

spring awakening

by Patricia Ezechie

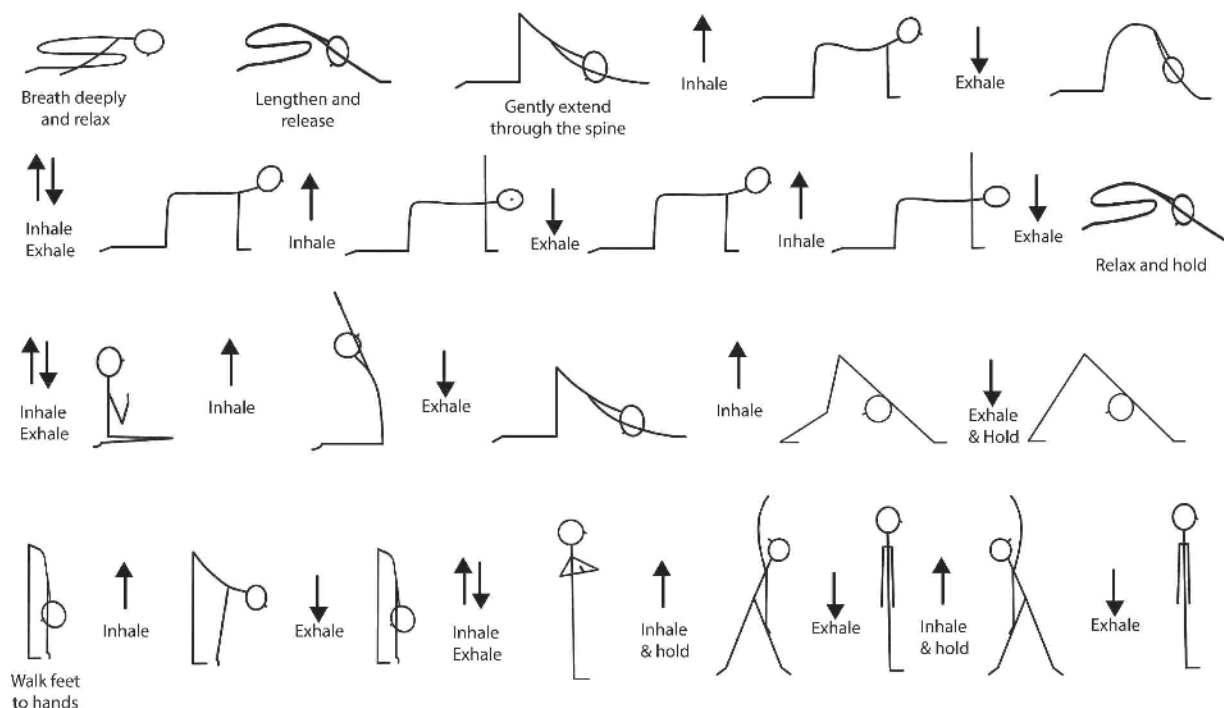
Thank goodness it's Spring! I always find the beginning of the year a bit of a strain – all that expectation – most of it heaped upon ourselves I might add, usually cynically and ably encouraged by the media. Within seconds of entering the New Year we are bombarded with messages telling us we are not enough and every year we collude. We begin the 'I must.', 'I can't...', 'I should'... I must... lose weight, stop smoking, drink less, exercise more, find a new job, get a partner, book a holiday, save the world, and of course there's world peace (breathe) ...the list is endless. Somehow between the 31st December and the 1st January we are no longer adequate, and as we grudgingly participate, allowing ourselves to be drawn into the mass hallucination and hysteria, we usually find the collective psyche has buckled by the 8th of January, brought to its knees by the burden of failure and negativity generated from berating ourselves.



We chastise ourselves for our lack of will power, our inability to curb the excesses from the festivities and for somehow unable to move overnight from overindulgence into restraint and deprivation. And all this in darkness, dankness and gloom – as somehow the message that the rest of nature seems to have understood, that this period of hibernation and dormancy has completely escaped us.

Thank goodness it's Spring! Like the Inland Revenue should make April the beginning of the year! By April in the middle of spring – we have survived the fall of bright blue mornings followed by rain and gloomy afternoons. We have all noticed that it is a little lighter when we wake up, and may actually be lighter when we are making our way home from work. Most importantly we have a moment when we have walked out of our house into a crisp, beautiful blue day with faces and chests seeming to naturally receive the warmth and love from the sun, our spines straightening and opening outwards after what feels like an interminable period of being closed. This is the time to embrace change, when nature is renewing itself, and providing us with all the inspiration and encouragement we need.

Simple sequence for reconnection and acceptance



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to begin and sustain our efforts. And as with nature, this change should be gradual, be nurtured from small buds of intentions and activity and encouraged with love, patience and acceptance into full bloom.

Thank goodness it's Spring! Now is the time to re-vitalise your body. Unlike January or February, your body is more likely to cooperate because it is in sync with the rest of nature and the universe even if your mind had been temporarily hijacked and distracted. Your body will naturally want to shed what I call 'the winter layer' and become lighter. The nutrition your body will require and demand of you if you are connected enough to listen to it will reflect the brightness and luminosity of the days and be more vibrant and fresh. By re-engaging with your practice and through this reconnecting with the body, you will hopefully be able to build the trust and patience required to heed this inner guidance and allow it to lead your body back into balance.

Thank goodness it's Spring! This rebirth in nature is the time to re-engage with our practice and reconnect with our spines. I am sure that even the most dedicated of us yogi/nis may have struggled to maintain their practice through the English Winter. If you were anything like me, my daily practice and teaching seemed to naturally gravitate towards forward bends, moving instinctively towards poses that although lengthening the body were about closure, looking inwards, introspection. It has been a struggle to encourage my back to open and my chest to lift and listening to my body I have kept my backbends simple and basic, focusing on trying to maintain some spinal flexibility and trying to keep the kyphosis that the winter weather encouraged to a minimum. But with the changing of the season, the lightness and brightness, there has been a natural evolution from Spinx and Cobra, towards Camel and Dancer. Twists

have become deeper and are held for longer, and trusty Down Dog may well be replaced with a more demanding inversion... who knows.

Thank goodness it's Spring! We have more time – or perceive we have more time as we have daylight for longer. Surely if we have more time we can take more time; more time for ourselves, more time to reach our goals. Unlike the New Year when everything had to be immediate.... practise everyday, lose 10 pounds in 2 weeks, work out 5 days a week for 90 minutes each time (crikey! I am exhausted just saying it), re-engage with your practice or fitness with baby steps. We have the perception of more time, so take some of it for yourself. I always encourage starting with just 5 minutes – we can all find 5 minutes in our day. 5 minutes to reconnect with our breath, 5 minutes to check in with ourselves, 5 minutes to acknowledge our day. And if a more demanding practice seems too much a stretch, make that 5 minutes a relaxation, as relaxation is the key. It is the key to reconnection, it is the method that will best help combat the stress or strain you are under both physically and emotionally and most importantly of all it will help switch on all those genes within the body that science now believes helps keep us healthy (seems like the scientific community is finally catching up with what we yogi/nis have always known!).

Make your intention every time you go to your mat to just take 5 minutes for yourself - you will find that once on the mat the 5 minutes will naturally evolve to much, much longer!

Thank goodness it's Spring! I know in Yoga we should always try to stay in the moment, but once we are in Spring, Summer is just round the corner. If the Spring brings us all these gifts just imagine what's in store for the Summer!