

YOGA PRACTICES THAT MAY BENEFIT PATIENTS OF HIV/AIDS

Yogacharya Dr. ANANDA BALAYOGI BHAVANANI

MBBS, ADY, DPC, DSM, PGDFH, PGDY, FIAY

Chairman: International Centre for Yoga Education and Research &
Programme Coordinator: Advanced Centre for Yoga Therapy, Education and
Research (ACYTER), JIPMER. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

DE-STRESS FOR A HAPPY AND HEALTHY LIFE

Stress is inevitable in the modern world because of the imbalance between the demands of one's environment and one's capabilities. In fact, it is the distress, which causes the problem and can be defined as every physical and mental tension that we experience as unpleasant. The environment today is more demanding. From childhood onwards, the development of capacities and capabilities of the individual is not able to keep pace with the increase of demands on them.

Some amount of stress (eustress) is necessary in order to bring out the best in us. However it is vital to learn how to manage stress and keep it under our control. Epictetus in 60 A.D. wisely said, "Men are not disturbed by things, but the views, they take of them". As Swamiji jocularly used to say "You don't have problems—you are the problem!" A positive frame of mind will help us to be cheerful and unstressed. Maharishi Patanjali's advice in this regard to cultivate Pratipaksha Bhavanam (The Opposite View) is vital to achieve balance of the emotions and mind. It is also worth trying to follow his advice of Maitri-Sukha (Friendliness towards the happy), Karuna-Dukha (Compassion towards the suffering), Mudhita-Punya (Cheerfulness towards the virtuous) and Upekshanam-Apunya (Indifference towards the wicked).

The most common causes of stress are the Shat Ripus or the six enemies of the spirit. These are Kama (Uncontrolled passion), Krodha (Senseless Anger), Lobha (Greed), Moha (Blind infatuation), Mada (Massive Ego) and Matsarya (Malice / envy). Unless we develop awareness and consciousness of what we think, feel and do, there cannot be a lasting solution to stress. We must strive to become persons of "Equal mindedness in all situations" that is described as Stitha Prajna or Samabhava in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. Yogeshwar Krishna says that the man of Stitha Prajna has the following qualities: He is,

Beyond passion, fear and anger. (II.56)

Devoid of possessiveness and egoism. (II.71)

Firm in understanding and unbewildered. (V.20)

Engaged in doing good to all beings. (V.25)

Friendly and compassionate to all. (XII.13)

Has no expectation, is pure and skillful in action. (XII.16)

Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

Though stress probably cannot be avoided, it can, however, be managed. The following actions may help reduce/eliminate the stress.

1. **Awareness:** It is important that we first become aware of the stress and then try to let it go. Sharing your tension with a friend and/or a family member may solve the problem to a great extent. You cannot wish away problems by non-acknowledgement of them.
2. **Movement:** Movement helps in reducing tension. This can mean walking, jumping, making noise, swimming and playing. Stress tends to accumulate in the joints and movement helps to dissipate it. Rotation of the neck and shoulders in many cases helps a lot. Some corporates have even established stress-relieving chambers where employees may shout, scream or hit a hanging pillow to relieve the pent up tension.
3. **Yoga techniques:** The regular practice of various Yoga techniques and inculcating the Yogic values in daily life will go a long way towards not only reducing the stress levels but also in giving us that elusive "Peace of Mind". Yogic relaxation practices such as Shavasana and Yoga Nidra help to create a sense of awareness and relaxation in the whole body as well as the mind.
4. **Hobby:** A hobby can help to relieve tension because it helps us to divert our mind from an unpleasant occurrence. Music, dance, painting, cooking and gardening are effective ways to take our mind to a different "Zone". Playing with your pet can also help relieve tension and many people have 'Thera-pets' or pets that help them therapeutically!
5. **Breathing:** Breathing is one of the easiest ways of relieving stress. Whenever you feel tension rising, take a few deep breaths and you will immediately feel the difference.
6. **Attitude:** It is important to "Let things lie" for sometime when facing problems and many situations resolve on their own. Other situations may appear smaller and less stressful after some time. Development of a detached attitude can also help us to have a better perception of situations and this in turn helps us to face them better.
7. **Visualization:** Visualization of a pleasant solution to the problems can also help a lot. This is quite different from daydreaming. This is widely adopted by players and athletes for improving their performance. After a stressful encounter, coolly sit in your chair, close your eyes and visualize the episode as an act of an ignorant person and excuse him for the incident.
8. **Auto-Suggestion:** Another mental technique is Positive self-suggestion. The negative thoughts are to be replaced with positive ones and an attitude of 'I can and I will' is to be developed.
9. **Self effort:** Stress is related to the individual's environment and their tolerance capacity. As both of these are different in different people, each individual has to settle for their own method for managing their day-to-day problems. It must

Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

be clearly understood that we are responsible for our health and happiness and have a duty to take care of these Divine gifts. Swami Gitananda Giri used to often say, "Health and happiness are your birthright". It is through our own efforts and will power that we can ultimately solve the problem of stress and achieve our birthrights.

Yoga is not just performing some contortionist poses or huffing and puffing some Pranayama or sleeping our way through any so-called meditation. It is an integrated way of life in which awareness and consciousness play a great part in guiding our spiritual evolution through life in the social system itself and not in some remote cave in the mountains or hut in the forest.

The Yogi wishes peace and happiness not only for himself, but also for all beings on all the different planes of existence. He is not an "individualist" seeking salvation for only himself, but on the contrary is an "universalist" seeking to live life in the proper evolutionary manner to the best of his ability and with care and concern for his human brethren as well as all beings on all planes of existence.

"Om, Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhavanthu Sarve Janaha Sukhino Bhavanthu"

"Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti. Om"

BASIC WARMING UP PRACTICES

Jattis are basic movements of the body parts that help to release pent up tensions in those parts. They increase circulation to the part and also the flow of Pranic energy is increased due to the movements. A few of these practices will be described now. Take up a comfortable standing position such as the Samasthiti Asana.

Stand on one leg and shake the other leg. Repeat on the other side and then alternate a few times between right and left. Stand on both legs and start to shake your hands one at a time. Alternate between the right and left a few times and then start to shake both hands at the same time. Shake your hands and move them up, down, to the left and to the right. Shake your hands all around you in a circular movement. This helps to energize the Pranamaya Kosha, our energy sheath or subtle body. Come back to the standing position.

Lift your right knee up towards your abdomen and then lower it. Do the same with your left knee. Continue for a few more times. Start to do some "on the spot" jogging. Start slow and then gradually increase the speed until you are going as fast as possible. Slow down and come back to the standing position. Relax with deep breathing.

Open the legs two feet apart and keep the hands on the hip. Move the torso in all four directions clock-wise and anti clock-wise in a grinding action. Then do it in a continuous manner. Bend forward and perform some toe touching with a bouncing action. Bounce to the front, and then move to your left. Move to your right and then come back to the front. Come back to the standing position.

Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

Spread your feet a bit and lift both your arms to the side. Start to twist your torso from side to side a few times. Feel the stretch in your hip region and back. Come back to the standing position.

Once again take up the wide stance. Lift your arms and stretch them to the side. Bend forward and take your right hand to your left foot with the other hand stretched up. Look up at the upper hand.

Turn your torso and take your left hand to your right foot. Look up at the right hand. Continue this action from side to side and gradually increase the speed.

When ready to stop, slowly come back to the standing position with your feet close to each other. Relax with deep breathing for some time.

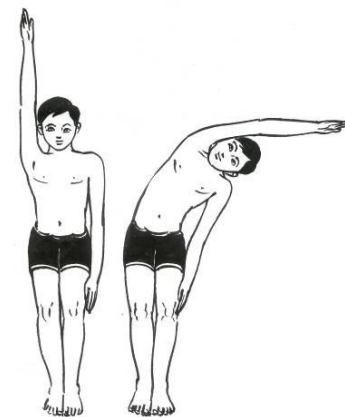


TALA KRIYA

The term, "Tala" refers to a Palmyra tree and you should try to stretch yourself as tall as that tree while performing this practice. Take up a comfortable and stable Samasthiti Asana. Breathe in and lift both arms up over your head until they are parallel to each other. Let the palms of both hands face inward and then go up onto your toes and stretch up as high as possible. Hold the breath and feel the healthy stretch along your whole body from toes to finger tips. Breathe out and relax your arms back to your sides while coming back to the flat foot posture. Repeat the practice two more times at each session for maximum benefit. With practice the posture can be held for a longer time and normal breathing done while holding the posture for 30 to 45 seconds.

HASTHA KONA KRIYA:

Stand in a steady Samasthiti Asana with your arms by your side. Breathe in and lift your right arm over your head. Try to extend the arm over your head towards the left as far as possible without bending it. This gives a good stretch to the entire right side of the body. Slowly start to breathe out and lower your arm slowly back to the side. Repeat the practice a few more times.



Make sure that you lift your arm on the in breath and lower it on the out breath. Perform the practice on the opposite side and then repeat the entire practice a few more times.

The Hastha Kona Kriya helps to stretch and tone up the musculature of the arms, shoulders and the Para-spinal area in a way not done in day-to-day life. This helps trigger the relaxation response in these tissues that are normally tensed due to disuse, misuse and abuse. A sense of profound relaxation is obtained after the practice of this activity that is also known as the Ardha Kati Chakrasana.

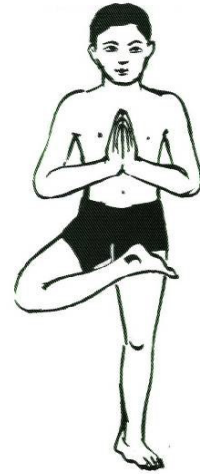
Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

VRIKSHA ASANA AND VRIKSHA KRIYA

A Kriya or structured set of movements can be performed out of Vriksha Asana, the tree pose by using several Hastha Mudras with the arms extending out like the branches of a tree. This focuses the mind on the heart centre (anahata chakra) that is related to the thymus gland and our cell mediated immunity.

From the Samasthiti Asana, perform Vriksha Asana by bringing your left foot onto your right thigh while standing on your right leg. After attaining to a stable Vriksha Asana bring your hands into the Namaskar Mudra. Lift your hands high over the head into the Anjali Mudra while taking a deep inhalation. Breathe out and slowly lower your hands straight out to the side, with your arms in line with your shoulders. Make sure that your palms are kept facing upward. Breathe in and bring your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra at the chest. Rest in the Namaskar Mudra and perform a slow exhalation. Breathe in slowly and extend your hands forward into the Agra Mudra. Breathe out while slowly bringing your hands back to the Namaskar Mudra at the chest.



At least three rounds of this movement and breath coordination activity should be performed while balancing on one leg, before performing the Kriya while balancing on the opposite side. This practice improves coordination and stimulates powerful energy currents in the upper portion of the body. It also induces a sense of steady balance and strength in the lower limbs. Both sides of the brain are activated by this right-left coordination activity that is a wonderful tool to improve concentration and develop a greater attention span in young children.

Slowly release the hand and foot position and come back to the Samasthiti Asana for a period of quiet relaxation and contemplation.

VEERA ASANA

Everyone needs courage, especially those suffering HIV as well as their caregivers. Take up the Samastithi position and breathe in. Breathe out and jump with your feet three to four feet apart. Breathe in and turn your right foot and your head to the right side. Breathe out and bend your right knee, creating a 90 degree angle in the space behind the knee. The knee should be directly over the ankle, and the arms should be stretched straight out from the shoulders. The torso is held erect and the chest opened up as much as possible. Hold this position, breathing deeply and counting slowly to ten. When ready, stand up by straightening your knee on the in breath. Hold in the breath, turn your right foot and your head back to the front.



Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

Turn your left foot and your head to the left side. Breathe out and bend your left knee. Hold the final position and, breathe deeply and count slowly to ten. When ready, slowly come back to the standing position on the in breath. Hold in the breath and turn your left foot and your head back to the front. Breathe out, lower the arms to the side, and jump back to the Samastithi position. Relax in the Samastithi Asana, and then perform the entire routine twice more on both sides.

MEHRU ASANA

This head below the heart posture helps to re-orient the flow of energy in the psychoneuroimmuno endocrine axis. From Samasthithi bend forward and perform the mountain posture. Straighten your knees and raise your buttocks up until the soles of both your feet are flat the ground. Keep your hands and feet in parallel so that the right hand and right leg as well as the left hand and leg are in a single line. Try to push your head in towards your abdomen and look at your navel. Perform a few rounds of regular breathing while holding the pose and contemplate the steadiness and might of a huge mountain. When ready release the pose and slowly come back up to the standing posture.



PADOTTANA ASANA

Stand in Samasthithi Asana. Jump with the feet three to four feet apart and stretch the arms to the sides so that they are pulling the chest in opposite directions.



Now stretch the arms parallel to each other above the head and slowly bring the hands down to the floor in between the feet. Lift the head and stretch the back. Then push the head in between the two knees and place it on the floor with the hands on the floor on either side of the head. Hold the position for 30 seconds. Release and come back in the same manner as you have gone into the pose and relax in Samasthithi Asana with a few rounds of deep breathing.

VAKRA ASANA

Sit erect with your legs stretched out in the Uttana Asana. Bend your right knee and place the right foot by the side of the left knee. Turn to your right and place your right hand on the ground behind you to support your erect position. Bring your left arm round the outer side of the right knee and catch hold of the right big toe. The left shoulder blade rests on the outer side of



Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

the upright right knee. Turn your head and look back over your right shoulder. The erect knee acts as a fulcrum for getting maximum twist of the spine. Keep your torso as straight as possible. Hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing. Release the posture and come back to the Uttana Asana. This posture gives an excellent massage to the abdominal organs and is very useful for those suffering from diabetes as well as digestive disorders. It is also useful for neck and back problems.

Repeat the practice on the opposite side and hold the posture for 30 seconds with soft breathing. Release the posture and come back to the Uttana Asana.

MATSYA ASANA

Sit straight with your legs stretched out in front of you. Fold up your legs and perform the Padma Asana or Sukha Asana.

Place your palms on the ground alongside your body. Bend your elbows and relax backwards until your elbows are flat on the ground. Support your body with your forearms and let your head fall back in a relaxed position until it touches the ground. Perform an exaggerated supine back-bend and force your shoulders off the ground so that the weight of your entire torso is well-balanced on the top of your head.

Place your hands on top of your thighs while keeping your elbows on the ground. If possible catch your toes with your fingers while bringing both your elbows down to the ground. Perform at least three to six rounds of deep breathing in this position before returning back to the Padmasana or Sukha Asana in a careful step-by-step manner.



Unlock your feet and stretch them forward into the Uttana Asana and then slowly return to the supine Shava Asana. A couple of rounds of head rolling from side to side in Shavasana can help release any pent-up tension in the neck that may occur after performing the Fish Posture.

EKA PADA UTTANPADA ASANA

From Shava Asana lift your right leg up towards the sky on the in breath. Try not to bend the knee if possible. On the out breath lower the leg back to the ground. Use a breath cycle of in and out for a count of six or eight. Repeat this two more times.

Perform the same practice on the left side. Lift your left leg up towards the sky on the in breath. Try not to bend the knee if possible. On the out breath lower the leg back to the ground. Use a breath cycle of in and out for a count of six or eight. Repeat this two more times. After performing the practice at least three times on each side relax in Shava Asana with deep breathing.



Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

DWI PADA UTTANPADA ASANA

From Shava Asana lift both legs up towards the sky on the in breath. Try not to bend the knees if possible. On the out breath lower the legs back to the ground. Use a breath cycle of in and out for a count of six or eight.

Repeat this two more times and then relax in Shava Asana with deep breathing. Those who have back problems should not do straight leg lifting and should do it with bent knees instead to avoid increasing the strain on the back.



SARVANGA ASANA

Lie down in Shava Asana. Breathe in and lift both legs at a time until you are in the Dwi Pada Uttanpada Asana. Continue the upward motion and lift your back off the ground using both arms to support the lower back. Keep your trunk and legs in a straight line by supporting the entire trunk on the shoulders. Breathe in a shallow manner while concentrating on the healthy pressure at the throat region.

Release the posture after 10 to 15 seconds and while breathing out slowly come back to the Shava Asana. Roll your head from side to side to ease away any pressure that may have accumulated in the neck. After a short relaxation, repeat the practice two more times.



PAWAN MUKTA ASANAS: THE GAS RELIEVING POSTURES

Lie down in a comfortable Shavasana and start to breathe in and out for an equal count of six or eight. To perform the single legged Eka Pada Pawan Mukta Asana bend and lift your right knee while breathing in and simultaneously also lift your head off the ground. Catch hold of your knee with your arms and try to touch your knee to your forehead. Hold the position a few seconds and then while breathing out slowly release the position and lower your head while at the same time bringing your foot back to the ground. Repeat this at least two more times to complete a set of three rounds of the practice. Relax a few seconds in the Shavasana and then perform the practice on the left side. Relax in Shavasana for a few minutes with deep and rhythmic breathing while concentrating on your abdominal area that will help to relax you further.



To perform the double legged Dwi Pada Pawan Mukta Asana bend and lift both your knees while breathing in. Bring them as close to your forehead as possible while simultaneously raising your head to meet the knees.



Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

Hold a few seconds and then while breathing out, lower your head and simultaneously bring your feet back to the ground. Repeat this two more times to complete a set of three rounds at each session.

Relax in Shavasana for a few minutes with deep and rhythmic breathing while concentrating on your abdominal area. This will help you to relax even further as the emotional tensions tend to tighten up the abdominal area leading to a feeling of "butterflies in the stomach".

BHUVANGA ASANA

Lie down in the face prone Unmukha Asana with your hands by your sides. Keep your chin on the ground with your entire body from toes to head in a straight line. Bend both your elbows and place the palms on the ground by the side of your chest. Slowly lift your head and then raise your chest until your arms are as straight as possible. Do not lift your navel off the ground. Feel the awareness of the bending at the lumbar region. After a few seconds relax and bring your chest and head down, touching the ground with your chin. Release your hands and then relax in the Unmukha Asana. Repeat the practice at least two more times for maximum benefit to the muscles of the lower back and posterior region.



BHUVANGINI MUDRA

To perform the Cobra gesture, take up the Unmukha Asana which is a prone position with your entire body in a straight line. In this technique the emphasis is on the breathing pattern and the production of a mighty hissing sound through the clenched teeth. Slowly bring your arms forward and keep your palms on the ground alongside your shoulders. Take in a deep breath. While making a mighty hissing sound, flare back into the Bhujanga Asana. Slowly relax back onto the floor while breathing in and then again flare back with a mighty hiss. Repeat this Mudra at least three to six times at each session.

This technique helps release the pent up stress that accumulates in our system from our daily life and provides great emotional and mental relief. It is an excellent stress-buster and is a must for all in this day and age. After completing the practice come back down to the face prone pose. Place your arms alongside your body and turn your head to the side. Relax for a few minutes and let the benefit of this Mudra seep into each and every cell of your body.

PRANAVA PRANAYAMA

Pranava Pranayama has unlimited healing potential and is useful in virtually all disorders. It brings about harmony of body, emotions and mind and is an important part of

Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga tradition as taught by Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj.

Adham Pranayama, the abdominal or lower chest breathing. Put the fingers into the Chin Mudra with the index and thumb fingers touching each other at the tips. Keep the other three fingers straight and united. Take a deep breath into the lower chest and abdominal regions..1..2..3..4. Now let out the breath with the sound aaa.....



To perform thoracic or mid-chest breathing, the Madhyam Pranayama, curl your fingers inward to form Chinmaya Mudra. Take a deep breath into the mid chest and thoracic regions 1...2...3...4 . Now breathe out with the sound ooo.....



Adyam Pranayama is the clavicular or upper chest breathing and utilises Adhi Mudra. Clench your fists with your thumb in the centre. Keep the Adhi Mudra on your thighs and breathe deeply into the upper chest and clavicular regions 1...2...3...4... Now, exhale with the sound mmm.....

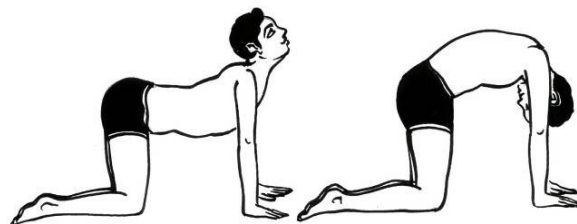


Joining the earlier three parts of the breath in a complete Yogic breath is the fourth stage, known was Mahat Yoga Pranayama. Put the Adhi Mudra with knuckles of your right and left hands touching in front of the navel. This is now known as the Brahma Mudra. Take a deep breath into the low 1...2...mid 3...4...and upper chest 5...6....regions. Now let the breath out with the sounds of aaa...ooo...mmm.... Relax in Vajrasana and enjoy the feeling of potent healing energy flow through the entire body.



VYAGRAHA PRANAYAMA

The tiger breath is an important practice to relieve numerous musculoskeletal problems and create excellent psychosomatic health. Take up Chatus Pada Asana with your weight evenly distributed between your hands and knees. Start breathing in and out for an equal count of six. While breathing in slowly lift your head and arch your back downwards. Then breathe out slowly and lower your head while arching your back upwards. Breathe in while lifting your head and arch your back down. Breathe out while lowering your head and arching your back up. Repeat this excellent practice at least nine times at each session. Vyagraha Pranayama helps us to utilize all sections of our lungs in a balanced and controlled manner thus energizing the whole body with healing Pranic energy. This is also



Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

very good for those suffering from musculoskeletal disorders of the joints. It is a simple and yet effective practice to prevent and manage gynecological disorders. It is an important component of rejuvenation and rehabilitation. When ready slowly relax back to the Vajrasana for a period of quiet contemplation.

NASARGA MUKHA BHASTRIKA

Take up a comfortable standing position and then start to shake your hands as vigorously as possible to help loosen up the accumulated tensions of your daily life. Visualize all the tensions that have accumulated in your wrist and elbow joints getting a good 'shake up' by this action. When you have got the tensions loosened up, take in a deep breath through your nose and clench your fist as if catching hold of all your tensions and stress. Now with a powerful blast through your mouth "whoosh" away all your accumulated tensions and stress as forcibly as possible. Again shake your hands as fast as possible. Breathe in and catch hold of the tension in your fist. Throw it all away with a blast. Make sure that you are using your diaphragm muscle vigorously while blasting out the breath in this practice. Perform this practice 3, 6 or 9 times as necessary. After performing 3 to 9 rounds of this practice, relax in the standing position and enjoy the feeling of relief that sweeps through your arms as you relax with some deep breathing. This is an excellent stress buster.

CHANDRA PRANAYAMA

Sit in Vajrasana and perform Nasarga Mudra with your right hand. Close your right nostril with your thumb. Inhale slowly through your left nostril for a count of four. Now exhale through the same left nostril for a count of eight. Keep your right nostril closed throughout the duration of the practice. Repeat the Chandra Pranayama for a minimum of nine rounds at each session. Patients of anxiety, hypertension, insomnia and other stressful conditions can benefit by practising this Pranayama 27 times before breakfast, lunch, dinner and before going to bed at night.



BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA

Sit on the heels in the Vajrasana with the spine erect. Perform the Shanmuki Mudra with the thumbs of the hands closing the external auditory canal. The first two fingers are then placed over the closed eyelids while the ring fingers regulate the flow of air through the nostrils. The little fingers are placed over the closed lips. This Mudra helps in joining together the nerves of the hands with the facial and trigeminal nerves on the face.

Take a slow and deep breath in for six counts. Let out the breath very slowly while making a sound in the nasal passages like the high-pitched sound of a female bee.



Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

This buzzing sound is very much like the Anuswarah sound of "mm" of the "AUM". Repeat this at least nine times. Bhramari is one of the Swara Pranayamas and stimulates the glandular secretions and tones up the nervous centres. It is a contemplative prelude to Nada Yoga. It is an excellent stress buster and creates psychosomatic harmony that produces health and healing at all levels.

SHAVASANA WITH SAVITRI PRANAYAMA

Lie supine on the ground with your head preferably to the north enabling your body to be in alignment with the earth's electromagnetic field. Make sure that your head and body are in a straight line while your hands are kept relaxed by your side with the palms facing upwards. Bring your feet together and then let your forefeet fall away into a 'v' shape with your heels as close together as possible.

Start to consciously watch your breath by letting your awareness settle in the abdominal area. Feel the abdominal movements as your abdomen rises as you breathe in and falls as you breathe out.

After a few rounds of this practice, slowly let your awareness settle at the tip of your nose. Feel the cool inspired air flowing into your nostrils as you breathe in and become aware of the warm expired air flowing out of the nostrils when you breathe out. Consciously regulate your breath so that the duration of the incoming and outgoing breathes are equal. The inspiration and expiration can be for a count of 4 or 6 initially and then with practice elongated to a count of 8 or 10. Perform at least nine rounds of this conscious deep breathing and enjoy the relaxed sensation that spreads throughout your body.



The relaxation in Shavasana can be further deepened by utilizing the Savitri Pranayama to relax and rejuvenate your body, emotions and mind. Breathe in through your nose for a count of 6. Hold in the breath for a count of 3. Breathe out through your nose for a count of 6. Finally hold the breath out for a count of 3. Make sure that you are breathing in and out through both nostrils and that you are using the complete Yogic breathing. Perform at least 9 rounds of this combination practice that heightens the relaxation to a very deep level.

After performing 10 to 15 minutes of the Shavasana slowly start to move your fingers and toes. Perform conscious stretching and make a smooth transition from the relaxed to the active state. Lift your left arm over your head and turn over onto your left side. Continue the turning action until you come into the face-prone posture. Perform Makara Asana by placing your right hand on the left while the left is placed palm down on the ground in front of you. Keep your forehead or chin on your right hand while keeping your legs a foot apart.

Bring your hands forward near your shoulders and push yourself back into the Bhujanga Asana. Continue the back bending movement and go into the four footed Chatus Pada Asana.

Relax into the Shashanga Asana with your arms stretched out in front and then finally come back to the Vajrasana. With your palms on your thighs sit quietly for some time and enjoy the effects of the deep relaxation that has spread to every part of your body.

SHPANDA - NISHPANDA KRIYA

This practice is done from Shavasana using the yogic concept of Shpanda Nishpanda, which means the coupling of tension and relaxation. We consciously tense different parts of our body as much as possible and then relax them to the maximum in a step-by-step manner. This produces a better relaxation response than the mere attempt to relax without putting in the initial effort of tension.

Lie down in a comfortable supine Shavasana with your entire body in a single straight line. After a few seconds of relaxation in this position, start to tense your entire body part-by-part from your toes up to the top of your head until every part of your body is as tense as possible.

Hold this 100% tension state of Spandha for a few seconds. Let all the muscles of your entire body be as tense as possible. At the peak of the tension, just 'let go' and immediately relax your entire body 100%. This is the state of Nishpanda. Enjoy this relaxed state and with conscious awareness continue to watch your breath as it comes in and goes out of your nose.

Repeat this practice at least three times for maximum benefit and enjoy the complete relaxation that ensures. Be aware of how all your muscles relax in this practice because the relaxation is deepened when it is contrasted with tension.

This practice is a boon for those suffering psychosomatic, stress induced and stress aggravated disorders. It is also useful for patients of musculoskeletal problems such as neck pain, back pain and arthritis.

PRANA DHARANA -BREATH AWARENESS:

Sit in Vajrasana or lie down in Shava Asana. Begin to be aware of your breathing and how the air passes down from the nostrils into the lungs and then back out the nostrils. Feel the abdominal movements as the abdomen rises with the in breath and falls with the out breath. Let your awareness settle in the abdomen.

Feel the cool inspired air flowing into the nostrils and the warm expired air flowing out of the nostrils. Let your awareness settle at the tip of the nose. Consciously regulate the breath so that the ratio of insp: exp is equal. It can be a 4,6,8 or 10 count. Perform nine rounds of this practice.

Yoga Practices That May Benefit Patients of HIV/AIDS

© Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. www.icyer.com & www.rishiculture.org

MINDFULNESS BASED MEDITATION:

One of the most productive of the many forms of "quiet sitting", popularly grouped under the heading of meditation is the mindfulness based awareness of one's thoughts. This is to be done without identifying with the thoughts and without either justifying or condemning them.

Take up a straight back sitting position and sit facing to the North or East in the early morning. Keep your mind as placid as possible, as this is the important feature of the early morning meditation. Breathe slowly and rhythmically, but very quietly. Do not upset the peace. Hold your mind concentrated inside your head at a point in line with the eyebrows. Relax. Don't attempt to force visualization, simply be alert and expectant.

Presently, you will have the sensation of movement within the head, as though watching a "ticker tape" of your thoughts. The thoughts will be in extreme slow motion. Observe the thoughts. Don't get emotionally involved with them, just watch them. You will actually be able to see your thoughts, as well as hear them. Usually, the thoughts are quite mundane, but benign. Simply observe them, passively and dispassionately.

OM JAPA:

Take up any meditative posture and start to perform the Savitri Pranayama in a 6 by 3 or 8 by 4 rhythm. Make an audible Pranava OM in the Bindu Nadi. With Japa-Ajapa, make silent intonation of the Pranava OM concentrating at this same point. Do not let the mind waver away from either a conscious repetition of the Mantra OM, as Japa, or as the silent Ajapa.

AJAPA JAPA:

Take up any meditative posture and start to perform the Savitri Pranayama in a 6 by 3 or 8 by 4 rhythm. As you breathe in listen to the sound of SAH made as the breath enters your respiratory passages. As you breathe out listen to the sound of HUM that is made as the breath leaves your respiratory passages. Concentrate on this Ajapa Japa of HAMSA SO HAM in tune with the breath.