

Morning Sadhana

“Sadhana” means daily spiritual practice and setting time aside early in the morning can add a positive, full impact on the rest of our day. Our personal sadhana can be anything that we choose. It can be as simple as stopping for a moment and feeling grateful for what we have and to be alive, or it can be a complex practice with time for prayer, exercise, meditation, pranayama, and more. Sadhana is our time to follow our intentions and prepare the mind, body, and soul to flow with ease.

A more complex morning sadhana can be any combination of yoga asanas, meditation, and pranayama, or for more advance yogis, a free-flowing combination of all of them. It can be noisy or it can be silent.

For those of you beginning a fuller morning sadhana practice, I would recommend two specific movement sequences that can offer you the greatest impact.

Sun Salutation A (Surya Namaskara A)

Sun Salutation A is a series of 12 asanas, starting and ending in a standing mountain pose plus one final step. There are several different sun salutations, depending on the culture, but I find this sequence all encompassing. As you move through this series, focus on breathing in and out through the nose. This focus on the breath also helps keep you in in the moment as well as in a rest and relaxation mode. Remember to work within your own range of ability. There’s no need to go to the edge.

- Mountain pose - stand with feet hip distance apart; bring your palms together in front of the heart center with the thumbs touching the chest
- Upward salute – inhale, releasing the palms; arms float out to the side and arch up over your head; bring palms together; allow a slight back bend, about 15 degrees; exhale, returning to full Mountain pose
- Standing forward fold – inhale, releasing the palms; arms swan dive as you bend at the waist, bending the knees slightly; the chest drifts toward the thighs; hands continue towards the floor, landing either on your shins or, if comfortable, beside the feet on the floor; exhale, moving your forehead toward the thighs

- Half standing forward fold – inhale, moving the torso up halfway with a flatback, lengthening the spine forward; torso forms a 90° angle with your legs; exhale the fingertips to your shins
- Forward lunge – inhale, firmly placing your hands on either side of your left foot bringing the right foot back into a full lunge; back leg is straight, the knee is off the ground, and the toes are up and active; exhale as you feel the stretch in the right upper thigh
- Downward facing dog – inhale, bringing your left foot back to match the right foot, allowing the sit bones to rise toward the sky; pushing into the palms; exhale, allowing the chest to drop down toward the floor and feel the stretch in the legs
- Plank – inhale, sliding forward into a plank with arms extended; push into the palm pads; keep a straight line between the crown of the head and heels of your feet; exhale, slowly lowering the body to the floor, keeping the elbows in; when on the floor, relax and take a breath
- Cobra – Inhale; with the toenails on the floor and the lower half of the body relaxed, place the hands beside the chest; began to lift the chest upward using the back muscles and not the arms for support; for an added variation, isometrically drag the hands back toward the body allowing the chest to open a little more; exhale, bringing the chest back to the floor
- Downward facing dog – inhale, pushing up with knees and hands into downward facing dog; exhale as you hold
- Forward lunge – inhale, swinging the right foot up underneath the chest, positioning your foot between your hands; exhale, bringing yourself to a full forward lunge with left leg extended
- Standing forward fold – inhale, bringing the left foot forward to match the right; hang forward with legs slightly bent into the standing forward fold; exhale as you engage the core before your next move
- Mountain pose – inhale, moving through a reverse swan dive as the arms go out to the side, the palms meet over the crown of your head and are drawn

down the center line to your heart center; exhale, allowing the thumbs to drift toward the chest and the heart to reach out to meet the thumbs

- Scan body – inhale, looking inward and scanning the physical body for sensations; exhale, scanning the emotional body; inhale, focusing on the breath; exhale, bringing your attention to the mind; take 3 deep rounds of breath and determine if anything has changed in these four planes since you began this sun salutation

This sun salutation has now engaged many body parts, begun the flow of the synovial fluid that is building strength within the muscles, and activated the spine to keep it supple. This series could be repeated several times to make it more of a workout and stretch, or you could move on to Dasha Chalana to help lubricate additional joints and gain some enhanced stretching.

Dasha Chalana (Eight Churnings) – Standing Joint Series

There is a group of preparatory practices in the hatha yoga texts known as the Dasha Chalana or "eight churnings." These foundational practices, integrated at the beginning of a session, or at the beginning of the day, free the flow of life force in the joints, reduce tension in the internal organs, and cultivate a mind-set conducive to one's yoga practice. The benefits and practice description can be found in a separate self-care article on the website.

Meditation is often added to morning sadhanas but the above is a lot to move through at the beginning. A full self-care article on meditation will be coming soon.