

Yoga for Detoxification

A workshop for people withdrawing from drugs & alcohol

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For instructors: People who choose to address their addiction to drugs or alcohol usually come to that decision by way of a crisis; Overdose, loss of job, estrangement of family, legal or financial problems, sometimes, a combination of all of these. By the time an addict is ready to quit they are usually surrounded with the negative impact of their drug abuse. We begin this workshop by turning off the negative self-talk.

Opening Meditation (5 minutes) We are not our past. We are not bodies. We are not our thoughts.

Here's why: The past is over. Let it go.

Your body was first simply one cell that began dividing. Then you were a fetus, then a baby, a toddler, a child, a teen, a young adult, middle-aged and finally old. That means you have never been consistently in just one type of body over the long term. Every inhalation brings trillions of atoms into your body and with every exhale, trillions leave. You have never been your body.

We are also not our thoughts. This can be demonstrated by observing them for any amount of time. It will quickly become apparent that they change constantly. One moment, we are thinking of one subject and in a blink, we are thinking about something else.

So, because the past is over, the body and mind are constantly changing and thus can't be said to be the permanent you, who are you? **You are the spirit that can witness your body and mind in action. This is your Real Self.** Please appreciate what good news this is -- you are not limited to your sense perceptions, your thoughts, or your feelings. You are the infinite awareness.

- Adapted from the Meditation Society of America
"Not the Body, Not the Mind, Not the Emotions"

For instructors: Breathing plays an important role in helping to remove toxins from the body. This energizing breathing technique is especially helpful to people withdrawing from various forms of amphetamine. Without their drug of choice they may find it difficult to stay awake, alert & focused.

Kapolabahti Pranayama- Skull Shining Breath (25 breathes, 3 rounds) Detox Benefits: Clears out carbon dioxide from the lung tissue, stimulates the organs of digestion and can train the diaphragm to move freely. When the diaphragm

moves with its natural fluidity, the abdominal organs are massaged and the lungs are fully emptied with every breath.

For instructors: In order to facilitate the detoxification process we will practice asana, specifically, poses that support the elimination of wastes from the circulatory, digestive & lymph systems. During withdrawal people often experience stomach discomfort. I have suggested variations that can lighten the pose when this is a concern.

Asana

Gentle seated warm up, *Virlasana*-cat / cow (5 minutes) Warming the body & moving the spine in preparation for more challenging poses.

For instructors: These 3 poses could incorporate Child's Pose between each or could be taken as a flow depending on energy levels &/or abilities.

***Adho Mukha Svanasana*- Downward-Facing Dog (10 deep breathes)** Detox benefits: Getting the heart higher than the head reverses the pull of gravity and aids in the circulation of blood and lymph. Also gently tones the abdomen, which stimulates digestion. To soften the pose drop the knees to the floor, hips high in the air & stretch the arms forward.

***Kumbhakanasa*- Nose-to-Knee Plank (15 seconds)** Detox benefits: Brings heat to the digestive tract, burning up accumulated toxins and making them easier for the body to eliminate. To soften the pose, drop 1 knee to the mat.

***Parvrita Parsvakonasana*-Twisting lunge (5 breathes)** Detox benefits: This physically challenging twist wrings toxins out of the digestive system & also raises your body temperature, which in turn increases circulation and further stimulates the release of toxins. In case of stomach discomfort, soften the pose by dropping the back knee.

Closing Poses

***Janu Sirsasana*- Head Beyond Knee (10 deep breathes)** Detox benefits: This forward bend brings fresh blood to the abdomen, washing away waste products and revitalizing the entire area. This forward fold should not be taken very deep if already experiencing stomach discomfort.

Ardha Matsyendrasana-seated half spinal twist(10 deep breathes) Detox benefits: Squeezes the abdominal organs and stimulates digestion and elimination. Experiencing stomach discomfort? Straighten the bottom leg to lighten the pose.

Viparita Karani-Legs up the Wall (5 minutes) Detox benefits: Encourages circulation of blood and lymph from the feet and legs. Gravity bathes the abdomen in fresh blood, stimulating the digestive organs. This gentle inversion gives the circulatory system a rest & soothes the nervous system, allowing your body to shift its attention from warding off stress to daily bodily functions, including detoxification.

For instructors: During withdrawal people often experience anxiety. In a clinical setting this is frequently treated with Ativan or other sedatives. In this workshop we will address this with breathing.

A study was conducted by physicians in Italy to test whether rhythmic formulas such as the rosary and yoga mantras can synchronize and reinforce inherent cardiovascular rhythms and modify baroreflex (blood pressure control) sensitivity. They compared effects of recitation of the Ave Maria (in Latin) or of the mantra Om Mani Padme Hum. Their results; both prayer and mantra caused striking, powerful, and synchronous increases in existing cardiovascular rhythms when recited six times a minute. Their conclusion; rhythm formulas that involve breathing at six breaths per minute induce favorable psychological and possibly physiological effects. For those new to chanting in Latin or Sanskrit we can achieve the same result by simply breathing with control.

-From The British Medical
Journal, December 22, 2001

Sama Vritti Pranayama –Equal breath (5 minutes) Calming & centering in corpse pose while incorporating equal breathing with 5 second inhales & 5 second exhales to complete 6 breathes per minute.

Savasana –corpse pose (5 minutes) Where all the good work is absorbed.

Closing meditation (5 minutes) Returning to the message of the original meditation (what we are not) & confirming what we are by offering “I am” affirmations.

I am a loving person.
I am a strong person.
I am a friendly person.

I am a capable person.
I am worthy.
I am loveable.
I am free.

For instructors: The following is a recipe for an herbal tea blend that can ease symptoms of withdrawal. It could be served after class to wind down or before class as a friendly icebreaker.

Soothing Tea

Lavender to relieve stress

Passion Flower for pain relief

St. John's Wort to ease cravings

Valerian Root & Catnip act as sedatives

Chamomile & Lemon Balm both soothe digestion & nerves

Hops act as a muscle relaxant

Rosemary calms the nerves & treats headaches

Skullcap is added for seizure prevention

Blend together & store in an airtight container.

To brew: Place desired amount in a cup or tea pot. Pour hot *but not boiling* water over herbs. Allow to steep at least 5 minutes before straining.