know what works and what doesn't until you feel it in your own body. The bottom line is that yoga is full of contradictions and varied opinions, leaving each of us ultimately responsible for our own choices. Pay attention to your body and discover what works and what doesn't – not just during your period but every day.

Contemplate...

“I have not ceased being fearful, but I have ceased to let fear control me. I have accepted fear as a part of life, specifically the fear of change, the fear of the unknown, and I have gone ahead despite the pounding in the heart that says: turn back, turn back, you’ll die if you venture too far.”

- Erica Jong, *The Writer and Her Work* (1980)



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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."*