GENTLE, SENIOR AND CHAIR YOGA TRAINING MANUAL - VOLUME 7

Chair and Senior Yoga, Gentle Yoga Therapy, Somatic Yoga and Restorative Yoga

Guest Presentation: Myth Asana®

With Sherry Zak Morris, E-RYT; Paula Montalvo, RYT; Pinush Chauhan, RYT; Justine Shelton, E-RYT500 and Certified Vinyoga Therapist, Lulu Peele, RYT and Ayurveda Counselor; Kathleen Gregory, RYT and Teresa Austin, World Mythology Teacher and Yoga Instructor


CHAPTERS:

- The Posture Project - An In Depth Exploration of Yoga for the 50+ Population with Sherry Zak Morris - Sherry will share the stunning results of her Senior Posture Project, and observations and analysis from her many years teaching Yoga to the 50+ population. Sherry has worked with many seniors over multiple months to get this data and has documented their improvements based on specific recommendations that can be done in Yoga classes and/or at home.

- Senior Yoga: Better Balance with Paula Montalvo - Paula Montalvo, RYT Senior Chair Yoga Teacher, will lead you through a practice designed especially for Seniors Citizens. Utilizing the common themes she incorporates into every class, you will learn first hand the issues, challenges and needs of this specific student demographic.

- Make it Creative! Make it Memorable! Using Props in Your Yoga Classes with Pinush Chauhan - Gentle and Chair Yoga Teachers are always looking for new ideas to bring into their teachings! Learn how to utilize Danda Sticks, various balls and other props to help your students experience a Yoga pose in a much different way.

- Gentle Yoga Therapy Q&A Session with Justine Shelton - Justine Shelton is a E-RYT500 and Certified Vinyoga Therapist and lead Therapist for the Yoga Therapy Mentorship Program at the Soul Institute. She has 1,000's of teaching and mentoring hours, and a growing private practice specializing in designing Gentle Yoga Therapy programs for a large variety of physical and mental conditions

- Integrating Somatics with Gentle Yoga with Lulu Peele - Incorporating somatic concepts and sequences with Gentle Yoga can improve posture and reduce chronic pain in your students. These powerful myo-fascial releases can benefit students of any age and ability. In this session, Lulu will share how you can easily weave these small, detailed but powerful movement sequences into your Gentle Yoga teaching.

- Incorporating Restorative Poses into your Gentle, Senior and Chair Yoga Classes with Kat Gregory - This Workshop will give you ideas of how you can add Restorative Yoga poses into your existing Yoga teaching to add variety and extra TLC.

- Myth Asana® with Teresa Austin - In this unique workshop come to understand your Yoga practice at a deeper, magical level! Learn the myths behind many of our beloved Yoga poses.

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Alignment vs. Mis-alignment

Our bones and muscles are the structure of the "building" of our body. Look at this skeletal photo on the right. If a building were built with this kind of mis-alignment, we can expect over time the building would deteriorate and collapse. This same concept can be associated with our physical bodies. Everything needs to line up in the horizontal and vertical plane, and if it does - ease and comfort are the results!

Compensation

Each muscle and load bearing joint (including our pelvis and spine) in our body has a specific action and function. When imbalances occur in muscles and joints, our body is smart enough to figure out ways to compensate around it. We might not feel physical pain for a time or season, but eventually, these imbalances cause over AND under worked muscular activity which ultimately leads to the most common form of joint degradation (osteoarthritis).

Perfect Posture?

I don't believe many human beings have perfect posture. We are the result of many things that have happened in our lives over time. Injuries, congenital issues, surgeries, repetitive movements, sports, etc. all contribute to what our structural bodies are at this moment in time. But, our bodies can find more homeostasis given the right conditions and awareness.

Let's review what Perfect Posture looks like, and how it can go awry.
3 Main Postural Positions

For the sake of simplicity, we can categorize people’s postures into three main visual categories. In my anatomy studies and research, these categories seem to be universal, but they are given different names.

These two diagrams depict the same concept. Two mis-alignments and their associated postures based on the position of the pelvis. (Now we can understand why cat/cow and the pelvic tilt are so important in every Yoga class!)

This is the third posture position - asymmetry caused by trauma, injury or improper movement patterns. This can be accompanied by a pelvic tilt alignment issue which compounds the posture problem.

This is an interesting representation of variations that the pelvic tilt can take us into. The more the pelvis is out of alignment, the more the body must compensate to remain upright. If we are out of vertical alignment, we will start over-correcting our posture in order to stay erect so we don’t topple forward or fall backwards. This over-compensation can lead to tight muscles and achy joints because the body has to work so hard to keep its alignment.

Can you guess where these people are experiencing tension, tightness and possible pain?
Meet our Students

The first guinea pig!

**Side View:** Look how I slightly lean forward in one view and back in another. I basically can't sit still even for a photo shoot. I catch myself doing that quite often. That is my Type "A" personality moving forward in life, and then catching myself.

I now notice when I am leaning forward standing in line as that starts to be undue pressure on my knees. So, I compensate by rolling back toward my heels and that surely relieves the pressure.

**Front View:** Wow, I guess I'm not very symmetrical. My head is way over to the right. My shoulders and hips align pretty evenly. I see a lot of the asymmetrical vertical positioning - no one is ever perfect!

Notice how my palms are facing inward. This is the correct alignment as it indicates the arm is positioned properly in the shoulder socket. Let's notice this hand placement in the other photos we will be viewing.
Servicing joints is described in the exercise that is done for the neck:

1. Start in a seated position with the spine long and the shoulders relaxed.
2. Roll the head and neck from side to side, keeping the neck long and the shoulders relaxed.
3. Repeat 5 times on each side.

This movement helps to release tension in the neck and shoulders and promotes flexibility in the cervical spine.

**Kyphosis**

Kyphosis, or “dowager’s hump,” is an unnatural curving of the upper back that creates a hunchback appearance in the posture, often associated with osteoporosis.

Most of the time a vertebral compression fracture causes this slumping of the spine which is irreversible. No chiropractor can fix this alignment, but bringing gentle movement and stretches to the front of the body will lessen the neck and shoulder tightness and pain that come with this posture.

**Humerus Deviation**

I learned this concept from Brian Dorfman in an Anatomy Workshop and I love how it is so descriptive of what is happening in our shoulder socket. The humerus (upper arm bone) sits nice and straight into the ball and socket of the shoulder joint. When position in this vertical alignment, shoulder movements like reaching and lifting are effortless and safe. When the humerus bone deviates from its perfect alignment—that is when the trouble starts.

Brian used the term “alignment follows the joints”. Let’s look at the arms of the following students and notice the joint of their shoulder, elbow and wrist. When these joints are in proper alignment, the arms rest comfortably at the side with the palms turned in toward the body. We can see that position in this perfect posture model to the right.
SENIOR YOGA

BETTER BALANCE

WITH PAULA MONTALVO, RYT
Arm and Leg Opposite

Begin by offering two movements at once by raising one arm and the opposite leg. Continue rotating this pattern a few cycles.

Now add in a third movement by looking up at the arm that is raised. Repeat a few cycles.

Arm and Leg Swim

Begin by taking the arms out to the side and moving them in a circle with the elbow straight.

Next, lift up the legs and kick like a swim kick.

Two things at once!
Balance Side-Side

Start to shift the weight side to side and notice how it feels. Do you feel more confident leaning in one direction vs. the other? Sometimes one leg is stronger than the other and we may favor that side in our walking and standing.

Challenge your balance by letting go of the chair with one or both hands and see how your balance shifts and how your body auto-correction itself.

Hula Hoop

The hula hoop motion combines the balance shifts into a continuous circle. Notice if you get dizzy doing this movement. That dizziness is the vestibular system processing the movement pattern.

CAUTION: Sometimes there are inner ear imbalances which affect balance and need to be further diagnosed. Always caution your students to stop if they feel dizzy or light-headed.
The Clock

This sequence steps the body into and out of the round the clock position, coming back to neutral with every hour of the clock. It can be more challenging if done without holding on to the chair. I usually start holding on, then letting go as I see the students are able to do so.

Take the movement around the clock, and always encourage the Seniors to grab the chair anytime they need it.
Stone Sequence

This sequence works the dexterity of the foot and especially the toes.

**PROP INFO:** I gathered up these rocks from my driveway, but you can find small smooth stones at various gardening places as well. They should be about 1/2 to one inch in diameter.

![Stone Sequence Image]

You can use small stones that are around an inch in diameter. They can be of varying sizes as well. Place the stones on the floor and pick them up one by one grasping them in the crease of the toes. You can make a pile and move them around. Or you can bring them up to your hand for added hip flexibility.

**SUMMARY**

Having good balance takes DAILY awareness of these six factors:

1. Vision
2. Mind
3. Vestibular Health
4. Muscles
5. Joints
6. Feet

When we do so, we can reassure ourselves that if we stumble, we will not fall!
USING PROPS IN YOUR YOGA CLASSES

WITH PINUSH CHAUHAN, RYT
INTRODUCTION

My Yoga Teaching world expanded multi-fold when I discovered the use of props. I am continuously looking for new ideas for my classes so that my classes are fun, inventive, safe, effective and different every time. I watch YouTube videos, attend other teachers’ classes in studios throughout my area, and attend specialty workshops where I get many of my ideas. I teach mostly Chair and Gentle Yoga classes, so many of the Yoga poses and sequences I see need to be modified to meet the needs of my student community. That is the fun and creative part for me. When the students tell me how much they enjoy these new sequences, it lifts my heart and motivates me to create even more.

I believe most Yoga teachers feel that teaching Yoga is as fulfilling as taking a Yoga class. I invite you to play with me as I introduce these props and poses. Take what works for you and your students, and don’t worry about the rest.

As I introduce the props I use, I will give details about each of the props: where to purchase them, estimated costs, and any usage guidelines.

Namaste,
Pinush
SEATED SEQUENCES

Sticks

"Danda" is the Sanskrit word for Stick. I was first introduced to the concept of Stick Yoga from a Chiropractor named Dr. Arthur Faygenholtz (www.StickYoga.com). I found him on YouTube and was amazed at what can be done using a simple stick to improve posture, range of motion and alleviate pain. Then I found an 80-yr Israeli Yoga Teacher who has YouTube videos that show Senior Citizens moving and grooving their bodies using a long stick. I was hooked! I hope you enjoy this selected group of Stick poses. And remember, feel free to create your own.

I introduced this concept to a few Wheelchair Yoginis and to my and their amazement, they were able to movements they never dreamed possible! Poses like down dog, up dog, forward folds, half moon are now accessible with the use of a stick!

Stir the Pot - Opening the Heart

This is a great sequence for warming up the spine.

| Place the stick in front of you. For a deeper stretch, place the stick further away from the body. | Start by leaning forward toward the stick, forming a forward fold position. | Keeping the stick in the same position, lean the body over to one side, noticing the stretch on the opposite side. | Continue to make a slow circle with the body. Notice the stretching of the shoulders, side body and hips. Repeat several cycles on one side, then the other. |

These sticks were created from dowels that I bought at Home Depot and had them cut to 6 foot lengths. The width of the dowels were 3.4 inch. I had a handyman sand them smooth (we don't want any splinters) and add a furniture rubber stopper on the bottom to prevent slippage on slick surfaces. The cost for each stick (with labor) was around $3.00.
Place the ball under the armpit and then relax the arm. Feel the gentle squeeze.

Start flapping the arms up and down to further stimulate the squeezing motion. Feel the opening of the chest.

Teacup

This sequence can be quite challenging for students who have shoulder pain or restrictions, so make sure to always remind your students to go within the range of motion that feels comfortable to them.

We are going to create a figure eight pattern using the ball. Start with the ball turned in towards your body.

Take it outward, starting to create a figure eight pattern.

Swoop the ball over your head, eyes and neck follow the ball.

Feel the good rotation in your shoulder and the mobility in your neck.
INTEGRATING SOMATICS INTO GENTLE YOGA

WITH LULU PEELE, YOGA THERAPIST
Somatic Cobra

We are pandiculating the back muscles by tightening as we lift up and actively and slowly lengthening and releasing the back muscles as we slowly lower down. This is a great substitute for cobra.

Lie on your stomach with your right elbow bent under your head. Place your left cheek on the back of your right hand. Rest your left arm alongside your body. Relax your right shoulder.

Lift just your head and look over your right shoulder.

As you inhale slowly lift your hand, head and upper body and twist as if you’re looking over your right shoulder. Your nose is in line with the elbow. Move only as far as is comfortable. Exhale and return slowly, and then completely relax. Repeat 3–4 X.

Sense the contraction in the upper body between the shoulder blades down into the lower back. The back of the body contracts as the front softens and lengthens.

Lift the left leg as you inhale. Do you feel any movement in the opposite shoulder? Sense the contraction in the lower back muscles. As you slowly exhale and return, the low back muscles lengthen. Relax completely. Repeat 3–4 X.

Keeping the left cheek glued to the right hand, inhale and lift head, hand, elbow and right leg. Control the movement back down, and completely relax the back and neck muscles. Repeat 3–4 X.

Repeat on other side.
Exhale as you combine both the movements creating an accordion action through the right ribs and waist. Lengthen through the waist and ribs as you return the head and foot to the floor and imagine reaching for something above your head with this movement. Repeat 4 X.

Variation

The Pendulum

Lie on your back before moving to the other side. Sense the difference between the 2 sides.

Note: As you contract through the right side of the body the left side lengthens and the ribs expand.

Try not to use the neck muscles. If your neck hurts try to move more slowly.

Lie on your left side, knees bent and head on your left arm.

Inhale as you reach forward and diagonally with your right arm while simultaneously reaching your right leg back. Feel the lengthening from shoulder to hip down the right side.

Exhale as you lift your right arm up and over reaching back and simultaneously swing your right leg slowly forward. **Knee is bent.** Allow your right hip to roll back, and your right ribcage to open. Allow your head to follow the movement of your arm. Repeat 4–6 X.
## Standing

Press down on the left foot and straighten your left leg. Allow the right knee to bend. Notice how the left hip lifts and the left waist shortens. The right hip drops and the right waist lengthens.

## Apasana

Lie on your back with your feet on the floor hip distance apart. Shoulders and head are relaxed on the floor. Draw your knees up towards you. Place one hand lightly on each knee, with your knees arms-length away.

Exhale as you draw your knees toward your chest. Allow your hands to just be a guide. Inhale and return to start position. Repeat 4–6 X.

### Variation

### References:

- Thomas Hanna *Somatics* Da Capo Press: Boston, MA 1980
RESTORATIVE YOGA
SUPPLIES, SUBSTANCE, SPIRIT, AND SAVASANA
WITH KAT GREGORY, CRRT
To inhibit the SNS (i.e. quiet the brain):

- withdraw as much sensory stimulation as possible (including stretching)
- use head down postures
- maintain darkness
- keep warm
- quiet the breath consciously - The heartbeat slows on exhalations and speeds on inhalations; lengthen exhale in centering breath

To activate PNS, slow heart rate: (more info in Spirit Section)

- light pressure on eyeballs (eye pillows and head wraps)
- head down postures

**SPIRIT**

**Empathy**
Understanding and entering into another's feelings

**Compassion**
Grace and understanding without judgement. Some students experience strong emotions, let them feel and work through. Although not to disrupt others.

**Observation**
Watch first, look for the good. Unless you see something major amiss (seriously uneven, slumped and breathing inhibited or neck crickness). Just let them rest.

**Creating restorative atmosphere**
Students should feel safe from demands, not to be reprimanded or yelled at, no inappropriate or unwanted touch. Listen to their concerns. Encourage them to take off watches, set up with back to a wall, and turn off phones. Quiet talking and demeanor. Friendly and approachable. No lyrics music, soothing essential oils, low lights. Consider no "yoga" music, chimes or chanting for Middle East/Gulf/Vietnam war veterans.
**Supported Forward Fold - Seated Angle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indications</th>
<th>Contraindications</th>
<th>Props</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Quiets the organs of digestion and elimination</td>
<td>• Neck pain, experiment with support height to alleviate, otherwise do not practice</td>
<td>• Bolster</td>
<td>• 3-10 Head at center or equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Soothes during menstrual cycle and pregnancy</td>
<td>NECK MUST BE COMFORTABLE</td>
<td>• Chair</td>
<td>time on each side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counterbalances effects of backbending poses</td>
<td>• Knee pain, can widen to alleviate</td>
<td>• One or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opens low back</td>
<td>• Disc disease in low back or sacroiliac pain, raise props under sitting bones and</td>
<td>single fold blanket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduces mental agitation citta vritti</td>
<td>raise the height under head and chest</td>
<td>• Towel</td>
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MYTH-ASANA

AN EPIC JOURNEY INTO OUR LIVES THROUGH YOGA, SYMBOLISM AND MYTH

WITH TERESA AUSTIN
**YOGA AS MYTHIC JOURNEY**

*I believe that the power of myth and the magic of yoga can guide us back to our innate navigational system towards our pure raw self, sahaja.*

Like the hero who usually doesn’t want to take on the heroic calling at first, we also find ourselves, at times in yoga, fighting emotional dragons or jumping into dark chasms of the unknown. Indeed, the journey into one’s self can be frightening. But we have allies! Joseph Campbell, world-renowned mythologist, believed that *the gods and goddesses are already residing in us speaking to us in symbols within our dreams and imaginations!* I believe that those same energies are with us every time we come to our mats encouraging us to keep moving through life with joy, strength, and self-compassion.

Some psychologists believe that if a child is suppressed from mythology and fables—which imbue valuable symbols and archetypes within the brain schema at an early age—that she or he can be compromised on an emotional and social level. **Myth helps clarify our relationship to one another by being a guide to the values our society holds dear,** such as determination, individuality, and a sense of community.

In Western society today though, many have moved away from the true self to the false self. Instead of Jesus Christ, Harriet Tubman, or Anne Frank as our heroic ideals, we find ourselves inundated with images of celebrities who subconsciously become our heroic identifiers.

It is up to the yogi to answer the call and shed the layers to unfold their inner hero, their true raw self! She or he can then come back to community with pearls of wisdom that they have learned along the way. These glimpses of the face of God, can then be lovingly bestowed to the world. The yogi recognizes that we are ONE with Nature, and each other. We become a pure representation of the divine herself, himself.

**Let us live then, in a mythic relationship with our world!**

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**MYTH-ASANA**

The following myths are believed to be thousands of years old, dating from 6500 BCE – 500 BCE. They were found in the Rig Vedas, the Sanskrit epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which includes the Bhagavad Gita. Historians from Harvard and other top universities now agree that indigenous Northern India was the earliest contributor to India’s cultural and spiritual heritage. One ideology still holds true in all of Indian mythology:

All things are part of a greater, whole ONE.