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Sequencing Guidelines--Ideal Class Template

- The ParaYoga Class Template is:
 - a basic structure, by which you can create an endless variety of sequences.
 - designed to provide ideal preparation and counter-posing for both maximum safety and bio-mechanic effectiveness as well as effectiveness in achieving specific energetic outcomes.
 - a complete and balanced energetic progression. The template is also a *krama*, progressing through the *vayus* in the following order: *vyana*, *udana*, *pran*, *samana*, *apana*.
 - the template begins with circulatory/distributive force (*vyana*), moves into developing the expansive force (*udana*), then onto the energizing/internalizing force (*prana*), the assimilative force (*samana*) and finally culminating in the grounding/stabilizing force (*apana*).
- Through adaptation and variation it is possible to create an infinite variety of classes from this template.
- When creating a sequence, consider the following:
 - accommodate a variety of styles, be creative, adapt to your students' needs and preferences.
 - emphasize safety, consider the bodies you're working with, time of day, energy level of your students and quality of the students' focus.
 - consider the Three Touchstones of a ParaYoga practice: *tapas*, *vinyasa krama*, *smarana*.



- the practice must be an integrated whole, emphasizing a specific category of postures and a methodical ordering of poses to approach the apex, combined with compatible *pranayama*, *savasana* and meditation techniques.
- the sequence is designed to meet the needs, capabilities and preparedness of the students—some classes may and will have more or less *pranayama*, more or less meditation, all of which is shaped by those to whom you are teaching.
- combine all the above factors in the design of your class.
- The following are the 8 landmarks of the ParaYoga Class Template:
- 1. WARM-UP: get the body and mind receptive, consider any or all of the following:
 - introduce a unifying theme or *bhav*, meditation or simple movements that deepen the breath.
 - consciously link the mind to the breath.
 - prepare the body for the specific poses that lead to the apex of the sequence.
 - start with simple movements, i.e *Chakravakasana*, supine or standing arm raises, dynamic *apanasana* or bridge, dynamic chair or *uttansana*, etc.
- 2. SUN SALUTATIONS: (*surya namaskar* or *vinyasa*) to warm the body further, expand and lengthen the breath
 - these are optional. Sun Salutations are neither required or recommended in every class.
 - when teaching beginners, consider placing Sun Salutations at the end of the standing series.
 - expands and lengthens the breath



- 3. STANDINGS: continue deepening toward the apex pose
 - be selective; there is little value of teaching every standing pose in any given sequence—efficiently and elegantly progress toward the apex pose and desired energetic outcome.
 - consider the use of vinyasa between poses for more vigorous classes and more physically challenging practices.
- 4. INVERSIONS: of all poses these are perhaps the most powerful and healing, yet they inherently have more risk; therefore, inversions require the most preparation and counter posing.
 - pause before inverting: a short rest is needed so that you take students into inversions with a clear mind and calm nervous system.
 - shoulderstand is the counterpose for headstand.
 - if you plan to include arm balances, place them before headstand and/or shoulderstand.
 - **note: you need not and probably should not teach inversions in every class.**
 - **they are contraindicated for many students.**
 - **you don't need an inversion to create a highly effective, powerful and profound class.**
- 5. BACKBENDS: vital for long-term postural health
 - energizing while they are held.
 - calming/internalizing if not held too long.
 - according to *Krishnamacharya*, *shalabhasana* is the ideal counterpose for shoulderstand.



- bridge or shoulderstand are each an optimal counterpose for headstand.
- *shalabasana, shalabasana, shalabasana!*
- 6. TWISTS: Loosen hips, unwind muscular tension around the spine
 - foundation for the finishing poses.
 - stimulates parasympathetic nervous system.
 - detoxifies internal organs.
 - internalizes and quiets mind.
- 7. FORWARD BENDS: the ultimate calming, soothing and unwinding of all poses.
 - seated forward bends have the strongest impact.
 - deepen the transition into a parasympathetic response—deep, healing and restful.
 - ideal preparation for *savasana*.
 - note: after seated forward bending, it is advisable to add dynamic bridge before going into *savasana*.
- 8. SAVASANA: required deep rest, necessary for the body and mind to assimilate and benefit from the physical practice.
 - minimum 5 minutes rest for a 60 minute practice.
 - 10 minutes rest for 90 minute practice.
 - an effective *savasana* guides the students into *smarana* (Self-remembrance).



- **PRANAYAMA:** the practice you teach will vary depending on several factors: student's level of experience, time/length of class/intensity of physical practice, complexity and specific meditation still to come as well as the overall progression of the sequence.
- “*pranayama*” in this context refers to any applied practice, whose main focus is *prana*/life force.
- It may be appropriate to lead a deepening *pranayama* practice that culminates in long breath retentions or it may be preferable to move the class into a simple *savasana* of watching the breath or any one of the many ParaYoga *kriya* meditations.
- Remember: *pranayama* should not be forced on students who are not able to remain stable and calm in a sitting posture.



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Introduction to Inversions Practice

- To properly sequence for inversions (either or both headstand and shoulderstand) all the other categories of postures are used as preparation.
- Note that inversions, as outlined in the class template, are placed in the middle of the sequence to maximize preparation and counter-posing.
- The specific energetic effect of inversions often help make meditation more accessible—particularly those practices related to the higher *chakras*.



Backbends, Inversions and Extensions

Refer to Appendix: ____ “Biodynamic and Energetic Effects of Asana”

- Backbends:
 - have a *brahmana* effect
 - increase *rajas*
 - increase *pran* (the one common denominator for practically all backbends),
 - thus, they generally are energizing, yet internalizing
 - also, they can increase all but one (*apana*) of the five *vayus*, depending on the pose:
 - *samana vayu*—*shalabhasana*, *dhanurasana*, for assimilation, valor and capacity
 - *vyana vayu*—*urdhva dhanurasana*
 - backbends generally activate the sympathetic nervous system—so again, they are stimulating.
- Inversions
 - *langhana* effect (soothing, internalizing, helping you feel lighter)
 - activate Parasympathetic Nervous System
 - reduce *kapha* because of the increased circulation throughout the system
 - increase *pitta* and to a lesser degree *Vata*.



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- *pitta* needs to be judicious: less inverting in the summer and fewer long holds of inversions
- increase *udana* and *vyana*
- decrease *apana*
- Extensions
 - *brahmana* (they enliven, challenge, activate, move)
 - reduce *kapha*
 - general ideas: increases *pran vayu*, due to their internalizing effect and *samana* and *vyana*;
 - more specifically impact on the *vayus* (and *dosha*) is determined by the breath utilized (e.g. holds after inhale versus hold after exhale)
- *Asana* is an energetic practice—a form of physical *pranayama*
- Using the wisdom of *ayurveda* and its energetic schematic of the *vayus*, we can determine the best way to address your or your students' specific needs
- This is a key teaching that allows to apply *yoga* as a therapeutic modality
- Master this wisdom through practice, both personal as well as through the consistent application of these principles in your teaching.
- In time you'll become a skilled teacher, able to achieve distinctly powerful outcomes for yourself and your students, while helping them achieve greater balance freedom and fulfillment.
- As a result, you will become an exceptional teacher/conduit for sharing the potential of *yoga*.
- This will empower you to share these principles and lead others to greater joy and lasting peace.

VINYASA KRAMA M27