

Chair Yoga for Seniors

Centering & Breathing - I believe this is the most important time of any yoga class as it allows time for the student to become quiet, still and peaceful. Quiet on the outside, means quiet on the inside – and that is where peace resides. Guide your Seniors into a state of calm by inviting them to close their eyes, let go of their worries and cares, and feel the gently flow of their breath. Remind them that every breath brings in more life force, more energy to help them heal and relax.

Breathing - Welcome Life Force

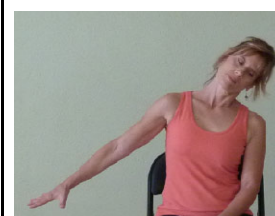
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Upper Body - If you looked at a group of Seniors in your yoga class, you would undoubtedly see a lot of rounded shoulders and kyphotic postures (what used to be called “hunchback”). This posture can be caused by osteoporosis in the spine, repetitive movement patterns of rounding forward, or simply gravity playing its part after years and years of living. That is why it is important to always weave in a good selection of Upper Body stretches, reaches and openers.

Neck - Side/side with hands open/close

This sequence combines neck movements with reaches and finger movements, so the student can start to feel what it feels like to have energy move through their bodies.



Neck - self massage

Many Seniors lack in this important health practice – the sense of touch. This is time to invite self healing and self touch by inviting the student to gently massage the tight and tense areas in their neck. Touch is healing, especially our own.



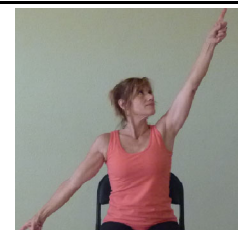
Neck - basket weave lift

Neck mobility is important to everyday activities – driving, crossing the street, etc. This sequence helps to support the cervical spine by offering a supported neck arch.



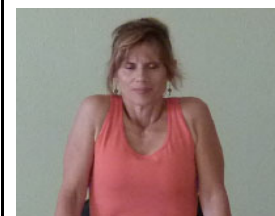
Eyes - Staying Alive

This one I have fun with because it is from my Baby Boomer Era – John Travolta and “Staying Alive”. This movement sequence moves the eye muscles in a diagonal as well as works the peripheral vision.










Shoulder - Hunch and Shrug





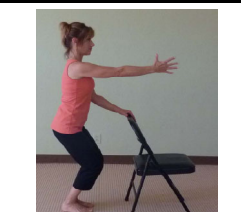
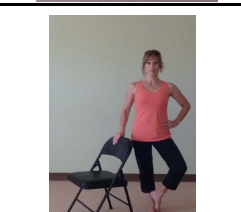

We can’t do enough of this sequence! It brings the whole shoulder joint back and down into its natural position. By doing that, it helps straighten the spine.







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<p>Chest Opener - Cactus with Eagle</p>	<p>Cactus is an easy and effective chest opener. Encourage the Seniors to do the best they can to bring the arms into a 90 degree angle, but realize that many will have limited mobility to do this.</p>	
<p>Arms - Life Force with wrist stretch</p>	<p>Two of the woo-woo things I talk about is “energy” and “life force”. Thus this pose is one of my favorites because I always tell my Seniors “I can always tell how much life force you have in your body by how far you can reach”.</p>	
<p>Hands/Fingers - Just Joints (Hula and Wave)</p>	<p>By the time we all become Seniors, we will surely have a bit of stiffness in our joints – and many times it starts with the fingers and hands. This is a great sequence for getting into all the joints of the upper body.</p>	
<p>Hands/Fingers - Energy Shake & Energy Bath</p>	<p>Here is the Energy woo-woo! This is great to add after the Hula and the Wave because everything is moving and we know when things move, energy is there!</p>	
<p>Axial Extensions - Alternates</p>	<p>The health of the spine is directly related to good, straight, tall posture. This sequence encourages length in the spine as well as challenges the left and right sides of the brain with asymmetrical movements.</p>	
<p>Side Bends - with Diagonal reach/grab</p>	<p>This sequence is to lengthen the torso, open the intercostal muscles between the ribs. This helps to make more space for the heart and the lungs to function and of course it just feels so good to stretch sides.</p>	
<p>Power & Balance - There is always a moan or two in the house when we start doing the Power poses like Sun Salutations and Warriors. I know that they are challenging and sometimes difficult for seniors. Thus why I always encourage them to do what feels good for them today, never to over-do, but always to listen to their bodies.</p>		
<p>Seated Sun Salutations - arm lift, twist & strong legs (8 cycles)</p>	<p>I actually do 8 full counts of Seated Sun Sals and weave in a pattern of poses that they have all come to know and love. After we are done, their heart is beating, their lungs are working, and they feel alive.</p>	

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<p>Back - Down and Up Dog</p>	<p>I like to start the standing series with a nice long stretch. If you ever see a dog or cat do their stretching, they usually do it as a transition from lying down to getting up.</p>	
<p>Back - Cat/Cow</p>	<p>There is nothing like gentle movements to increase blood flow and encourage synovial fluid in the joints. This sequence articulates the movement of each vertebra. It is slow and mindful.</p>	
<p>Back - Bend and Salute/Crunch</p>	<p>This is a great option to add into the Cat/Cow flow. It works the joints of the upper and lower body at once. I usually do this 2-3 counts on each side. Here is an option to get the quadriceps into the action. Bend the knee and dip down with the bend/salute movement.</p>	
<p>Warrior I - with push-up</p>	<p>If I do any Warrior in my Senior Chair Yoga class, I do Warrior I. It is pretty simple and basic, but highly effective for strength, balance and confidence. And what Senior can't use a dose of Warrior traits in their everyday lives. Adding a push-up makes it even stronger.</p>	
<p>Chair</p>	<p>The wonderful thing about Chair Yoga is that the chair is a prop, a partner, a coach and a life preserver. Seniors love having it nearby for the standing poses, and many never even touch it. This pose encourages balance, strength and patience.</p>	
<p>Tree</p>	<p>I always like to end any standing series with a strong, but calm pose like Tree to shift the energy. Tree provides the opportunity to be strong, but to reflect at the same time. It can be a still and silent pose, or it can be playful and vibrant.</p>	
<p>Lower Body - The poses and sequences in this section focus mostly on the lower back, hips, knees and feet. After a great round of upper body stretches and standing and balancing poses, the Seniors are about ready to settle down again. So, give them a time to reflect with their eyes close as they come back down onto their chairs.</p>		
<p>Hips - Windshield Wipers</p>	<p>This sequence gently and fluidly encourages movement into the hip joint and lower back. It contains a gently twist, so caution is suggested for any lumbar or spinal issues.</p>	

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<p>Legs - Hasta Pada</p>	<p>This is one of my most favorite multi-tasking poses because it benefits so many things – stretches the hamstrings which helps release the low back, strengthens the arms while holding the back, works the hip range of motion and provides an upper and lower body asymmetrical movement pattern for the brain.</p>	
<p>Pigeon - with Quad strengthener</p>	<p>Pigeon is one of the best hip openers, but for Seniors, this one can be challenging. Anyone with hip replacements, hip injuries, or limited mobility in the hip joint should be aware of the sensations their body is telling them. If there is ever sharp or stabbing pain, caution the student to stop and get out of the pose and rest.</p>	
<p>Twist - arms out</p>	<p>Twists have a multitude of benefits, but they also can be quite precarious – especially for Seniors. Try to avoid any leveraged twists, which is a twist where you use arm or body strength to move deeper into a twisting motion. This twist works great to keep it safe and effective.</p>	
<p>Leg/Ankle - Ankle Stretches & Rolly Polly</p>	<p>By the end of class, I remind the students that we moved every muscle and every joint that they could today in class. That makes them feel like they accomplished a lot. This sequence strengthens and stretches the muscles of the ankles and feet, while the lifted legs are holding strong with the quadriceps muscles.</p>	
<p>Svasana - Relaxation - Depending where I am teaching, I may not use the word Svasana, but rather let the students know that at the end of each class we take at least 5 minutes for conscious relaxation.</p>		