

BASIC HIP OPENING SERIES

When we create space in our hip joints through the practice of hip opening poses and preparations, we allow healthy blood flow to circulate, increasing the flexibility of the many ligaments that attach at the hip joint. This freedom in the hip joints results in freedom of movement. Understanding the anatomy of the joint, it is beneficial to work on releasing tightness in the hip joints through a good logical progression of preparations and hip opening poses. Often the use of a chair, and/or block, is helpful for beginning students to attain a challenging level of release in the hip joints, without “over-stretching” which can result in further tightness or injury. Women, especially, (according to the ancient scholars of the philosophy of yoga in India), tend to hold much tension in the hip joints. While men tend to have tighter leg muscles, so this practice designed to release the connective tissue at the hip joints will help relieve tightness in the legs as well.



HIP JOINT OPENING w/ Chair #1 – Sit just at the edge of a chair with both legs externally rotating. Check to see that the knees are pointing directly over the toes. (Note that the ankle joints can externally rotate much more than the hips, so adjust the knees and ankles accordingly). Press down on the widest part of the femur (thigh) bones with both hands while at the same time encouraging the external rotation at the tops of the thighs. Lift the pelvis and torso up out of the legs and lengthen the spine forward slowly on exhalation breath, eventually releasing the weight of the upper body forward with hands resting on the floor, or block. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths.



HIP JOINT OPENING w/ Chair #2 – Similar to above, sitting on edge of chair, - with weight slightly forward of the sitting bones - but this time, the legs are parallel. Hips, knees and ankles should all be in one straight parallel line. Press down on the widest part of the femur (thigh) bones with both hands, this time creating an internal rotation at the tops of both thighs as the pelvis and torso lift up. Lengthen the spine forward releasing the weight of the upper body forward with hands resting on the floor, or block. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths.



PREPARATION FOR PADMASANA w/ Chair – Sitting just at the edge of the chair, both legs parallel, bring the right leg up with bent knee. Externally rotating deep inside the right hip joint, bring the right foot up into the left elbow, if possible, or hold right foot in left hand. It is most important to keep the right foot strongly flexed, so that the bottom of the foot is at a 90 angle to the shin. Similarly, keep the right (bent) knee at a 90 angle to the thigh. Hold the right foot into the left elbow crease and breath deeply. Remember to keep the lower back lifting up vertically, and take care not to bend at the waist. The deep-in rotator attachments at the back of the hip sockets are being stretched. Finally, straighten the right leg into one long extended line, keeping the right knee very active, and send a deep exhalation breath through the hamstring stretch. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths. Release the right leg, and repeat on the left.



ARDHA BADDHA PADMASANA TWIST w/ Chair – Sitting just on edge of chair – with weight slightly forward of sitting bones, bend the right knee, and keeping the right foot strongly flexed, let the right foot rest across the top of the left thigh (in Half-Bound Lotus). Press lightly down on bent right knee as the spine lifts and lengthens. Begin to twist the torso around to the left. Use left hand behind on seat of chair for support. Look back over the left shoulder and twist deeply with exhalation breath. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths. Release the right leg, and repeat on the left.



HIP JOINT OPENING w/ one foot on Chair – Stand near to chair, parallel to forward edge of chair. Bring the right foot up to rest on seat of chair. Keep both feet parallel. Externally rotating the upper right thigh, lift the right hip bone up and out of the right thigh, as the torso lifts up and the spine lengthens forward releasing the weight of the upper body. Use the right hand reaching down to hold the leg of the chair to receive a deeper stretch to the back of the right hip joint as well as to the kidney area, lumbar spine and S/I (Sacro-Iliac) joint. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths. Come up slowly. Repeat on other side.



BADDHA KONASANA – Sit on the edge of a folded mat to lift the sitting bones slightly up, shifting the weight forward of the sitting bones. Bring the feet together close to the perineum. Pressing the heels together actively, allow the upper thighs to press down toward the floor so that the knees reach nearer to the floor. Hold as long as 1- 5 minutes.



PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA – Stand with the feet wide apart – approximately. 3-4 feet (1 meter). Make sure the feet remain parallel and feel the weight in the tripod base (big toe / little toe / heel) of the feet. Keep the inner arches actively lifting. Extend the arms out to the sides and on exhalation breath, hinge at the hip joints, lengthening the back into a traction stretch forward with the arms reaching over head and forward with tremendous energy.. For tighter hamstring students, rest hands on the seat of a chair, or use block to rest hands. Allow the whole spine to lengthen as you release forward. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths. Come up slowly.



WIDE ANGLE LUNGE w/ TWIST - From Prasarita Padottonasana – Stand with feet turned out – externally rotating legs at the hip joints. On inhalation, lift the arms out to sides, and with deep exhalation, bend knees directly over toes. When the legs are at a right angle, with the thighs parallel to the floor, use the hands to press straight down on the tops of the thighs. Take care that the knees remain directly over the toes. Twist: On exhalation breath, lengthen spine forward to almost parallel to floor, keeping hands pressing down on the thighs, and turn the head to look over one shoulder. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths. Come up slowly. Repeat on other side.

RECLINING at WALL SERIES – Lying down on the floor close to the wall, let legs rest up the wall. Allow the whole spine to rest on the floor. Relax the shoulders, neck and muscles of the face. This is a very restorative series. 3 parts:



a.) Legs Straight up the Wall – Hamstring Stretch - Lie down on the mat with legs up the wall (use belt at feet to help keep shoulders relaxed on the floor). Keep the kneecaps actively lifting as the backs of the legs (hamstrings) let go. Use deep exhalation breaths and hold 5 – 10 breaths.



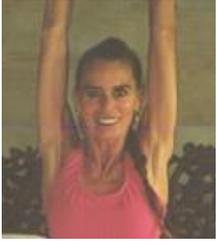
b.) Upavistha Konasana at Wall - Externally rotate the legs at the hip joints, then allow legs to open out to the sides with the backs of the legs at the wall. It is helpful to press with both hands evenly on the tops of both thighs directly into the wall so that the hip joints, inner groins, and adductors can stretch and release more efficiently. Hold 5 – 10 deep breaths.



c.) Baddha Konasana at Wall – From Upavistha Konasana, hold outside of knees and bring the bottom of feet together. Keep both heels actively pressing into each other, as you bring the heel close to the perineum. It is helpful to press with both hands evenly on the tops of both thighs directly into the wall so that the hip joints and inner groins can release more efficiently. This pose is the prescription pose for relieving Sciatica – As the hip joints open and the lower back (where the sciatic nerve originates) releases on the floor, often there is immediate relief from pressure on that major nerve. Hold 5 –10 deep breaths. Bend the knees into the chest and roll to one side to come up.



RECLINING LEG STRETCH – Lying down on the mat, bring the right leg up and use a belt around the toes to help keep the right knee very straight and at the same time, relax the shoulders and back completely down on the floor. Hold this parallel line of the legs for a few deep breaths. Then, still using the belt around the toes of the right foot, allow the right leg to open out to the side. Hold the left hipbone down with left hand. Breathe deeply into the right inner thigh stretch. Hold 5-10 deep breaths. Come back to parallel lines of the hamstring stretch before releasing the right leg back down to the floor. Repeat on other leg.



Ann Barros is a senior Iyengar yoga instructor with over 30 years teaching experience, including 5 years at UCSC, where she introduced the Iyengar tradition to the Santa Cruz, California community. She has led over 40 successful Yoga In Bali tours. She has led workshops both domestically in California and Colorado, and internationally in Singapore, Jamaica, Greece, Mexico, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and China, as well as as her beloved Bali, which has become her second home and remains where her heart is always. Ann first studied with BKS Iyengar in India in 1976 who personally guided her into curing her own scoliosis. She is certified by the Iyengar Yoga Institute of S.F. since 1980, and later that year after studying again in India, first came to Bali.

After 30 years of teaching, Ann's eyes are well trained. She works currently with chiropractors in the US. The chiropractic patients work individually with Ann during their stabilization phase of recovery from surgery or injury. Ann has many case histories of helping people - help themselves - toward pain-free living and avoidance of surgery in some cases. Ann's teaching approach is compassionate, yet challenging, with emphasis on precise and careful alignment of the joints for the greatest freedom: strength and flexibility, balance in the body, quieting of the mind, and a soaring of the spirit. Her strong dance background and B.A. in dance from U.C.S.C. combined with her love of art, music, yoga and Hinduism has culminated in her creating a wonderfully balanced life-style and tour program. Those who participate in her special Bali Yoga tours and recent Asia Programs develop a solid foundation and understanding of the poses. Ann gratefully acknowledges her teacher, Shri BKS Iyengar. Ann has led successful Yoga in Bali tours continuously since 1985. As of 2006, she now operates her own studio in the Iyengar tradition in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia; and offers teacher training programs and workshops.