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OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL YOGA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN 2021

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“I think that IYTA provides members with a large number of benefits. For me, the best benefit is the provision of very high quality, accessible CPD, be it regular videos, or zoom/ in person workshops. I have attended many and always been very impressed by their quality. Thank you so much!”

Dr Rossana McKenzie

editorial



ONE OF THE MAIN THINGS WE'VE ALL MISSED DURING COVID HAS BEEN TRAVEL. So this issue hopes to redress that just a little bit!

From the comfort of your armchair (or yoga mat) we are taking you on a journey to the UK – where we follow Linda Stephen's experience of a tumultuous year of lockdowns in England and how she's managed to nurture and even grow and adapt her yoga business, to Sharron William's wonderful account of her trip to Bhutan (just before all the international borders shut down).

We've also got inspiring stories – the resilience of Trudy Vains who is either the luckiest or unluckiest person around – having experienced six car accidents. But Trudy turned what could have been a debilitating and devastating run of events into something positive when she discovered yoga, became a teacher running a successful studio and has now even published a book. You can read her story on page 6.

Then there's Catherine Stark who has written with raw honesty about how she has navigated her diagnosis of bipolar with the help of the Gunas.

Plus there's our usual features including our crossword, all our fabulous IYTA events, classes and trainings and David Burgess delves deeply into the balancing practice of Nadi Shodhana. And there's a fun competition for you – so get creative and you could win a delicious box of Bush Bites: plant-based treats – we've got six to give away!

Happy reading and please write in if you'd like to be featured in our magazine or if you have any articles you'd like to contribute.

Namaste,
Katie Brown
Editor,
the International Light
editor@iyta.com.au

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greetings

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Namaste

WELCOME TO OUR FIRST ISSUE FOR 2021.

The year 2020 will go down as, hopefully, a pivotal point in history. We discovered that a lot of us can work, teach and study fully on line when necessary. Our global carbon emissions were drastically reduced with the halt of travel and commuting as we endured lockdowns. Politicians learnt to listen to scientists when our lives were put at risk.

In Australia, we showed that we care about each other enough to follow the directives and stay at home when called for. Finally, I am grateful to be living in this large island/continent, the home of a wonderful cooperative community. For our international members, we feel for you. My son lives in the US and is unable to come home. He keeps me informed of the radically different situation where Covid has been rampant.

Since our last issue we have two new members joining our Committee: Surya Tetlow has taken on the role of Treasurer and Vanessa Lahey is our new Secretary. Both are great additions to our Committee of Management.

Around six years ago IYTA phased out the three- year membership packs of \$300 or yearly membership at \$110 and reduced it to an annual full membership fee of \$95. As our expenses have risen over the years in keeping IYTA functioning as a non-profit association, from 1st May 2021 we will be raising our Full membership fees to \$110pa and our Associate/Non-teaching/International to \$75pa. IYTA has been providing free CPD point accruals via videos in our monthly e-newsletters, quality workshops and trainings and more articles/blogs via our website. We hope you continue to find value in your membership with us as listed on page 2.

I have had a quiet time over December to February concentrating on my recovery from two total knee replacements. I hope you enjoy the rundown of my experience in this issue.

*Namaste,
Astrid Pickup*



I KNEE-D YOGA!

While most people were relaxing over the New Year, Astrid, 53, was recovering from a double knee replacement. This was tough for someone who is a black belt karate teacher, yoga teacher and canyoning enthusiast. Here she explains how yoga has aided her recovery.

Twenty years ago Astrid had a hockey accident which led to knee surgery. Her knee was never quite the same afterwards, but more recently, she found she was starting to struggle to walk around the shops let alone her bushwalks. And she didn't want to have to resort to regular anti-inflammatory medication.

An X-ray revealed there was almost no cartilage left in her knees and they were no longer tracking correctly. Due to her age and fitness she was able to have a double knee replacement on December 14, 2020.

ASTRID'S RECOVERY:

THE OPERATION:

"I was first cab off the rank at 6am in the morning and went in with a positive mind frame for the outcome and full trust in my doctor. My daughter works as a theatre nurse with this surgeon and had described exactly how they would cut the bone and replace the joint with metal and plastic. I wanted to be able to visualise how the parts would integrate with the body and use that in my meditational healing process.

The first day the nurses get you to stand up using a walker and then it took a few days before I was using the walker to get myself to the bathroom. In the meantime, when I was awake, I was using breathing techniques to cope with the discomfort and not identifying with the pain so much as thinking of "sensation".

In bed I used a crepe bandage to help lift a leg into the air and began with gentle hamstring stretches and knee bends. By end of the week, I had graduated to crutches for mobility and able to get up and down some stairs. Utkatasana, chair pose was very important in moving from bed to standing and vice versa. Correct positioning of the spine and weight through the feet made this transition so much easier.

COMING HOME

My favourite pose was Viparita Karani aka legs up the wall. This really helps with fluid retention and inflammation.

I worked on lots of chair transitions, stairs, half rotation on a stationary bike and my usual leg stretches while on the bed. I could fold forwards and touch the ground and walk the hands into downward dog but was not yet able to lie or sit on the floor.

WEEK 4

I worked out a way to sit on the floor via downward dog but not let the knees touch the ground. From here I was now practising Setu Bandha, bridge pose to stretch the front quads which were very tight. Also good for strengthening the glutes. While on the floor I could add in my hamstring and glute stretches such as Supta Padangustasana. I would then roll over on to my stomach and add a cobra pose.

To get back to standing I moved into a brief full plank, back to down dog and then walk the hands back to the feet in a forward bend. I spent a lot of time massaging the scar tissue and surrounding muscles with positive intentions of healing.

WEEK 6

My progress in recovery for 6 weeks was exceptional (most people were at that stage by 12 weeks) and I was able to now drive my car. I would regularly do 20-30 minutes on the bike and had achieved 130-140° bend in the knees with good strength in the muscle groups. I began putting weight on the knees in Cat pose and a little bit of movement easing into child pose.

Amazingly just six weeks after her double knee op, Astrid returned to teaching her six regular yoga classes. Check out our next issue and Facebook and Instagram for more updates on Astrid's recovery.





How six car accidents LED TO A YOGA CAREER

Trudy Vains has been in six car accidents. And not one was her fault. While recovering from one of her many injuries, she discovered yoga – and now she's a teacher!

BY KATIE BROWN



Trudy Vains guides her students through a Hatha Yoga class – she gives impeccable instructions, encouragement and alignment cues. It's 2016 and she's teaching her class from a wheelchair following an accident which left her needing spinal surgery.

It's one of dozens of operations that mum-of-two, Trudy has endured over the years after being in six car collisions and a rickshaw accident. The first accident occurred when Trudy was just 13, another two accidents when she was 18, fourth and fifth accidents as a young mum, aged 32 and another at 36, and finally at the age of 43 when the rickshaw she was a passenger in hit a kerb at speed. All these accidents have led to cumulative injuries in her spine and she is now recovering from spinal fusion surgery.

But Trudy refuses to let it get her down, instead she devotes her time and energy to running her Brisbane yoga home studio and has put together a yoga for back pain series and written a best-selling Amazon book: *Fused: My story of Resilience and Overcoming the Odds* based on her experiences.

She says: "I love my life even with restrictive movement. Yoga has helped me so much mentally and physically, remaining positive and still being able to teach is amazing. My future is as bright as everyone else's".

PHOTO CREDIT: Chris Higgins

The first accident happened when Trudy was out with a friend. All she remembers is waking up in an ambulance. She'd been hit by a car that was travelling at 70kph in a 60kph zone. Trudy suffered head injury, memory loss and her left leg was broken in two places.

All she could remember was her age, her name and her parents. She had no memory of the collision or her life before the accident. She still can't remember anything from the first 13 years of her life.

Trudy was lucky to survive, but she needed weeks of painful treatments to mend her broken leg and spent most of the year in a wheelchair.

Then five years later, in 1993, at 17, she was involved in two separate car accidents – one where the car sideswiped a tree and the other where the driver fell asleep at the wheel at 100kms on the highway and hit a tree. Trudy woke up to an air bag in her face and the sickening crunch of metal.

Somehow, she walked out of both vehicles seemingly uninjured... Fast forward 14 years and now Trudy was married with two children when she was at a set of lights in her car (with her children) and a distracted driver ploughed into the car behind her which ricocheted into her car.

Trudy suffered whiplash but thankfully no-one (including Trudy's two small children were injured). But later that year as Trudy was doing the school run, she parked and took one step out of the car and a driver reversed into her car door and over her foot.

This left Trudy with crippling injuries – a subtalar coalition – which is where the heel is broken and caused Trudy immense pain. It was so bad that Trudy was forced to quit her jobs as a dental nurse and pathology collector.

She went from being an active working mum to having to rely on her husband Craig to do everything for her and the children.

She says: "The thing I really struggled with was the unfairness of it all. I just couldn't work out why this kept happening to me. I was also in so much pain and basically living on the couch that I ended up drinking more and more until I became an alcoholic."

Then one day Trudy's loving husband Craig brought home a Chair Yoga DVD. Trudy played the DVD and felt instantly calm from the instructor's voice and soothing words. She also found the physical movement beneficial. She began doing the DVD most days.

But then another accident – this time Trudy was 34 and a car hit her from behind at a stop sign and T-boned her into a busy intersection, leaving her with whiplash injuries. Once more the pain flooded back and the mental anguish of wondering "why?" tortured her again...

A couple of years later, on crutches and still in daily pain from her catalogue of injuries, Trudy decided to try a yoga class at her local gym. To her dismay it was nothing like the Chair Yoga – it was difficult physically and frustratingly painful. But just as she was about to give up, the teacher guided the class into Savasana – and a spark lit up in Trudy.

Trudy left the class determined to learn more about Yoga and signed up to a yoga teaching course to explore the practice. She didn't think she'd end up teaching but after graduating, she began leading yoga classes for friends – and then rented out a small studio. Word spread and the classes were packed. Trudy's empathetic and kind nature shone through and she really related to people who were experiencing pain and body issues.

She quickly outgrew that studio and opened another larger space – when accident number seven occurred... This time it wasn't a car, but a rickshaw ride, the person pedalling hit a kerb at speed and Trudy landed with a heavy and awkward bump on the hard seat.

She was barely able to walk and had to see her doctor who ordered an MRI. This revealed a spinal injury – part of her L5 had broken off and was covering the L4 nerve root – resulting in excruciating pain.

Trudy was faced with the agonising decision of closing her studio – or teaching in a wheelchair. She chose to teach from a wheelchair.

She says: "I could still teach by positioning my wheelchair in the centre of the room – so I could keep my eye on everyone and talk them through the poses".

Then the unthinkable happened – not another accident, but ongoing back pain, which led to Trudy seeing her doctor. An MRI revealed three tumours in her pelvis, which the doctor suspected could be cancer.

It was an agonising wait for the results but thankfully they were benign – it wasn't cancer. But it did reveal Trudy needed more surgery which involved two titanium rods and 6 titanium screws inserted into Trudy's spine to fuse L4, L5 and S1. That was in November 2019.



It took a year for Trudy to recover from the spinal fusion, but thankfully it's now 16 months since the operation and she is living pain free.

Trudy is now a qualified doula and pre and post-natal yoga teacher (having studied with the IYTA). She now has a studio at her home in Burpengary, Brisbane and her daughter, Emily, 21, is also a qualified yoga teacher. It's become a family business with Craig helping out too! Her book Fused was launched in December 2020 and the feedback has been incredible. Trudy says: "There are so many people out there who have spine injuries, or live with daily back pain. One word can change someone's mindset. That's how I wish to help others".

She adds: "Yoga has been my saving grace so many times, not only do I teach, but I attend as a student when I can. Yoga is my life passion, these days I just teach it a little differently. Everything in life is adaptable, it's how you see it to be, and with a positive mindset you can overcome anything, no matter what the outcome is."



FUSED is available at
<https://backpainyoga.com.au>
And costs \$29.95
including postage.

Trudy is extending an offer to IYTA members to receive Fused at the discounted price of just \$15 per book (postage is an additional charge) to take advantage of this great offer just email Trudy at: trudy@yogawithtrudy.com.au





Mum-of-three Linda Stephens is a Kiwi who did her yoga training in Australia and now lives in southern England. She writes about how yoga and travel has supported her life journey...

I can't help but smile at how I used to define myself by the busy-ness of my TV production career before having children. In the space of two short years in the mid 1990s, I got married and had two premature babies. It rocked my world to realise that motherhood and corporate TV life were like oil and water.

Like many a new mum burdened with the weight of her own expectations, I felt I was failing from the get go. Cutting through the mental fog of those early years, a friend waxed lyrical about her yoga training and a voice in my head said: "This is your rope out of here."

I'd practiced yoga throughout my twenties but, as a new mum in my thirties, I had an epiphany: *I was going to re-train as a yoga teacher.*

So I enrolled in a yoga teacher training and soon after studied pre and post-natal Yoga with the IYTA. I think that's when my real passion for women's health was ignited. I came to appreciate how instinctively supportive women are to one another. We deal with stress through connecting with each other. It's how we learn best, it's how we thrive.

After 15 years living in Sydney's Northern Beaches we moved to England in 2013 to be closer to my husband's family. We settled in the picturesque Georgian market town of Farnham an hour south west of London. I was initially struck that there was no 'yoga scene' as such. The women of Surrey practiced Pilates!

Change was afoot though: I set up YogaMums in a light-filled hall in central Farnham and within two years, three large yoga studios had opened up in town. By 2016 there was a 'yoga scene' with women walking around in leggings with mats tucked under their arms! The boutique coffee shops arrived at the same time ;)

In the beginning of YogaMums I specialised in teaching women to protect their pelvic muscles from birth trauma and how to heal properly afterwards with foundational core rehabilitation.

The women who come to my Women's Health Yoga classes are of a similar age to me, and as we all entered the peri-post menopause years the demand for a teaching focus on our 'Queenager needs' has increased.

From my mid 40s I saw various GP's with peri-menopause symptoms, but each doctor suggested anti-depressants straight away. If I was depressed, it was about not being listened to. At the time I didn't appreciate the significance of peri-menopausal hormone changes on our mental and physical wellbeing. Like so many others I pushed through the debilitating fatigue. I had responsibilities! I had a family and students that needed me.

In April 2019 things came to a head and I had a breakdown. I felt like an electric circuit that had fused - completely burnt out. I had to stop everything; I couldn't get out of bed let alone teach. I thought that I'd lose my business, my reputation, and ultimately, my sense of self. On top of the crippling anxiety was the shame - I was supposed to be a wellbeing teacher. In actual fact, I had to embrace *Santosha*: total acceptance of what is. Life was telling me to lean in to the sangha.

Women are remarkable. Instead of leaving me as I feared, my YogaMums community brought me sourdough bread, sent me flowers, cards, candles and well wishes. My honesty about the breakdown enabled them to speak up about their own traumas. Vulnerability made the bonds of the sangha even stronger.

In the summer of 2019, we went to the Wilderness Festival, a family-friendly Glastonbury-type weekend: live music, glitter, tents - fortunately the weather was gorgeous so there was no mud. Whilst I love a good boogie, I'd never been to a festival before and had certainly never been up on stage dancing my socks off in front of thousands in the final of the Festival dance-off, Stone. Cold. Sober. Four months earlier I couldn't get out of bed yet here I was in my element. It was the best feeling ever to know that given the right recovery tools and space to heal, the body *can* bounce back.

Since then I have been on a mission to empower other women with the menopause knowledge and wellbeing practices I discovered, along with providing connections to helpful resources and people.



“Life was telling me to lean in to the sangha.”





Teaching in my back garden

A big bonus of moving to Europe has been having access to exotic locations for yoga getaways. I've now led two women's health retreats to Marrakesh, in the foothills of Morocco's stunning Atlas mountains.

In early 2020, two dozen women got away for my Menopause 'Empower' retreat. I was delighted to have an HRT specialist GP, a women's health nutritionist and a highly respected pelvic floor physio on the team; the four of us contributing our relevant expertise in mid-life hormone balancing and pelvic floor care. Once again we all experienced the power of collaboration, of *leaning in*, of women supporting women. An hour into our flight back to UK we learned that the Moroccan borders had just been closed due to Covid Lockdown and ours was the last flight to leave Marrakesh.

The first nationwide lockdown was tough in the UK. With gyms and studios closed all teachers had to adapt quickly to support their students. Two days after arriving back from Morocco, I was teaching my first class live via Zoom. Initially skeptical about online classes, teachers and students alike, I soon saw the benefits and flexibility of both live and recorded online yoga. However as 2020 progressed, Zoom fatigue set in and with many people losing jobs or being furloughed (granted temporary leave from

work at a percentage of your normal salary), discretionary spending for many started to dry up. As women have handled the brunt of homeschooling and housework during lockdown, we have been particularly hard hit. Furthermore, many frontline workers are women. Stress causes even more havoc with peri-menopausal hormone disruption so many are suffering with exhaustion and depression.

To aid my own recovery and to serve these peri/post-menopausal women more holistically I completed a post graduate diploma and am training as a life coach.

For some time now, I have been planning to create online courses, but it took lockdown to actually make it happen. With in-person teaching stalled indefinitely, I've had to adapt to reach an online audience beyond Farnham. The internet makes this possible. Of course, along with online teaching and course creation comes a whole world of technical learning, stress and expense. It's a two step forward, one step backwards dance for all of us. Niche teaching and authenticity is key to cut through as there is already so much noise online.

There's also nothing like real-life connection. In the brief six weeks last year that we could go back to restricted in-person teaching, I led yoga classes in the forest. It was a chance for groups

of students to see each other and get into nature, whilst being compliant with lockdown restrictions. It rained and it was cold, but using trees for props and embracing the elements, the sessions were chicken soup for the soul.

This Easter I am launching the *Linda Stephens Women's Wellbeing Membership Site*. Taking inspiration from the Wilderness Festival, it'll be a festival-like hub of women's health information with a library of yoga practices, live masterclasses, interviews with wellbeing professionals and access to therapists and practitioners that I'm collaborating with. It will also be my portal for booking in person masterclasses and mini retreat days from the studio I've built amongst the trees in our garden. People are craving connection with nature and I want to continue teaching outdoors wherever possible!

Coming out of Covid, I see yoga teachers in greater demand than ever, and in a deeper and more profound capacity within our communities. As Yoga teachers, we know how to breathe deeply, we know how to open our hearts and

hold space, we know how to unlock physical tension and use words as a balm and a beacon. We understand that emotion is energy in motion. If it isn't moved through the body, it gets stuck, it metastasises. We are the custodians of powerful, ancient tools that are needed today more than ever.

My postcard from England is signing off with a rally cry.



Supporting feeding the frontline



Yoga in the forest



Yoga retreat at Marrakesh



WIN! WIN! WIN!

TOTAL PRIZE VALUE: \$144

Invent a yoga pose!

Create your own Aussie asana and you could win SIX boxes of delicious Bush Bites

Australian-owned **Bush Bites** are a new plant-based snack packed with raw food treats and available in six delicious flavours.

These healthy bars were inspired after mum-of-three, Colleen Zhang wanted nutritious and convenient snacks to eat after being diagnosed with gestational diabetes.

All Colleen could find were sugar-laden muesli bars, so she worked with a team of dietitians and Bush Bites was born! There are now six flavours: *maple sesame, cacao coconut, chia & almond, hazelnut macadamia, mixed berry and pecan pistachio*.

They are all individually wrapped, so the perfect snack to pop in your bag and munch on between



yoga classes or cut into bite-sized pieces and offer as a raw food treat at yoga workshops. They are also a hit with kids and great in school lunch boxes.

From quokkas to koalas, each bar has its own Bush buddy character. To celebrate the launch of the bars we'd like you to send in a photo or a drawing of an Aussie inspired Asana – it could be a kangaroo pose or possum pose! We'll publish the winners (and photos) in the next issue of the *International Light*.

Reader offer: In the meantime, check out the Bush Bites at foodunited.com.au and every *International Light* reader will receive 20 per cent off their first order.

Just visit the foodunited.com.au website and use the codeword: **LIGHT20**

Terms and conditions: Competition begins Monday, April 12 ends midnight June 30, 2021. Only open to residents of Australia (sorry unable to post to international addresses) and only open to people over age of 18. One entry per person. And only open to full IYTA members. This is a competition of skill and the winners will be notified by July 7, 2021

Heart Warming Yoga

Roll out your mat, get cosy and enjoy these practices for Autumn and Winter from IYTA yoga teacher, **Rebecca Lean**

As a Vata Dosha, frozen mornings and wintery ailments simply do not inspire me to crawl out from under my covers, no matter how many times I read about 'the fire of tapasya burning away all impurities'. Bah Humbug!

However, I'm a big fan of practicing the Pawan Muktasana during the colder months of the year and here's why: these joint rotations around the body can be practiced dynamically enough to warm and revitalize the whole body while seated on the mat, so lovely and grounding - particularly on windswept days.

Conversely, if the chilly season aggravates arthritis or you end up with a stuffy cold, then this series can be practised as a gentle moving meditation seated in a chair or even lying in bed if that's where you need to be.

But if you can drag yourself out from under the covers and engage in a more energising class, may I suggest simply dancing the winter blues

away with my dancer sequence beginning with some music - the pose of Lord Krishna playing the flute!

If not, then traditional Sun Salutes and warming pranayama such as Bellows or Skull Shining breath may be perfect alternatives.

For meditation my cold climate go-to is anything with the semblance of warmth, Chanting Mantra out loud, for instance, or even Candle Gazing can soothe the most Vata affected souls.

Whatever you do, I wish you love, light and much warmth.

Rebecca X

Rebecca is one of our fabulous lecturers on the IYTA's Diploma Of Yoga Teaching. You can follow her on

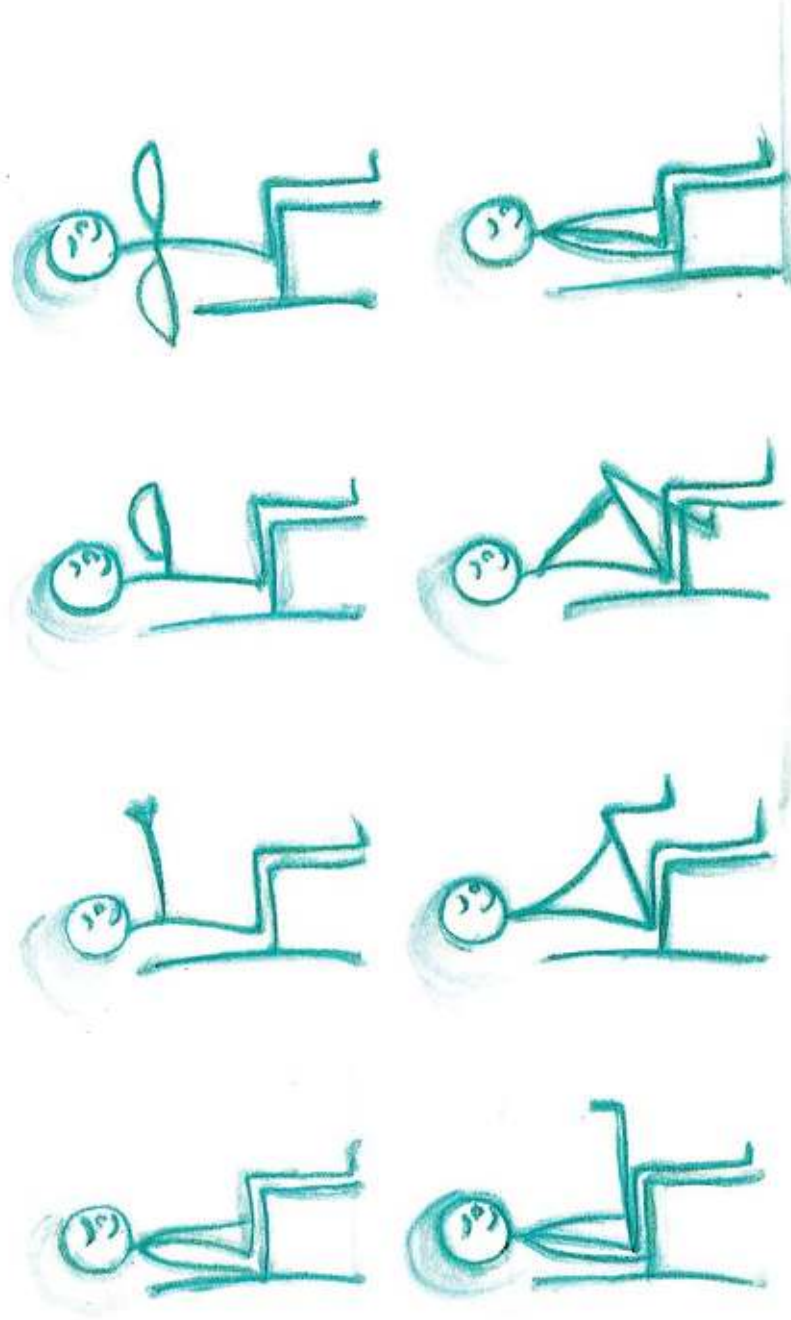
[yogadoublebay](https://www.instagram.com/yogadoublebay)

Turn the page for Rebecca's two Heartwarming Yoga Flows – to cut out and keep 😊

AUTUMN ROUTINE #1

Seated Pawan Muktasana

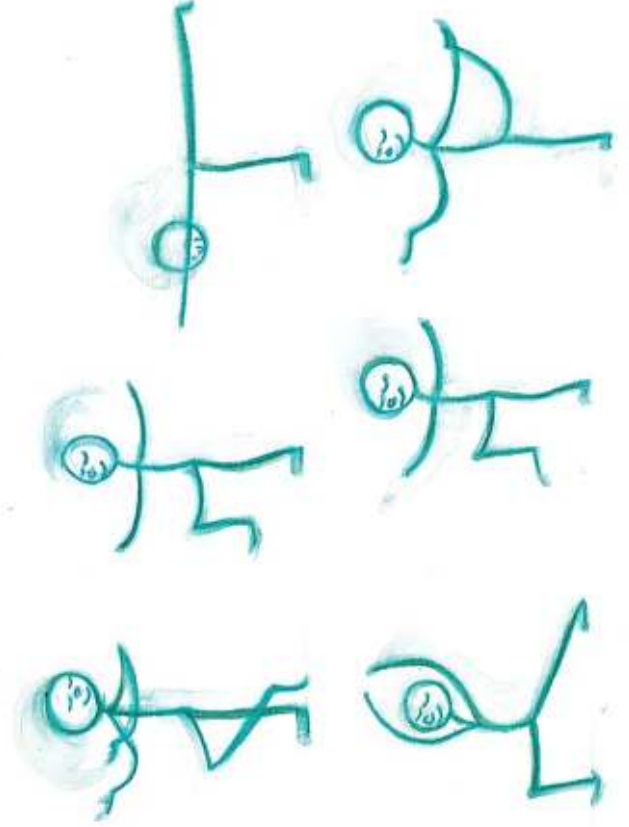
Reading from left to right: after centering in a seated position commence neck releases with the breath and exploring the four movements of the neck. In order, practice finger bending, wrist rotations, elbow bending, shoulder rotations, toe bending, ankle rotations, knee bending, hip opening/half lotus most importantly take time to notice the effect on the entire body.



AUTUMN ROUTINE #2

Standing Dancer Sequence

From Tadasana, move into Lord Krishna's Pose by bending the right knee and placing the foot on the outside of the left calf, toes to the floor while raising both hands up to the right, as though playing the flute, and turning the head gently to the left. Take your time before using your next inhalation to bring the arms and out while the right knee and foot raise vertically. Exhale into Warrior 3, extending the right leg back, hips even and the arms forward. Hold firm until ready to move into Warrior 1 by inhaling the arms and torso up while stepping the right foot back at an angle comfortable for the ankle, knee and hips. Square the shoulders and bend the left knee. Hold comfortably before returning to your transition pose, again inhaling the arms out with the right knee and foot raised vertically. Finally move into Dancer pose with the right hand taking hold of the inside of the right foot, right knee bent towards the floor. Inhale the left arm up and exhale moving forwards, hips even, left arm forward and right arm and foot back. Hold and release gently before repeating the process on the other side



Happiness is a Place – it's called BHUTAN!

It's hard to believe, but this time last year I was wandering around the beautiful countryside of Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon - a place of Golden Buddhas, saffron clothed monks and the mighty majestic Himalayan mountains.

My first sight of the Himalayas had me choking back a tiny tear or two – it's a place I have long fantasised of visiting and here I was, nose pressed hard up against the plane window (the seat expressly booked for just this reason) and watery eyes blurring their magnificence. But what a sight! Snow-capped, majestic and awe-inspiring.

It had been a long flight on 9th January 2020 from Sydney via Bangkok where we had booked into a hotel around 5:30pm only to be up again at 2:30am to be at the airport for a 6:30am flight to Bhutan via Kolkata. We arrived in Paro at 10:00am on 10th January. The plane circled around the city to enter the airfield giving a gorgeous view of the Himalayan mountains surrounding the airfield and the colourful rooftops of the houses and Lhakangs (temples). Once down and many Tashi Deleks, Kuzuzangpo La and Kardenche La's later, we were ushered through Customs and into a bus and on our way to Thimphu, stopping on the way for a small hike up to a roadside temple to start acclimatising us to the altitude and getting us ready for all the hikes ahead! The air is clean and bracing in Bhutan and the people extremely friendly and happy. I have to say I didn't see one dejected face!

Our group stayed in Thimphu for two nights. Each morning and late afternoon of our visit to Bhutan, we had a wonderful yoga and meditation class with Sal Flynn. During the day there were plenty of activities - and in Thimphu we visited

the magnificent Golden Buddha at Tara Lhaden Zhingkhom Lhakhang, lunch at a traditional Bhutanese restaurant, sampling the local beverage arra and Bang Chhang – hic! – a hike in the National Park and walking around the local markets and getting happily lost.

We travelled through the countryside and made our way towards Punakha Valley, passing the Semothka Dzong, built in 1629 and once the oldest fortress of its kind that guarded the Thimpu Valley and today it is a monastery. We marvelled at the sight of hundreds of prayer flags, stopping at Dochu La where there are 108 Buddhas in memory of the Bhutanese soldiers and Indian separatists who died there in 2005 and we stopped off and once again gazed in awe at the Himalayas. The higher up we went the colder it became and so we donned coats and hats as we walked around the grounds examining the caves where the monks from long ago came to meditate in the sight of the Himalayas.

Next stop was the Chimi Lhakhang monastery built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley (also known as the Divine Madman) a monastery set in beautiful surrounds with a huge tree in the middle making for a serene and peaceful place to meditate. It is believed that childless women who visit there and receive a blessing from the monk, eventually become pregnant!

There was so much to see and do, a walk through the rice fields to a typical Bhutanese restaurant, a visit to a local zoo, lunch at a local farmhouse, local paper factory, visits to Lhakhangs and Goempas, watch the favourite Bhutan sport Archery – which

I must admit I tried my hand at but could not even hit the target and a traditional Bhutanese dance group. The time flew by.

Finally we began our way back to Paro taking in again the magnificent views of the snow-capped Himalayas, the friendliness of the people and the beautiful scenery. We visited and saw so much, walked and ached from climbing steep stairs and rocks - but loved every minute of it.

In Paro we had our very own Yoga and Meditation studio set aside from the hotel and with an awesome sight of the majestic mountains. We visited the National Museum marvelling at the ancient Thangkha painting, weavings, costumes, weapons, art and other artefacts from Bhutan's rich past. We attended a Lhab Sang Puja at our hotel's private Lhakhang. This Puja is a ceremony to celebrate new beginnings and special occasions and we were invited to bring anything we wanted blessed, from books to mala beads to photos! It was performed by some of the monks from the local Monastery and it was such a beautiful and moving ceremony that just the thought of it even now is so calming.

Up early, our final hike was to the Taktsang Monastery (Tigers Nest), a pilgrimage walking meditation hike which began at 8 am. One of Bhutan's most sacred sites, all Bhutanese Buddhists try and make this pilgrimage at least once in their lives, with each step along the trail accruing merit points for their next life.

The five-hour round trip hike is quite strenuous in places and at least moderate fitness is required. There are many steep steps and awesome views

in some parts and I thanked myself for staying the course on the other hikes; however it was a most rewarding journey and one of the highlights of my Bhutan experience. As we descended the mountain it began to snow – so beautiful and wondrous it captured the serenity of the surrounding mountains. We all enjoyed a late Bhutanese style vegetarian lunch at the Tigers Nest viewpoint cafeteria on the return hike, which is the half-way point on the hike. Returning to the hotel I managed a well-earned massage, a scrumptious dinner, and a semi-early night!

Our final excursion was to visit the Rinpung Dzong with its ancient cantilever bridge and of course, a visit to handicrafts and jewellery – no pressure to buy, but who could resist!

After a farewell gala dinner, we said our sad farewells to Bhutan on 19th January 2020, many of my fellow travellers directly to home, but I stayed over in Bangkok and did some sightseeing with another fellow traveller, Madi – the pair of us lazily drifting along in a boat and visiting the Jade Buddha.

It was a fabulous trip, the itinerary put together by Sal Flynn with Enlightened Events.

Tashi Delek Bhutan!

ABOUT SHARRON: Sharron is a Yoga and Meditation teacher, Yoga Therapist and Ayurvedic Lifestyle Consultant. Sharron holds yoga classes in Castle Hill, NSW and her website is: www.serenityyogaandmeditation.com.

Bhutanese/English words:

Kuzuzangpo La	Respected Greetings – when meeting new people (drop the La with people you know)
Tashi Delek	May all good things come to you – used as a farewell
Kardenche La	Thank you
Goempa	Meditation Centre
Lhakhang	Temple



Landing in Bhutan



Can't believe I am here

YOGA CROSSWORD

BY HEDY STAHEL

the answers for the crossword are on page 25

Across

- 1 Author of APMB - Swami (10,9)
6 Rudimentary (5)
8 Nothing (3)



10 St Valentine's Day flowers (5)

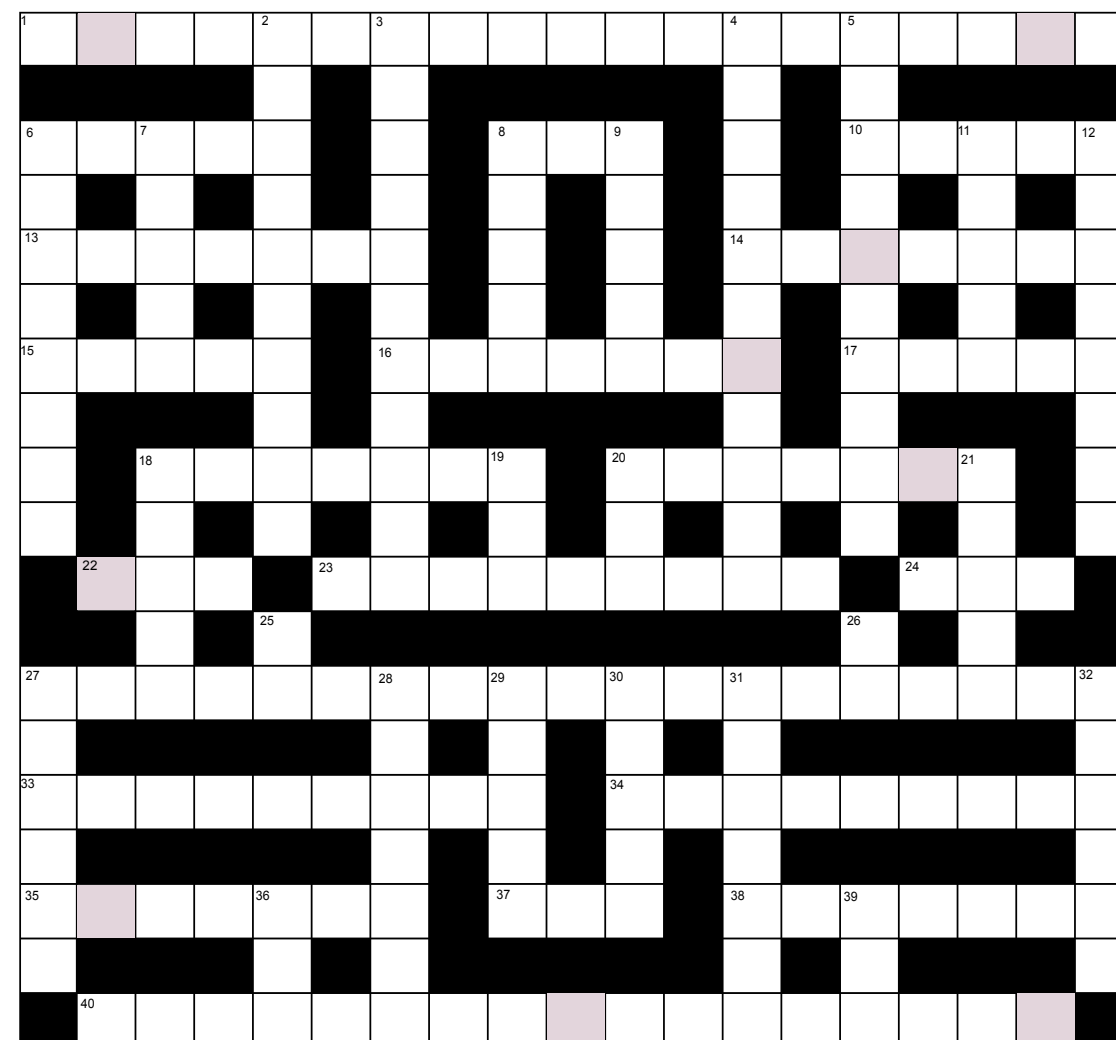
- 13 Character in Anime "End Roll" (7)
14 Combine chemically with oxygen (7)
15 Doze / rest (5)
16 Canadian Province (7)
17 Divide into two (5)
18 Hallway (7)
20 Neptune's spear (7)
22 Write down (3)
23 Losing strength or momentum (9)
24 Make ends meet (3)
27 Pavanmuktasana (3,9,7)
33 Audaciousness (9)
34 Room for a person who is invited to stay overnight (5,4)
35 Fundamental constituent (7)
37 Don't stand (3)
38 Prop up (7)
40 Cooling breath (8,9)

Down

- 2 Akarna Dhanurasana (6,4)
3 Melting Heart Posture (11)
4 Rejuvenation (11)
5 Unravel (10)
6 Crow pose (8)
7 Char (5)
8 Tycoon (5)
9 Not now (5)
11 Expertise (5)
12 Hellcat, evil woman (3-5)
18 Muscle in the lumbar region extending through the pelvis to the femur (5).
19 Newt (3)
20 Road surface (3)
21 Canadian reindeer (5)
25 Pronoun (2)
26 Pronoun - plural of 25 down (2)
27 River flowing through India and Bangladesh (6)
28 Lethargy (7)
29 Sleeveless garments (5)
30 Darkness (5)



- 31 Continue moving forward in a forceful way (5,2)
32 Canadian salty blue cheese, french recluse (6)
36 First woman (3)
39 Settle a bill (3)



Find the name of the
Father of modern yoga
in the highlighted squares

PHOTO CREDIT: roman-kraft; nathan-anderson/UNSPLASH



PHOTO CREDIT: JAREN RICE AT UNSPLASH

Guided by the GUNAS

Catherine Stark spent many years resisting her mental illness, but then she began practising yoga, embraced her bipolar, explored yogic philosophy and her life's path took on a new direction...

IT WOULD BE CLOSE to the truth to say most people will know someone with mental health issues or have a diagnosis of some kind themselves. Within a classroom of students in our yoga classes, there will be people who have major challenges mentally or emotionally due to so many reasons. Students may feel agitated, overwhelmed, distracted, heavy or sensitive, depressed and down. It is often why people seek yoga – to find balance, to find a way through whatever is not feeling right, to gain new insight and perspective. Life has its many challenges and navigating the world itself, let alone having a mental illness can be very difficult.

I know this because I have bipolar and have been working with it for more than twenty years. I have had my many 'blow outs', from being manically high and hospitalised, to being depressive and deeply low. I have come into my strength and rhythm more in the last few years as I had to accept I couldn't be the embodiment of blissful, harmonious Sattva all the time.

Everyday people without mental illness have the ebbs and flows of high and low, but I was just in a more extreme category. I have been clear of hospital for 13 years now, became a mother, and have my own yoga business teaching all ages and needs. The bipolar has made me the yoga teacher I am, and I now see it as a gift. It is a sensitivity which just needs love and management. Through daily yoga, meditation and self-love, and staying on medication, it is possible to build a healthy and stable life.

When you feel at your most vulnerable and weakest point, in the darkness, there is something of a flame in yoga practice that can reignite the self-worth and confidence to get you through the difficulties. In my experience with mental illness it is often about pushing through the feelings of defeat when your mind and emotions have gone haywire, when becoming stuck in the fight/flight response sees you feeling low and depleted. Its about standing in your empowerment and self-belief and surrendering to a bad day, acknowledging imperfection and knowing you are going to be ok.

Overwhelm is a big part of mental health issues and calming the pent-up emotions, worries, insecurities and fears is very important. Calming the mind and emotions with mental illness is harder, it's a rough ride like an ocean of tumultuous waves that are relentless and you think it will never stop. You feel defeated and exhausted because you try so hard – you try to find the calm and you resist the big waves that come at you so strongly. When you let go and trust that the big waves aren't going to swallow you up and are not your reality then the waves don't feel so big and are more manageable.

Remember there can be many causes for mental disorders – from trauma, use of drugs, hereditary, illness etc... It is a specialised area for professionals working in these fields and we don't need to be experts as yoga teachers. We do however need to be mindful of how sensitive we are to people who feel fragile. Being that someone who is of nurturing support, for those who come to us for

guidance, can change a person's direction in a moment. Being in tune with yoga philosophy also can help guide.

I believe as a yoga teacher we must show that deep respect for each person as unique and with their own story. Each person will have strengths and weaknesses in different areas. If we look to the gunas, being characteristic of moods and states that are made up of Tamas – overburdened, lethargic, low, Rajas – oversensitive, over thinking, ungrounded and Sattva – pure state, harmony and bliss, we can help support the student to find what works for them to build a more sustained inner peace. We can ask if people are feeling more overwhelmed today or more lethargic? Connecting them with the yoga philosophy, making it about everyone and that we are all ebbing and flowing with states of being. We are then guiding students to feel empowered and not alone.

When I came across the gunas I started to find insight and ways to feel like I could manage myself. I realised that nature has ebbs and flows, ups and downs, life isn't perfect and I don't need to be in a calm state all the time. I realised that bipolar is the extremes of rajas and tamas. I had a window to view my moods and cycles, I had some clarity that yes I was chemically imbalanced due to hereditary influences and life experience, however I could find a way to balance when my days were in any given extreme.

It was the teacher in me that encouraged an acceptance of overwhelm and acceptance of my erratic thoughts and that it is a daily struggle sometimes but I am not alone. The gunas are about nurturing yourself and being with what is happening inside, being like a best friend to yourself. Let the winds blow with Raja and let the earth burden you with Tamas and then find the counteractive yoga technique to help support you. The poses are a way to love your body and listen deeply to your needs, to listen to yourself like no other can. To not obsessively have to hold the perfect state of bliss – Sattva, but just enjoy it when you do maintain it after good quality practice.



YOGA RECIPES FOR THE GUNA STATES OF MIND

Here is one recipe for the bipolar anxious type and what has worked for me when I have been out of balance, guided by the gunas.

Excessive Rajas – hyper alert, over sensitive, over thinking, ungrounded, feeling disconnected and vulnerable:

GOAL: Calming yet grounding movements and poses first, expending pent up energy, breathing and relaxing afterward. Closing poses. If the student is exhausted restorative and breathing first. Calming affirmations and deep relaxation.

- Calming music, lavender essential oil in a diffuser
 - Restorative yoga – particularly pressure to the heart, ie resting over bolster
 - Deep breathing with longer exhalations, or equal part inhale and exhale, no pressure to be perfect
 - Slow flowing movement of Downward Dog into Cat into Child pose with Ujjayi breath then relax into child pose if comfortable and just be. Chin to chest will induce the relaxation response. Closing pose.
 - Balance poses – tree pose, Warrior, Chair pose, extend forward into Uttanasana.
 - Hands on wall, lengthen through spine, legs parallel to wall, upper body parallel to floor. Feel pressure through hands and feet into the contact points. Very calming.
 - Relax by being in Savasana or restorative pose with bolsters.
 - Affirmations – I am ok, I am safe, I am calm, I am balanced, I am loved.
 - Mantra that feels right – So Hum, A Hum, Om, Satanama. (All have helped me)
 - Yoga nidra – often the soothing voice of the teacher can calm the student if still over stimulated.
- FOOD:** earthy foods – grains that suit you, root vegetables, chamomile tea, less spicy foods, oats for the nervous system.



Excessive Tamas – low energy, flat, despondent, heavy, depressive, avoidance.

GOAL: Energising poses and breathing exercises that pump blood around the body, cleansing breaths, opening poses, flowing movements, uplifting affirmations and gratitude statements. Mantras that are expressive and opening. Releasing others' emotions and the world's chaos.

- Ha breaths, exhale the Ha, then deep inhale for four exhale for two. The longer the inhale the more energising.
- Sun salutations, taking it at your own pace, listen to your body.
- After a warm up be mindful in a Cobra, Bridge or Camel... followed by an extended Child's pose with deep calming breaths with the affirmation - I am deserving, I am capable, I surrender to my inner guidance.
- Kapalabhati breaths (not too much in summer) followed by Nadi Sodhana.
- Deep relaxation – guided visualisation that takes me through a wonderful nature scene where there is connection, life, abundance.



About Catherine:

Catherine Stark runs the business *Move Breath Calm* in Brisbane – teaching all ages yoga skills for life. She studied Human Services in child and family studies at Griffith University and has worked with children and adults with special needs over her career. Yoga became an integral part of her life from 1997 and inspired her to become a teacher in 2002-2003 with IYTA. Her best contact is via email: trainingyoga53@optusnet.com.au.

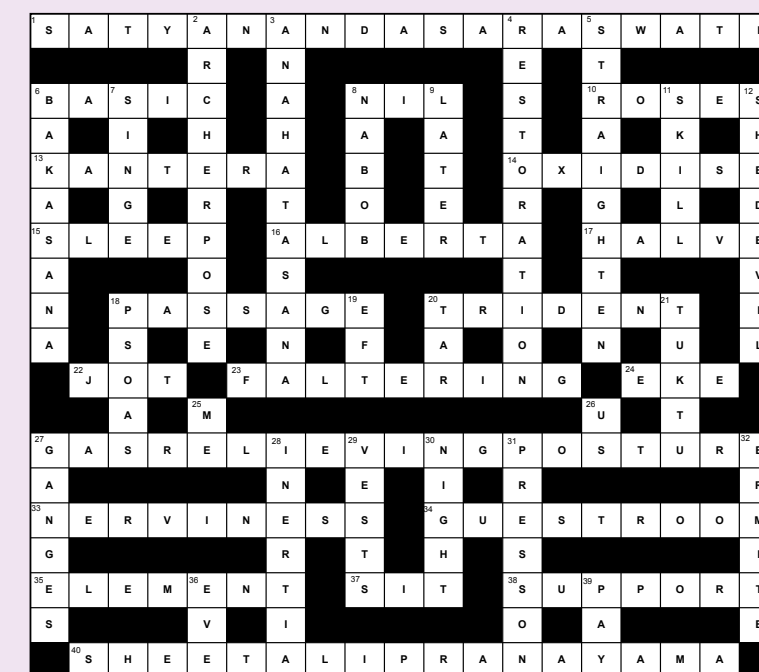
Turn the page for a step-by-step guide to cultivating balance with Nadi Sodhana...

Guided with uplift in mind and acceptance of the lows of life. The troughs. Seeing clear open spaces in front of you like a horizon out over the horizon. Letting go of the world and others' emotions.

FOOD: light salads, zesty lemon water, fresh fish or legumes, eat small amounts regularly, honey for sweetness, yellow foods, light colours for upliftment.

The gunas gave me a way to accept myself even more and let go of the past as defining me, and not feel like I had to aim so possessively toward peace, to be in the light every moment. The bipolar and other diagnosis don't define me anymore, I am just a highly attuned being who can see through all worlds and who feels deeply the emotions of others and the world's chaos. That's why I would be so extreme. I am intuitive and clear when I am in my Sattva state and I accept when I may be out of balance now and then and do a tune up based on if I am more Rajas or more Tamas. It has been quite the ride however it makes me a better teacher and person to have done the hard work to stabilise and know my truth. My best advice is to see the illness as a guide back to the true self, it may be difficult, but it pays off in the end.

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD page 22 and 23



Cultivating Balance with Nadi Shodhana

In these uncertain times it is more important than ever to bring a sense of balance and equilibrium into our lives. One of the simplest ways to do this is with a daily practice of alternate nostril breathing.



BY DAVID BURGESS

The word Nadi means 'energy channel' and Shodhana means 'to cleanse or purify'. So through this practice, we are cleansing the energy channels in the body and aiding the natural flow of prana. Nadi Shodhana is practiced by alternating the inhalation and exhalation between the left and right nostrils, thus balancing, and purifying the flow of prana through the two major Nadis of ida and pingala and harmonising the two brain hemispheres.

The practice of Nadi Shodhana, restores balance in both the physical and mental body, and is a method of reducing anxiety and increasing mindfulness and concentration. When we bring our focus to the breath and allow it to flow slowly and deeply with awareness, it calms us by balancing the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems therefore lessening the stress response.

The practice of Nadi Shodhana can be adjusted to suit the ability level of the practitioner, depending on the level of your practice and life circumstances. For some, the basic practice of Nadi shodhana will be enough as a long-term practice. It is a great practice to use in preparation for meditation, however through the inclusion of kumbhakas and bandhas over time, can be a complete practice in itself.

PREPARATION

Sit in a comfortable seated position and place your right hand in a position called Nasikagra mudra. The index and middle fingers of the right hand gently rest at the eyebrow centre, and the thumb just above the right nostril and the ring finger just above the left, use these fingers to control the flow of breath in the nostrils by alternately closing one nostril then releasing and closing the other. The breath should be silent and not restricted in any way.

BASIC NADI SHODHANA (Alternate Nostril Breathing)

To begin, close your right nostril and inhale through your left nostril using a count of 1 om 2

om 3 om, then close the left nostril and exhale through the right for the same count. This is then repeated in the opposite direction, inhaling through the right, then closing the right nostril and inhaling through the left. This is one round and considered a ratio of 1:1. Over time you can slowly increase the breath count until the breath ratio is 10:10, so an inhale for a count of 10 and exhale for the same count through the opposite nostril.

This technique balances the breath and the brain hemispheres. It improves concentration, is calming and relieves anxiety. The equal ratio of 1:1 is a soothing rhythm for the brain and heart.

Once the breath ratio of 10:10 is comfortably reached, the ratio can be increased to 1:2, starting with a breath count of 5 for the inhale, and 10 for the exhale. The breath ratio can be built up over time to be 10:20, this high count should only be practiced if it can be done so with ease and without strain.

The ratio of 1:2 is beneficial in that the exhale is extended; it is a very calming practice that moves your body into a state of deep relaxation, switching over to the parasympathetic nervous system.

Throughout the practice, awareness should be focussed on the breath and the counting.

Retentions (kumbhakas) are contraindicated for people with high blood pressure or heart problems.

After practising the basic method for a while, you might start to notice a natural pause between the inhale and the exhale and vice versa. Allow these pauses to occur naturally without counting them and let your breath flow naturally and with ease.

WITH ANTAR KUMBHAKA (Inner Retention)

In this version an internal breath retention (Antar Kumbhaka) is introduced where you consciously hold the breath in for a count that is equal to the inhale and exhale.

Begin with a ratio of 1:1:1 ensuring the count is equal for inhalation, inner retention, and exhalation. The breath count should be quite low to start with. A count of 5:5:5 is recommended, even if you have reached a much higher breath count in basic Nadi Shodhana. Over time the breath ratio can slowly be increased to a count of 10:10:10 ensuring there is no tension or effort in doing so.

Once that is achieved without strain, the ratio can then be adjusted to 1:1:2. Each time you change the ratio, you should lower the breath count to help you adjust. It is advisable to have at least several months of regular practice using a particular ratio and gradually increasing it, before changing it. So for the ratio of 1:1:2, the breath count should reduce to 5:5:10 and then over time, slowly and without strain, can be increased.

It is important to ensure you are not speeding up the count due to shortness of breath. The breath should flow naturally and with ease. While some might increase their breath ratio easily, for others a lower count may be the more natural option.

Over time, the ratio of 1:1:2 can be changed to 1:2:2 which should be commenced with a breath ratio of 5:10:10, and then 1:3:2 which builds on the internal retention and starts as a breath count of 5:15:10. Ultimately settling on the ratio of 1:4:2 which starts with a breath count of 5:20:10. The ratio of 1:4:2 is the most widely recommended in yogic texts.

These ratios should be built up to gradually and without strain and only once a comfortable practice is achieved with each ratio. The length of breath should increase spontaneously without the use of force.

The inner retention of the breath activates various brain centres and harmonises the pranas.

It is important to remember at any stage or variation of the practice, that the breath should be silent and not forced or straining in any way. More advanced versions of this practice include both antar and bahir kumbhakas and bandhas.

However, if you are looking for a simple practice that helps you to handle life's situations in a more balanced and calm manner, then a basic Nadi Shodhana would be a beneficial pranayama practice to make time for in your day.

Explore the beauty and benefits of Pranayama with David Burgess on the IYTA's popular comprehensive course: *Meditation and Pranayama* – visit the website to find out more: www.iyta.com.au

PHOTO CREDIT: JEREMY THOMAS AT UNSPLASH

What's on in 2021

Get the diary out and keep the date free for our
IYTA workshops and classes



AUTUMN YIN with Sarah Manning

When: Saturday, April 24
Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm
Where: online and live via Zoom
Cost: \$55 members, \$65 non-members

RESTORATIVE YOGA TRAINING with Katie Brown

When: Saturday, May 15 and Sunday, May 16
Time: 8.30am – 5pm
Where: MacKillop House, Archibald St
Lyneham ACT

BRISBANE SANGHA

When: Sunday, May 2
Time: 1pm – 3.30pm
Where: online via Zoom

SOMATIC YOGA - FINDING EASE AND COMFORT IN YOUR LIFE With Katrina Hinton

When: Saturday, July 24
Time: 9am – 5pm
Where: Lesleigh's Yoga Studio,
The Bernoth Centre,
663 Ruthven Street, Toowoomba

AND END TO STRESS & ANXIETY IN KIDS – THE YOGA THERAPY SOLUTION with Loraine Rushton

When: Saturday, July 31
Time: 1pm – 3pm
Cost: \$40 members and \$50 non-members

YOGA FOR MENOPAUSE with Katie Brown

When: Sunday, July 18
Time: 9am – 12pm
Where: Crows Nest, NSW

KEEP THE DATE FREE:

Plus we have an online Mother's Day workshop
with Patricia Wigley on Saturday, May 8

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