

Just Love Yoga

Focus 12 & Spinal Stretches

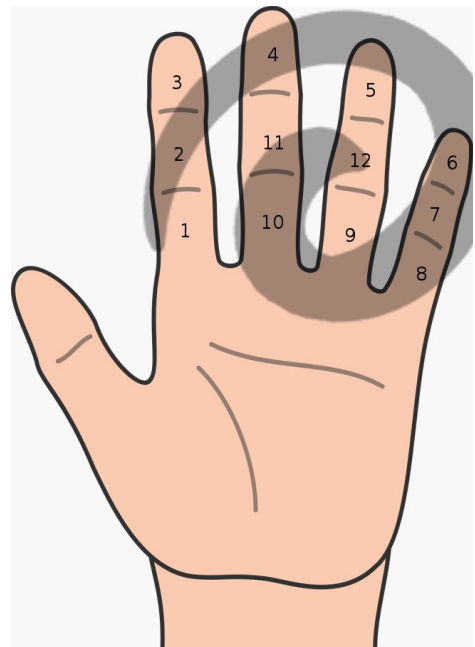
Before commencing your āsana practice, it's nice to take a moment to centre yourself, letting go of thoughts and events prior to this moment.

We start with a simple breathing exercise called the Focus 12. It is a Sama Vritti (Sama = same; Vritti = breath, meaning the inhale and exhale are of equal length). It's a simple, yet very effective breathing technique. It stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system bringing us into a state of calm.

How to:

Come to a comfortable crossed legged position on your mat. Feel free to sit on a block or cushion so that you can sit tall with a long neutral spine, and knees lower than pelvis.

We take 12 equal breaths here using the left thumb and left hand to keep count. Place your right hand to your right knee palm facing down. To start inhale completely, as you exhale place your left thumb to the root of the left index finger (labelled 1 on the diagram). Take a full breath in and an equal exhalation. On each exhale, move your thumb (counter) along one, to the next number. On your 12th exhale release the thumb.

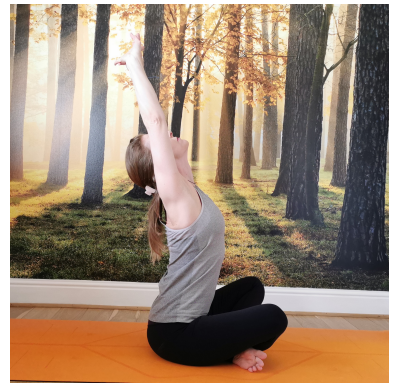


Next, we start to move the spine with our Spinal Stretches. Remain in your comfortable crossed legged position, with an optional cushion or block for support. These may even be done sitting on a chair if that's more comfortable.

How to:

Ekam:

As you inhale extend your arms up, with fingers interlaced and palms facing away from you. Look up behind your hands, anterior pelvis. Lift from your heart centre.



Dve:

Exhale bend your elbows taking your hands behind your head, round your upper back, curl inwards as you look to your navel. Posterior pelvis.

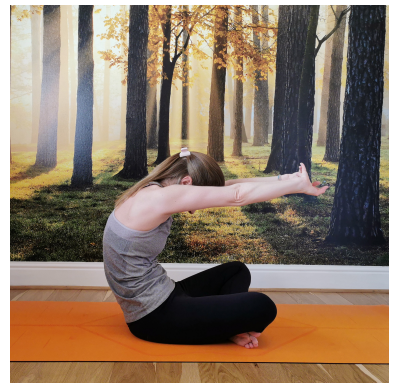


Trīṇi:

Inhale reach your arms up once again – same as Ekam.

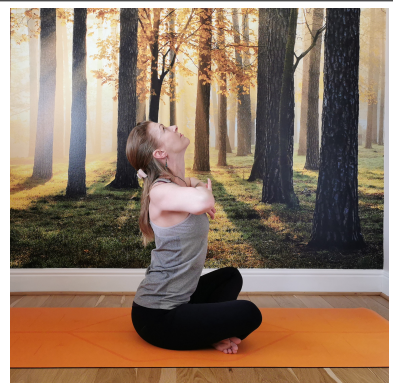
Catvāri:




Exhale reach your arms forward away from your chest, fingers are still interlaced with palms facing away from you. Round your upper back, curl inwards as you look to your navel, posterior pelvis.




Pañca:

Inhale pull your hands in towards your heart centre, palms facing away from you. Lift from your heart centre, gaze up.



<p>Sat: Exhale reach forwards once again - same as Catvāri.</p>	
<p>Sapta: Inhale reach your arms up once again – same as Ekam.</p>	
<p>Astau: Exhale release your right hand down, with your palm flat on the mat. Look towards your right hand. Left arm reaches overhead as your lengthen through your left side body. Inhale look to your left hand. Open the chest by drawing left ribs back. Exhale look down.</p>	
<p>Nava: Inhale reach your arms up interlacing fingers – same as Ekam.</p>	
<p>Daśa: Exhale release your left hand down, with your palm flat on the mat. Look towards your left hand. Right arm reaches overhead as you lengthen through your right side body. Inhale look to your right hand. Open the chest by drawing right ribs back. Exhale look down.</p>	
<p>Ekādaśa: Inhale reach your arms up interlacing fingers – same as Ekam.</p>	
<p>Dvādaśa: Exhale curl your torso inwards, turn to the right, placing your right arm behind your back, left hand to right knee. Inhale sit tall, look to the side over your right shoulder. Exhale release and curl inwards once again.</p>	

<p>Trayodaśa: Inhale reach your arms up interlacing fingers – same as Ekam.</p>	
<p>Chaturdaśa: Exhale curl your torso inwards, turn to the left, placing your left arm behind your back, right hand to left knee. Inhale sit tall, look to the side over your left shoulder. Exhale release, curl inwards once again.</p>	
<p>Pañcadaśa: Inhale reach your arms up interlacing fingers – same as Ekam. Exhale release arms to the side.</p>	