

BALANCE

In Our Physical World

Information to help you realize the importance of balance and how you can improve your balance skills.

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BALANCE *IN OUR PHYSICAL WORLD*

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WHAT IS BALANCE ?

- One definition, especially as it pertains to everyday life, is our ability to maintain a stable position.
- Balance is essential for us to go about our normal lives, it allows us to enjoy life, and it prevents falls.
- Strength, flexibility and agility are essential to balance our bodies.

WHAT AFFECTS BALANCE AND HELPS TO MAINTAIN IT:

- Our inner ears provide the brain with information about changes in the position of our head. This system tells our brain if we are twisting, lurching and about to fall, even when we are standing on an uneven surface.
- Our senses - vision, touch, hearing, taste and smell - tell the brain about the environment outside our bodies.
- The eyes tell our brains about our bodies relative to objects around us.

WHAT AFFECTS BALANCE AND HELPS TO MAINTAIN IT:

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- Sensors in our skin allow us to feel the outside environment. The body part touching the ground gives us feedback about the ground - is it rough or soft, smooth or wrinkled, etc.
- Proprioception (a big word meaning awareness of the position and movement of the body) is our body's ability to tell us where we are in space from the inside out.

HOW YOGA HELPS

- Yoga practice usually takes place in a safe space, either privately or in group classes, which allows for repetition of our balance movements. This improves proprioception and the sense of touch, as well as reflex and reaction times.
- Standing poses challenge our balance and improve it, as we are standing with one foot going one way and the other, the other way — an asymmetrical stance.

HOW YOGA HELPS

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- As yoga is usually done in bare feet, the sensation provided by the ground helps to improve balance.
- Our nervous system is enhanced by a regular yoga practice as more blood flows to the sensory nerve receptors. This also increases space around the nerves (if the space around nerves is tight it creates irritation).

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR BALANCE THROUGH YOGA

- **Variety** - Change your balance work every few days.
- **Time yourself** - stand on one leg until your leg tires (i.e. tree pose), then take 1-3 more breaths before coming out of your pose gracefully.
- **Resist doing 3 balance poses in a row on one leg, then 3 on the other** - your hips will thank you.
- **Feel your poses** - we often 'throw ourselves into a pose'. Instead move into, hold and release your pose mindfully.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR BALANCE THROUGH YOGA

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- Challenge yourself - vary the time you hold a pose, the surface you stand on, or add distraction to your environment.
- Shift your vision - look up, down, side to side. Try closing your eyes (challenging!). A bit of support nearby will be helpful.
- If you usually balance on your yoga mat, try your pose on carpet or tile. If outside, try standing on grass, concrete or sand.
- Do balance work in a different area: go outside or to a gym, stand on one leg while waiting in line.

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BALANCE POSES TO TRY



BIRD-DOG POSE = A GREAT WAY TO START



**SIDE ANGLE POSE - AN
ASYMMETRY CHALLENGE**



TREE POSE - A BIT MORE CHALLENGING



**REVOLVED CHAIR POSE - CHALLENGING
OUR INNER EAR**

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