Cover Note for Handouts of Class Plan from June 18th Yoga & Aging Webinar

Greetings everyone and thank you again (and again) for coming to our presentation!

There are three documents attached:

(1) A visual summary of most of what we practiced
(2) An itemized class plan with copious notes to remind you of what to do, why and how to modify
(3) A bibliography of my favorite books ~ the one I showed first, **A Morning Cup of Yoga,** is a treasure. Out-of-print but readily available on sites like abebooks.com and Thrift … I have many copies, like new mostly … let me know if you'd like and I'll send one to you next week.

If I can offer support to you in any way as you move forward on the quest to staying stronger longer, please let me know:

lindalang@theopen-door.com 301.704.2040 text or call

If you wish to be on my mailing list, it would be wonderful.

I rarely send emails, so don't worry …

Just send me a brief memo if you'd like to stay in touch.

Bowing in your direction,

namaste,

linda

Linda Lang

# Seated Practices

This is a brief yet comprehensive review intended to support your quest for a meaningful experience, both intellectually and physically. As you learn more about the physical practices, you will notice the physiological components that contribute to deeper relaxation and release, an increased sense of calmness and overall well-being.

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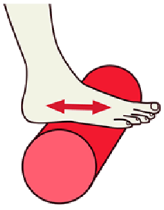
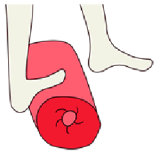
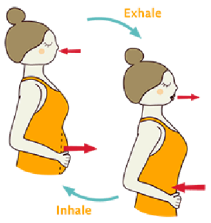
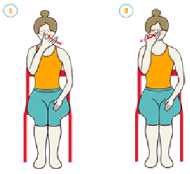
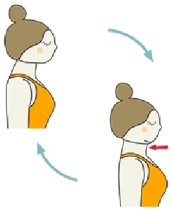
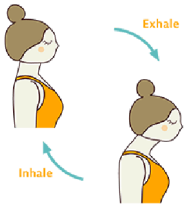
| Om | | Set Intention | | |  |
|  | Pranayama | Breath Awareness | |  | |
|  | Centering | | |  |  |
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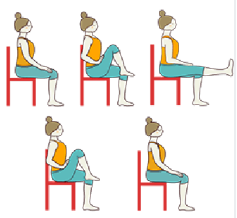
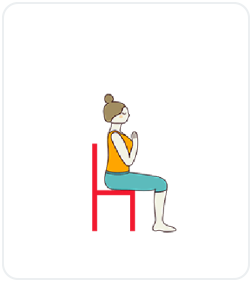
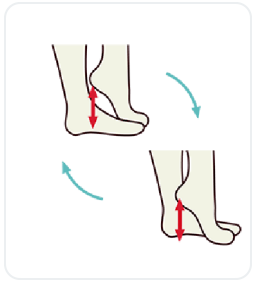
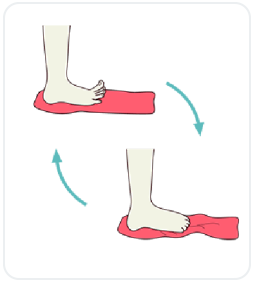
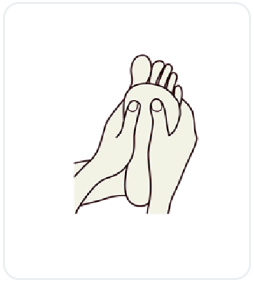
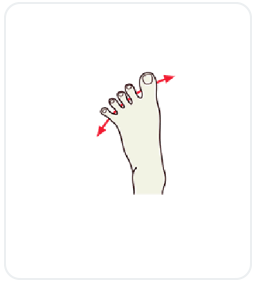
| | | | | |  |

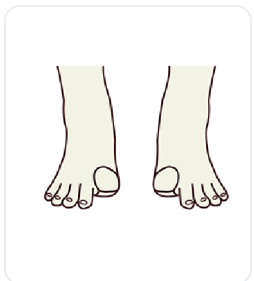


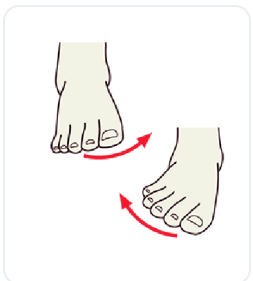


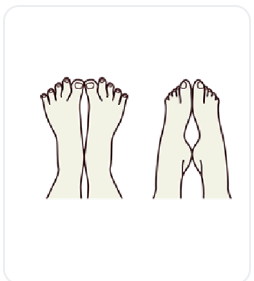


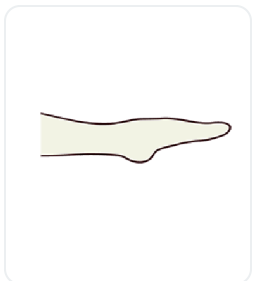


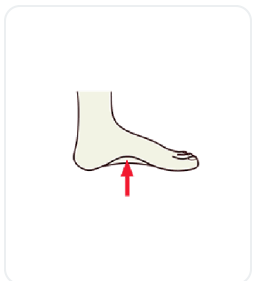


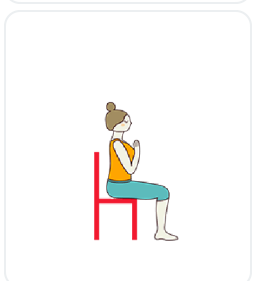


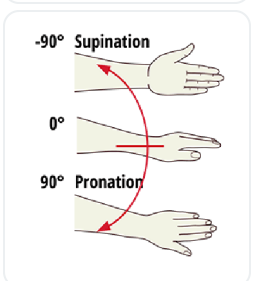


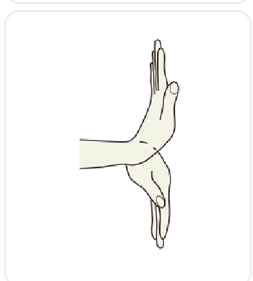


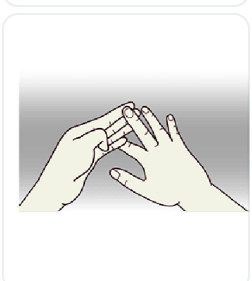


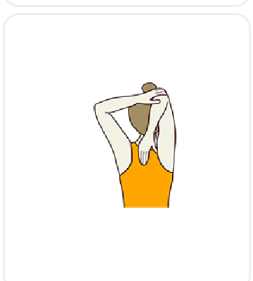


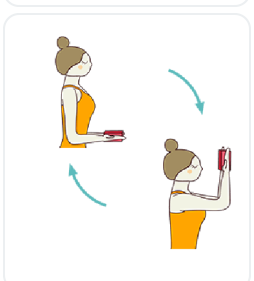


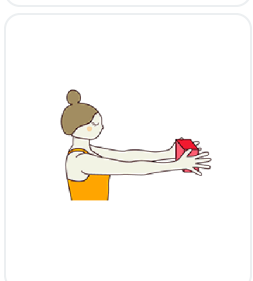


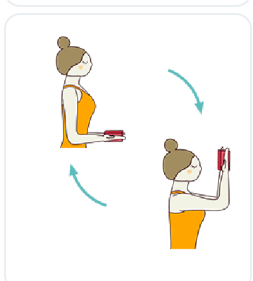


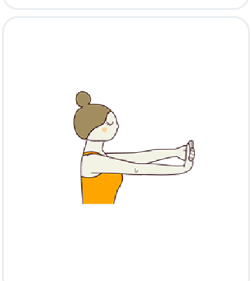




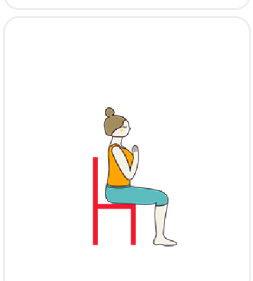


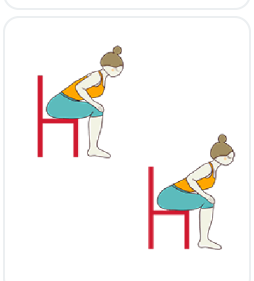


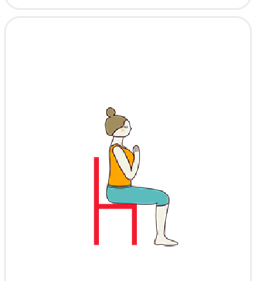


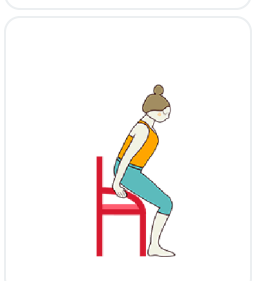


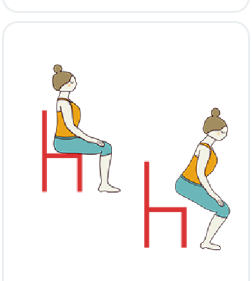
Bring Your Intention Back to Mind

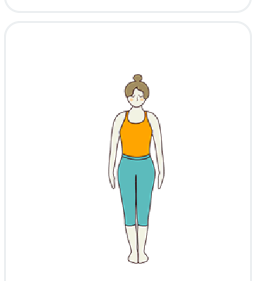


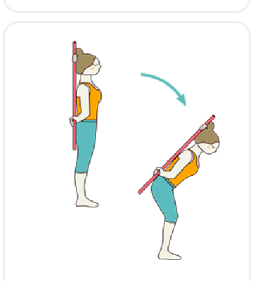


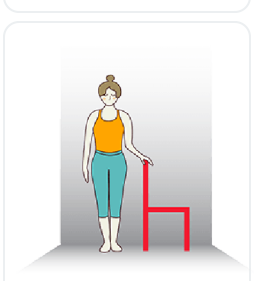


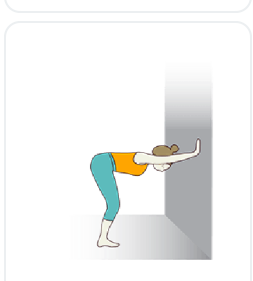


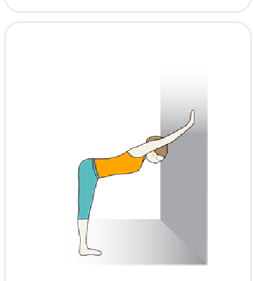


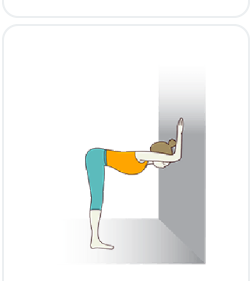


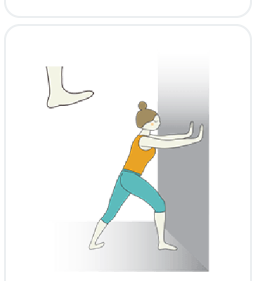


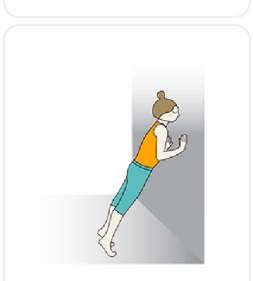


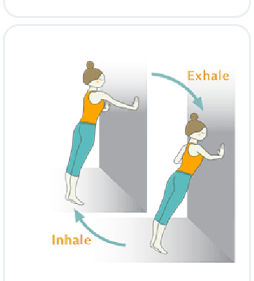


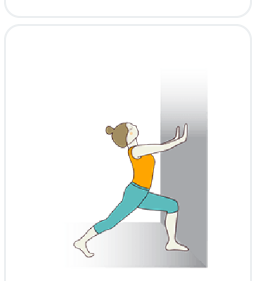


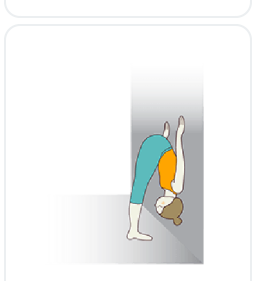








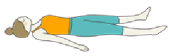


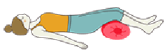
Meditation

4-7-8 Breath

Yoga Nidra

Savasana





Om Shanti

Linda Lang

# Seated Practices

This is a brief yet comprehensive review intended to support your quest for a meaningful experience, both intellectually and physically. As you learn more about the physical practices, you will notice the physiological components that contribute to deeper relaxation and release, an increased sense of calmness and overall well-being.

Om

Ommm is the sacred sound from which the Universe evolves, as it continues to vibrate and pulsate through all things including you, and me. It is the tone of reverence, and sets that tone for our practice as we honor our minds and bodies, recognizing and sensing into the human with the divine.

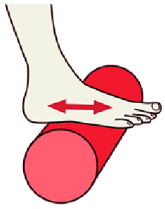
We recognize the four states of awareness: Deep Sleep (upper left), Being Awake (lower left), Dreaming (lower right), Turiya (spacious conscious awareness) upper right ... as easily as we experience the first three, we can also experience the fourth, by softening into the possibility of realizing that this is a natural state of Being.

Set Intention

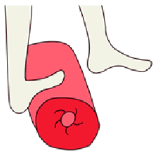
When you "sit" to practice it is meaningful to know why, what is it that you wish for, that you desire? This can be similar to a goal, as in strengthening or healing a part of your body, or mending a broken heart, or coping with a difficult situation or condition. However, it is generally more expansive, as in recognizing the heart's desire for self-compassion, the desire to feel more self-acceptance, a sense of being in a loving-presence that resides within you.

And so we begin, seated comfortably, taking time to choose and create a comfortable seat. Sukkham, means sweetness, comfort and ease ... sukkhasana is the name of this pose. Breathe in and think to yourself, so Ham, "I am this" and breathe out "Ham Sa" That I Am

Some people feel more grounded, more centered and more at ease with a block or rolled blanket beneath their feet (I know i do)



The support beneath the feet is comforting, increases circulation and sensation (stimulates acupuncture meridians) that comfort and calm us.



You can also use it to articulate the ankles and toes, stimulating muscle engagement all the way into the hips and low back.
And on days when it is "enough to make a shadow" we can remind ourselves of how easy it is to find comfort.

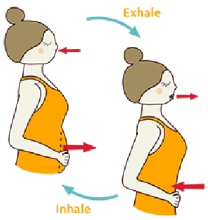
## Pranayama

Pranayama is "breath restraint," becoming more aware of the breath and learning how to control it to promote emotional self-regulation (vagal tone), enhance sleep, reduce inflammation and influence healthy metabolic and neurological health. By control, we mean regulating the speed, the intensity and frequency ... it means controlling your thoughts as you breathe and increasing focus and concentration on what you are doing, how you are doing it, where you feel it ... i've provided a few examples ... practice gently.

## Breath Awareness

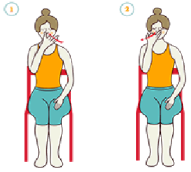
we'll use this in our first class to center, create an intention and soften into the experience

Sparsha, is the Sanskrit term for touch. Gently place both palms on your upper chest if comfortable; breathe gently.
Sense movement under your hands, along the sides of your body, in your back ... ahhhhhhh




Place hands on your belly to make sure it is relaxed and able to expand as you breathe in, contracting as you breathe out.

You can try to identify the three parts of diaphragmatic breathing ... first expanding the belly, then mid-chest then upper chest.
Breathing out, try to release in teh reverse: upper first, then mid, then feel the belly contract



The practices of alternate nostril breathing are many. Research shows that increased breathing on the left nostril instills a deeper sense of calm and quietude to promote rest, while focus on the right nostril increases energy to support activity.

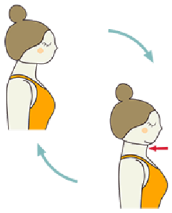
## Centering

Centering happens when you sit very quietly, notice the breath and adjust your body so that it feels symmetrically balanced sitting on a chair or on the floor. Listen to the sounds in the room around you, notice without judging sounds as they arise and vanish ... ultimately you will be able to notice many things as they arise and vanish, without having to fix or change them, without reacting, simply noticing.

Although more esoteric, I like to introduce the major "bandhas", which create incredible internal structural integration and anatomical alignment, strengthen the spine, tone the pelvic floor, lift the chest and align the head for optimal posture and productive breathing. In this way you will begin to strengthen at the deepest levels as you learn how to engage these three internal mudras simultaneously:

(1) Mula bandha: tone and lift the pelvic floor, (from the front), draw the low belly back and upward, feel your waist
draw back toward the spine as the lumbar area lengthens

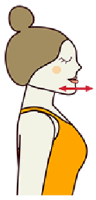
(2) Uddiyana bandha: tone the mid-section and hollow the belly inside of the rib cage with an energetic drawing upward
(subtle engagement, don't over do it!!). You can sense this action by holding the belly while exhaling "hah hah hah"



(3) Julandhara bandha: float the base of the skull back to lengthen the neck, feel your head align with your spine, hold it high!
This is axial extension, and as the third "engagement" it truly helps to elongate the entire spine and improves breathing.

This is an image of what NOT to do! Your head will want to release forward; strengthen the muscles of your neck by keeping the head held high. Simply think of floating the entire head backward and upward as if your ears are being gently drawn back ...

I like to place my thumbs on my chin and fingers up the back of my neck to help adjust the position of my head.



Floating the chin back can help us breathe more productively, strengthen neck muscles, overcome symptoms of tight jaws and clenching our teeth which can lead to TMJ and headaches. Think of the hyoid bone drawing backwards, chin and forehead remain neutral.

As you begin, try each of the mudras above until you are comfortable enough to practice them at the same time. Your posture will become much more linear and expansive, your breath will be easier & deeper, your stamina greater.

Promise yourself not to move into discomfort, move gently into your range of motion, explore as you breathe.
Avoid discomfort, straining or "pushing limits" at all times.

If you have an unstable pelvis or pelvic pain, you might want to use a blanket beneath you. Use a block between the knees to encourage gentle adduction which creates a strong pelvic floor, thigh muscles and can promote better balance. The block also helps maintain stability in twists and upper body movement.

Inhale, touch the sky
(if you have tender shoulders, remain well within your comfort zone. Making a fist and tightening the muscles of your arm frequently alleviates pain, "Strengthen Before You Lengthen.")

fFoat gently to each side, flowing with the breath
(keep the opposite hip on the chair, keep the knees steady, perhaps place a block between your knees to stabilize hips)

It might feel wonderful to assist the arms as they lift by holding the wrist as shown

Actions that "cross the midline" inspire neuroplasticity, ways of moving that inspire the development of new neural pathways... poses that do this are very important for focus and concentration, balance and coordination. Very important to overcome impact of neurological conditions including side effects of medications, Parkinson's Disease, dementias and difficulties arising from stroke.

If you have a healthy spine, leaning back can be practiced. Back bends are known to enhance the release of endorphins, hormones that boost mood and make you feel happy.

As this series ends, we close the pose, hands in front of the heart in Anjali mudra ... and simply breathe

sweep your arms forward as you breath out, come up on your toes ... enjoy this flow
(see section on the feet, squinching and isometric action)

Swing your arms back, breathe in
heart wide open, head held high

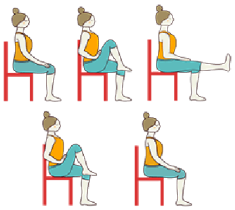
If comfortable, you can lean in and reach back farther, with caution ... repeat this flow, with the poses above, for a minute

An added detail would be to "reach through the wrists" which creates greater strength in your forearms and "flosses" the ulnar nerve

Then transition to articulating the legs and feet, notice the posture ... exhale hugging in, inhale releasing

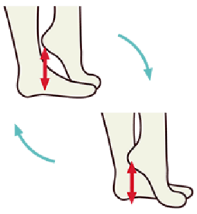
DO NOT ROUND YOUR CHEST THIS WAY, especially if you have osteoporosis. Rounding the upper chest can create tiny fractures in the anterior spine, so move carefully avoiding this crunched position.

Continue with whatever variations seem comfortable to you. If you lift and lower legs without using the arms, your legs will strengthen more quickly. Strength in the upper leg, quadriceps, has been correlated to maintaining and improving intellectual function in older individuals.

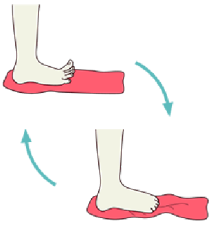


and close the pose

Articulate from the toes to the heels to warm up: remember no pain is no pain, move within your own limits, lovingly> Sense the feeling all thay up and into your hips. Keep all ten toes on the floor and heels aligned, don't let the knees splay out.



This is a great example of how to build and maintain strength in your feet!!! Feet are keys to better balance (and independence)
Squinch and release your toes, glide a towel forward and backward on a hard floor, feel the muscles working all the way to your low back



Take a moment to massage your feet firmly yet gently

Find the great knuckles on top of the foot and articulate them
by firmly massaging the bottoms of the toes as pictured

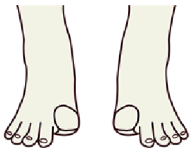
Take your time :) every toe, wiggles, spread, inspire movement even if they feel super tight ... it's an amazing release

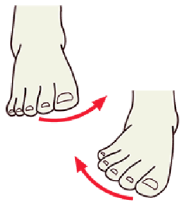
yes, squinch squinch squinch as long as there is no discomfort

and spread

Pronate

Supinate





and then do both, alternating and allowing the knees to widen and draw back in, and you will be doing the Charleston ;)

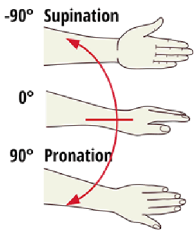
(more encouragement to Charleston ... strong feet and ankles, strong legs and hips, happy pelvic floors)

lengthen the entire ankle, think of opening and closing the arch between your heel and your calf muscle in the back
of the leg, avoid pointing your toes :) ...

Sit on the edge of the chair: scrunch your toes and "claw" the floor to create an arch in the middle of your foot, keep all toes on the floor. You will feel as if your body is being pulled forward, then push your feet forward isometrically, and you will sense the body wanting to move backward ... continue with a gentle rhythm. Feel the strength in both legs, is one working harder than the other? You'll feel this when you practice the seated warm-up above ...

A nice reminder

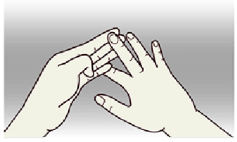
Return to this neutral position, and sense the energy moving through your feet and legs ... breathe gently ... notice ...




After focusing on the feet and lower extremities, we move to the upper body. Just as the feet pronate and supinate, so do the hands and arms ... hold your upper arms strongly against your side, and articulate the forearm and hands

Stretch, your fingers like rays of light ... test each finger cautiously, play with range of motion, massage if fingers are tender ...

massage every finger gently, find the knuckles and be comprehensive! interlace your fingers, release, interlace again and again



test the strength of each finger, practice resistance to create strength,
and then explore range of motion by stretching gently

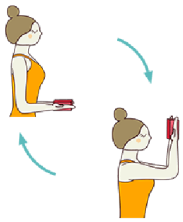
articulate the wrists delicately, look for a right angle if possible

First, stretch out all fingers, and reach each finger, one at a time, across your palm, look for the movement of your tendons along the wrist ... then gently massage from your wrist toward your elbow, gently press the muscles toward the bone ... gently yet firmly ...

As pictured, hold the elbow with your opposite hand,
and encourage your fingers to walk down your back.

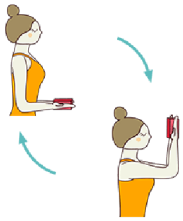
when you are finished, lift the bent arm straight up to the sky,
and release it straight forward, just as you began

this opens the entire rib cage, encouraging greater ease in breathing



Hold the block FIRMLY between your thumbs and index fingers. Arms are at a right angle to the body; extend as pictured and continue...continue this variation into seated cobra

Keep your fingers, thumbs and index fingers, holding the block, and extend forward, and overhead as high as you can go pain-free, then continue to flow as below



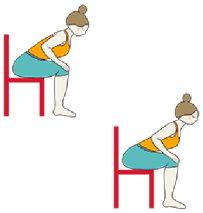
We added a movement: the "cobra" position, where the arms moved back, shoulder blades together, heart held high

See the seated cobra below

stretch, articulate, shake out your hands ... nice work

**Bring Your Intention Back to Mind**

Pause, sit tall, breathe ... remember your intention? Breathe into it, let it fill your awareness ... notice what you are thinking and more importantly, notice what you are feeling. And remember, sometimes no words arise when we try to think of an intention, and honestly, that's fine ... the language of the Heart has its own ways of making itself known ...



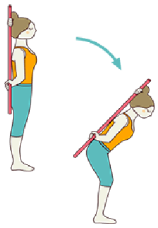
Continue with seated cobra to round out this series of seated poses. notice how the model's arms are moving backward to open the chest and expand the entire shoulder "girdle" ... this stabilizes and strengthens your arms and upper back. Keep the low belly toned and engaged ...

yes, simply This ... breathe in "so ham" ... breathe out, "ham sa"

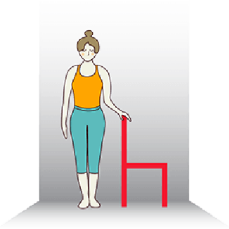
Practice rising and releasing back into the chair to build strength, promote balance, endurance and resilience. If you have tender knees
or a vulnerable back, press up gently. Use a pillow on the chair to raise your hips so that your hips are above your knees, otherwise there will be too much strain on your knees ~ so protect your knees while strengthening them! Check around the house to correct any chairs, sofas, beds (yes) and commodes that are too low and create strain on your knees. Simply add cushioning that you can buy at a fabric store.

You can practice releasing back in the chair, KEEP TOES ON THE FLOOR!!! Play with rising and releasing, breath in as you rise, breathe out as you release. Maintain a long spine with your head held high ...

and now, express yourself in a standing pose known as Mountain (but when you are on the Shore, it becomes Lighthouse Pose, so shine out in all directions!) Stand tall and try to practice the Maha Mudra, the three bandhas introduced at the very beginning of this class series ...



Remember to keep your spine long and your head aligned with the spine. You can use walking sticks or a broom as well as the corners of the wall to determine where you are in terms of being able to stand tall with optimal posture. It is critical that you work on this to maintain optimal posture and balance! It is a wonderful way to correct kyphosis and strengthen muscles in your back and neck while releasing tight abdominals and chest muscles.



Ans so, the seated practice moves from actually sitting, to using a chair or a wall space. This program does not have great images of using the chair as we did in class, but you can see how working at the wall might even be better.

Place your chair on a surface like a carpet or yoga mat, something that will not allow the chair to slip. Using the wall is equally good.
This is a standing "downward dog pose" that opens us up majestically ... notice the length of the spine and head alignment here

If comfortable you can walk your arms father up the wall

From the extended pose above, step one foot forward into a lunge ... keep a wide angle behind the knee to avoid strain!!
To align the sacrum and avoid rotating the pelvis, draw the front hip back, and the back hip forward.

As you spine allows, you can opn these little lunges into little backbends ... isn't it lovely

... just kidding ...

Return to your chair, sit tall, notice the breath
breathe in, and pause at the top, notice the stillness waiting there for you

breathe out, and pause at the bottom, notice the stillness waiting there for you

repeat for two-three minutes

## Meditation

Meditation is a natural state of being ... soften into the gentle flow of your breath ... keep your eyes open, look around your room with deep appreciation of "home" ... listen to the sounds ... and then gently close your eyes ... focus on the breath ... breathe in, pause at the top and hover like a hummingbird in the stillness, and then gently breathe out, releasing into the stillness waiting for you at the bottom of the breath

## 4-7-8 Breath

breathe in deeply for the count of 4 ... hold it gently for the count of 7, and then release to the count of 8 ... repeat, build up to 2-3 minutes.
This elongates the exhalation, increasing the volume of CO2 in your bloodstream which calms and quiets the nervous system, enhances anti-inflammatory processes, it is the ultimate anti-oxidant ... repeat

## Savasana

Find the most comfortable chair you have, or use a sofa, or stretch out on the floor ... the final posture is a pose where the body is perceived as simply being the vessel (finite), in which there is a radiant Being (infinite) ...

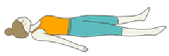
alternatives would be staying in your chair with support or not

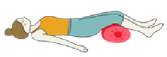
If you enjoy being on the floor, here is another option.
This is the pose of deepest release, a pose where the breath becomes the focal point.
You simply soften, and notice the breath ... with appreciation for your practice
Let your inner gaze rest behind your eye, and between your ears ... soften soften soften

Breathe in from an infinite source, and it becomes you. Breathe out, and that breath is warmed by your essence.

another option

and another ...





Ommmmm peace, peace, peace

## Om Shanti