

My weekly ponderings...

Good morning everyone!

I assume everybody has really 'open and supple hips' from all that sitting in Malasana during your emailing, texting, watching the tv or reading a book! This week we are breaking down Utkatasana or Fierce pose as it is translated. Fierce from its appearance? Or fierce from the sensations that may be experienced in the legs, if grace isn't found in the breathing...

UTKATASANA No 4.

(Utkata - fierce Asana - pose) or chair pose

Muscles working:

Legs - Thighs, hamstrings, hip flexors, groin & calves/shins all engaging.

Glutes - Bottom/rear supporting.

Trunk - Core & abdominals.

Torso - Chest opening, trapezius.

Back - Latissimus dorsi & spinal muscles supporting.

Arms - All parts of shoulders, triceps (back of arms) contracting.

Benefits - Helps alleviate stiffness in the shoulders, strengthens the legs & ankles effectively. Great for abdominal tone & breathing focus. The chest also expands open when the arms are raised, increasing flexibility.

Modifications - Arms crossed in front, extended in front or above the head. Advanced version includes crossing the leg over the knee (standing pigeon).

With this pose you may start to notice how there is a huge crossover of muscles that are utilised - as with other poses we have profiled. I have purposely not gone into anatomical jargon as I feel this will overcomplicate the execution and would rather you rely on feel, intuitive body intelligence and awareness. Alternatively (shameless plug!) coming to a class will allow you to comprehend these cues even more! Begin by grounding yourself in Tadasana (mountain pose) standing straight and as with previous issues; press the outer edges of the feet down firmly encouraging that inner arch lift, along with pressing the big toe mounds down firmly too.



There are various ways of entering chair pose, but for this profile start to bend the knees to a comfortable level close to your edge, remembering softness and firmness (*Sthira/sukka*) balance. You can see from the picture above I am not at 90 degrees, so as to keep my knees behind my toes for protection and good alignment, really accentuate sticking the bum out so the lower back curve is also strong and not compromised for support or shock absorption. From here you could try extending the arms in front of you or crossing over the chest. If you feel up for the challenge, take the arms above, firming up the triceps, relaxing the shoulders away from the ears and keeping the arms straight and close to the sides of the head. Refrain from looking upwards (as I am showing) as it will be more comfortable on the neck joint. This is where the fierceness begins! Lengthen the inhales and exhales of the breath, whilst pulling the tummy button in. Focus on the heart centre to allow the sensations in the muscles to subside and fade, by calming your nervous system response. You will be amazed how much more you can embrace when doing this. Shift your awareness to all the parts of the body that can be lighter and when ready gently stand up in Tadasana taking a reset and try again. Enjoy!!!!

'With continued awareness, we identify only with the pure consciousness residing in the heart.'
- Yoga sutras 1.18

NEW and current classes...

Location; The Studio, Earlham House Clinic, Unit15, Earlham House, Norwich, NR2 3PD.

MONDAYS & TUESDAYS - weekly mixed ability yoga class - 6pm.

Hatha / Vinyasa Flow Yoga A step up from the complete beginners' class at an intermediate level.

We will be working through some of the more challenging poses at a reasonable pace to really feel like you are working the body and achieving a good workout. We will put into practice; posture, breathing exercises, relaxation and meditation.

THURSDAYS - 6-week beginners yoga course - 6pm - STARTS NEXT WEEK - THURSDAY 8th SEPT.

Suitable for complete beginners, or those who are wishing to refresh themselves on some of the fundamental postures of yoga before joining or re-joining a mixed ability yoga class. The class will be kept to a small size and paced to allow the participants to learn each pose in a safe, friendly, supportive and unrushed environment. We will cover; posture, breathing exercises, philosophy, relaxation and meditation.

SATURDAYS - Outdoor weekly guided meditation sessions, The Plantation Gardens - 9am.

Starting from 21st May... They are back... A one-hour outdoor guided meditation session in the relaxed & beautiful setting of 'The Plantation Gardens'. Reflecting on philosophy, whilst enjoying some peace and tranquillity.