



# Meditation Essentials

# Meditation ISN'T:

- Stopping your thoughts
- Only for monks
- Sitting cross legged on the floor
- Time consuming
- Spiritual and/or religious

(... but it can be some of those things if you would like!)

# Meditation IS:

- A powerful tool for noticing, observing and therefore letting go of habitual patterns and responses
- Concentration of the mind – bringing the mind to rest on one focal point or area of thought
- The cultivation of mindfulness and awareness
- A confrontation with the voice(s) in your head
- An opportunity to connect with your sense of self, your inner awareness, your heart, universal consciousness

# Happify Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-kMJBWk9E0>

# Why Meditate?

- Stress Management
- Decreased anxiety/depression
- Pain management
- Increase memory/efficiency
- Lower blood pressure and cortisol
- Boost immune system
- Increase brain gray matter
- Increase melatonin
- Switch from fight/flight/freeze to rest/digest
- Alter gene expression
- Develop relationship to your thoughts
- Ability to observe thoughts, emotions and fears rather than responding to them
- Spiritual connection
- Increase compassion, love and tolerance
- Decrease anger, fear, doubt
- Moving from the heart rather than the head
- Connection to true essence
- Transcend limiting beliefs

*“Trying to tame the mad monkey mind is, in many ways, like a flabby middle-aged businesssman trying to recover his youthful profile on the step machine. It hurts because we’re just not used to it.*

*We are confronted by the consequences of decades of bad habits and ill-discipline. We are forced to use mental muscles we didn’t even know existed. Wouldn’t it be easier just to give up, and instead enjoy a nice big internal talkfest, garnished with disjointed reflection and lashings of fantasy?” - David Michie*

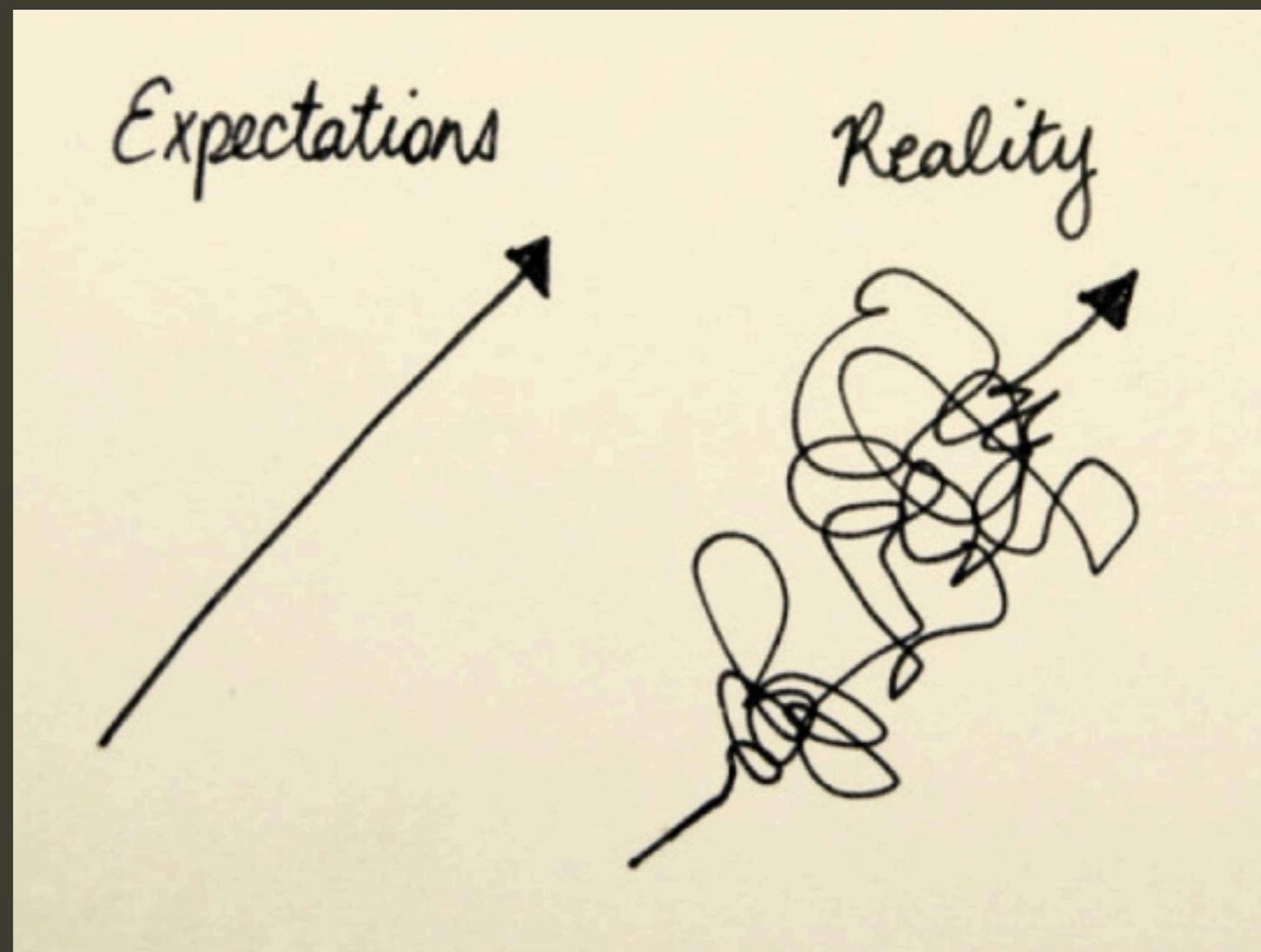
# Obstacles to Meditation:

- "I can't stop thinking"
- "I don't have time"
- "I tried but didn't see results"
- "I don't know how to do it properly"
- "I don't like being alone or silent"
- "I forgot for two days, I suck at meditation, I quit"
- "I don't need meditation"

# Abhyasa and Vairagya

Abhyasa: Practice! Cultivate that which takes you towards balance and tranquillity.

Vairagya – Non-attachment. Practice with non-attachment, without judgement and with compassion.



# Eightfold Path

From the Yoga Sutras – developed by Patanjali as a handbook for meditation.

1. Yamas – moral observances
2. Niyamas – daily observances
3. Asana - seat or physical practices
4. Pranayama - energetic practices (breath)
5. Pratyahara- sense withdrawal
6. Dharana - concentration with effort
7. Dhyana - effortless concentration (meditation)
8. Samadhi - absorption

# Layers of Mind / Meditation

1. The conscious mind – learning to calm the conscious mind to allow the subconscious mind to appear.  
Slowing down the brain waves.
2. The subconscious mind – learning to cope with and not be disturbed by the images/emotions that arise through the subconscious mind.
3. Beyond subconscious mind – resting in awareness beyond thought, feeling and emotion.  
Equanimity.

Adapted from teachings by Mark Breadner

\* “Now, just because we allow everything to be as it is doesn’t mean that our meditation is necessarily going to stay totally peaceful and silent. The point here is awakening, right? The point is not to learn how to suppress yourself so that you feel better. It’s how to wake up to the reality of your being, and we wake up to the reality of our being by relating with our human nature, not by avoiding it. Not by going around it. Not by trying to pray it away or mantra it away or meditate it away.

\* We wake up by letting everything within ourselves reveal itself, be felt, be experienced, be known. Then and only then can we move on to a deeper level. This is very, very important and it’s something a lot of people don’t understand. It’s easy to use meditative techniques to suppress our human experiences, to suppress things that we don’t want to feel. But what is called for is just the opposite. True Meditation is the space in which everything gets revealed, everything gets seen, everything gets experienced.”

\* ~ Ādyashānti



# Methods of Meditation

*“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”*

*- Viktor E Frankl*

# Some Methods of Meditation

1) CONCENTRATION

2) MINDFULNESS

3) VISUALISATION

4) MANTRA

5) CONTEMPLATION



# Concentration

# Concentration

Focusing the mind on one point and giving the monkey mind bananas. Tend to be preparatory techniques, especially in those with very busy minds.

Techniques include:

- Counting backwards
  - Candle gazing
- Pranayama techniques
  - Mantra
- Walking Meditation

# Walking Meditation

- Meditation in action
- Full awareness on the task at hand
- Options:
  - Count steps to 10
  - Synchronise breath
  - Mantra "I. Am. Here. Now"
  - Focus on a movement that you would normally take for granted



Mindfulness

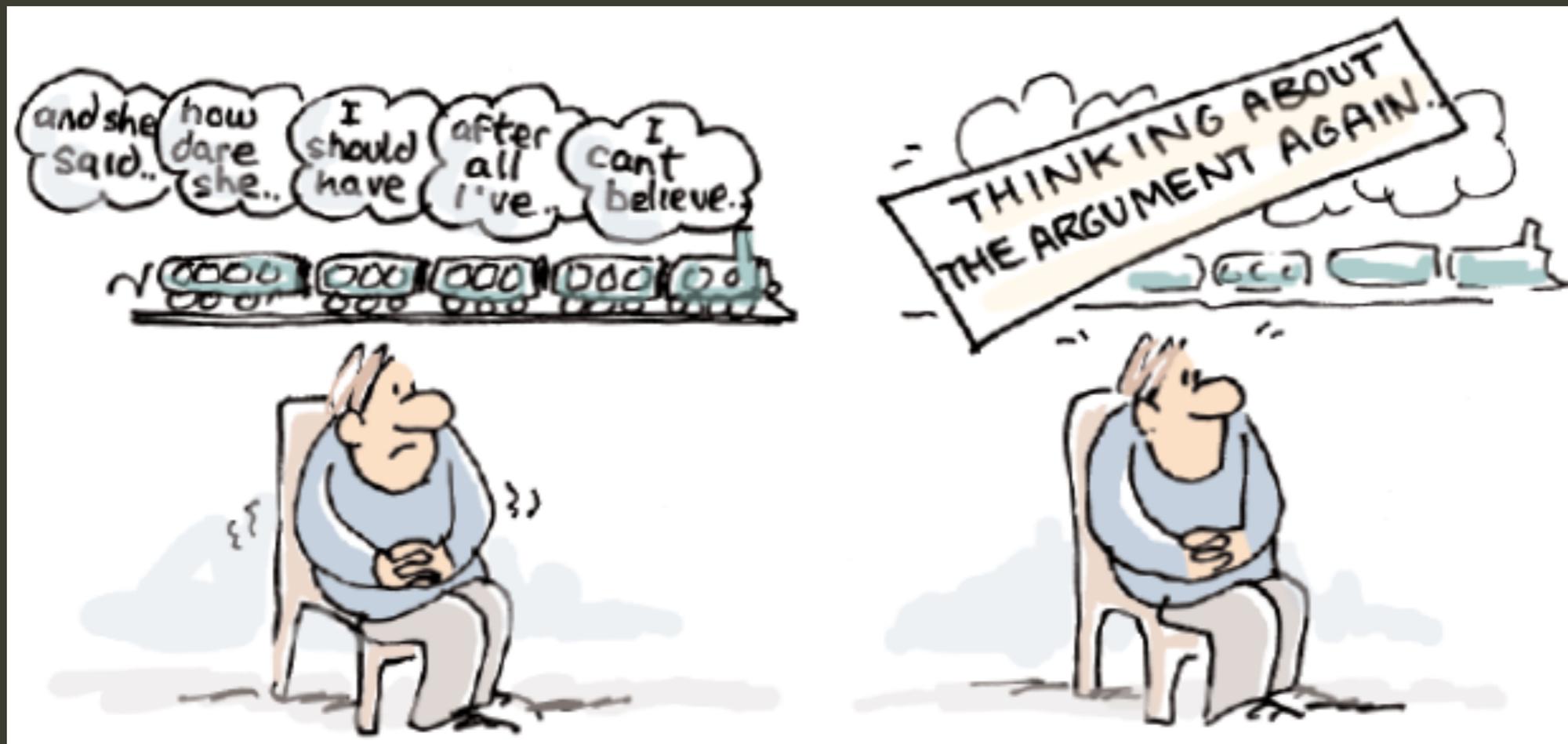
# Jon Cabat Zinn Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8Nsa45d0XE>

# Thought Labelling

The process of acknowledging and labelling your thoughts

Allows for a review of your habitual thoughts and breaks the cycle of rumination



- \* Sit in meditation and acknowledge your thoughts on paper. After, label them as past, future, present and positive, negative, neutral.

- \* PAST:

- Neutral – remembering
- Positive – reminiscing
- Negative – regretting

## FUTURE:

- Neutral– planning
- Positive – fantasizing
- Negative – fearing

## PRESENT:

- Neutral– wondering
- Positive – desiring
- Negative – judging

# Limiting Beliefs

*“Limiting beliefs are those which constrain us in some way. Just by believing them, we do not think, do or say the things that they inhibit. And in doing so we impoverish our lives”*

- [changingminds.org](http://changingminds.org)

# Limiting Beliefs

Practice: Consider a limiting belief that you have, perhaps relating to your personality or your ability or your image.

It might start with "I don't" or "I can't" or "I might" or "I should" or "I am/am not".

Sit quietly and listen to the way that you talk to yourself.

*Thoughts are like the breeze or the leaves on the trees or the raindrops falling. They appear like that, and through inquiry we can make friends with them. Would you argue with a raindrop? Raindrops aren't personal, and neither are thoughts. Once a painful concept is met with understanding, the next time it appears you may find it interesting. What used to be the nightmare is now just interesting. The next time it appears, you may find it funny. The next time, you may not even notice it. This is the power of loving what is. – Byron Katie*



Mantra

# Mantra

Mantra = mind instrument

Examples:

Sa Ta Na Ma

Ham Sa

So Ham

Hreem / Aum



Visualisation

# Metta – Loving Kindness

Invoking a warm hearted feeling and directing that feeling towards yourself and others

Studies have shown that metta increases positive emotion, increases ability to ward off depression, gives life purpose, decreases illness and outruns the “Hedonic Treadmill Effect”.





Practice



# 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).

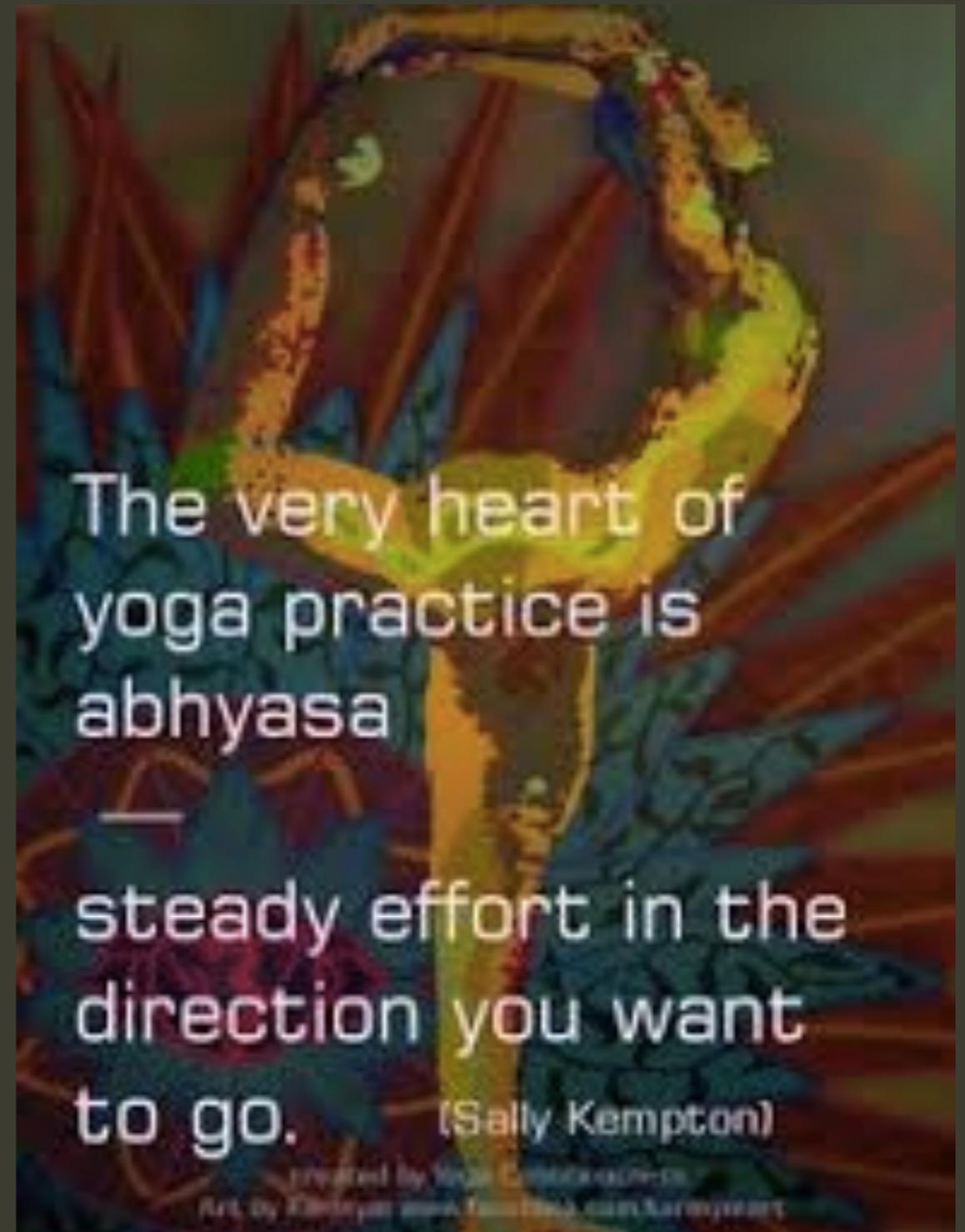
Practice: cultivating the lifestyle, actions, speech and thoughts that lead us in a positive direction and letting go of the things that lead us away from where we want to go.

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.”*

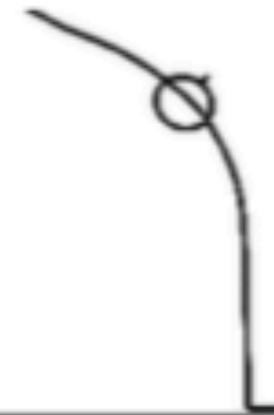
\* Mark Whitwell

# 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

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

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



**x4**

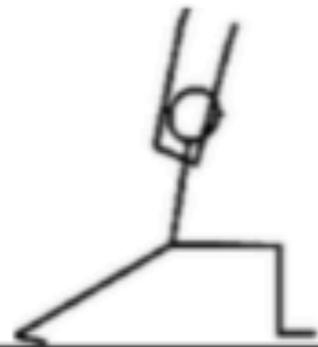
Inhale raise arms

Exhale lower arms

**x4**

Inhale raise arms

Exhale bend forward



**x4**

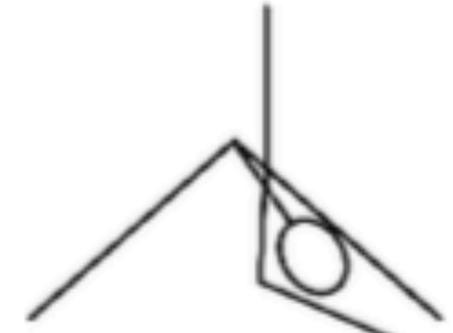
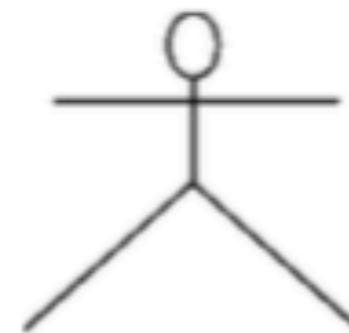
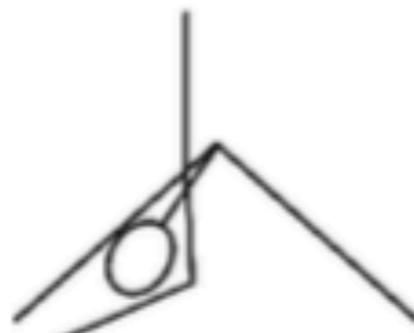
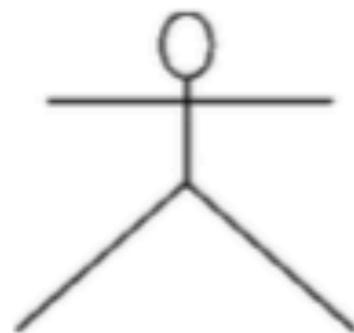
Inhale raise arms

Exhale forward

**x4**

Swap legs inhale raise

Exhale bend forward



**x4**

Arms & legs wide

Exhale twist

Inhale up

Exhale other side



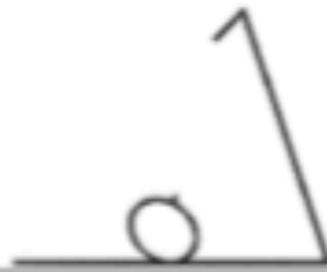
**x4**

Inhale look up in cat

Exhale child pose

Inhale cobra – use abs

Exhale down dog



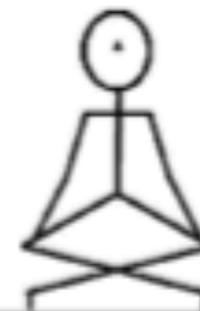
**x4**

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



Poems / Quotes

# "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

## Miscellaneous

"Gentleness is stronger than severity, water is stronger than rock, love is stronger than force." – Hermann Hesse

\* "Beneath the thoughts and feelings  
you have worn on your shoulders for so long,  
there is the real you,  
who is worthy of freedom  
from what darkness said you would be  
for you are more than what you feel,  
you are more than what you think,  
and yes, these things do matter,  
but they do not mean everything  
there is still this open space  
deep within endless grace  
to let those old things go  
and start all over again."  
– Morgan Harper Nichols

"Yoga is an opening into what we cannot possibly know, explain or define and giving ourselves to this mystery unreservedly even though we have no idea where it will lead us. It is an awakening to the intensity of life when we drop ur guard with the full knowledge that to love also opens us to sorrow and loss." – Donna Farhi

## "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.

# Body Love Poem 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?