

FREEDOM YOGA & RELAXATION

Social Media Updates
by Carolyn.

My yoga alphabet has reached the letter K. I have chosen Koshas

The Koshas

Although there are earlier references and concepts around the koshas, this one based in Vedantic philosophy is most helpful to me.

Five layers, bodies or sheaths and an inward journey through them, noticing, resolving imbalances towards revealing and understanding the self.

The five Koshas are:

1. Annamaya kosha (the food sheath) - The first layer of the koshas represents the physical body, including the skin, muscles, connective tissue, fat and bones. As we feel our skin and muscles, we engage with annamaya kosha. For most people this is the kosha is where our attention and awareness is most of the time, locked in our physical senses the outermost kosha.

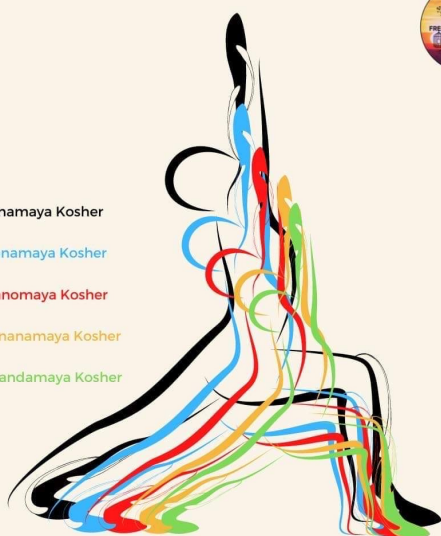
2. Pranamaya kosha (the sheath of vital life force energy/pranic or subtle body) - closely connected with annamaya kosha, this sheath is responsible for animating the physical body. Pranamaya kosha is composed of prana (life force energy) and is greatly influenced by pranayama (breathwork). We could consider it the circulatory system for prana. It also includes the fluid, physical aspects of the anatomical body that control the movement of blood, lymph and cerebrospinal fluid through the body and the circulatory movement of breath through the respiratory system. In psychological terms, pranamaya kosha controls our bodily and spiritual rhythm.

4. Manomaya kosha (the mental or psychological sheath) - the part of the mind dealing with the way we perceive the world around us. This kosha is where our sense of Self develops, along with habitual thinking, affecting our behaviour. The deep recesses of the mind, emotions and nervous system. It's this layer where we move from physical feeling and rhythm to emotional feeling.

5. Vijnanamaya kosha (the intellect sheath) - this sheath is the seat of intuition, connected to inner wisdom and deeper states of consciousness. It is also responsible for inner growth and authenticity, and is impacted by all aspects of yoga. The wisdom body. Where we develop awareness, insight and consciousness. The kosha that can highlight our motivations showing us we choose to act in life in intention rather than habitually auto-responding.



Annamaya Kosher
Pranamaya Kosher
Manomaya Kosher
Vijnanamaya Kosher
Anandamaya Kosher



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6. Anandamaya kosha (the bliss sheath) - otherwise known as the bliss body. Beyond the logical, thinking mind, offering an experience of connection with all things, liberation from suffering and a state of being sometimes described as "in the flow." Daily meditation can help us connect with anandamayakosha.

Since the kosha model encompasses all aspects of our being, Yoga therapy uses this diagnostically. As such, an individual can be viewed holistically and multidimensionally, rather than one-dimensional approach to treatment. If you are interested in yoga classes, 1-2-1 yoga or yoga therapy sessions, please get in touch. Send me a message.

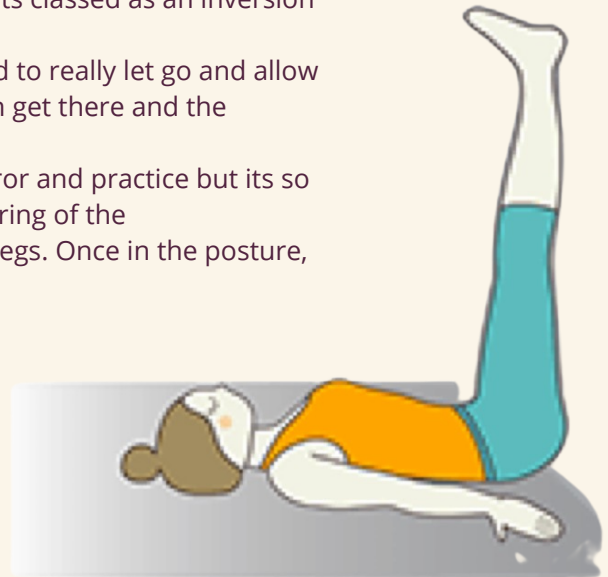
Reaching L in my yoga alphabet, I offer up Legs up the wall pose.

Translated from the Sanskrit Viparita Karani

This pose is such a valuable pose to have in your yoga tool box! Its classed as an inversion but targets the whole body as a resting pose.

In this pose, we let the wall support us in this pose. Its often hard to really let go and allow the wall to do the supporting but gradually, with practice, we can get there and the rewards follow.

The tricky thing is getting into the pose. This takes some trial, error and practice but its so worth it. The pose is Pose is calming and relaxing due to a triggering of the parasympathetic nervous system response. It rejuvenates tired legs. Once in the posture, any swelling of ankles, feet and lower legs can reduce.



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I often recommend the use of this posture for 10 minutes before bed to those who suffer restless legs. Many people have reported huge benefit.

As with most poses, there are ways to make this pose easier or more comfortable for your body.

This pose also offers relief from symptoms of arthritis, headaches, high/low blood pressure, restless legs and insomnia.

It may ease symptoms of premenstrual and menopausal symptoms. It can Relieve tired, cramped feet and legs. Its also gently stretches the hamstrings, legs and lower back so it may aid The relief of low back pain.

Although this is a restorative and easy posture, as it is regarded as an inversion, those with serious eye conditions like glaucoma and detached retina are advised against inversions. If you have a cardiac condition or unmedicated high blood pressure, do check with a member of your health care team that your should not avoid this pose.

My yoga alphabet reaches M. I have chosen meditation.

Meditation is a contemplative practice, used widely as a method of stilling, focussing and transforming the mind to foster self-awareness.

We dont have to completely empty the mind to meditate although that can be the objective. Meditation can be focus on thoughts or another point of focus or concentration. Each time the mind becomes distracted, the practitioner is encouraged to come back to the point of focus.

Meditation is also referred to as dhyana in Sanskrit.

The practice of meditation is training in attention and awareness. It is widely used as a spiritual practice in Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and yoga, and is even found in secular contexts such as modern interpretations of mindfulness. Some consider Jewish, Christian and Muslim prayer to be a form of meditation since the mind is focussed on a set of words or concepts.

There are many different meditation practices. Generally speaking, when meditating, we establish a point of focus aiming to free ourselves from distractions, creating stillness in a steadiness and stable posture. However, there are some forms of the practice which involve movement, such as walking meditation.

Popular focal points for meditation include:

* Sound: Repeating a mantra, phrase or other sound.



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Visualising: Picturing an object with eyes closed, such as a lotus flower or the energy points in the body.

* Gazing: Looking at an actual object with eyes open. Candles, flowers or pictures are common objects used in gazing.

* Breathing: Observing the breath and what it feels like – the sensations – as it travels in and out of the body.

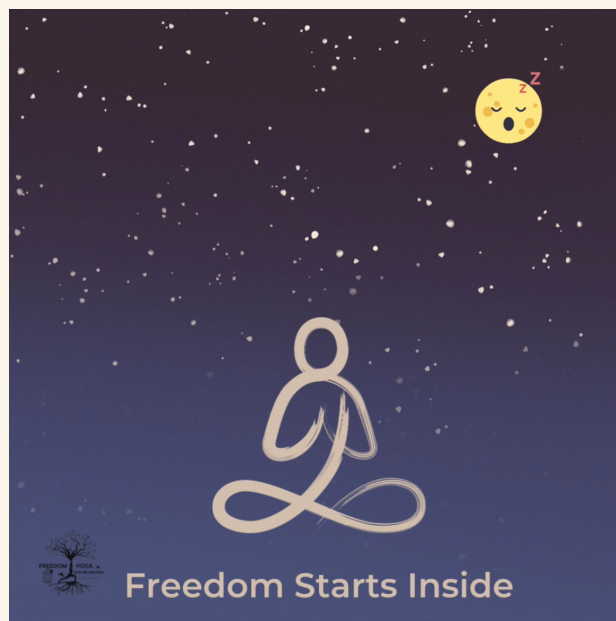
* Philosophical or spiritual concept: such as loving-kindness or acceptance.

In meditation, we observe patterns of the mind and notice thoughts as they appear, reaching a point where the spaces between the thoughts widen over time. With frequent practice, we can reach stillness and deep concentration more readily and mental strength and focus improves.

Science now backs up the claims that physiological and psychological changes occur in the body during meditation. Herbert Benson's studies found that meditation counteracts the stress response, in turn improving any health conditions related to chronic stress.

In yoga, the Sanskrit terms from Patanjali's eight-limbed path separate the state of meditation (dhyana) from the practice of concentration that leads to such a state (dharana).

Generally, what is taught as 'meditation' in yoga is in fact the practice of dharana; techniques to focus and concentrate the mind in preparation for dhyana - the absence of thought. Focus on breath, bodily sensations, mantras, chakras or drishti are all forms of dharana, in which the mind is trained to fix on one particular subject or object as above.



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The letter N in my yoga alphabet reminds me of Namaste.

Namaste is a greeting used both for hello and goodbye throughout India. Namaste comes is translated from two Sanskrit words,

* Namah which means "salutations," "I bow" or "I honor."

* Te which means you.

Namaste is more than a simple greeting.

It is a way of acknowledging, honouring and respecting the other person and so acknowledging the divinity in yourself.

Its about being present with each other in that moment.

Many yoga sessions start and end with namaste as the teacher and students respectfully greet and salute each other. It marks the respect that the students have for the teacher and vice versa.

During namaste, we bring our hands together in prayer position and bow slightly demonstrating humility and heartfelt love. The position of the hands is called a mudra and this mudra is a way of sending energy towards our heart.



Reaching the letter O in my yoga alphabet. Time to add another pose.

One leg bridge pose is an intermediate balancing asana.

In Sanskrit, 'eka' = 'one,' 'pada' = 'leg,' 'setu' = 'bridge,' 'bandha' = 'lock,' 'sarva' = 'all,' and 'anga' = 'limbs.'

To explore this pose, starting in semi-supine on your mat. Draw the heels close to the bottom. The feet should be well planted on the mat in line with the knees. Engage pelvic floor and tummy muscles, then scoop the pelvis away from the floor aiming for thighs parallel with the floor. Firmly plant the left foot, grounding into the floor, as you reach the right leg upwards aiming for a vertical right leg. Bring hands together under the back, interlocking fingers and straightening elbows. To exit the posture, release the fingers and gently release the spine to the floor one vertebra at a time, top to bottom. The repeat on the other side. Count your breaths to measure the time held in the posture aiming for the same length hold each side.

Bending the raised leg over the tummy is a variation as would be adding some support such as a pile of yoga blocks or block on its side to support the low back.

Balancing the body on the shoulders while one leg is raised in this pose demands awareness. Control of the breath while coordinating the balance to help maintain the strength of the core, the quadriceps, the hips, the shoulders, and the arms can be achieved only with full awareness. Therefore, this pose works on balance with awareness.

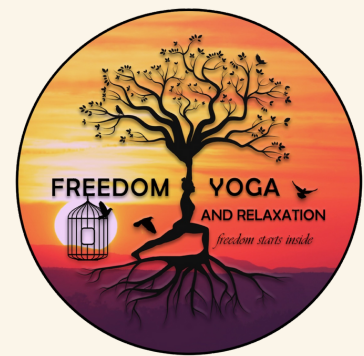
In one legged bridge the hamstrings, quads, calves, glutes, biceps and triceps, shoulders are working hard but the abs - particularly upper abs are working to support the hips and low back.

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Letter P in my yoga alphabet!

Paschimottasana is the Sanskrit name for seated forward fold in which the upper body is folded forward over the legs in order to stretch the hamstrings and the muscles of the back. (paschima = "back" uttana = "stretch" and asana = "seat" or "posture").

To explore paschimottasana, begin seated with legs extended and feet flexed from the ankles. Breathing in, lift the arms and lengthen the spine, then breathing out, hinge from the hips folding forward, engaging tummy muscles gently. Think length in spine rather than dropping face to legs. Let the hands settle where ever they arrive on the legs or the floor. Only if it is easy to, should you hold the feet or heels. Keep the neck neutral. Its a great pose to practice after other asymmetric poses to help return body to balance. We can add in props to make the pose more accessible where the body may otherwise resist.



Paschimottasana (Seated Forward Bend Pose)

- 4. ARMS:** stretched from armpits, away from ears, fingers interlocked
- 5. CHEST:** broad, sternum on thighs
CHIN: on knees
- 3. SHOULDERS:** engaged, scapula away from each other
- 6. SPINE:** lifted from base, lengthening forward
BACK: strong and broad
- 2. LEGS:** parallel, thighs pulled upwards, knee cap pulled up
FEET: ankles together, active foot arch, big toes together, toes pointed up
- 7. ENGAGED:** gluteus, pelvic floor, psoas, hip flexors, hamstrings
NAVEL: pulled in to support back
- 1. HIPS:** engaged, internal rotation, forward bend
SIT BONES: grounded equally to support spine
- 8. BREATH:** exhale deep for forward bend



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bolster or cushion could be placed on the thighs in order to support the upper body. It may then be possible hold the pose for longer - even relaxing into it as a restorative pose. We can use a yoga strap under the feet and two end held in the hands. We can also sit on the front of a yoga block or cushion. Those with tight hamstrings may need to keep a bend in the knees. Paschimottasana is a quietening, potentially introspective posture, calming for the mind and nervous system, so may be therapeutic for anxiety and depression. If we add in focus on the breath over a longer hold time, the whole thing can become quite a meditative experience.

This can be a challenging posture. It is one of those postures in which there is risk we get caught up in desire to go deeper that the body is ready for eg grasping to reach the feet with the hands and therefore risking injury. It is far better and safer to let go and soften into the version of posture that feels right for you at the time of practice. Surrender to where you are now. Perhaps think "its not about achieving the perfect posture but the learning on the journey there".

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I struggled to find a yoga term or pose beginning with the letter Q.

So I'm going with "Question".

I'm constantly asking questions in yoga classes and yoga therapy sessions too. Eg what do you feel? Where is the breath? Where do you notice the stretch? If you could describe the sensation of the breath to yourself, how would you describe it?

What does your body want now? Does this feel safe or right for your body today?

Ask yourself why you are doing a yoga pose. What are we trying to achieve? Should this be in a dynamic flow easing in and out or should this be held at an "edge", should this be deepened gradually, should this be a supported restorative version of the pose? Is it a warm up, peak or cool down posture? So many questions about postures alone. Then there is the breath, the mind, the senses and so much more.

Final question! Who knew there was so, so much to yoga? I certainly didn't when I attended my first ever yoga class.

Q is for Question



<https://bookwhen.com/freedomyogaandrelaxation>

Viparita Virabhadrasana (Reverse Warrior Pose)

4. CHEST AND RIB CAGE: broad, lifted upwards, (L): lateral stretch
CHIN: away from chest

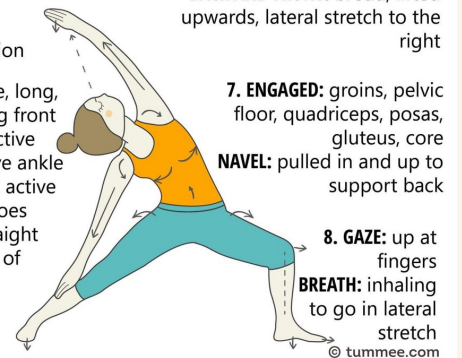
3. SHOULDERS: broad, scapula towards each other (R): rolled back, away from ears
(L): extended

2. HIPS: square,
(L): external rotation

1. LEGS: (R): to side, long, active knee, facing front
(L): 90 degrees, active thighs, knee above ankle
FEET AND TOES: (R): active arch, grounded, toes wide, pointed straight
(L): taking weight of body, grounded, toes wide, pointed straight

5. ARMS: active, long, away from ears (R): reaching to calves
(L): active armpits, palms facing down, fingers together, active

6. SPINE: lifted from base, long, lateral stretch to the right
BACK AND FRONT: broad, lifted upwards, lateral stretch to the right



7. ENGAGED: groins, pelvic floor, quadriceps, posas, gluteus, core
NAVEL: pulled in and up to support back

8. GAZE: up at fingers
BREATH: inhaling to go in lateral stretch

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R in my yoga alphabet spoilt me for choice but a personal favourite of mine is Reverse Warrior or Viparita Virabhadrasana. The name comes from the Sanskrit words viparita = reverse or inverted, virabhadra = the name of a warrior created by Lord Shiva (as per Hindu Mythology), and asana = posture. It is a standing back-bending pose that provides a deep side stretch. Reverse warrior stretches many parts of the body and offers lots of health benefits. It stretches the arms and sides of the body, which strengthen the lower body and open the hips. It's a great chest opener, core strengthener, helps improve balance and it's a bit of an energiser.

S in my yoga alphabet is Savasana, or shavasana which is the Sanskrit name for an important restorative asana. It is a key component of asana practice in almost every yoga tradition, and is most commonly used at the end of a sequence as a means of relaxation and integration. In my classes, in final relaxation, I verbally guide people into a relaxation. In some classes savasana is used to settle the body and mind at the start of a class, and in others and in Yoga Therapy it is practiced between postures in order to balance nervous system and assimilate.

The term is derived from two Sanskrit roots; shava, meaning "corpse", and asana meaning "seat" or "posture".

In this pose, the objective is to imitate a corpse by keeping the body still. Through encouraging the motionless state, with a still mind whilst staying awake, we learn to relax. We give our body the gift of rest. This conscious relaxation invigorates and refreshes both body and mind. This seemingly easy pose is in fact quite challenging. Many of us are so unused to being still however, our body and mind will thank us for practicing savasna regularly.

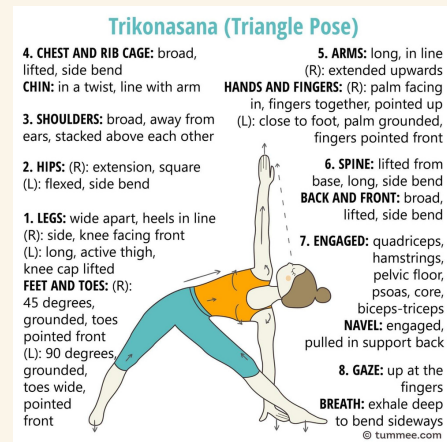
Savasana is very grounding with the whole length of the body in contact with the earth.

The pose offers benefits including:

- * Increasing energy and productivity.
- * Improving memory, focus and concentration.
- * Relief from stress, headache, fatigue and insomnia.
 - * Lowering blood pressure.
 - * Providing deep relaxation.

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My yoga alphabet brings me to the letter T. Can you name this pose?



Trikonasana is often referred to as "triangle pose". It's a standing yoga pose requiring balance, flexibility and strength. Both arms extend with the legs wide apart and one foot turned out 90-degrees. The upper body folds over the lead foot with the same arm reaching toward the ground. The other arm reaches upward.

Trikonasana translates as follows - trikona, meaning "three corners" or "triangle," and asana, meaning "posture." The term is often used synonymously with utthita trikonasana (extended triangle pose).

In addition to a range of physical benefits, trikonasana is believed to unblock energy pathways in the body. It is one of the basic poses common to the many styles of yoga.

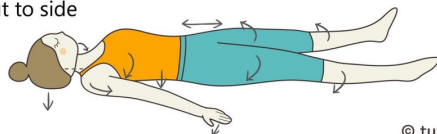
Savasana (Corpse Pose)

4. CHEST AND RIB CAGE: broad, softly engaged
CHIN: a bit tucked to chest

3. NECK: neutral
HEAD: well settled, heavy on floor

2. SPINE: neutral and resting
BACK AND SHOULDERS: grounded, heavy on floor, flat, shoulders away from ears
HIPS: neutral, soft external rotation

1. LEGS: soft thighs and away from each other, soft knees moving outwards, heels resting on floor, soft arch of feet, ankles external rotation, toes soft and pointing out to side



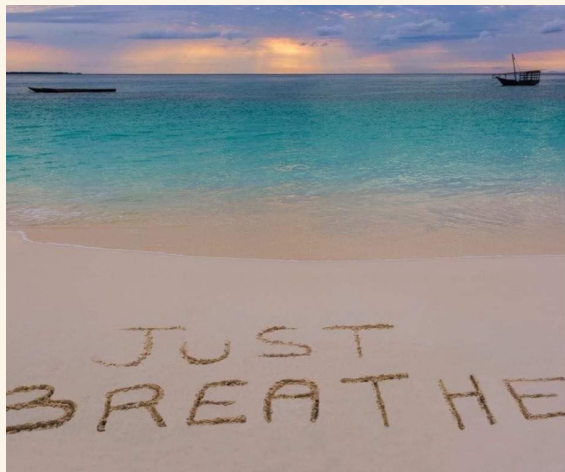
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Ujjayi is a type of breathing exercise, or pranayama, used from a still seated place or during posture (asana) work in yoga. The Sanskrit word may be translated to mean "one who is victorious." Ujjayi breath may also be referred to as "victorious breath," "cobra breath" or "ocean breath" due to the sound made during the practice.

In ujjayi breathing, both inhalation and exhalation are through the nose. Ujjayi is achieved by breathing in and out through the nose while constricting the glottis at the back of the throat. The opening between the vocal cords is narrowed, creating a rushing or hissing sound like the waves at the sea, or Darth Vader.

To use Ujjayi breathing, start by breathing in through the nose and then breathe out through the mouth as if you were fogging your glasses ready to wipe them. Repeat this a few times then create the same sensation but with the mouth closed. This breathing can foster a quietening and calming of the mind and body. it can result in deeper focus.



Vrksasana (Tree Pose)

4. CHEST AND RIB CAGE: broad, lifted upwards
CHIN: aligned

3. SHOULDERS: flexed, lifted, away from ears

2. HIPS: (R): active, external rotation (L): square

1. LEGS: (R): bent outwards, active thighs and knee (L): long, active, knee cap lifted
FEET AND TOES: (R): lifted, active arch, resting above inner knee cap, toes pointed down (L): grounded, active arch, toes pointed straight



5. ARMS: raised, long, away from ears, active elbows, palms together, fingers active

6. SPINE: lifted from base, long, active
BACK AND FRONT: broad, lifted upwards, active

7. ENGAGED: calves, quadriceps, hamstrings, groins, gluteus, pelvis, core

NAVEL: pulled in to support back

8. GAZE: a point ahead
BREATH: soft breathing to balance

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Vrksasana is Sanskrit. vrksa, meaning "tree," and asana, meaning "pose." Vrksasana is often referred to as tree pose. It's a balance - usually from standing. Balances help improve focus and strength.

To enter the pose, stand on one leg with the other leg bent and placing the sole of the foot on the inside of the ankle, calf or thigh of the standing leg. The hands are extended overhead with palms touching as in prayer. Breathing should be steady and easy. (Often when we try balancing, we hold the breath but this simply encourages tension to build in the body)

We aim to feel as steady and strong like a tree. We ground by imagining sending roots into the earth drawing up things we need and to help us feel secure. Those who find balances tricky can use props like chairs, walls etc for support. One finger on a support can make a huge difference and allow us to build strength and develop our sense of balance. We can change the position of hands and arms according to what the body needs. Once we have the strength and balance to hold the pose, it can promote a feeling of a calm mind.

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Pawanmuktasana (Wind Release Pose)

- 1. SPINE:** long, grounded
BACK AND FRONT: broad and active
- 2. SHOULDERS:** broad, away from ears, scapula grounded
- 3. CHEST AND RIB CAGE:** broad
CHIN: away from chest
- 4. HIPS:** flexed, active
- 5. LEGS:** bent, thighs squeezed, pressed against abdomen, knees together
FEET AND TOES: together, flexed, toes relaxed and pointed up
- 6. ARMS:** bent, active, hands at knees
- 7. ENGAGED:** abdomen, hip flexors, gluteus
NAVEL: pulled in
- 8. GAZE:** up
BREATH: exhaling to flex the hips



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Wind relieving pose (sometimes called by its sanskrit name, pavanamuktasana), is a tummy-relieving pose which also strengthens the back and is said to massage abdominal organs. To do this pose - lie down on your back in supine with the legs straight. Draw knees in toward the chest, hugging the knees in toward the chest. Lift the head, bringing the forehead toward the knees (so compressing the tummy, encouraging wind to pass). Release legs and feet back down onto the mat to exit the pose. I think it is much kinder to the knees to do this pose with the hands between the thighs and calves.

The compression and release of the tummy is said to affect the abdominal organs and intestines, helping to improve digestion while relaxing and stretching the lower back. It also increases blood flow to the hips. It is best to practice the wind relieving pose with an empty stomach.



AMAZON, 2021

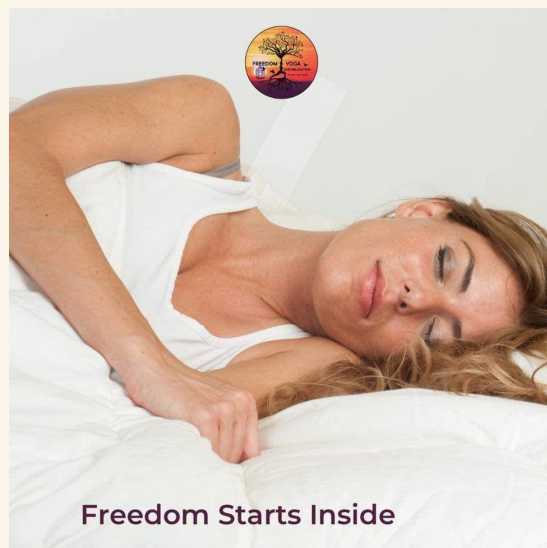
Freedom Starts Inside



I couldn't find a word beginning with the letter X So I have chosen the word "experience". This is a word I use frequently in yoga therapy. I guide the person to experience what is going on for them in their body moment by moment. Following the experience as it develops allows us to access the messages held by the body. As the mind and body work together, an understanding and decoding of the clues presented can take place. I use the word "experience" in my yoga teaching too. Every person can have a different experience in a posture, breathing practice or meditation moment to moment. It is not my place to suggest that they may be experiencing anything. By asking the student to notice their experience, I encourage them to tune into their own body. As my business tagline states "Freedom starts inside".



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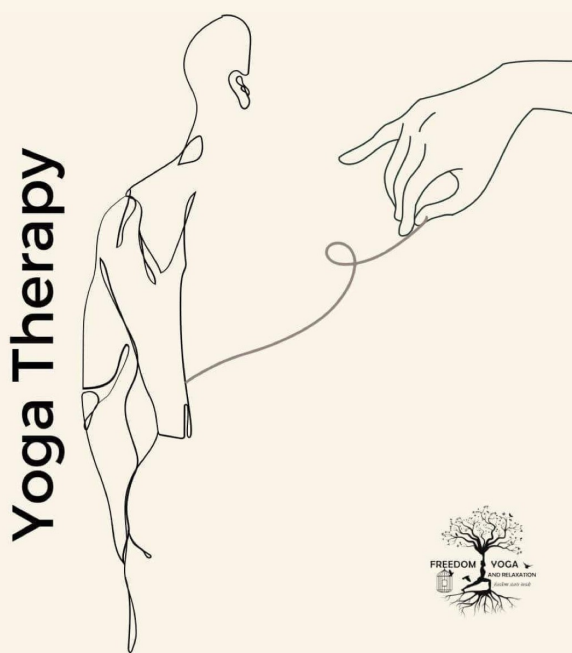
we have reached the letter Y in my Yoga Alphabet. Here I present Yoga Therapy!

Yoga Therapy is a collaboration between therapist and client/Health Seeker (you and me) in which yoga is used to create freedom from the discomforts of the body and/or mind. Together, using clues provided by the body, we uncover a path towards wellbeing for you, the unique individual.

Yoga Therapy can be delivered on a 1:1 basis or in group sessions. 1:1 sessions are specific to the individual. Group sessions are usually set up for a group of people with a similar issue to all in that group.

I wrote a blog on my website recently relating to the subject. You can view it here.

<https://www.freedomyogaandrelaxation.co.uk/carolyns-musings>



On reaching the letter Z in my yoga alphabet, I found it to be limiting so have chosen Zzzzzzzz. The importance of rest and sleep is not to be underestimated as so many of you will agree. Yoga offers up many tools to help support and promote restful sleep. In our busy lives, we often don't ensure we get enough sleep. Many don't prepare the body for sleep. Just like the rest of nature, we need to adjust between phases of wakefulness and sleep to receive the best of ourselves. Just like nature needs autumn to prepare for winter, we need to slow down in preparation for sleep. We cannot go from high energy busy-ness and busy mind into sleep. So many people report that their best night's sleep of the week is after an evening yoga class. Of course a gentle bedtime routine, some reading, quiet, darkened room, no tech, comfy bed are all essential. In addition though, you could do a little gentle yoga, some relaxation promoting breathing, a restful "legs up the wall". Oh, and you could use one of my recorded relaxations which you could purchase via this link.

<https://buff.ly/3whAU4j>

If you would prefer a CD version, please message me.

Carolyn

<https://bookwhen.com/freedomyogaandrelaxation>