

## SPANDA® PRIMARY THERAPEUTIC POSTURES

### Basic Practice Categories:

#### 1. Joint and General Limbering

**BENEFITS:** Joint health is critical to full mobility and an enjoyable and productive movement life. Joint injury is a main reason why exercising adults discontinue exercise. Also imbalances in sedentary lifestyle, work and dietary choices can be, to some degree, alleviated through a regular practice of joint mobilization.

Joint movements are an important aspect of preparing to exercise, and to do more extreme ranges of motion in yoga practice as they lubricate the joint spaces, create greater viscosity in the joint capsule, activate proprioceptive feedback through the joints and muscles, and warm the connective tissue and muscles from more movement.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** There are no true counter-indications for these gentle movements, individuals will do them to their level of mobility, and even visualizing these simple movements can aid in mobility.

**MODIFICATIONS:** These practices can be done standing sitting and lying down so with forethought class members can do these practices in various positions. Visualizing the actions is beneficial when pain is an issue.

#### 2. Heating Movement and Vinyasas

**BENEFITS:** Recent research shows that stretching itself is not optimal for preparing to exercise, especially when exercise includes full range of motion like yoga asana and vinyasas practice. Warming up is essential for progress in asanas and in injury prevention. Muscle, tendon, fascia, and ligament all need elevated core body temperature and increased blood flow. You can liken these tissues to Play Doh right out of the can. From a yogic point of view, warm-up movements encourage prana to flow throughout the entire energy body. Heating movements and vinyasas send large currents of energy throughout the entire body, they activate agni and tejas, so that cellular metabolism is encouraged and brought on-line. Each cell is then a participant in every practice, whether it is located in the area of focus or not.

Specific use for specific purpose is the rule when warming, so that if you plan on using the legs for hip opening, it is important to address these areas through movements that take the muscles through an increasing range of motion and activation. Warm-up movements that include gently increasing reach space provide the most injury prevention to muscles, ligaments and other connective tissues.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** Warming –up is not counter-indicated for anyone in general. Please check the individual asanas you will use in the sequences and movements you choose to include.

**MODIFICATIONS:** Depending on class members, it is important to offer a variety of options for these introductory movements. Lessening the reach space and offering transitional supports (steps) for weight shift is an important factor in designing modifications. Transitioning to and from the floor is usually the biggest barrier, so if adapting practice, design a floor vinyasa and then a separate standing one so participants only have to transition once. In cases of a class of very limited participants, you may choose to use pelvic centering as the heating movement.

### 3. Pelvic Centering

**BENEFITS:** In Ayurveda, yoga's sister 'life science,' the agni at the body's center is the measure of health. With good agni one is healthy, without it one is not. Pelvic centering practices stimulate this agni, or faculty of transformation at all levels of being.

Another aspect of pelvic centering practice is its effect on the enteric nervous system, the nerve cells that communicate with the gastro-intestinal tract. The vagus (wandering 10<sup>th</sup> cranial) nerve as well as other nerves direct the complex functioning of this central body area. There are, in fact, more nerve cells communicating about this area of the body than in the spinal cord itself! Stress, emotional responses and other non-voluntary information affects the viscera of this body area. Yoga practices focused here that include awareness and breath support are able to directly calm and improve functioning of the organs and other tissues in this body region.

Good organ and muscular tone, movement of lymph, circulation, connective tissue stimulation, and improved digestion, assimilation and elimination are benefits as well. Reduced tension, anxiety, agitation. Improved function of pelvic glands, and nerves.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** Abdominal work such as the practices based on the Bandhas of Root Lock and Stomach Lift, and the combination, Agni Sara (Solar Energizer), as well as Double Leg Lifts, and Upward Facing Boat, its derivatives and variations, should be avoided during pregnancy, with hiatal hernia, intestinal ulcer, glaucoma, raised inter-cranial pressure, overactive thyroid, recent abdominal surgery, hernia, during menstruation, with un-medicated high blood pressure, and colitis.

Double leg lift should be avoided if low back is injured or weak. With single leg lift use caution.

Wind Eliminating Pose, which is passive compression of the abdomen, should be avoided once a woman believes she is pregnant. With knee problems, one can hold the leg under the shin around the thigh, rather than over the shinbone.

### PRIMARY PELVIC CENTERING PRACTICES:

*A. Root Lock*

*B. Abdominal Squeeze and Release*

*C. Abdominal Lift*

*D. Solar Energizer*

*E. Upward Facing Boat Pose*

#### **4. Whole Body Integration**

**BENEFITS:** Strengthens the torso muscles, relaxes tension in the hip and shoulder regions. Massages kidney-adrenal complex, thyroid parathyroid complex. Gives awareness of spinal and navel radiation patterns. Plank poses develop strength and flexibility in the shoulder girdle region, and gently stimulate heart and lungs.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** When working with whole body integration, provide individuals with supports such as blocks or chairs to assist in balance and in maintaining the pose so that integration can be felt. Reducing the range of motion, changing the plane of movement, visualizing the range, adding supports, using the flow for mobile fluid support throughout the body and the joints, and **COORDINATING ACTIONS WITH BREATH** will allow limited individuals to accomplish these important practices.

At times, someone may not be able to put weight in the hands with the wrists extended so they can grasp a small dumbbell in each hand and rest it on the floor rather than have the hand flat on the floor's surface.

#### **PRIMARY WHOLE BODY INTEGRATION PRACTICES:**

*A. Cat Pose*

*B. Bird in Flight Pose*

*C. Down Plank*

*D. Up Plank*

#### **5. Standing**

**GENERAL MODIFICATIONS:** If someone is not able to stand for long, they may use the wall either at their back or sideways to the body and still complete the asana. If not able to stand but able to get to and from the floor (for example in the case of an ankle injury,) or they may use a chair back, or table. They may also do the pose lying on the floor with the soles of the feet on the lower aspect of the wall (baseboard area.)

When arms are lifted, the arms may instead be placed on the hips, left down, on tops of shoulders, or lifted with less reach space ("cactus arms".)

When the knee or knees are bent, they can be bent only slightly, left straight, or the pose can be held less long, or simply moved into and out of without breath coordinated movement support during the entire action.

**BENEFITS:** All standing poses give us a better sense of alignment of the body systems in space and in response to gravity. They thereby improve posture overall and strengthen muscles and other tissues that support our postural structure. And while they provide

overall awareness and whole body integration as well, the legs and lower are strengthened in particular. They can be heating and are stimulating overall.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** Standing poses, even simple ones, can be taxing and so the timing of the practices (when in the class and day) as well as the time spent in the postures, and the number of standing practices should be monitored. Students who are not well or limited may need to have alternatives to standing.

Those with heart conditions and stroke in their history should get approval for the bent knee standing poses. They may use modifications.

## **PRIMARY STANDING PRACTICES:**

- A. Mountain*
- B. Standing Staff*
- C. Lunge / Monkey*
- D. Warrior*
- E. Chair*
- F. Squat*

## **6. Balance**

**GENERAL MODIFICATIONS:** If someone is not able to stand for long or have injury or weakness in the lower extremities, hips or pelvis, they may use the wall either at their back or sideways to the body and still complete the asana. If not able to stand but able to get to and up from the floor, they may do the pose lying on the floor with the soles of the feet on the lower aspect of the wall (baseboard area.) Holding onto a chair back or other appropriately high stable support with the option of letting go is a great way to practice balance challenges.

**BENEFITS:** General benefits for balance poses are that they increase stimulation of the balance mechanisms including the righting reactions and equilibrium responses of the nervous system, as well as stimulate the vestibular system. So even if someone cannot balance on two or one limb, the attempt to do so, through the lessening of stability will activate and restore these responses to a certain point. Also, whatever is the base of the pose will be strengthened whether it is the foot or the hand. Spinal awareness and intrinsic spinal musculature is activated. Because King Dancer Pose is also a back bend, it has the additional benefits of stimulating the pelvic and abdominal organs and glands.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** Balance poses are a class of posture which are self-limiting; i.e. they usually cannot be done for a long time by those who should not do them for a long time. Persons with heart conditions, stroke in their history or un-medicated HPB should carefully observe their breath and limit the length of time in the poses. Also, persons with injury or issue with the lower extremity should use modifications, limit time in pose and **BEGIN WITH THE EASIER PRACTICES** working, if inclined, to greater strength and capacity over time and with noted improvement. King Dancer should be done with the thighs parallel by those with low

back issues. Those with hip and hamstring limitations should limit their range of motion and/or use modifications such as using blocks and chairs in Standing Scale and Half Moon Poses.

### **PRIMARY BALANCE PRACTICES:**

- A. Tree*
- B. Eagle*
- C. King Dancer*
- D. Standing Scale*
- E. Half Moon Balance*
- F. Crow*

### **7. Side Bending**

**BENEFITS:** Side bends stimulate circulation throughout the entire torso and depending on the ‘key stone’ area of the bend will focus stimulation through specific tissues such as the lungs, liver/gall bladder, etc. Side bends increase flexibility of the lateral muscles of the torso, which is welcome relief for most westerners as these muscles stabilize the torso in activities like sitting to type and drive, etc. In addition, they offer relief and relaxation to the nerves and ganglionic sympathetic chains on the sides of the spinal column providing general stress reduction to the autonomic nervous system. Side bends are also a way to compress and expand the organs, which tones them as well.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** Caution needs to be taken for those with spinal injury such as disc issues. Otherwise arms overhead will increase internal pressure so those with heart disease and stroke history should practice with arms down, at sides or on shoulders or hips. It is wise for them to seek advice from their medical professional as to the extent of their yoga practice.

### **SIDE BENDING PRACTICES:**

- A. Serpent Couch*
- B. Half Moon – sitting*
- C. Half Moon – standing*
- D. Head-to-knee – side*
- E. Side Angle Stretch Pose*

### **8. Backward Bending**

**BENEFITS:** Backward bending poses are very stimulating and challenging. They increase circulation throughout the entire body and especially throughout the torso. Backward bends stimulate the central ductless glands and the charkas. They relax and strengthen muscles around and near the spine, and stimulate the nerves themselves. Backward bends also stimulate the effected organs that are located at the ‘keystone’ of the stretched position. When done correctly back bends lengthen the spine and thereby decompress the spinal discs stretching the nerves of the spinal cord and its extensions into the torso.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** Because backbends are physically demanding, proper support and alignment must be attended to at all times. Back bends are generally contraindicated for those with recent abdominal surgery, with back pain and issues of disc or other injury, neck pain and problems, and for those with unmedicated HBP, stroke history, heart disease, and if head is inverted in the pose, glaucoma. Most often however, with medical care giver's permission, modified versions of the beginning asanas are permissible.

Backbends are cautioned after the end of the third month of pregnancy. One should consider, during pregnancy the efficacy of any practice in terms of its possible detriment.

### **PRIMARY BACKWARD BENDING PRACTICES:**

- A. Standing Back Bend*
- B. Bridge*
- C. Fish*
- D. Down Boat*
- E. Cobra*
- F. Up Dog*
- G. Locust*
- H. Reclined Hero*
- I. Camel*
- J. Bow*

## **9. Twisting**

**BENEFITS:** Twisting poses increase spinal circulation, strengthen intrinsic muscles around the spine and deep torso muscles, strengthen the diaphragm muscle, and massage the internal organs and glands. They increase flexibility all along the spine and also in the hips and shoulder girdle regions. Twists tone the spinal nerves and have a gentle cleansing, as well as calming effect. Twisting gives awareness of spinal articulation and organ individuation. Twists can be added to most lateral and sagittal poses to offer the above additional benefits.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** Common sense implies that anyone with significant spinal injury or disc protrusion or pain should check with their doctor before practicing this class of asana. Caution after the fourth month or pregnancy.

### **PRIMARY TWISTING PRACTICES:**

- A. Universal Twist Pose*
- B. Twist Pose – sitting / Sage Matsyendra Pose*
- C. Half Moon – reclined*
- D. Revolved Triangle*

## 10. Forward Bending

**BENEFITS:** Lengthen many of the stronger muscles located in the back of the body. They also bring the nervous system tone down and are calming, providing inner attention. They decompress the convex curves to the spine and stretch large, usually strong muscles in the back of the body and legs.

In cases where the lower torso is compressed against the thighs they provide stimulation and cleansing to the pelvic/abdominal organs and glands, especially those that become the ‘key stone’ of the pose, i.e. the kidneys and adrenals in Posterior Stretch Pose.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** All forward folds must be modified or avoided during pregnancy. Also, they should be modified if there is knee, neck, or low back pain. Students with these issues should check with their care provider to find out which forward bends if any they must avoid. Students suffering from sciatica should not do forward fold poses until the condition is relieved. Also students with significant bone loss should check with their doctor.

### PRIMARY FORWARD BENDING PRACTICES:

- A. Single Leg Lift*
- B. Double Leg Lift*
- C. Child’s Pose*
- D. Standing Forward Fold Pose*
- E. Standing Spread Leg Forward Fold*
- F. Side Angle Pose/ Angle Pose*
- G. Head-to-knee Pose – forward*
- H. Posterior Stretch Pose*
- I. Half Forward Pigeon*
- J. Symbol of Yoga Pose*

## 11. Hip Mobility

**BENEFITS:** Hip opening poses do exactly that which is important for all movements, for balance and for injury prevention. They also stimulate the pelvic organs and glands, including in many cases the reproductive. Due to the increase in the downward flow of energy they often improve not only digestion but elimination as well.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** Students who have an inguinal hernia should avoid these poses. Those with tightness in the hips and lower extremities must modify at first.

### PRIMARY HIP MOBILITY PRACTICES:

- A. Half Lotus / Leg Cradle*
- B. Bound Angle Pose*
- C. Cow’s Face Pose*
- D. Monkey*
- E. Hero*

*F. Seated Angle Pose / Seated Spread Leg Pose*

## **12. Inversions**

**BENEFITS:** The benefits listed in yoga therapeutic texts for this class of practice go on for pages! However interestingly it seems the person for whom the pose would do the most good is often also the person who should be avoiding the pose. Some general benefits include: vitalization of all the tissues, reverse effect of gravity, refreshment of blood through the organs, gland and all tissues, strengthening of the diaphragm muscle, refreshment of the brain, and head glands, and strengthening of postural and base supporting muscles in the poses. Invigoration of the nerves that maintain balance, and drainage of the lymph for elimination.

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** Not to be done during menstruation, past the third month of pregnancy, with un-medicated high blood pressure, or heart disease, detached retina, hiatal hernia, certain ear problems, recent abdominal surgery, stiffness in the neck, difficulty breathing, with headache, sneezing, or if spine, especially neck injury. Any symptom of pressure in head, eyes, ears or neck is a sign to avoid the pose at that time.

### **PRIMARY INVERTED PRACTICES:**

- A. Two-footed Desk Pose*
- B. Down Dog*
- C. Inverted Action Pose*
- D. Shoulder Stand*
- E. Plow*

## **13. Relaxation**

**BENEFITS:** Removes fatigue; revitalizes both the body and the mind!

**COUNTERINDICATIONS:** For those who are not comfortable on the back due to back pain or those not comfortable on the front due to pregnancy, overweight, or other reasons may choose the  $\frac{3}{4}$  side lying pose of Flapping Fish which is equally beneficial and refreshing.

### **PRIMARY RELAXATION POSTURES:**

- A. Corpse*
- B. Crocodile*
- C. Flapping Fish*
- D. Thunderbolt / Kneeling Pose*