



# Yoga Essentials

# History of Yoga

*The exact date of yoga's origin is difficult to tell. The oral tradition of India and its first representation on fragile material caused the difficulty. Researchers traced it back to 5000 years ago, but some believe it existed even 10,000 years ago. The evolution of yoga is divided into four periods for better understanding.*

## ऋग्वेद ऋषि

Yoga was first mentioned in the Rig Veda, 5000 years ago and later trickled down into the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita composed around 500 B.C.E. These texts spoke about karma yoga and jnana yoga.



## पतंजलि ऋषि

Yoga Sutras, the first book containing a systematic representation of Yoga, was written in the 2nd century AD by Patanjali, widely considered as the father of yoga. Patanjali describes Raja Yoga and the eight-limbed practice of yoga in his book.

## हाथा ऋषि

A couple of centuries later, the mind and body were used as means to attain enlightenment giving rise to Tantra yoga or the Hatha yoga.



## प्रसन्त ऋषि

The new-age yoga began with yoga teachers traveling across India and abroad spreading the knowledge of yoga and its practice. Starting from the late 1880s to forming stable institutions in the 1930s, the practice of Hatha yoga continues till date in various formats with newer ones cropping up from time to time.



What is Yoga?

*“Yoga is the path which cultivates the body and senses, refines the mind, civilises the intelligence, and takes rest in the soul which is the core of our being”*

- BKS Iyengar

# What is Yoga?

A systematic practice for:

- Self Realisation
- Healing
- Connection / Expansion
- Self Discovery and Self Care
  - Living on purpose

“A practical inquiry into being” – David  
Emerson

# Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

One of the most referred to texts in yoga dating back to 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century consisting of 196 "threads".

Essentially a compilation of the spiritual practices up to that date and focused on renunciants and is therefore a guide to transcending the mind through meditative practices.

Patanjali focused on mastery of the mind as a path to self-realisation.

# Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

1.2: *yogah citta vrtti nirodhah*

Yoga is the restraint / cessation of the fluctuations of  
the mind

1.3: Then the seer becomes established in their  
essential nature

1.4: Elsewhere, the seer conforms to the roaming  
tendencies of the mind.



# Yoga Essentials

# Avidya

Yoga as an opportunity to move from wrong understanding/confusion (avidya) to correct understanding/clarity (vidya).

Avidya occurs as a result of a lifetime of experiences, behaviours and conditioning that affect our perception of the world. We see ourselves based on labels, history, image rather than who and what we really are.

One prominent goal of yoga is to reduce the layers of avidya in our lives.

# Avidya

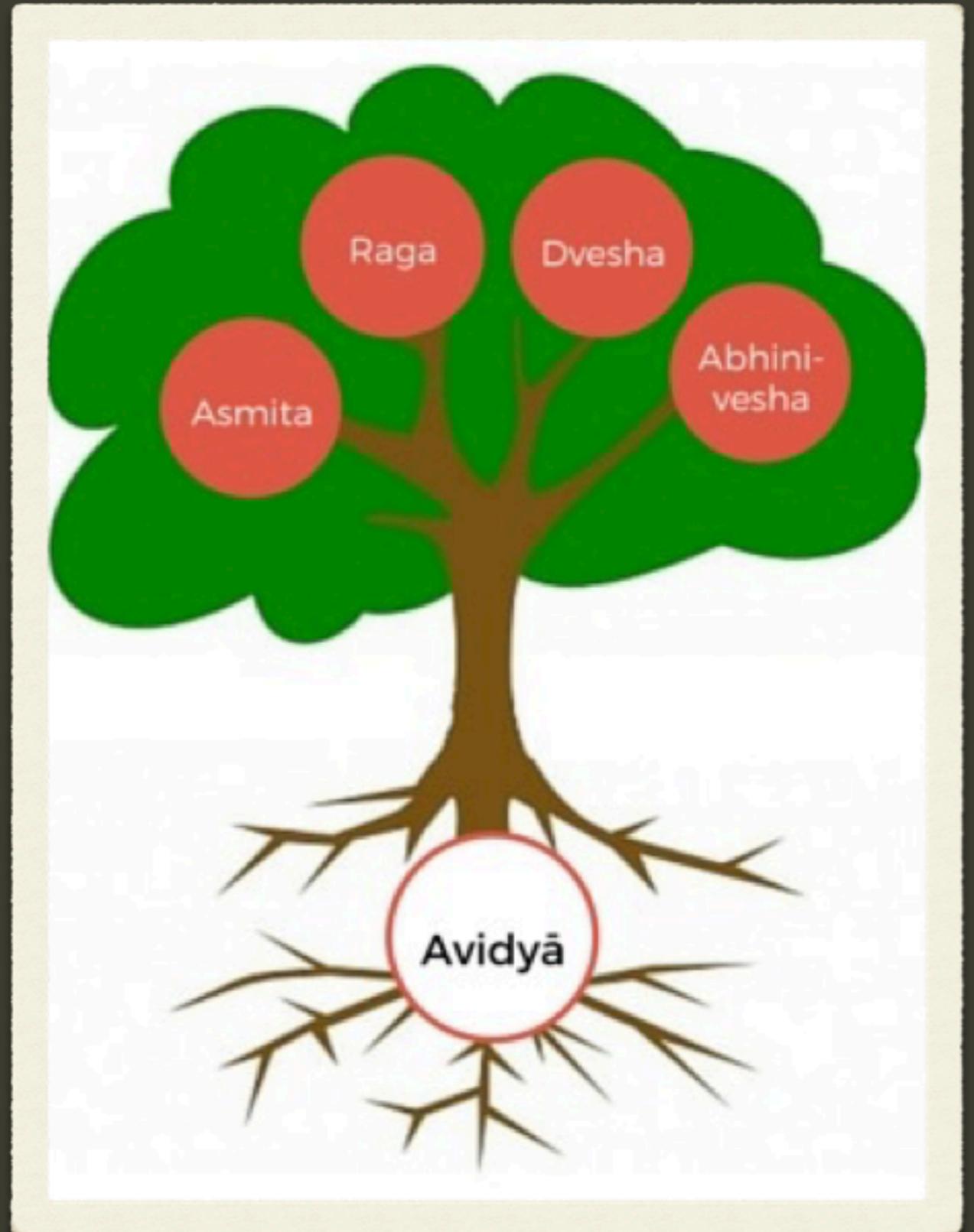
\* Caused by:

\* Asmita - ego

\* Raga - attachment

\* Dvesha - aversion

\* Abhinivesha - fear



# Types / Styles of Yoga

Kundalini    Sivananda    Iyengar

Hatha Yoga

Anusara    Jivamukti    Yin    Tantra    Bikram

Ashtanga    Power vinyasa    Flow

Jnana Yoga

Knowledge

Bhakti Yoga

Devotion

Karma Yoga

Service

# Hatha Yoga

The traditional application of the branch of yoga most common in the West is a combination of asana (physical postures), pranayama (breathing), kriya (cleansing techniques), meditation, mudra (hand gestures) and bandhas (locks).

A technique of controlling energy within the body in order to release mental and energetic blockages and bring the body and nervous system into balance.

# The Gunas

All things in nature (humans included) are said to include three forces or qualities:

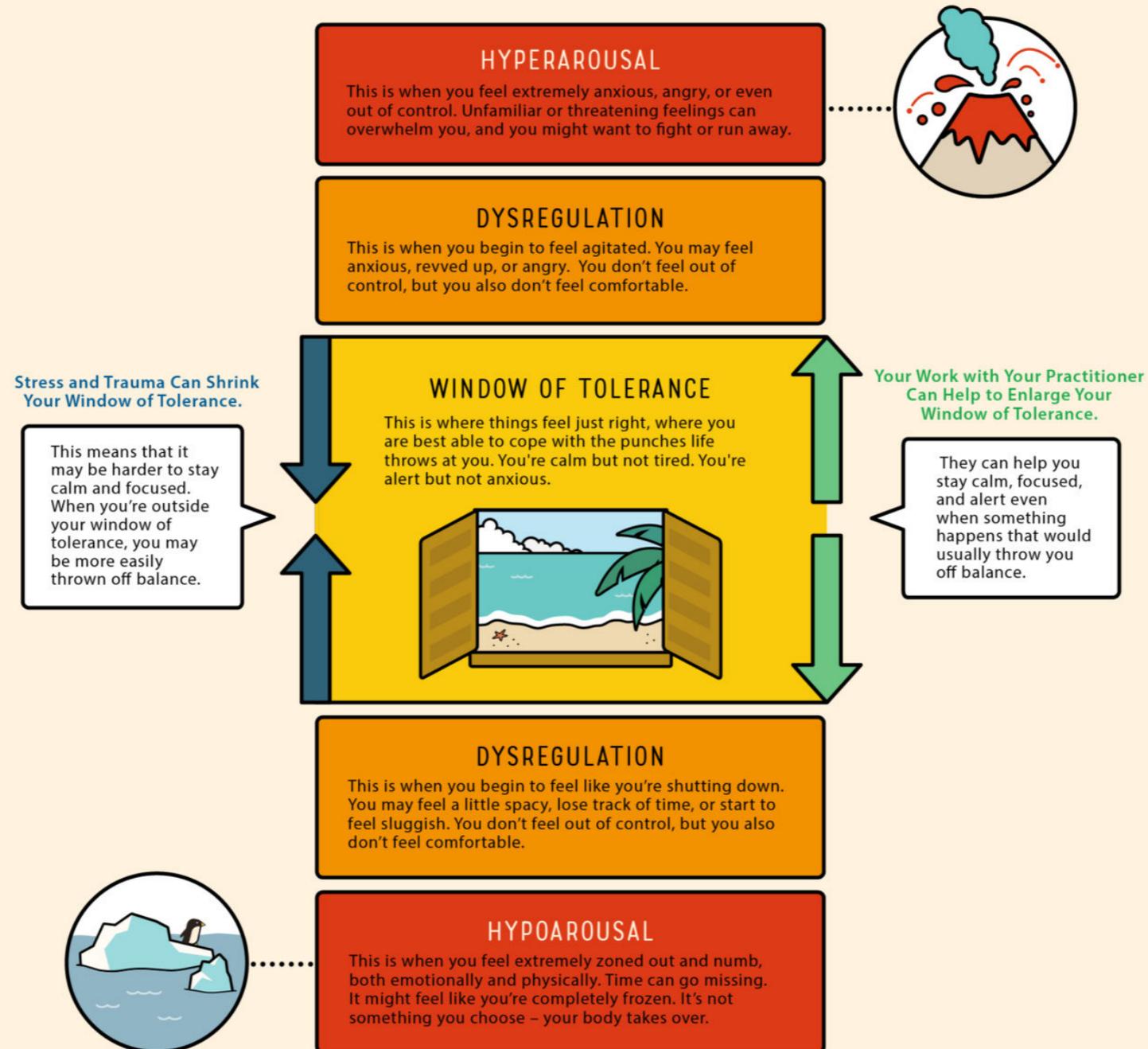
Rajas – action, movement, change. Too much = longing, attachment, agitation

Tamas – inertia, inactivity, darkness. Too much = confusion, lethargy, immobilisation

Sattva – harmony, balance, joy

# Window of Tolerance

## How Trauma Can Affect Your Window of Tolerance



# Tools of Yoga

chanting

study

visualisation

mantra

breath

meditation

journaling

poses (asana)

counting

gazing

intention

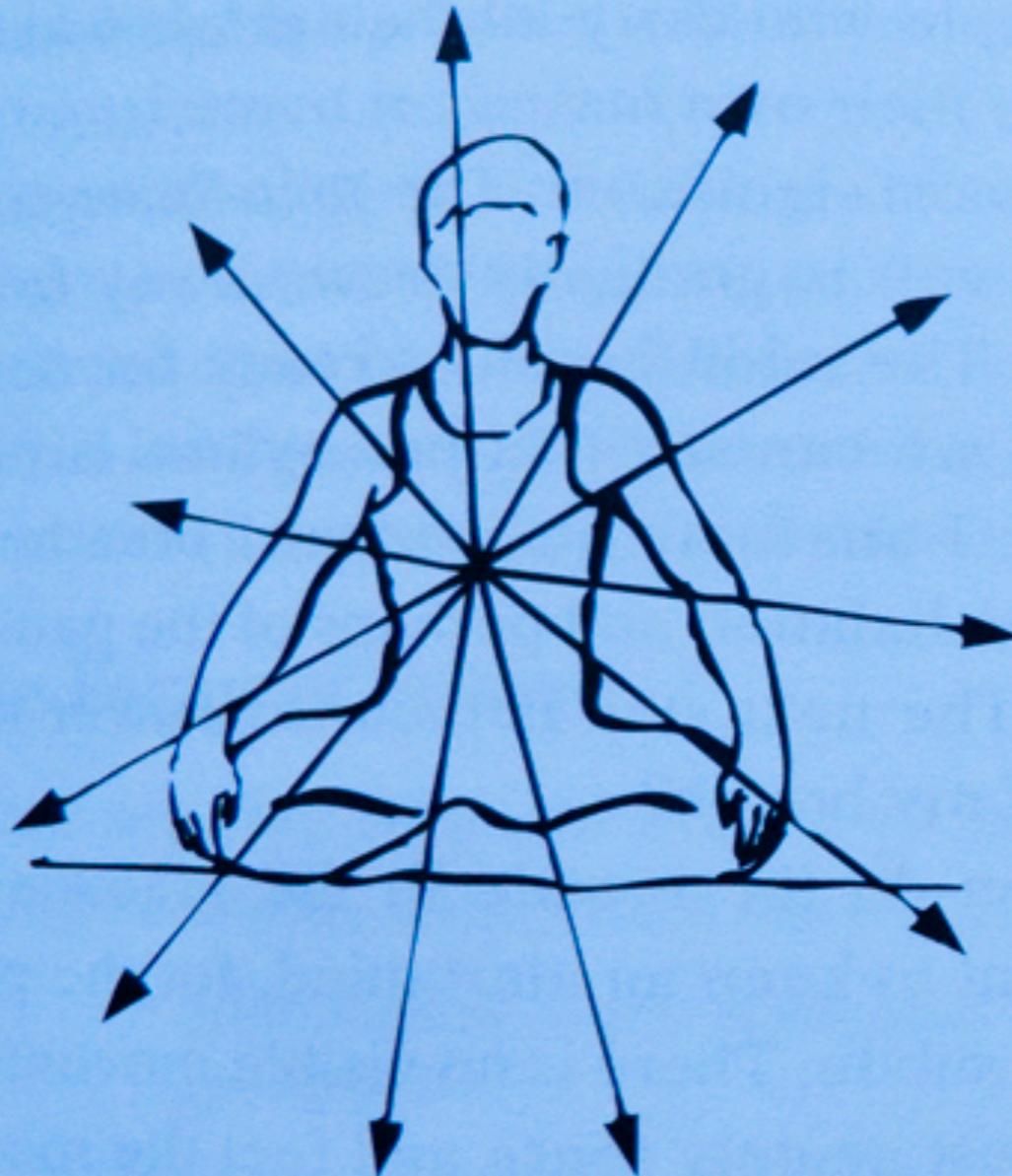
# Pranayama (Breath)

The forefront of our yoga practice and the primary way in which we move energy through the body.

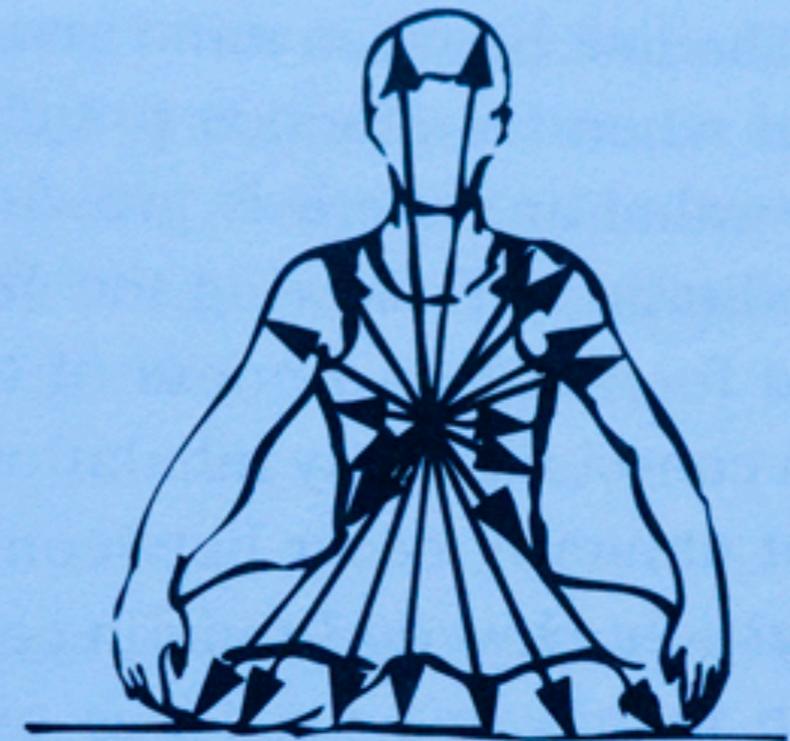
The quality of our breath is a reflection of the quality of our mind.

“Anybody can breathe, therefore anybody can practice yoga.” TKV Desikachar

# Pranayama (Breath)



(1)



(2)

# Pranayama (Breath)

The breath affects the way that the body functions and the body affects the breath.

Generally, the inhale is stimulating (sympathetic nervous system) and the exhale is soothing (parasympathetic nervous system).

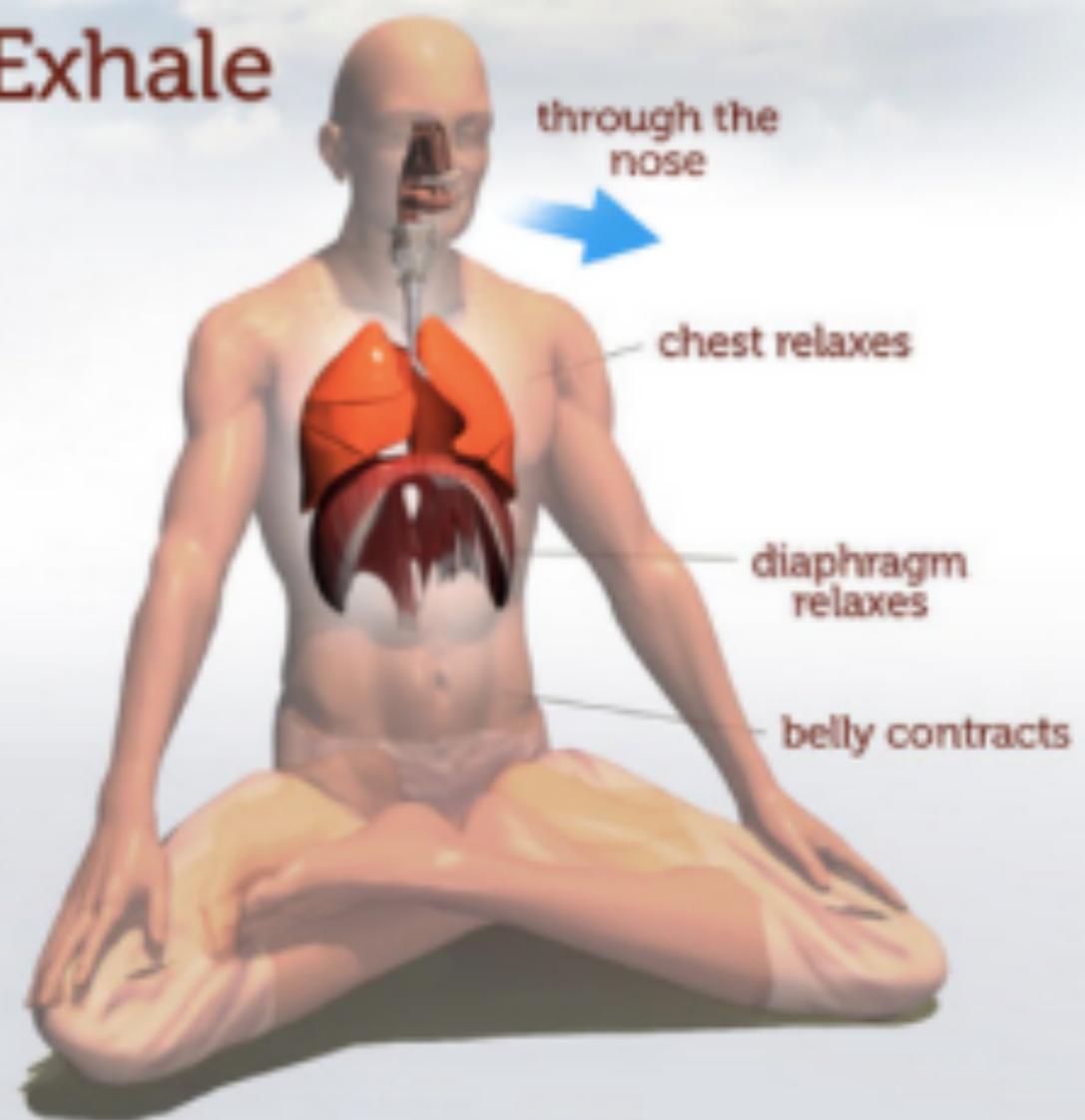
Different techniques are available for cooling, heating, cleansing, calming, balancing, connection and concentration.

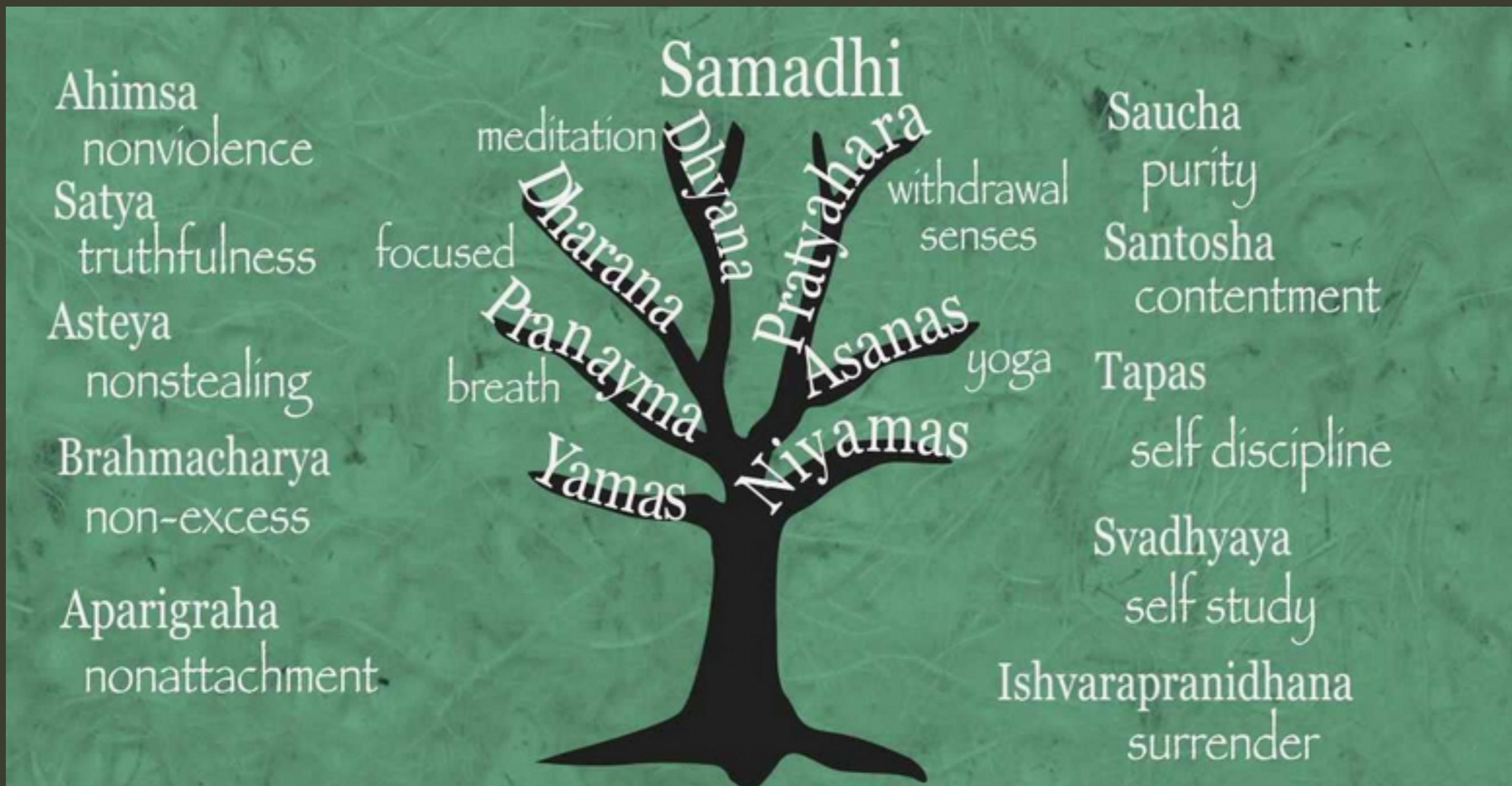
# Pranayama (Breath)

**Inhale**



**Exhale**





# Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga

## Sutra 2.1

“The practice of Yoga must reduce both physical and mental impurities. It must develop our capacity for self-examination and help us to understand that, in the final analysis, we are not the masters of everything we do.”

# Asana

The physical component of the practice. The postures that we use to move our attention into our body, heal our body and connect our body, breath and mind.

Yoga Sutras: sthira sukham asanam  
An asana should be steady and comfortable  
(with a sense of ease).

The breath is the perfect guide as to whether we are practicing asana or just exercising.

# Meditation

Dhyana = concentration of the mind. Working towards a one pointed mind.

Dharana = sustained concentration

Developing a relationship to the thoughts, to the emotions attached to those thoughts, to our Self.

Meditation can be on: breath, mantra, object gazing, awareness, plus many more.



Asana Lab

# Why Alignment is Important

- Reduced risk of injury / protecting your joints
- Better flow of energy
- More comfort / ease
- Energy conservation / less fatigue (sthira sukham)
- Body awareness

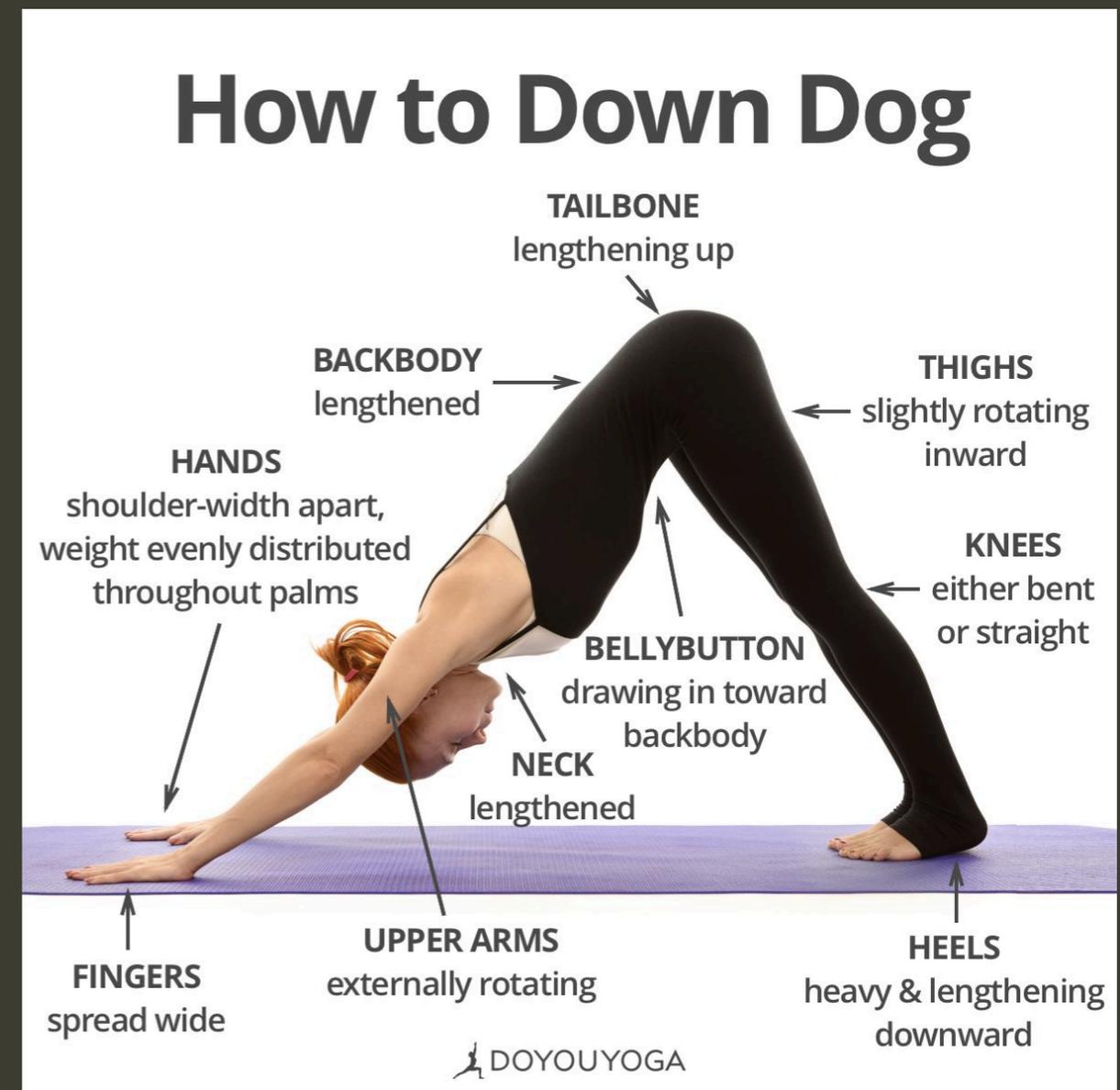
# But....

- \* Remember that yoga is not about achieving “the perfect pose” or the perfect shape.
- \* We have certain alignment priorities that are good for *some bodies* and we need to adjust as necessary, for each person.
- \* We want to be able to find a sense of stability and freedom in a posture because we want to be able to be with the breath . So trying not to become obsessed with the body shape.

# Downward Facing Dog

*adho mukha svanasana*

- \* Common mistakes:
  - Locking the knees (which will generally pull the sit bones down and round the lower back)
  - Too much bend in the legs
  - All the weight on the hands
  - No finger activation
  - Hypermobility in shoulders



The Problem

The Fix



X

✓

✓

✓





# Developing a Regular Practice

# Sutra 1.12

*abhyasa vairagyabhyam tat nirodhah*

The fluctuations of the mind are controlled through *abhyasa* (practice) and *vairagya* (non-attachment).

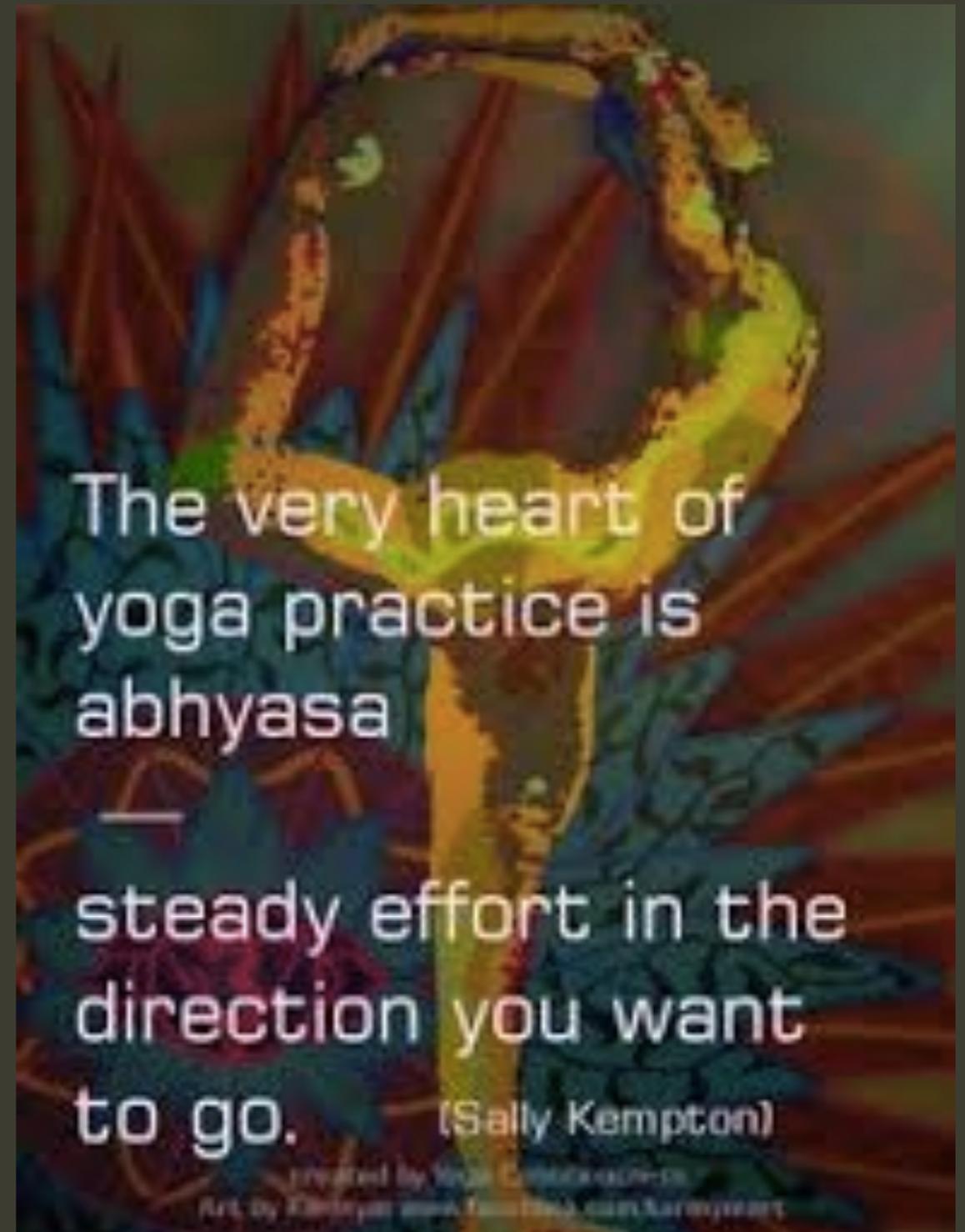
Practice: cultivating the lifestyle, actions, speech and thoughts that lead us in a positive direction and letting go of the things that lead us away from where we want to go.

Non-attachment: Doing all of this without attachment to the results.

# Abhyasa

Exercise:

- Where do I want to go?
- Which actions, words, thoughts lead me toward where I want to go?
- Which actions, words and thoughts lead me away from where I want to go?



\* *The most complicated thing about a home practice is just getting on the mat. Roll out your mat and sit on it - the rest will come, you need no plan, no special outfit, no particular circumstance - you just need a mat and your butt sitting on it.*

\* *Stephanie Snyder*

# Six Keys to Success

- \* *“Enthusiasm, perseverance, discrimination, unshakeable faith, courage, avoiding the company of common people, are the six causes (keys) which bring success in Yoga”.* Hatha Yoga Pradipika

Enthusiasm: Why do I practice?

Perseverance: What are the obstacles and how will I continue to practice anyway?

Discrimination: Understanding what is taking you closer to a deeper practice and everything that is taking you further away.

Faith: In yourself, the teacher and the teachings

Courage: What makes you feel vulnerable?

Avoiding common people: Do the people around you bring out the best version of you?

# Practice Toolbox

chanting

study

visualisation

mantra

pranayama (breathe)

meditation

journalling

poses

counting

gazing

intention

# Tips

- Set an alarm / put a reminder in your calendar / visual reminder
- Make a space!
- Utilise apps like Insight Timer and Headspace
- Begin still and end still
- Set a realistic commitment
- Consider the practice you need based on age, lifestyle and time of life

\* *“When you do yoga at home every day, it becomes no different from taking a shower. You wouldn’t dream of not taking a shower, and you don’t congratulate yourself for doing it every day. So doing a daily practice doesn’t have to be a heroic activity you impose on yourself. It’s just a simple, natural pleasure.”*

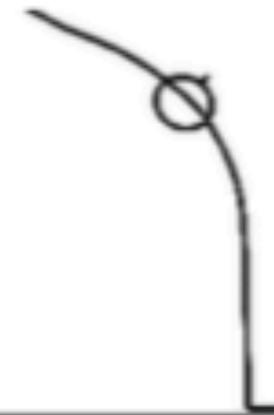
\* Mark Whitwell

# Studio Practice

- Know the difference between styles:
- Ashtanga: strong, dynamic set sequence
- Iyengar: focused on props and alignment
- Vinyasa/Hatha: extremely varied
- Yin: long passive holds
- Gentle yoga/restorative yoga/slow flow: more slow, restorative practices
- Collaborative Maroubra, Sukha Mukha Bronte, Earth and Sky Marrickville, Qi Manly and Freshwater, Dharma Shala Bondi

## Seven Minute Daily Yoga Practice " A Moving Pranayama"

*Breath leads all movements, breath through nose but feeling breath at throat*



**x4**

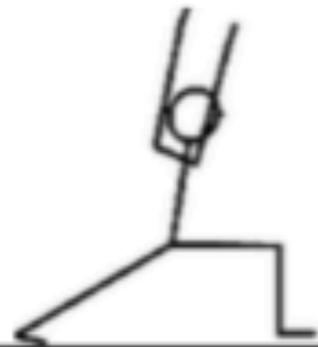
Inhale raise arms

Exhale lower arms

**x4**

Inhale raise arms

Exhale bend forward



**x4**

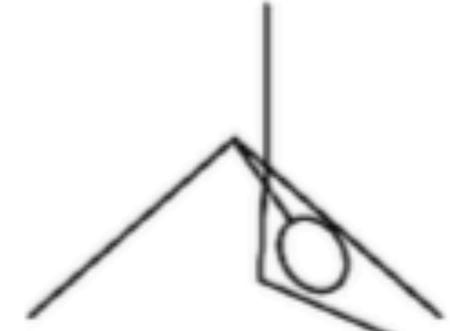
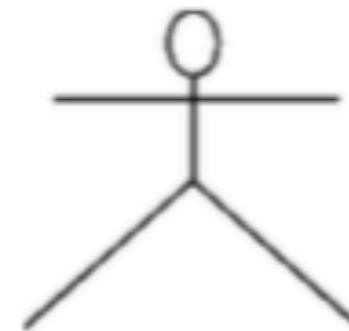
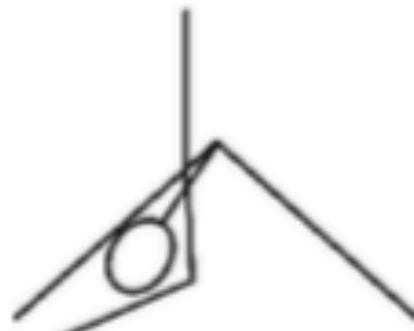
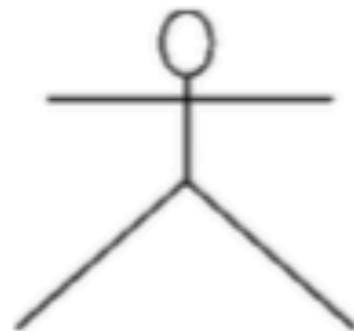
Inhale raise arms

Exhale forward

**x4**

Swap legs inhale raise

Exhale bend forward



**x4**

Arms & legs wide

Exhale twist

Inhale up

Exhale other side



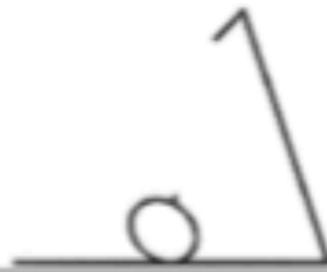
**x4**

Inhale look up in cat

Exhale child pose

Inhale cobra – use abs

Exhale down dog



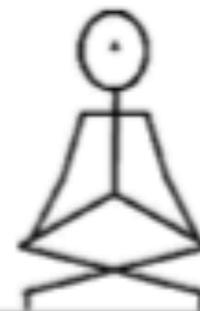
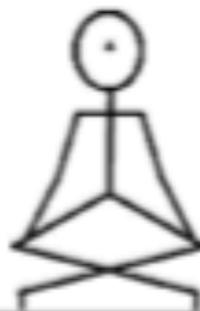
**x4**

Hands knees, knees chest

Inhale legs up

Exhale hands knees  
knees chest

Inhale raise hips



**x4** rounds alternate nostril  
breathing 'Nadi Shodhana

**x4** "Sur yar.. yar namaha"  
(welcomes the sun)

Sit totally still for 3 minutes – observe, repeat mantra  
silently I on inhale, Am on exhale

## "The Guesthouse" by Rumi

- \* This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.
- \* A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.
- \* Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.
- \* The dark thought, the shame, the malice.  
meet them at the door laughing and invite them  
in.
- \* Be grateful for whatever comes.  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

## "Today I Asked My Body..." by Hollie Holden

Today I asked my body what she needed,  
Which is a big deal  
Considering my journey of  
Not Really Asking That Much.

I thought she might need more water.  
Or protein.  
Or greens.  
Or yoga.  
Or supplements.  
Or movement.

But as I stood in the shower  
Reflecting on her stretch marks,  
Her roundness where I would like flatness,  
Her softness where I would like firmness,  
All those conditioned wishes  
That form a bundle of  
Never-Quite-Right-Ness,  
She whispered very gently:

Could you just love me like this?

# "The Mighty Oak Tree" by Johnny Ray Ryder Jnr

A mighty wind blew night and day  
It stole the oak tree's leaves away  
Then snapped its boughs and pulled its bark  
Until the oak was tired and stark

But still the oak tree held its ground  
While other trees fell all around  
The weary wind gave up and spoke.  
How can you still be standing Oak?

The oak tree said, I know that you  
Can break each branch of mine in two  
Carry every leaf away  
Shake my limbs, and make me sway

But I have roots stretched in the earth  
Growing stronger since my birth  
You'll never touch them, for you see  
They are the deepest part of me

Until today, I wasn't sure  
Of just how much I could endure  
But now I've found, with thanks to you  
I'm stronger than I ever knew

# “Allow” by Danna Faulds

- \* There is no controlling life. Try corralling a lightning bolt, containing a tornado. Dam a stream and it will create a new channel. Resist, and the tide will sweep you off your feet. Allow, and grace will carry you to higher ground. The only safety lies in letting it all in – the wild and the weak; fear, fantasies, failures and success. When loss rips off the doors of the heart, or sadness veils your vision with despair, practice becomes simply bearing the truth. In the choice to let go of your known way of being, the whole world is revealed to your new eyes.

## Home by Rolf Gates

- \* We are far now from home, and weary from our travels. The sun is setting and there is no destination in sight. Yoga is a lamp lit in the window of our home, dimly glimpsed across the spiritual wilderness in which we wander. At a time when we could not feel further from our home, yoga reminds us that we are already there, that we need simply awaken from our dream of separation, our dream of imperfection. Allow this book to awaken you, to be a light that shines in the darkness, guiding you through your days, pointing you home.

# Stay in Touch:

- \* Instagram: @kirstywrightyoga
- \* Facebook: facebook.com/kirstywrightyoga
- \* [www.kirstywrightyoga.com](http://www.kirstywrightyoga.com)
- \* (Feel free to join the mailing list on my website for spontaneous inspiration)