

breathe for joy | Stretching sideways can activate core muscles, expand breathing, and bring feelings of spaciousness and levity.



the practice

Asanas that open the sides and expand the ribs can help access core muscles and viscera (organs), where blood and energy flow through the body's main channels. This sidebend sequence helps create interior space for abdominal organs, widens the diaphragm, and allows the collarbones and sternum to lift and spread. As a result, the breath can expand and deepen, allowing *prana* to flow—an effective preparation for pranayama practice.

mind-body benefits

Besides lengthening and deepening respiratory rhythm, these poses help improve circulation and stretch your spinal nerves by releasing compression between the vertebrae. Sidebends also bring greater elasticity and range of motion to the spine, which brings a feeling of lightness and buoyancy to the chest, neck, and skull, often translating to feelings of serenity and happiness.

key focal points

Root through your legs to better align muscles throughout your body, thereby accessing your core, which connects and supports other musculature. In each of the poses, extend your front body, and use your breath to expand the side ribs (imagine the way helium expands a balloon), sensing the effect on your diaphragm, internal organs, ribs, and connective tissues. Direct your breath to where you feel the greatest resistance.

PHOTOS: RICK CUMMINGS; MODEL: MATT CHAMPOUX; STYLIST: EMILY CHOI; HAIR/MAKEUP: SALLY WALKER MINA WITH ALCHEMY; TOP: AMERICAN APPAREL; SHORTS: PRANA; BLOCK: MANDUKA

home practice

sequence by Tias Little

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Lie on your back for a minute and breathe. Allow the lateral margins of your pelvis, waist, side ribs, neck, and skull to relax and expand.



1 PREPARATORY SIDEBEND

Interlock your fingers behind your head. Slide your left elbow toward the wall behind you as you pivot your right elbow toward your hip. Keep your elbows on the floor, and push out through your left heel. Alternate right and left 6 times, breathing deeply.



2 SUPTA GARUDASANA

RECLINING EAGLE POSE VARIATION

Cross your left knee over your right leg then lower both knees left on inhale, letting gravity provide traction. Looking left, return upright on exhale. Repeat 6 times; after doing 3, rotate your head right. Switch sides.



6 PARSWA TADASANA

SIDEBENDING MOUNTAIN POSE

Step forward and stand up. Squeeze a block between your inner thighs, and with arms raised, catch your left wrist and sidebend right, initiating from the squeeze of the block. Hold for 1 minute; switch sides.



7 PARIGHASANA

GATE POSE

Move to the floor and kneel. Stack your left hip over your left knee, extending your right leg to the side. Reach your left arm up and to the right, spinning your ribs upward and stretching and elongating your waist. Hold for 1 minute; switch sides.



8 UTTHITA TRIKONASANA

EXTENDED TRIANGLE POSE

Spread your feet 3 to 4 feet apart, then turn your right foot out and left foot in. Rock your pelvis toward your back leg, and draw the left side of your waist away from the pelvis. Extend your arms as pictured. Hold for 1 minute; switch sides.



12 PARSWA UPAVISTHA KONASANA

SIDE SEATED WIDE ANGLE POSE

Sit up and spread your legs, pressing both thighbones down. Sidebend, and latch your right hand to the inside of your right foot; extend your left arm. Revolve your trunk skyward. Hold for 1 minute; switch sides.



13 PARIVRTTA JANU SIRSASANA

REVOLVED HEAD-OF-THE-KNEE POSE

Draw your left foot to your inner thigh, and press your right thigh down. Sidebend as in the previous pose. Raise your navel, spiral your trunk, and expand and broaden your abdomen. Hold for 1 minute; switch sides.



14 PARIVRTTA PASCHIMOTTANASANA

REVOLVED SEATED FORWARD BEND

Push out through both heels, and press your thighbones down. Latch your right elbow to the outside of your left shin, grab your feet, twist, and elongate your left side. Hold for 1 minute; switch sides.



3 **BALASANA** CHILD'S POSE, VARIATION

Come to your knees, set them hip-width apart, and lengthen forward. Sweep your trunk over your right knee, shifting your belly right. Remain stable in your pelvis in order to get a deeper side-body stretch. Hold for 2 minutes; switch sides.



4 **SUKHASANA** EASY POSE, VARIATION

Slowly sit up, cross your legs, and place your feet under your knees. Fold forward, and lengthen over your right knee. Aim your breath along the left flank and buttock. Hold for 2 minutes; switch sides.



5 **ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA** DOWNWARD-FACING DOG POSE

Come up, and step back into Down Dog. Set your feet as wide as your mat. Lengthen your spine forward, while drawing back your legs. Stretch your torso's two sides congruently. Hold for 2 minutes.



9 **UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA** EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE POSE

Set your feet 4 to 6 inches wider than Triangle. Place a block to the inside of your right foot, sidebend to your right, and rest your hand on the block. Spiral your trunk toward the sky. Hold for 1 minute; switch sides.



10 **PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA** WIDE-LEGGED FORWARD BEND, VARIATION

Angle your feet inward; fold forward. Center yourself, then swing to your right and hold your right ankle; pull to side-bend your left trunk. Hold for 2 minutes; switch sides.



11 **JANU SIRSASANA**

HEAD-OF-THE-KNEE POSE Sit down and draw your left heel to your groin. Push your right heel forward. Clasp your right foot with the left hand and draw your right ribs back, left ribs forward. Feel the twist deep into your organs. Hold for 2 minutes; switch sides.



15 **SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA**

BRIDGE POSE Raise your hips and prop up your sacrum with a block. Keep your thighs and inner feet parallel; lengthen the tailbone. Set your arms to the side, palms up. Elongate your torso and relax your internal organs. Hold for 3 to 5 minutes.



16 **FINAL SEATED POSTURE**

Sit in any comfortable position, and align your cranium over your pelvis. Float the back of your skull upward and gently lower your chin. Raise your side waist up. Broaden your ribs and deepen your breath. Feel the lateral expansion. Stay for 5 minutes.

TO FINISH

Rest in Savasana for several minutes.

ABOUT OUR PROS

Tias Little teaches yoga and meditation, and is cofounder of Prajna Yoga in Santa Fe, New Mexico. prajnayoga.net

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