

3 steps to making any yoga pose more effective

STEP 1. Move in and out of the pose between the neutral position and the maximum comfortable range



By moving in and out of the pose we increase circulation to larger skeletal muscles and surrounding tissues. Muscles are designed to contract and relax in succession; doing repetitive movements in a yoga practice helps us to: Dynamically warm up the body • Lubricate your connective tissues (fascia, joints, ligaments) Minimize the risk of injury • Develop healthy muscle tone • Release chronic muscle contraction • Improve range of motion at the joint level + Identify and modify dysfunctional movement patterns

Example

Standing with Arms Up



Uttanasana




To warm up the anterior(front) and posterior(back) structures of the body.

DETAILS: On the Exhale gradually contract your abdomen as you begin to move down. Keep your lower back in a neutral position till your body is parallel to the ground, then gradually round it. On the Inhale lead with the chest as you begin to move up, return into a neutral lumbar curve at about half-way up and maintain it for the rest of the movement. It helps to bend the knees generously at first.

STEP 2. Move into the maximum range of the pose and then work on contracting and releasing the target area at this end point

By alternatively contracting and relaxing the muscles while deep in the pose, we are training the body and the mind to recognize and accept this new position. This is where the actual release of chronic muscle contraction happens.

Example Uttanasana  Ardha Uttanasana

To release chronic tension in the lower back



To release chronic tension in the upper and lower back



3 steps to making any yoga pose more effective

STEP 3. Holding the pose statically

Holding the pose statically after repeating it few times sends the signal to the body and the nervous system that this range of movement is acceptable. It helps “cement”, so to speak, the work that was done in Steps 1 and 2.

Example Uttanasana



“WORK THE POSE”:

- Lengthen the breath
- Make subtle physical adjustments to make the spine longer with every inhalation
- Imagine moving the energy along the spine using breath as a vehicle

Holding the pose statically after repeating it few times helps to

INCREASE MUSCLE TOLERANCE

By contracting the muscle first and then staying at the maximum range for several breaths we are encouraging the muscle to release and adapt to this new range of movement.

REDISTRIBUTE TENSION ALONG MYOFASCIAL MERIDIANS

We need to identify which meridians are concentrically loaded (pull) and which ones are loaded eccentrically (being pulled on) and try to work on restoring balance to support the body’s structural integrity.

“PUMP PRANA” TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE SYSTEM

We need to position the body in a way that creates organic, open energy lines, and then use breath and attention to move the energy throughout the system.

THE PSYCHOSOMATIC (MIND-BODY) EFFECT

Students can experience profound release while holding the pose. Depending on the pose and how you work it, it can help you feel more strong and powerful, more soft and accepting and so on. Those types of effects can come from the pose itself, from how you package the poses within the practice or from the student’s own internal process.

When we practice with an open mind and focused attention, we have a chance to observe and transform our patterns. Gary Kraftsow: “In this way, asana practice becomes an experimental ground in which we experience, learn and grow.”