

Encinitas Yoga

February Newsletter

You Are Only As Old As Your Spine Is Inflexible

It is the time of the year when you might be getting back to the routine of work and life after holidays and possibly begin to lose steam in your new year's resolutions. Hopefully, this little bit of reading will help maintain and boost your ongoing motivation to practice yoga. Over time, with regular practice, changes in your body start taking place and you will embrace them as part of your life. With your yoga practice you have the opportunity to change old habits and thought patterns as your personal self-awareness deepens. Yoga is a health science. Regularity in your practice will yield the longest lasting benefits for your body mind and soul.

As the title of this month's newsletter suggests, your spine is the key to a healthy, long and active life. The fact is most of us have experienced varying degrees of back discomfort and lower back pain resulting from injury, repetitive motion at work or home, or as is becoming quite common, from inactivity and a general lack of movement and flexibility

The latter is what many people are dealing with as work and life become increasingly 'easy' thanks to mecha-

nized transportation, computers, automated production and a more sedentary lifestyle become the standard of living. As you know, yoga has gained tremendous popularity over the years, because of the well-rounded, holistic approach of an exercise discipline for the entire body while simultaneously taking into consideration the wellness of the mind and presence of spirit. Resulting in what is one of the best, if not the best, over all disciplines for preventing disease and injury, helping the body to recover from trauma, and a guide for personal growth; physically, mentally and spiritually.

So back to the spine, or the spinal column to be more precise, also known as the backbone or more scientifically the vertebral column. Most of us do not provide adequate movement for our spinal columns to maintain the natural range of motion, elasticity and necessary hydration of the inter-vertebral discs and circulation throughout the many bones, ligaments, muscles and nerves that reside in this crucial area. However it is never too late to rejuvenate your spine. Since the topic is vast and there are many books and articles already written on this subject, I

hope this brief, simple, safe and effective way of moving your spine will help make your back happier every day.

Keep in mind, that your spine is designed for movement; bending it backward and forward, side-to-side are good and natural movements for your spine. The spine also has the potential to be compressed slightly due to the effects of gravity every day and over time, but also to be lengthened with practice of yoga postures and other forms of restorative and strengthening exercises. "You are only as old as your spine is inflexible" is a friendly reminder that you can think of when your mind is giving you resistance in sticking with your daily yoga practice. It is through

gentle persistence and patience that you will reap the most gains. You may have gone years without paying much attention to the health of your spine, and it might take months to restore your back to a flexible and healthy condition, however a regimen of Hatha Yoga, yoga asanas / postures, practiced with patience and compassion is one of the most effective long-term approaches to overall health and general well being

I wish you an insightful month; explore how your new awareness on your spine will help your practice grow to a new level - not to mention the improvement and positive changes in the health of your back!

Namaste, Outi



CAT/COW posture is a fun and simple combination of a forward and backward bending of the spine - best practiced daily, morning or evening. This posture is as applicable to the young as the old, the beginner or the more experienced yogi, and everyone in between. As long as you do it, you will receive the benefits. Kneel on all fours on the floor (should there be discomfort in your knees or feet, use pillows as support to make it more comfortable at first), your knees hip width apart and your hands shoulder width apart, fingers spread wide and facing forward with your whole palm flat on the floor. Now roll the creases of your elbows forward, keeping your arms straight the whole time. Try to be in a square, tabletop like position. Start slowly with an inhale through your nose and as you inhale lift and lengthen your chin up toward the ceiling, push your palms down, lift your chest up as you roll your shoulders back and down, arching your back, push your tail bone up toward the ceiling. When you are at your maximum inhalation, begin to exhale through your nose and pull your belly button to your spine, curl your tail bone back under while squeezing your buttocks to further round the lower back, push into your palms and bring your chin toward your chest to fully round your spine - the opposite. Repeat the calm, full inhalation with the arching movement described followed by a slow exhalation and the corresponding rounding movement. Repeat as many times as you like, you may notice that the first few done slowly will help you warm up, slowly deepen the extent of the arch and round on the following rounds. Be sure to take your time. If doing this at home on your own brings up questions, arrive earlier before your next class and ask any of our teachers.

CAT/COW posture helps to increase the flexibility of your spine in both forward and backward directions. With the opposite movements you are promoting the natural curves in your spine as well as massaging your abdominal organs.

We're Adding Classes

January was a very good month for Encinitas Yoga! Our classes were the best attended since we opened last May. Thank you! In order to build on the momentum, we are very happy to announce a new teacher and the return of our heated morning classes. David Lakin will be teaching heated classes at 9:00AM on Tuesday and Thursday.

We are also adding a new 4:00PM heated class on Saturday afternoon to be taught by Sara. Also, our Monday evening Gentle/Intermediate class is changing to a Heated Intermediate class -

same flow, but with the addition of heat.

If your haven't already tried Florence's Wednesday 6:00PM heated class, be sure to find time for it in February. Her class is truly a very special experience.

Valentine's Day Special
Saturday, February 14th, is Valentine's Day. In honor of the day, bring a friend to your yoga practice for free - 2 people for the price of one. This offer applies to all students paying for individual classes or having monthly series.