

Beginner's Yoga Handbook by Carolyn Relei

(A Supplement to Personal Instruction - A Very Basic Introduction)

About the Booklet:

This booklet is intended for those of you who need an introduction to this art and a simple handbook for learning a few basics on your own. I first created it in 1969 in Mt. Shasta, when yoga was fairly unknown and there weren't many resources available. People new to yoga now tell me they don't know what type of yoga to study as there are so many resources they are confused as to which is the right one. - So here is a little guidance for getting started. Once you have established a routine of practice of the yoga postures and other yoga techniques in this booklet, you will find that your path leads to a wonderful class or teacher.

Carolyn, 2016
Palm Desert, CA



Introduction

Yoga works to bring together the physical, mental, and spiritual components of our human life, through the physical postures, *asanas*, control of the breath, *pranayama*, the practice of cleanliness, *kriyas*, and meditation, *raja yoga*. Hatha Yoga is one of the oldest continuing systems of physical and mental culture in the world. It originated in India, where its practice was passed from teacher to student for thousands of years. Practice of Hatha Yoga has been shown to foster many health benefits. Regular practice is reputed to delay the appearance of old age and extend the creative part of life.

In addition to a daily practice of *asanas* (the postures), the suggestions for sleep, diet and hygiene included here are recommended as part of this ancient art for not only optimum health and wellbeing, but also for emotional and mental stability and peace.

Sleep

Adequate and restful sleep is important. Although nowadays, with the gift of electricity, we can stay up all night and sleep all day, it still may be true that the most refreshing sleep is that which begins before midnight and the most refreshing sleep of all that which begins before midnight. If you are beginning this practice to heal your body, it is a good idea to go to bed every night before midnight and, a couple of nights a week, go to bed before 10 PM. If tension usually troubles you after you lie down, first practice some calming yoga practices such as alternate nostril breathing and *savasana*. Also, a short yoga practice with emphasis on forward bends before you go to bed may be the key for you to effortlessly fall asleep. If

your room is well ventilated, your body will get more refreshment from sleep, because, after developing the habit of yogic breathing techniques, you will automatically breathe deeply when sleeping.

Some people are troubled with awakening at 3 or 4 in the morning and cannot get back to sleep. Take heart if this is you. The hours before dawn are a special time for yogis. The predawn hours are called the *Brahma muhurt*i hour(s), and it period of time that is considered to be the best for meditation as well as asana practice. If you plan ahead and place a mat and blanket somewhere in your home apart from your sleeping housemates, when you awaken in the predawn hours, you can go straight to the prepared area and do some gentle yoga, followed by *savasana* pose, ending with seated meditation. It is during the *Brahma muhurt*i hour that the sacredness of this practice most clearly reveals itself.

Dietary Suggestions

The suggested diet for yoga practitioners is a diet of fresh foods, uncontaminated by pesticides, preservatives, and other additives, and prepared in as close to a natural state as possible. Yoga tradition holds that foods can be divided into three categories: *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic*. Each category is thought to foster a different mental state. *Sattvic* foods are said to raise consciousness and encourage calmness. *Rajasic* foods are considered to be stimulating, while *tamasic* foods are reputed to contribute to sloth, laziness and self-destruction. *Sattvic* foods include grains, nuts, beans, seeds, honey, oil, milk and un-aged cheese. *Rajasic* foods include meat, eggs and spices. *Tamasic* foods are foods that are aged or spoiled. The Indian healing science of Ayurveda is the study which has most information about the three types of foods and their relation to healing for different bodily

types. Many of my students have given me feedback over the years in how their diets, the food they were naturally attracted to, changed toward *sattvic* when they established a yoga practice. This appears to be a natural outcome of Hatha Yoga practice.

Hygiene

A daily bath or shower is a recommended part of yoga hygiene. Cleaning the teeth in the morning, after meals and before bedtime is also recommended. Tongue scraping, with a spoon or special tool (available online or at many natural food stores), is a way of removing wastes that have accumulated on the tongue overnight.

Neti kriya is the cleansing of the nasal passages. There are special *neti* pots (they look like a teapot) that are used just for this technique. Saline (salt) water is poured through from one nostril to the other. The technique is cleansing and healing.

Sometimes, in dry climates, the inside of the nose becomes dry, irritated, and flaky. To deal with this, (the late) Pattibhi Jois recommended to us that a bit of sesame oil be wiped inside the nostril. The oil alleviates dryness and allows the flakiness to heal.

Mental Hygiene

Mental hygiene is achieved through the practice of mental relaxation and formal meditation techniques. They formal relaxation and meditation techniques go hand in hand with new habits of mind that are built by the practice of the restraints and observances of aspiring yogis, the *Yamas* and *Niyamas*. Focus on breath, *pranayama* practice, quiets the chatter in the mind, even at the beginner level of practice.

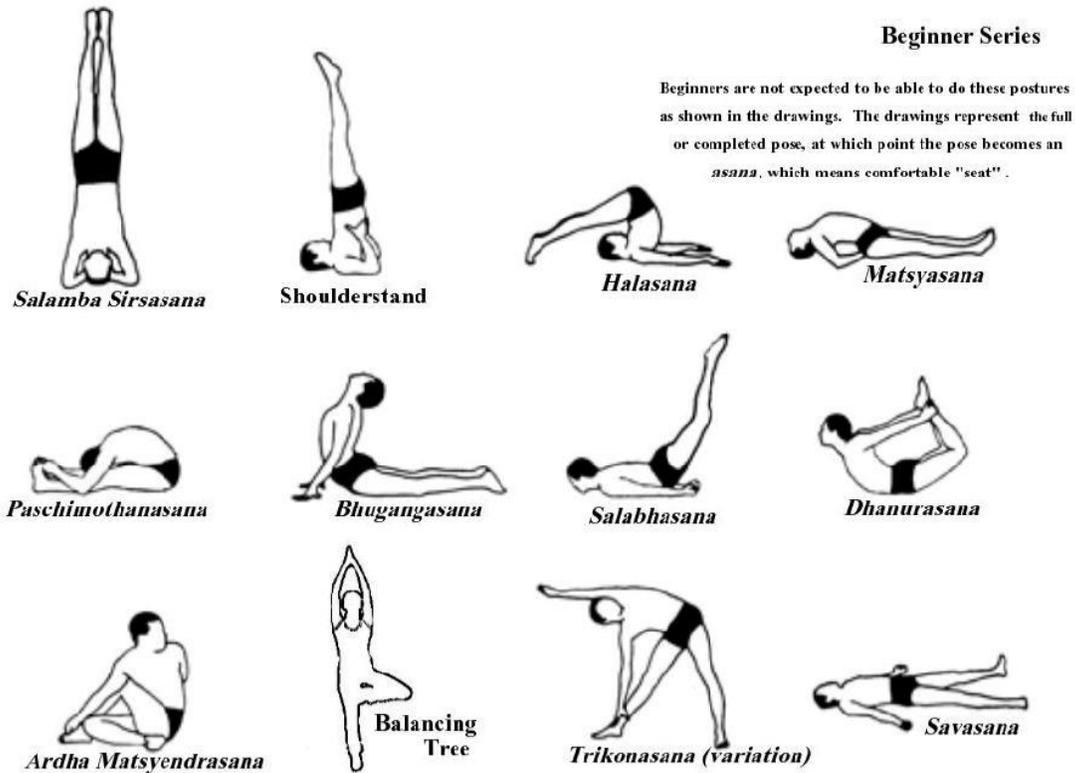
Hatha Yoga

The Sanskrit word for physical posture is *asana*. *Hatha* refers to sun-moon while the word *Yoga* refers to yoking or joining, so a short definition of Hatha Yoga is: the union and balancing of the Sun-Moon polarity within the Self (the union of opposites). This is approached in yoga by faithfully following a program of cleansing, stretching, breathing, and mental techniques. Within weeks or months, growth and progress in yoga will become apparent.

There are hundreds of yoga postures, which can be categorized into forward bending, backward bending, inverting, twisting, and balancing. A complete yoga session (or program) consists of some postures from each category. When a daily practice of postures from each category is not possible, you may plan your yoga sessions so that you do postures from each category on alternating days.

Use a yoga mat and/or a blanket dedicated to your practice. By using the same mat or blanket daily, you will reinforce the habits you are developing. Never strain beyond the threshold of pain. Gently stretching to your limit each day will result in increased flexibility over time. Patience is important. By patiently developing flexibility in *asana*, you will be avoiding injuries and insuring that you will continue to enjoy your yoga practice. At the beginning of your practice, you may warm up with spine rolls, spine wiggles and side rolls. Perform each posture slowly and deliberately, and when you have stretched to your limit, back off a tiny bit, then hold the posture and do not fidget or bounce around. Yoga gains its power by stillness.

The diagram below shows the basics postures of the Sivananda tradition.

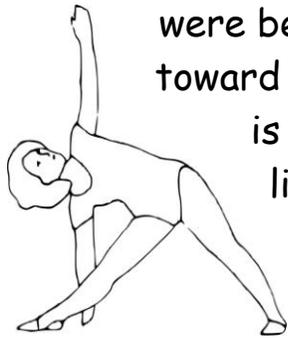


Trikonasana (triangle pose)

The triangle pose pictured above is from the Sivananda tradition. In this form the arms start out with the left arm straight up, upper arm close to the ear, right arm parallel to the floor. (If I have only one triangle variation to do, I prefer this one as it gives a wonderful stretch to the shoulders and collar area where tension seems to build the most). In the full position the left (upper arm) is stretched out parallel to the floor, while the right arm is perpendicular to the floor with the hand resting on or near the mat.

In most classes in the USA the triangle is performed in the following way: From a standing position, spread the feet about three and one half feet apart. Raise the arms up at the sides, until they

are parallel to the floor. Turn the right foot to the right. Then turn the left foot slightly to the right. (If a straight line were drawn through the right foot from toe to heel, it would intersect the left foot through the arch). Keeping your body on one plane, as if you



were between two panes of glass, exhale and bend (lean) toward the right leg. Your spine will be straight and the bend is from the hip. Your arms continue to be in a straight line from each other, so that at the full extension of this pose (after much practice), your arms are perpendicular to the floor, left arm extended upward, right arms downward with hand near the

floor, both feet planted firmly on the floor, supporting the equilateral triangle of the legs. Keep the left arm stretched and opposite the right arm at all times. Turn the head to look up at the outstretched hand or down to look at the floor if your neck has issues. Hold the pose for thirty seconds or more with awareness of your breathing. Then reverse the pose.

Balancing Poses for beginners (there are many, with many names, *Vrikasana*, or tree pose, is most commonly practiced in yoga classes in USA).

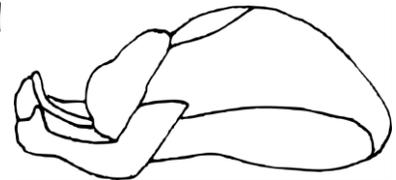
1. Stand with your arms at your sides, feet slightly apart. Raise up on your toes and shut your eyes. Hold for 10 or 15 seconds to start.
2. Bend your right knee, gently sweeping your right foot off of the floor toward the back and stand, keeping your body erect and balancing on the left foot. Hold the pose for 15 - 30 seconds, then repeat with the opposite leg.
3. Tree pose: bend the right knee, place the right foot at the left ankle or higher up on the thigh (either place it above or below, but never on or against, the knee) and balance on the left foot. Repeat on the other side.

Balancing poses strengthen the small muscles of the legs. Adeptness

at balancing helps to ensure balance while walking or doing any physical exercise, helping to prevent falls.

Paschimothanasana (forward bending pose)

In a seated pose with legs extended, stretch your arms over your head, and stretch your back upward as well. Slowly bend forward, from the hips. When you reach the limit of your forward stretch, move your hands to rest on your legs, and hold the position. When you hold a position, at first, when you are a beginner, you will stay in a pose for only a short time. You can count the time you spend in a pose in various ways. You may mentally count, use a ticking clock or count your breaths. Holding most poses for a minute or more will give you the most benefits of yoga practice. As a beginner, try first with 5-10 second hold, gradually increasing hold time, as you are able. Repeating the pose 3x, with short hold time, will encourage your muscles to stretch.

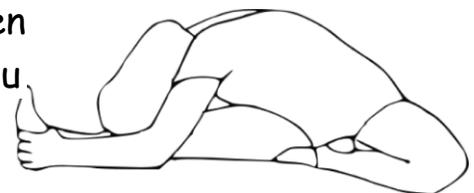


Janu Sirsasana (head to knee pose)

This pose is similar to the forward bending pose. The difference is the position of the legs. In Janu Sirsasana, one leg is bent at the knee and the foot is placed against the opposite thigh. Once you have placed your foot to the thigh, arrange yourself so that your sitting bones are in contact with the mat, then fold your upper body forward, slowly, until you have reached the limit of your stretch.

Place your hands on the outstretched leg.

Press the back of your extended leg toward the floor, so the back of the knee is more in contact with the mat (do not tighten the knee



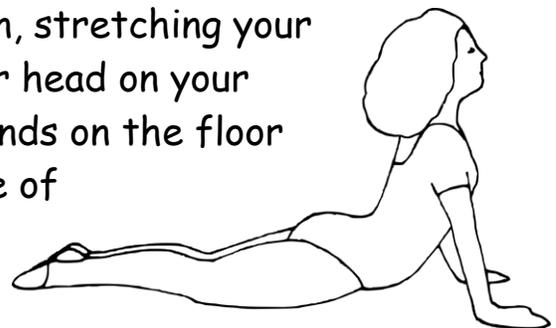
cap). Breathe deeply and consciously and hold the pose. Then raise your head, following with your upper body, release the hands and sit up fully. Reverse your legs and practice the posture on the other.

This pose has many variations, some with distinct names. When you are more flexible, you can place the foot of the bent knee on the thigh of the extended leg, the sole of the foot faces up. Although it requires extra flexibility, it is worth moving toward practicing this way for two reasons. One reason is that with the foot on the top of the leg, the knee is kept from popping up, so the stretch on the hamstring is more intense and hastens increased flexibility. The other reason is that, in this pose, when you bend forward, the foot is also pressing against your abdomen, giving your internal organs a bit of a pressure massage.

(Interestingly, some yoga lineages teach this pose with the back more rounded, not flattening the back and moving from hips, but creating a gentle curve in the back as one bends forward, being aware of each vertebra moving into the curve. I like to practice this posture both ways, because each style develops flexibility in a different way. The illustration shows the pose done with rounded back).

Bhugangasana (cobra pose)

The cobra pose stretches the spine backwards and is considered to be an invigorating pose. Lie face down, stretching your legs straight behind you and rest your head on your forehead, placing the palms of the hands on the floor next to your shoulders. Take a couple of breaths, then inhale, tighten the buttocks, and raising your head,

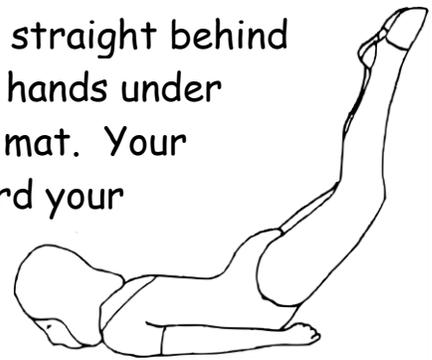


neck and shoulders away from the mat, rolling upwards, vertebra by vertebra. If holding the pose for ten or twenty seconds, just hold your breath and exhale on the downward movement, coming out of the pose vertebra by vertebra. If you are holding the pose longer, you will breathe "behind the stretch", with long conscious breathing, at the top of the cobra pose and then exhale on the way down.

My favorite variation of this is to begin with the arms at the sides on the mat while raising the upper body, beginning with the head, then neck, then shoulders, until it feels that you can lift no further, then move the hands into position under the shoulders and gently press the hands into the mat while moving further into cobra. Coming out of the pose is the same, using the arms as support at the place where one can finish the slow, conscious lowering of the spine, vertebra by vertebra, without the support of the arms. This variation seems to build strength and enhances one's ability to hold oneself erect when standing.

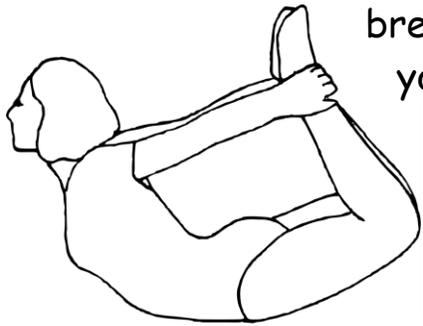
Salabhasana (locust pose)

Lie face down on the floor, legs stretched back straight behind you. Make a fist with each hand and place your hands under your body, with the backs of your hands on the mat. Your arms need to be quite straight and angled toward your groin. This position of the arms and hands provides a strong base for the rest of the pose. Rest your chin on the floor, exhale, and then inhale and lift your legs and pelvis off the floor. Hold the pose and, before your next breath, exhale, bringing the legs straight down.



Dhanurasana (bow pose)

Lie face down on the floor, legs stretched back straight. Bending your knees, bring your feet toward your buttocks. Grasp your feet or ankles with your hands. Exhale, then inhale as you lift the legs, head and chest off the floor. When the maximum stretch has been reached, the body will look like a bent bow and the arms will resemble the



bowstring. Hold the pose and, before your next breath, return to the starting position. When you are more proficient at the pose, you can hold the pose longer. At that point, you can hold the pose and breathe deeply before exhaling and bringing your body to the starting position.

Salamba Sirsasana (headstand)



Kneel on the floor. Rest the forearms on the floor and completely interlock the fingers. Form an equilateral triangle on the mat with the arms and clasped hands forming the apex of the triangle and the space between the elbows forming the base. Place your head so that the crown of the head is on the floor and the back of the head is against the cupped area of the hands. Now "walk forward" with your feet until your feet are close to your face. At this point it will be possible to bend the knees and almost effortlessly swing up into the headstand. **When will you be ready to try this pose?** You will be ready to try the headstand when you have achieved flexibility in the forward bending poses, strength in the standing poses and balance with the balancing poses. When you are ready to try the headstand, have an experienced partner or your teacher

"spot" you, so you won't fall down. Alternatively, you can get into the preparatory position in a corner, positioning yourself about 10 inches or more from the corner. This way, when you ease up into the headstand, you will have both walls of the corner in which to center your balance by gently touching the walls with your feet until you are fully balanced.

Ardha Matsyendrasana variation (half spinal twist, beginner's version)

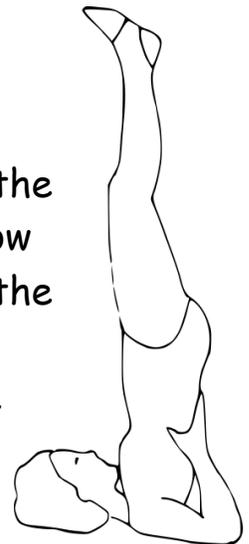
Sit on the floor with both legs stretched out straight in front. Bend the right knee, gently moving the bent right leg along the floor, so that your foot touches the inner left thigh. Now, gently raise and bend the left knee, holding your left ankle with both hands, and cross the left leg over the right, placing the left foot next to the outside of your right leg, just between the thigh and knee. Now your lower body is "locked" into place. This is the starting position for the half spinal twist. Stretch upward so that your spine, neck and head is erect. Place your right hand against the outside of your left knee. Place your left hand on the floor, near your left hip as you gently twist your body, neck and head to the left. At your maximum stretch, hold the pose, breathing deeply for a few moments. Coming out of the pose, sit erect, centering the spine, neck and head, then repeat on the other side.



The Reverse Pose and the Shoulderstand (*Salamba Sarvangasana*)

Reverse Pose: Lying flat on the floor, legs extended and arms at the sides palms down, exhale, flex the knees, bringing them toward the chest, after a couple of breaths, raise the hips from the floor, supporting your hips with your hands. lifting legs, buttocks and back, and supporting your upright lower body with your hands, your thumbs and fingers opposed, circling just below the hip bones. In the Reverse Pose your back is not perpendicular to the floor, you are supporting your hips with your hands, and there is little pressure on your neck. Although your back is at a diagonal angle to the floor, you can straighten your legs, so the legs are perpendicular to the floor. This posture is reputed to be very beneficial for women, because of its effect on the organs within the pelvis.

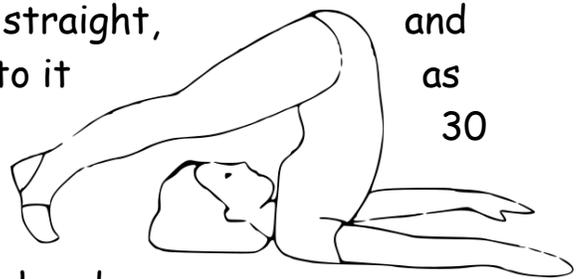
Shoulderstand: We arrive at the Shoulderstand in much the same way, but the difference is that the final pose of the shoulderstand is straight - the body from the neck to the feet is a straight perpendicular line. The benefits of the shoulderstand include deep relaxation, increased blood flow to the brain and face, the reverse of gravity's effect on the internal organs. However, for many people, the strain and pressure on the small bones of the neck severely limit the enjoyment of this pose. For this reason, a modification of the shoulderstand is suggested (first introduced by master B.K.S. Iyengar). Fold a large firm blanket into a rectangle large enough to support the width of your shoulders and the length of your body from neck to waist. Place this folded blanket carefully under your back and shoulders, so that the blanket ends exactly at shoulder level. Your head and neck should not be on the blanket. Now raise yourself into the shoulderstand as described above. The use of the blanket as a prop creates a different angle at



the junction of the neck and shoulders, eliminating most, if not all, of the pressure, yet keeping all of the benefits of the shoulderstand.

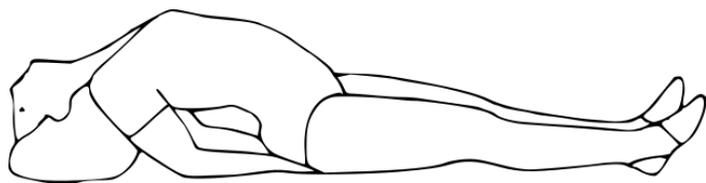
Halasana (plough pose)

A natural finish to the shoulderstand is the Plough Pose. From the shoulderstand, bend from the hips, legs straight, and lower the feet to the floor (or as close to it as possible) behind the head. Hold for 30 sec. or so. To come out of the plough, bend your knees and, at the same time, lift your chin and press the back of your head into the mat, unrolling the spine until your buttocks are on the mat and legs perpendicular to the floor. Then place your hands under the buttocks, palms down, and lower the straightened legs slowly and with control to the floor. Placing the hands under the buttocks, while lowering the legs, helps to prevent strain on the lower back. Raising the chin, keeping the back of the head on the mat, while you unroll the spine, helps to prevent strain on the neck. Practiced before bedtime, *halasana* can help you achieve a more restful sleep.



Matsyasana (Fish Pose)

The fish pose is the counter pose to the previous poses, and often follows the Shoulderstand or Plough. Lying flat on your back with the legs stretched out straight on the floor, ankles touching, place the hands under the buttocks, then raise your chest and neck from the floor, keeping the crown of the head near or touching the floor. Bring the shoulder blades toward



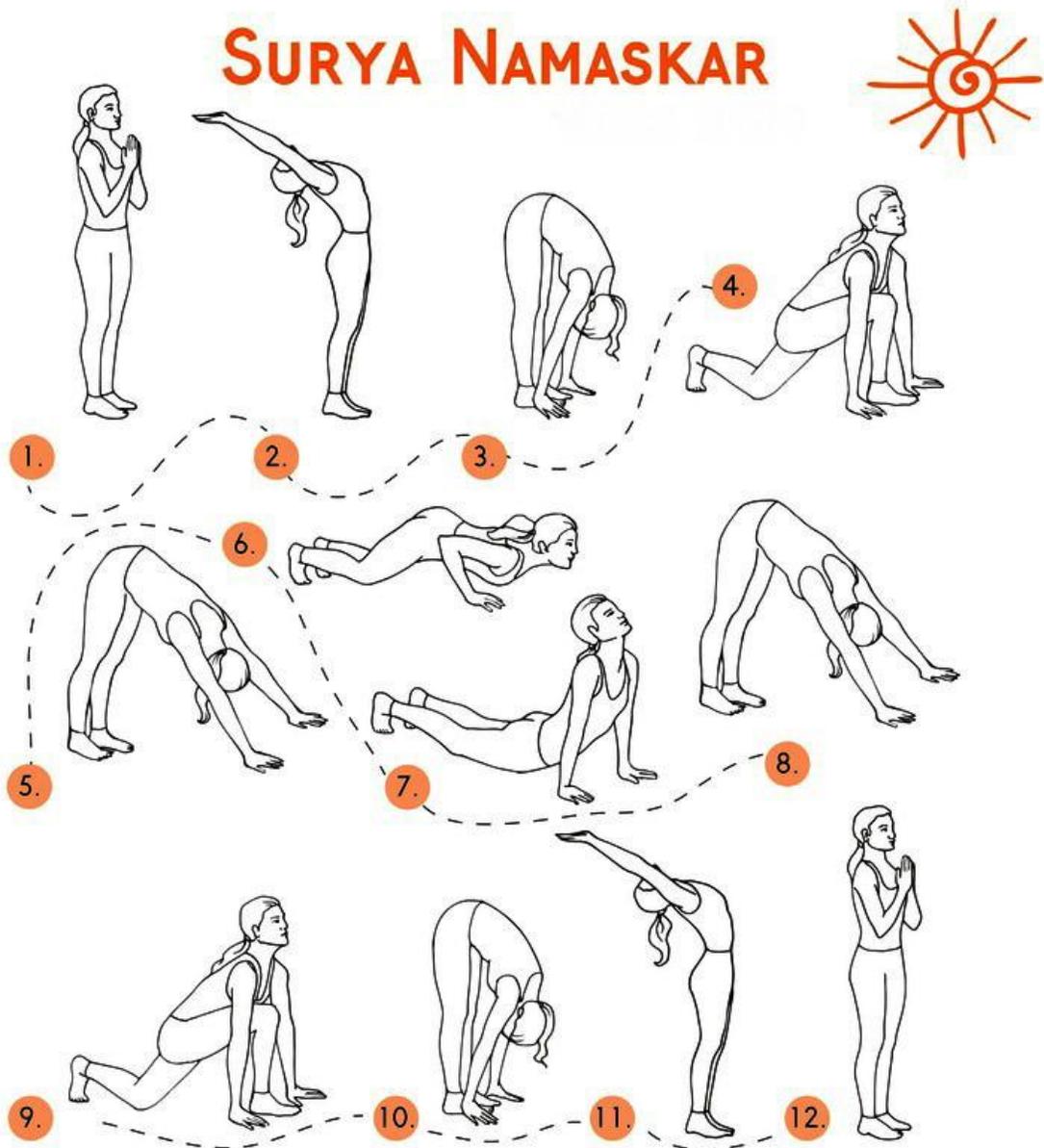
each other and hold the pose two or three minutes with normal breathing. There are other variations of this pose. The "complete" or advanced form of this pose requires full flexibility in the full lotus position, as the legs are engaged in the full lotus pose while the back is arched into the raised chest position that characterizes all the variations of this pose. (In the advanced variation of the fish pose it is easy to float in water, on the surface, with the nose above the water line.)

Savasana (corpse pose)

This pose of relaxation follows all yoga sessions, ideally for at least 10 minutes. Lie on your back, on the mat, feet slightly apart, arms at your sides, hands palms up. Close your eyes. Concentrate on your breath, aware of the rise and fall of your belly as you breathe. The relaxation can be more quickly achieved and deeper if, after a few moments of conscious awareness of the breath, you bring your attention to each part of your body in turn, starting with the feet, mentally saying "I am relaxing my _____, my _____, (is) (are) relaxing, my _____ (is) (are) relaxing". Name the feet, soles of the feet, the ankles, the lower legs, the knees, the upper legs, hips, abdomen, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, lower back, middle back, upper back, neck, head, including mouth tongue, cheeks, nose, eyes, forehead, scalp, and ears. After completing the suggestions, go back, with your awareness, to any parts of the body that are retaining tension, and consciously release that tension. You may then visualize yourself as heavier than lead, sinking into the floor, then as lighter than clouds, floating carefree above the earth. Suggest to yourself that you will remain this way, full of light and joyous energy for several minutes, and that when you complete the corpse pose, you will be

energized, alert, and ready to resume your conscious life with vigor and enthusiasm. When you are ready to resume your normal waking consciousness, tense your face, hands, and feet, then release the tension. Do this a few times. Next, roll to your side and rest a little while on your side before getting up.

Surya Namaskar Salute to the Sun



There are several variations of the Surya Namaskar - this one is from the Sivananda tradition. I love it because it stretches out my upper back and shoulders, where tension forms. Adjust the leaning

back in #2 according to your suppleness. You will develop flexibility even if you are quite stiff, so long as you go easy. Practice yoga for the long term, avoid injury and overdoing

The Twelve Steps of the **Surya Namaskar** (Sun Salute)

Stand at the top of your mat, arms at your side feet parallel and about 2-4 inches apart. Bring your hands together in the namaste (greeting) position, that is, palms together as in a prayer, centered at the level of your chest. 2. Bring your arms up over your head, palms facing one another, shoulder width apart and open the chest, face palms forward leaning your upper body back, following the sweep of your arms. 3. Bend your knees slightly for support while you bend forward, arms sweeping before you, until you are standing with your body folded, hands on or close to your mat. 4. Place your hands firmly on the mat with your fingers spread for support and facing forward while you bring the right leg all the way behind you, stretched out with the knee and foot on the mat. 5. Lift the right knee off the mat, supporting yourself with your hands, and bring the left leg back so that both feet are on the mat (plank pose). 6. Now, drop your body into the next part of the sequence, placing the knees, chest, and chin on the mat. Your feet and hands are still on the mat, but your belly is not. 7. Now, drop the belly as you lift your chest and head into a cobra pose. 8. From cobra, push your hands and feet into the mat while you lift your mid-body off the mat, achieving the V pose (downward dog shape) 9. Now, bring your right foot between your hands, you are in lunge pose that is a mirror image of the first lunge (#4). 10. Now bring your left foot forward to enter into a standing forward fold pose, just like #3. 11. Now sweep up the arms, head and upper body as you inhale, sweeping your arms and upper body backwards. 12. Return your hands to your

sides.

Typically the *Surya Namaskar* is repeated 12 to 24 times, alternating right and left sides. Different yoga schools practice different styles of this moving sequence, sometimes variations are added, and the sequence includes other postures such as the triangle, upward dog, standing twists, etc. As pictured and described in this booklet, it is the version taught in the Sivananda tradition. When you are no longer challenged by it, add in some of the variations, keeping a flowing sequence.

Uddiyana Bandha (stomach lift)

Uddiyana Bandha strengthens and massages the abdomen, should be performed when the stomach is empty, preferably in the morning before breakfast.

Stand erect and place the feet about one foot apart with the toes pointing straight ahead. Exhale completely, stoop over, bending the knees and place the palms of the hands on your thighs. Hold your breath out, press your chin into the notch at the base of the throat and contract the muscles of the entire abdominal region, pulling them upward and inward. Then, straighten the legs and place the hands on the hips without inhaling or loosening the contraction or taking the chin up. Then soften the abdomen and inhale, without lifting the chin, until inhalation has been completed. Repeat three to six times.

Yoga Breathing

The breathing exercises, known as *pranayama*, enable the practitioner to gather a great supply of nerve energy. Yogic wisdom teaches that this nerve energy, also called *prana* or life force, exists in and around all the material manifestations, that the abundance of *prana* promotes energy and good health while the lack of *prana* leads to debility and sickness. Breathing exercises help to steady the mind. The breathing practices go hand in hand with the mental concentration and relaxation techniques. You may sit cross-legged or in a chair, with an erect spine, neck and head.

Ujjayi (the complete breath)

Sit in one of the cross-legged postures or firmly on a chair. Exhale and inhale slowly through the nostrils. Allow the area from the navel to the bottom of the ribs to fill with air by relaxing the muscles in that area. Keep the area below the navel firm. Allow the solar plexus area to fill, without purposely protruding the belly outwards. Then expand the lower ribs sideways, backwards and forwards. Then let the breath rise to fill the upper chest as the upper ribs expand sideways, backwards and forwards. The breath is complete at this point. The collarbones do not rise upwards, but are the upper stopping point of the breath. Exhalation is the opposite of inhalation. First the upper ribs are allowed to relax, then the lower ribs, and finally the diaphragm area is contracted.

Nadi Sodhana (alternate nostril breathing)

Alternate nostril breathing cleanses and soothes the nerves to prepare the mind and body for the relaxation-concentration techniques. Sit upright and fold the first and second fingers of the right hand toward the hollow of the palm. Leave the third finger, little finger and thumb extended. The tips of the little finger and the third finger rest on the left nostril, just below the nose bone. The tip of the thumb rests on the right nostril just below the nose bone. Exhale. Then inhale through the right nostril only, by blocking the left nostril with the little and third fingers. Make the inhalation steady and complete, not hurried. Repeat for a period of time, five to ten minutes, alternating nostrils, ending with inhalation through the right nostril. Follow with relaxation in the corpse pose or with a relaxation/concentration technique.

Kapalabhati (cleansing breath)

This breath is practiced to cleanse the sinuses and all the air passages in the head. Sit in one of the cross-legged positions or firmly on a chair. Inhale, softening and filling the entire abdominal area from the pubis to the bottom of the lower ribs. Do not allow the inhalation to expand upwards into the chest area. Exhale forcefully through the nose by contracting the abdominal muscles. Inhale, passively and slowly, moving only the abdominal area. Exhale forcefully again, inhale slowly, and repeat the sequence of the cleansing breath with a steady rhythm. Do ten or more repetitions at a time. Each set of ten or more repetitions constitutes one round. After each round, do one or more complete breaths. Continue until the first signs of fatigue appear. Follow with the corpse pose or a meditation technique.

Relaxation-Concentration Techniques

The mind has been likened to the ocean. The thoughts are likened to the restless waves. Beneath the surface of the waves lie the vast depths of the ocean, full of myriad creatures, plants, and currents. Likewise, beneath the surface of the mind-thoughts lies the unexplored vastness of the human mind and spirit. With relaxation-concentration techniques we learn to still the thought-waves of the mind. Thus, we are able to become aware of that which has been previously hidden by the restless waves of our thoughts.

Candle Concentration

Sit in a comfortable position in a dark, draft-free room. Place a candle, with the flame at eye level, in front of you. Gaze fixedly at the candle flame with your attention centered on it for three minutes. Then cup your hands over your opened eyes. In the darkness of your cupped hands you will see the after-image of the flame. Hold this after-image steady in the center of your vision for three minutes. At first, the after-image will dart around. Eventually, you will be able to keep the after-image fixed on one point. With this technique, you are training your mind not to wander, to obey you, and to hold itself on one point.

Concentration on the Breath

Sit quietly with your eyes half closed. Place your attention on the breath as it enters, moves within, and leaves your body. Breathe rhythmically through the nostrils. This technique stills the mind, inducing a state of deep relaxation.

Viewing the Thoughts as Clouds

Sit comfortably and breathe gently. Observe your thoughts as if they were passing clouds. Notice how the thoughts repeat themselves, how a thought begins to gather emotional energy and suck you into identifying with it. Pull your awareness back again, be aware that you are sitting to observe and not get carried away by your thoughts. This powerful exercise can be done any time and becomes easier with practice.

***Yamas and Niyamas* (restraints and observances)**

Yamas and Niyamas are two of the Eight Limbs of yoga practice. Here are ten *yamas* and ten *niyamas*, although most yoga traditions (and scriptures) mention only five *yamas* and five *niyamas*.

The *Yamas*, or restraints, are:

- *Ahimsa* - non-violence (do no harm)
- *Satya* - truthfulness
- *Brahmacharya* - moderation in all things, control of the senses, celibacy when single, faithfulness in marriage
- *Asteya* - non-stealing, non-coveting
- *Kshama* - forbearance, forgiveness
- *Dhriti* - fortitude, endurance
- *Daya* - mercy, compassion
- *Aarjvna* - straightforwardness, meekness, honesty
- *Mithra* - moderation in diet
- *Suchi* - purity

The Niyamas, or observances, are:

- *Tepas* - austerity
- *Santosha* - contentment, cheerful bearing
- *Shraddha* - faith
- *Dana* - *charitable disposition*
- *Satsanga* - good company
- *Laija* - modesty
- *Ishwara Pranidharna* - constant awareness of the Divine Presence
- *Vrata* - observance of vows
- *Mati* - sound mind, development of spiritual will and intellect
- *Japa* - repetition of a holy name (or prayer)