

# Home Practice

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*"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step".*

When many new yoga teachers begin teaching they stop attending group classes. Also, they have not established a stable, consistent, disciplined home practice. Yoga is one of those disciplines where it is essential that it be practiced on a daily basis. Yoga teachers need to make that commitment. It is not an either or between group classes or home practice. For many years there should be a combination of both as both are necessary of a practitioner and a teacher. There is a maturity that begins to grow when there is a fruitful home practice.

It has been said that it takes eight years to train a yoga teacher. A good education from qualified instructors is integral to this. This education begins in group asana classes and through attendance in workshops. The names of these poses are introduced and learned as well as the techniques and methods for practicing these poses for optimal effect. This is important to help guide students and prospective teachers in their development.

In a home practice there is an opportunity to explore principles of movement and the techniques learned in class. There is a freedom in a home practice that allows the student to explore their own individual rhythm as well as to delve into what will expand their personal growth in yoga. For teachers it affords the ability to express ideas and concepts from their own experience. Home practice becomes the foundation for authentic teaching.

Getting started is sometimes the biggest hurdle. Oftentimes, it is the obstacles that keep a person from practicing that are given the most focus. However, the simplest way to begin is the best way. In the beginning it is not necessary to plan a whole series of postures that will take hours to complete every day of the week. The simplest way to start is with one pose; preferably a favorite pose or one that is fun to do and feels good doing. A solid home practice can start from there.

## Guidelines for Home Practice

Create a space in your home. It does not have to be a big space, but it should be at least mat size.

- a. Clean
- b. Free from clutter
- c. Suitable for practice (an uncarpeted surface is best)

Plan the time and the day.

- a. Schedule the time and hold it sacred
- b. Be disciplined
- c. Plan for distractions and how to avoid them

Plan the practice (at least in the beginning).

Have in mind what you want to do—especially in the beginning.\*

(\*as you become more disciplined you can let the spirit move you)

Expect dry patches. There are going to be days where you do not feel like practicing. As Iyengar says "Do one pose and if you still feel uninspired, take the day off. On the second day if it's the same, take the day off again. On the third day, you must practice."

## What time

According to the ancient texts, mornings are the best time of day for practice before the busyness of the day sets in. However, for many of us, especially in the beginning, this is just not practical. So, the best time to practice is whenever you can. Sometimes because of family or work obligations your practice might come at the end of the day or between activities. Although restorative asana always seems like the best choice for a day when energy is low with an effective start to the practice you can find the energy and will power to do a strong practice. If you feel tired you can begin practice with Savasana, Pawanuktasana in a chair or legs up the wall pose. After a restful pose of 10-15 minutes even on the most exhausting days energy can be found for a more challenging practice.

## What to Practice

There is infinite variety in what can be practiced. What you choose to practice is based on your current abilities, state of mind and health on a given day, how much time you have and what you are interested in---what goals you may have set for yourself. Some practitioners are highly motivated with regard to asana and desire mastery over the whole spectrum of posture. Some practitioners like to use asana as a support for meditation. Some just want a practice that helps them to feel a little bit better every day. In general a home practice should include the following:

*Asana, Pranayama, Dhyana (meditation)*

*And it should be: Consistent, Challenging, Stable*

*And should: Encourage growth, Reach beyond perceived limitations*

The poses you include in your practice should be asana that you are working on. Keep a journal of what was presented in class and perhaps repeat that sequence at home. Earmark asana that you would like to improve and/or understand better. That is what makes it a practice. Invoke the actions of the asana as you are practicing so that your mind also stays engaged.

In "Light on Yoga" Guruji has listed a series of asana courses. Those are a good resource in terms of what to practice. Geetaji's "A Gem for Women", "Preliminary Course in Asana", and "Intermediate Course in Asana" all contain practice sequences that bring a balance, diversity and direction to a home practice.

