



South Okanagan Yoga Academy



# YOGA Teacher Training 200 Hour Program Manual

## EXCERPT

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## **Meditation**

## Understanding Meditation

The practice of meditation  
Although it sounds  
is effortless, but takes

the mind's activities.  
thought enters the mind,  
get carried away with the  
things can occur in the  
off into the endless

*concentration* is when we  
on one thing. This may be

of something like the  
candle flame. We hold the mind there, concentrating on that which we are focused on, not  
allowing thoughts or the mind to wander.



is often misunderstood.  
contradictory, meditation  
discipline.

Let us consider some of  
*Daydreaming* is when a  
and we allow the mind to  
thought. All sorts of  
daydream as we venture  
possibilities.

On the other hand,  
purposely focus the mind  
a yantra (a picture or form

symbol Om (ॐ) or a

**Daydreaming** ← ----- **Meditation** ----- → **Concentration**

Meditation is somewhere in between these two activities of the mind. We allow thoughts to rise, but we don't let the mind wander off with them. In order to achieve this, we chose a "*vehicle*" for the mind to work with. This is usually the breath or a mantra, but can be something different, like a prayer or meaningful verse from a sacred text.

During the process of meditation, as each thought rises observe it, gently let it go and bring your mind back to the breath or the mantra. For example, as the thoughts rise, view them like subtitles on a movie screen, coming and going. You could also think of the thoughts like clouds passing by in the sky. They clouds come and go, but the sky remains unaffected by it.

Use the breath, and "watch" as you inhale and exhale. Notice that the breath is cool as it enters the body and warm as it exits. Notice the pace of your breathing, but do not control it. While you watch the breath, a thought rises. "Did I let out the cat?" Acknowledge the thought, and then gently let it go like a subtitle, returning to the breath.

The same can be done using a mantra, such as "*Tat Tvam Asi*" (That Thou Art). You repeat the mantra over and over in your mind, and as soon as you realize a thought has come into the mind, you return effortlessly to the mantra "*Tat Tvam Asi*". Immediately the thought is released and the mind returns to its peaceful state of meditation.

Mind and breath are intimately connected. When you control or slow down the breath you slow down the mind. The practice of Pranayama prepares the mind for meditation. As your breath slows down, the brain waves move from beta to alpha and eventually to theta. If you synchronize your breath with your mantra it can work to deepen the meditation. For example, use the mantra "*So Ham*", which translates to "I am That (God) I am". As you inhale repeat in your mind "So" and as you exhale repeat "Ham". You allow the breath to move freely and naturally, never forcing it to be deep or shallow. When the mind wanders away from the mantra and breath to a thought, bring it back to the flow of breath and the mental repetition of the mantra. As the meditation deepens, the breath will become calm and the mind will follow.

You may already have been previously initiated with a mantra. If not, try several different mantras at first until you find one that seems right for you. There are many books where you can learn the meaning of the mantras. If you are unsure of how to pronounce the mantra, choose a simple one that you can say properly. Then, when you find the right meditation technique for you, stick with it. The mind will become familiar with this and know what to do when you begin to repeat it. Quickly, the mind will rest into the practice.

The process of meditation can be likened to the dying of a cloth. Each time the cloth is dipped into the dye, it deepens in colour. Each time we meditate, the mind goes deeper into that peaceful bliss. Dedication to regular practice will reap benefits untold. The process is effortless and simply requires one to “just do it”. You can change your life and your entire way of being by regularly meditating.

Ideally, the practice of meditating twice a day, morning and evening is the best discipline. Twenty minutes to half an hour per sitting is recommended. The consistency of this practice results in one becoming “hooked” and you will miss it if you don’t do it.

But what if you don’t have time? One of my most loved yoga teachers, Dr. Hari Dickman (disciple of HH Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh) gave me a wonderful option. Keep a small notebook with you at all times and dedicate to meditation every spare few minutes that you have throughout the day. Record these “five minutes here and eight minutes there” in your notebook. Tally them up at the end of the day and you will find that you have accumulated many minutes in meditation. It may be a little inconsistent at first, but it will become habit to dedicate these minutes to a blissful mind.

Dipping in and out of meditation several times throughout the day can only ground us in our Spiritual Self, and help us to respond from a loving heart. Enjoy your time in meditation. Enjoy the peace and the bliss it will bring to you. Dedicate time to meditation just as you would your asana practice. Know thyself!

### **Benefits of Meditation**

- ☸ Heart rate will slow down
- ☸ Blood pressure lowers
- ☸ Amount of oxygen consumed lowers
- ☸ Body temperature at the extremities raises
- ☸ Muscles relax
- ☸ May reduce overall anxiety
- ☸ Is a very affective form of resting
- ☸ Responses come from a calm centre
- ☸ We come to know the “inner quiet” of the soul
- ☸ The relaxed state makes it easier to be in control of fear and anger

Tension blocks the mind and body union and keeps them both from performing at their best. Tension raises fatigue, resulting in your energy level dissipating. The relaxed state that results from meditation changes your perception of the world and your spiritual self.



## **Chanting or Kirtan**





**Sanskrit Pronunciation**

## SANSKRIT PRONUNCIATION Devanagari Alphabet

Scholars have arranged the Devanagari characters and their transliterated letters into an alphabet of 16 vowels and 33 consonants. The most common order is as listed below. Devanagari is written and read like English, from left to right.

### THE DEVANĀGARĪ ALPHABET

#### VOWELS

अ *a* आ *â* इ *i* ई *î* उ *u*  
ऊ *û* ऋ *ṛi* ॠ *ṛî* ऌ *lṛi* ॡ *lṛî*  
ए *e* ऐ *ai* ओ *o* औ *au* ँ *m̄ or n̄ :h̄*

#### CONSONANTS

क *ka* ख *kha* ग *ga* घ *gha* ङ *ṅa*  
च *cha* छ *chha* ज *ja* झ *jha* ञ *ña*  
ट *ṭa* ठ *ṭha* ड *ḍa* ढ *ḍha* ण *ṇa*  
त *ta* थ *tha* द *ḍa* ध *dha* न *na*  
प *pa* फ *pha* ब *ba* भ *bha* म *ma*  
य *ya* र *ra* ल *la* व *va or wa*  
श *śa* ष *sha* स *sa* ह *ha*

Variations in the formation of the Devanāgarī characters are found in MSS. and in type-fonts, the principal ones being

ऋ *a* ऌ *na* झ *jha* क्ष *ksha*



## **Basic Pranayama**

## PRANAYAMA - THE SCIENCE OF THE BREATH

Sources: Yoga Dictionary by Harvey Day; Yoga of Light by Hans-Ulrich Reiker; Light on Yoga by BKS Iyengar, Sivananda Companion to Yoga by the Sivananda Yoga Center; Pranayama by Swami Kuvalyananda.

### What is Prana?

“Prana” is a Sanskrit word which means “the energy of the universe expressed in mental, physical and spiritual activity”. Symbolically, prana is either yellow or coral in colour. It should not be confused (though it often is) with just breathing or respiration. “Prana” means breath, and “ayama” means pause, so it implies a pause in the movement of breath.

Prana is the vital air, which is connected with anahata chakra (the cardiac plexus near the heart) and is concerned with health, strength and the well being of body and mind. The body needs nourishment with food, water, and light. When these conditions are satisfied and air is inhaled by yoga breathing (pranayama), the body becomes infused with prana. Atmospheric air consists of 79% nitrogen, 20% oxygen, and 1% other gases. Pranayama enables the body to make use of prana and so prevents disease, increases vitality, and lengthens life.

Prana is the Life force, or breath of life. Prana is also known as one of the five bodily currents. Breath in Sanskrit is prana, but what we call breath is only an insignificant fraction of what the Indian person understands by prana. Breath is more than inhaled and exhaled air, more than oxygen and nitrogen, even more than a chemist could analyze. Breath is the carrier of an especially efficacious life force of a stream, which nourishes the organism. There is actually little difference between this “life force current” and an electrical current. This current flows in the fluid along our spine.

The Yoga Vasistha describes prana as extending outside the physical body, insisting that the prana extends and reaches a distance of approximately twelve inches. The term given for this is "vadasanta" or twelve finger-breadths from the body. On one level, this was regarded as the field of prana. On another level, it was understood that prana, being cosmic, was not limited to this twelve-inch shell.

In addition to the physical body, yogis perceive man as possessing two other bodies - the causal and astral. This makes sense when we consider the words above from the Yoga Vasistha. Prana is the vital link between the astral and the physical body, but flows mainly through the Nadis or energy channels of the astral body.

Through the practice of asanas and Pranayama, more prana is taken in and stored in the body, bringing great strength and vitality. Prana exists both as a positive and negative energy - the negative form known as apana. Prana is an afferent impulse (conveying impulses inwards) whose nature is to move upward, and apana is efferent (conveying impulses outwards) and moves downward. When the two channels are united at the Brahmanadi (the opening to the sushumna) at the base of the spine, the Kundalini energy awakens. For Pranayama to be successful, one must practice regularly, and the mind must be in a sattvic state. This is achieved by being steadfast in your yamas and niyamas, and practicing with bhaava, or love from within.

Consider your purpose for your practice of Pranayama. If you are trying to relax and reduce stress, there is no need to include kumbhaka or breath retention in the practice. It is very safe to practice the techniques without breath retention. If you are trying to move prana and raise the Kundalini, then one should incorporate kumbhaka, however, you must have cleansed the Nadis prior to introducing

kumbhaka, and you must not hold the breath if you do not have normal blood pressure (the regular practice of yoga usually helps to normalize blood pressure).

### **Bandhas**

The bandhas need to be applied when performing Pranayama *if one is performing kumbhaka and the desired result is to raise the Kundalini Shakti*. It is strongly cautioned that one should only begin by using Jalandhara bandha, gradually working up to using all three bandhas (Bandha Traya) during pranayama. Haste could damage the lungs.

**1) Jalandhara bandha:** Chin lock. Performed during breath retention after inhalation (Antara kumbhaka). This bandha is essential during kumbhaka as it prevents the onrush of air after holding the breath for a long time, protecting the Eustachian tubes to the internal ear. The chin rests in the jugular notch. This results in pressure on the arteries going to the brain and arrests the downward flow of nectar issuing from it. The pressure created to the carotid sinus from Jalandhara bandha results in a trance-like state induced in the brain. This stimulation also slows down the heart. This bandha forces the prana to meet with apana. The Siva Samhita states that when this practice is perfected, blissful and pure Brahman reveals itself. (p 27-28 Pranayama: Swami Kuvalyananda)

**a) Jihva bandha:** This is a secondary bandha. During Jalandhara bandha, press the tip of the tongue behind the upper front teeth, and the rest of the tongue towards the back of the throat, sealing the entrance from the nasal passages to ensure there is no escape of air during kumbhaka.

**2) Mula bandha:** Anal and perineum contraction. Usually performed during breath retention (Antara kumbhaka), in conjunction with Jalandhara bandha. Forcibly, one contracts the anal sphincters and pelvic region while closely pressing the perineum by the heel. (p.29, Pranayama: Swami Kuvalyananda). You are not trying to squeeze the buttocks together, but isolate these internal muscles. This bandha works on the central and sympathetic nervous systems through the nerve terminals in the anal sphincters. This bandha draws the apana upwards to unite with prana.

1) **Uddiyana bandha:** Flying Up. During breath retention (Antara kumbhaka) and upon deep rechaka, one draws the abdomen in towards the spine and up towards the chest cavity. This continues for a moment while the breath is held out (Bahya kumbhaka). In this exercise the diaphragm will rise up under the ribs and the abdomen will undergo a pronounced depression, appearing concave. When the breath can no longer be held out, then one inhales. Improves constipation, liver troubles and draws the kundalini energy up through the sushumna.

## Anuloma Viloma, also known as Nadi Sodhana

### Alternate Nostril Breathing

This breathing technique is mainly for the purpose of maintaining equilibrium in the catabolic and anabolic processes in the body, and for purifying the 72,000 Nadis (physical and astral nerves).

According to the Yogis, when breath flows more than 24 hours in one nostril without changing, it is a warning that some serious illness is at hand. The longer the flow of the breath in one nostril, the more serious the illness will be. This is because the ganglia of some particular nerve centre are being overworked by the abnormal flow of breath, which moves in a particular centre for a longer-than-normal period of time. One hour and fifty minutes (approximately) is considered the normal period of breath flow per nostril.

In this technique you use the right hand in Vishnu Mudra (also known as Nasagra Mudra). The thumb is used to block the right nostril and the ring and baby finger are used to block the left nostril. The index finger is not used due to its ego. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and quietly inhale through the left nostril. Now close the left nostril and the little finger. Retain the breath, inhale back through the right nostril. Remove your thumb from the right nostril and exhale slowly and quietly through that nostril. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and retain the breath using Jalandhara bandha. Remove the fingers from the left nostril and exhale slowly through it. *This is one full round.* **NOTE: This mudra should be used during any kumbhaka during pranayama to ensure the prana is sealed within.**



Vishnu Mudra (also known as Nasagra Mudra) is used to block the right nostril with the thumb, the left nostril with the ring and baby finger, and the little finger is not used due to its ego. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and quietly inhale through the left nostril. Now close the left nostril and the little finger. Retain the breath, inhale back through the right nostril. Remove your thumb from the right nostril and exhale slowly and quietly through that nostril. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and retain the breath using Jalandhara bandha. Remove the fingers from the left nostril and exhale slowly through it. *This is one full round.* **NOTE: This mudra should be used during any kumbhaka during pranayama to ensure the prana is sealed within.**

**The traditional ratio for breathing is 1:4:2.** For example, start with 3 seconds of inhalation, retain the breath for 12 seconds, and exhale for 6 seconds. This is too much for many, and we must slowly build up to it. Some schools teach a **1:2:2 ratio** which is also acceptable. To prepare for a 1:4:2 ratio, beginners should start as such:

Inhale 3: Retain 3: Exhale 3	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.
Inhale 3: Retain 3: Exhale 6	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.
Inhale 3: Retain 6: Exhale 6	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.
Inhale 3: Retain 9: Exhale 6	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.
Inhale 3: Retain 12: Exhale 6	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.

**Now you have worked up to the 1:4:2 ratio and continue in this fashion:**

Inhale 4: Retain 16: Exhale 8	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.
Inhale 5: Retain 20: Exhale 10	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.
Inhale 6: Retain 24: Exhale 12	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.
Inhale 7: Retain 28: Exhale 14	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.
Inhale 8: Retain 32: Exhale 16	Only increase ratio when this is comfortable to do twenty rounds.

Do twenty rounds at a sitting. Gradually work up to a ratio of 8:32:16. It should take eight to twelve months of steady practice, two sittings a day, to reach this timing. Do not try to hurry it. You can use the same ratio as in Anuloma Viloma in all the other Pranayamas. *\*\*Note: Do not retain the breath after inhalation if you have high blood pressure or are pregnant.*

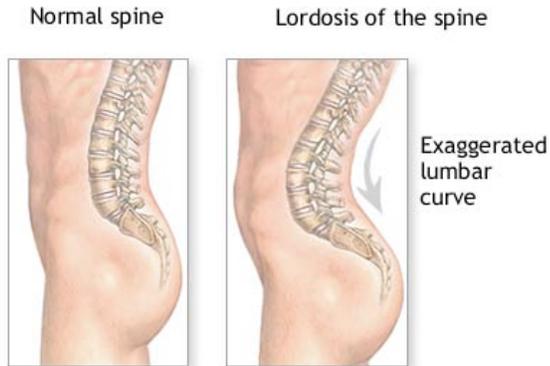


## **Anatomy & Physiology**

The spine has four curves which are alternately convex and concave. These curves increase the strength of the spine, help maintain balance in the upright position, absorb shocks from walking, and help protect the column from fracture. The spinal column is very thick from front to back and side to side, and takes up considerable space within the torso.

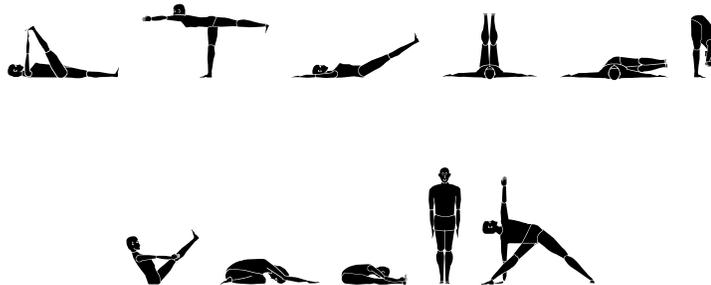
### Common Posture Problems of the Spine

- 1) **Lordosis:** when weak to tilt forward, outward curve of the spine. The toes end up body and both lumbar sections. Often, weak tight hamstrings condition. Poor tuberculosis of contribute to this lumbar curve of



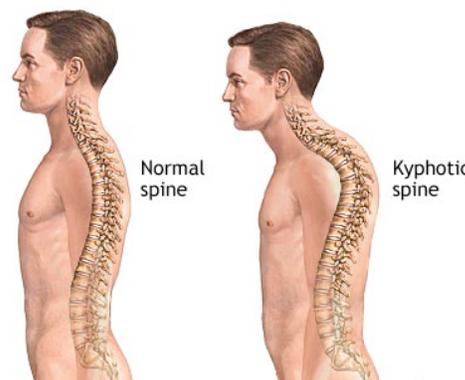
“Sway Back” occurs muscles allow the pelvis creating an exaggerated the spine at the waist. bearing the weight of the the **cervical and** of the spine are affected. abdominal muscles or contribute to the posture, rickets, and the spine may also exaggeration of the the vertebral column.

*Leg raises strengthen abdominals. Seated or standing forward bends (padahastasana, paschimottanasana, & janusirsanana) lengthen the hamstrings. Tadasana and trikonasana with a pelvic tilt help to strengthen the lower back. Navasana, Virabhadrasana 3.*



NOTE: A flat back appears when the pelvis tilts too far up at the front, negating the natural lumbar curve. Rounded shoulders and a rigid spine also characterize this postural problem.

- 2) **Kyphosis:** “Humpback” thoracic curve of the the result of rounded or this postural condition excessively outward, the head hangs too far the natural curve of the rounded upper back prevents free breathing. *Chest opening poses will correct rounded sphinx or bhujangasana,*



is an exaggeration of the vertebral column. It is hunched shoulders. In the upper spine curves neck curves in and the forward, thus flattening **cervical spine**. The restricts the rib cage and

*help to prevent and shoulders, such as gentle setu bandhasana,*

*ustrasana, dhanurasana, and legs up the wall  
with chest elevated by a blanket or roll. Be aware of osteoporosis and do not force!*



- 3) **Scoliosis:** The “S-shaped” curvature of the spine is a sideways or lateral bending of the vertebral column, usually in the **thoracic region** of the spine. When the bend occurs in the pelvic area, a compensating curve tends to develop in the upper back. It is often congenital, but may also be acquired from persistent



## **Asanas**

## The Twelve Basic Asanas

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika tells us there are 840,000 different Yoga poses. Many of these are variations of the 12 Basic Yoga Asanas. The 12 Basic Yoga Asanas are:



- ॐ Shirsasana, Headstand
- ॐ Sarvangasana, Shoulderstand
- ॐ Halasana, Plough
- ॐ Matsyasana, Fish
- ॐ Paschimottanasana, Seated Forward Bend
- ॐ Bhujangasana, Cobra
- ॐ Shalabhasana, Locust
- ॐ Dhanurasana, Bow
- ॐ Ardha Matsyendrasana, Half Spinal Twist
- ॐ Bakasana, Crow or Bird or Mayurasana the Peacock
- ॐ Padahasthasana, Standing Forward Bend
- ॐ Trikonasana, Triangle

Asanas can be categorized as Standing, Sitting, Supine, (lying on back), Prone (lying on abdomen), Kneeling, Inverted or Balancing.

In order to achieve a postural and balanced Asana routine, which includes equalising massage to the internal organs, extension and flexion to the muscle groups, and enhanced circulation, one must include at least one of each of the following types of asanas:

- ॐ Forward Bend
- ॐ Back Bend
- ॐ Side Bend
- ॐ Twist
- ॐ Inversion
- ॐ Balance

## **The 6 Kinds of Poses for Balanced Asana Work**

From the forests and caves of the Himalayas this wonderful science of Yoga was born. This practice brings one radiant health and long life.

Swami Sivananda says, *“We do not practice yoga asanas in order to gain big muscles. Muscles do not necessarily mean health. The practice of Yoga asanas is to achieve the healthy and harmonious functioning of the endocrine glands and the internal viscera, the nervous system and the mind. This is what the regular practice of Yoga Asanas and Pranayama will bestow upon you.”*

Each style of hatha yoga has a system or methodical approach to the asanas. The masters have designed these systems with a purpose in mind, so it is often a good idea to find a system that works for you and stick to it.

A common denominator to the practice of hatha yoga is that there are six kinds of poses one must incorporate to achieve the balance and health of the body. These poses are:

### **Side bend, Forward bend, Backbend, Twist, Inverted, Balance**

By incorporating these six kinds of poses into each yoga session one will ensure optimum stimulation of the endocrine glands, nervous system, muscular system, and respiratory system, while including weight-bearing exercise for healthy, strong bones.

According to the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, there are 840,000 different asanas, which provide variety and the opportunity to continuously advance in your ability. These asanas will all fall within these 6 kinds of poses.

The order in which one should do these poses will vary throughout the different hatha yoga styles. Below is one example of how to put the asanas together.

**TWISTS**

Twists may also be forward bends, inversions and balancing poses. Here are some examples of Twist Poses.



Parivritta Trikonasana  
Arda Chandrasana  
*Revolved Triangle*



Parivritta ParsvaKonasana  
*Revolved Side Angle  
Half Moon*



Parivritta  
*Revolved*



Parivritta Sirsasana  
*Revolved Headstand*



Jathara Parivartanasana  
Janu Sirsasana  
*Stomach Revolved Pose  
Revolved Head to Knee*



Parivritta



Ardha Matsyendrasana Variations  
Marichyasana  
*Half Spinal Twist Variations*

*of a Sage pose*

*Name*

**Counter Poses:**



Pavana Muktasana or Apanasana  
*Gas Relieving Pose*



Pranatasana  
*Childs Pose*

## **Twisting Poses: Benefits, Precautions and Modifications**

### **Benefits of Twisting Poses:**

- ☺ Improves digestion and circulation.
- ☺ Spine becomes more flexible and hips move more easily.
- ☺ Opens throat, chest and shoulders.
- ☺ Reduces discomfort from backache, neck pain and sciatica.
- ☺ Helps to relieve muscular problems in back and hips.
- ☺ Increases the synovial fluid of the joints.
- ☺ Tones roots of spinal nerves and the sympathetic nervous system, and brings fresh blood supply to spine.
- ☺ Massages abdominal muscles.
- ☺ Benefits gallbladder, spleen, liver and bowels.
- ☺ Increases lung capacity.
- ☺ Relieves menstrual discomfort.
- ☺ Stimulates lymphatic system.
- ☺ Beneficial effect on entire nervous system.
- ☺ Kidneys and abdominal organs are activated and exercised.
- ☺ Forces energy up the spine to the Heart and Throat Chakras.
- ☺ Rouses the Kundalini (potential spiritual energy).
- ☺ Brings peace of mind.

### **Placement Tips:**

1. Elongate Before You Revolve – Lengthen spine by extending upward through crown and downward through tailbone.
2. Let the Breath be your Guide – Twists tend to compress the diaphragm. As you inhale, lengthen the spine and as you exhale, revolve gently into twist. Pause and lengthen again on the inhalation and rotate farther with the exhalation.
3. Stabilize the Lower Spine - The pelvis, lower back and neck needs to be anchored. Upper spine revolves. Keep lower spine stabilized by squaring the hips (and feel twist at rib cage level as opposed to hip level). Watch your lower back and neck because of their natural curves; they can bear the burden of revolving actions. Do not let the cervical spine do all the work – the head and neck should follow the movement, not lead it. Be conscious not to over-twist in these more mobile areas. Try extending the movement into some of the more resistant areas.
4. Practice Evenly on Both Sides - Spend equal time revolving in each direction to promote balance.
5. Take Care – Some twists in combination with forward bends can strain the back. Watch range of motion for lower back or sacroiliac joint strain.
6. Enjoy the Aftereffects – Enjoy the sensations of clarity, vitality and ease once you have emerged from your favorite twist.

### **Precautions:**

Angle Pose ~ Turned Body – Back issues – lift back heel, Weak lower back, hip or knee, knee injury, LBP – fingertips towards ceiling, migraine, pregnancy.

Seated Spinal Twist (Matsyendrasana) - Digestive discomfort, HBP or LBP, headache, osteoporosis, pregnancy.

Seated Sideways Spinal Twist (Bharadvajasana) - HBP, eye strain, stress headache or migraine.

Seated Bound Spinal Twist/Forward Bend (Marichyasana III) - Headache, migraine, insomnia, fatigue.

Triangle Pose ~ Turned Body (Parivrtta Trikonasana) - Migraine, insomnia, LBP, neck injury - look down