



*strength \* spirit \* solace*

## *Newsletter*

March 2004

Dear friend...

Unfortunately, there is no “Yoga Inspiration Hotline” for those who have gotten away from their practice or who are experiencing the “yoga doldrums.” But, everyone has a yoga slump now and then – times when your practice is in a rut, when you feel your discipline slipping away, or when you realize that you've been to class only twice in the past month.

Getting yourself through the yoga blues is a challenge, but the first step is to recognize that “this too shall pass.” When you're in a lull, acknowledge there are different seasons to your practice. Lapsed enthusiasm doesn't mean your yoga days are over. A dry spell might be connected with stress at work, emotional issues, or relationship difficulties. The best advice: Don't get caught up in negative self-talk. Push through, move on, and grow!

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

Namasté,  
Sara Delaney

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### **Spiritual Readings**

#### **Balance**

I will seek balance. Running from extreme to extreme in order to maintain inward and outward balance is a fool's paradise. I have more wisdom than that. I recognize the high cost that I pay mentally, emotionally, and spiritually when my feet travel faster than my mind and heart. Yes, running from end to end does achieve a sort of anchoring to a mid-ground but at what cost to my serenity? I can test my limits and push the envelope using the strength and power that I get from a balanced life rather than from the speed I get from running toward an extreme. I will last longer this way, and I will be able to keep my eyes open as I go. Balance is my source of strength.

## **Poses You Can Do at Home**

### **Savasana (Corpse Pose)**

Savasana is a pose of total relaxation—making it one of the most challenging asanas.



### **Benefits**

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Relaxes the body
- Reduces headache, fatigue, and insomnia
- Helps to lower blood pressure

### **Contraindications/Cautions**

- Back injury or discomfort: Do this pose with your knees bent and your feet on the floor, hip-distance apart.
- Pregnancy: Raise your head and chest on a bolster.

### **Step by Step**

1. In Savasana it's essential that the body be placed in a neutral position.
2. With your hands lift the base of the skull away from the back of the neck and release the back of the neck down toward the tailbone.
3. Make sure your ears are equidistant from your shoulders.
4. Release the arms to the floor. Turn the arms outward and stretch them away from the space between the shoulder blades. Rest the backs of the hands on the floor as close as you comfortably can to the index finger knuckles. Make sure the shoulder blades are resting evenly on the floor.
5. In addition to quieting the physical body in Savasana, it's also necessary to pacify the sense organs. Soften the root of the tongue, the wings of the nose, the channels of the inner ears, and the skin of the forehead, especially around the bridge of the nose between the eyebrows. Let the eyes sink to the back of the head, then turn them downward to gaze at the heart. Release your brain to the back of the head.
6. Stay in this pose for 5 minutes for every 30 minutes of practice. To exit, first roll gently with an exhalation onto one side, preferably the right. Take 2 or 3 breaths. With another exhalation press your hands against the floor and lift your torso, dragging your head slowly after. The head should always come up last.

### **Modifications & Props**

Usually Savasana is performed with the legs turned out. Sometimes though, after a practice session involving lots of outward rotation of the legs (as for standing poses), it feels good to do this pose with the legs turned in. Lie back and turn your thighs inward, sliding your heels apart.

### **Nutrition – The Truth About Atkins**

Chances are you or someone you know has been on the “Atkins’ Diet” and has lost weight. It seems too good to be true – because it is! Just because a “diet” produces weight loss doesn’t make it a good, safe, or healthy way to eat. In a culture where fifty percent of all Americans are overweight and many more are simply unhealthy, fad diets are plentiful! Many of these fad diets tout extremes of indulgence or of omission, neither of which is recommended by medical experts! The Atkins’ Diet is no different – it may leave you weighing less, but it won’t leave you healthier!

Dr. Robert C. Atkins has taken advantage of over 20 million people and their desperation to fight the battle of the bulge. His unscientific, ketosis-inducing, high-protein/very low carbohydrate diet recommendations are unsafe. The fact that so many choose to take his fictional word over that of biochemists, dietitians, and proven scientific research illustrates another type of disease in our society: desperation for weight surpassing health and common sense! It is true that one can lose weight, and lose it quickly on the Atkins diet (quick weight loss of greater than 2 lbs. per week should always be a red flag), but not without serious potential health risks.

Robert H. Eckel, MD, director of the general clinical research center at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver told WebMD.com, “Our worries over the Atkins diet go way past the question of whether it is effective for losing weight or even for keeping weight off. We worry that the diet promotes heart disease. We have concerns over whether this is a healthy diet for preventing heart disease, stroke, and cancer. There is also potential loss of bone, and the potential for people with liver and kidney problems to have trouble with the high amounts of protein in these diets.”

The Atkins theories remain unproven, and most experts are concerned that a high-protein, high-fat diet can cause a host of problems, particularly for the large segment of the population that is at risk for heart disease. What's more, the plan doesn't permit a high intake of fruits and vegetables, recommended by most nutrition experts because of the numerous documented health benefits from these foods. Now, *that* is food for thought.

Questions about the Atkins Diet? Email me at [sara@saradelaney.com](mailto:sara@saradelaney.com).

### **Your Questions Answered!**

Do you have a question? Email me at [sara@saradelaney.com](mailto:sara@saradelaney.com).

**Q:** *Since I started practicing yoga, I have noticed my wrists feel stronger and my carpal tunnel pain has gone away. How does this happen?*

**A:** Common in jobs where employees must continually repeat movements with their fingers, hands, and wrists, carpal tunnel syndrome is thought to result from nerve compression in the wrists, often causing such discomfort that workers can't perform their jobs.

Research suggests that yoga can be used to treat a serious work-related health problem: carpal tunnel syndrome. A recent University of Pennsylvania study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* shows that Iyengar-style yoga classes conducted twice weekly for eight weeks significantly reduced pain and improved grip strength among carpal tunnel patients.

The researchers designed a yoga sequence to strengthen, stretch, and balance all the joints in the upper body – especially the wrists, arms, and shoulders – and propose that yoga helps because it eases the compression of the affected nerves, improves blood flow, and creates better joint posture.

Yoga's success in combating carpal tunnel symptoms should be good news for sufferers and employers alike. Career-related health conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome cost workers more in lost earnings than any other illnesses; such conditions cost businesses, too, through higher medical expenses and decreased productivity. The Penn study suggests that yoga may be cheaper and more effective than the injection therapy, surgery, drugs, and wrist splints currently used to treat the syndrome. Researchers also believe yoga may discourage recurrence and help prevent the original onset of carpal tunnel symptoms.

\* Source: *Yoga Journal* magazine, April 1999

### **Contemplate...**

When done properly, “Ujjayi” breathing should be both energizing and relaxing. The sound of Ujjayi is created by gently constricting the opening of the throat to create some resistance to the passage of air. Gently pulling the breath in on inhalation and gently pushing the breath out on exhalation against this resistance creates a well-modulated and soothing sound – something like the sound of ocean waves rolling in and out. It is important to remember that the key to Ujjayi breathing is relaxation; the action of Ujjayi naturally lengthens the breath. Some small effort is required to produce a pleasing sound, but too much effort creates a grasping quality and a grating sound. Generally, it is the inhalation that presents the greater challenge. So begin by practicing on the exhalation where there is a natural letting go process.



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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."*