

WORKING WITH CHRONIC PAIN ON THE PRANAMAYA LEVEL

Attending to the three pillars of physiological health – stress, sleep and energy – helps pull the body out of the emergency response mode and supports the healing process.

STRESS

Questions to answer:	Strategies for managing stress:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your overall level of stress? (<i>from day to day</i>) • What is the source (or multiple sources) of stress? (<i>Work? Personal relationships? Self-imposed demands? Etc.</i>) • What are the manifestations of stress in the body? (<i>Does stress show up as a tight neck? Digestive distress? Anxiety?</i>) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actively move the body to release the built-up energy through movement. Repressed physical/emotional response to stressors significantly exaggerates the physiological response. 2. Use specific movements to relieve tension in the parts of the body where the stress shows up (to get out of the stress loop). 3. Use langhana breathing for stressful situations. When confronted with a stressful situation or an episode of pain, focus on lengthening the exhalation and introduce a slight hold at the end of the exhalation. 4. Do other things that give you joy and make you feel balanced and calm.







SLEEP

Questions to answer:	Strategies for better sleep:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the pain interrupt sleep? • Does it hurt more before bed or in the morning? • Can you get enough of quality sleep? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Experiment with different sleep positions and props (like a neck pillow or whole body pillow) to create more support for the body. 2. Encourage “sleep hygiene” which means going to bed at a reasonable hour, staying away from agitating activities before bed, keeping the temperature in the room comfortable, and so on. The goal is to set the stage to facilitate restful sleep. 3. Try pre-sleep langhana practices. Start with some fast movements that involve large muscle groups and then gradually slow down the pace, deepen the breath, lengthen the exhalation, bring the body closer to the ground, spend more time in supported deep forward bends.

ENERGY

Questions to answer:	Strategies for managing energy:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where on the affective diagram do you find yourself most often? • What is the dominant quality of your energy? (<i>Agitated, dragging, dull, hyper, etc.</i>) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify where you need to move from your current location on the affective diagram to the place of more balance (<i>Up? Down? Right?</i>) 2. Choose a brhmana practice to nourish the system and build it up or a langhana practice to purge unwanted stuff.

When you work with energy, it is best to choose a brhmana or langhana breathing pattern and then build the rest of your practice around it. Here are some examples of brhmana and langhana breathing patterns and what you need to do to prepare for them in the course of the practice:

BRHMANA BREATHING PRACTICES	LANGHANA BREATHING PRACTICES
 <p>LONG INHALATION + RETENTION (HOLD AFTER INHALE) HOW: Deepen your inhalation to 6 seconds first, then to 8 seconds. PREPARATION: Gradually deepen the Inhale in the course of the practice, introduce a slight hold after the Inhale.</p>	 <p>LONG EXHALATION + SUSPENSION (HOLD AFTER EXHALE) HOW: Lengthen your exhalation to 6 seconds first, then to 8 seconds. PREPARATION: Gradually deepen the Exhale in the course of the practice, introduce a slight hold after the Exhale.</p>
 <p>KRAMA INHALE (SEGMENTED INHALATION) HOW: Inhale is broken down into 2 or 3 parts with pauses in between, Exhale is long and flowing. PREPARATION: Focus on poses emphasizing Inhalation (Backbends and Lateral bends); lengthen Inhalation throughout the practice, introduce Retention (hold after Inhale).</p>	 <p>KRAMA EXHALE (SEGMENTED EXHALATION) HOW: Exhale is broken down into 2 or 3 parts with pauses in between, Inhale is long and flowing. PREPARATION: Focus on poses emphasizing Exhalation (Forward bends and Twists); lengthen Exhalation throughout the practice, introduce Suspension (hold after Exhale).</p>
 <p>VILOMA UJJAYI (ALTERNATE NOSTRIL INHALATION) HOW: Inhale through alternate nostrils, Exhale using Ujjayi breath. PREPARATION: Focus on poses emphasizing Inhalation (Backbends and Lateral bends); prepare the shoulder and neck for prolonged arm holding (while working with nostrils); lengthen Inhalation throughout the practice.</p>	 <p>ANULOMA UJJAYI (ALTERNATE NOSTRIL EXHALATION) HOW: Inhale using Ujjayi breath, exhale through alternate nostrils. PREPARATION: Focus on poses emphasizing Exhalation (Forward bends and Twists); prepare the shoulder and neck for prolonged arm holding (while working with nostrils); lengthen Exhalation throughout the practice.</p>

Important considerations:

- Never force the breath, keep the flow of the breath smooth. If it becomes jerky, you are practicing beyond your capacity.
- DO NOT make your inhalation longer than your exhalation, or your retention longer than your exhalation. It's OK if IN+RET > EX
- DO NOT hold the breath for very long. It's more important to lengthen your inhalation and/or exhalation.
- Generally, it is more important to begin with langhana to purify the system and teach it how to eliminate, before you start building.