

Take Home Flow 6-6-09

Yoga for Your Back and Spine

Keeping our back and spine healthy is key to feeling young and vital. Enjoy this flow that builds strength and flexibility in your back and spine as you combine side bending, backbending, spinal balancing and forward bending.

Come to your center

Sit comfortably. Begin with a few moments to listen to your breath, becoming quietly centered. As you connect with your breath, begin to let your arms flow up and down with each wave of breath. *I tune in to my body.*

Awaken your body

For a few breaths, play with a few poses to awaken your body and your connection to your movement. Release the neck, open the spine with cat/cow flows, stretch into downward facing dog, release into a standing forward bend. When you are ready, make your way to all fours for your flow.

Flow

1. From all fours, inhale, looking up and lifting the tail into cow pose. Exhale, pulling belly to the sky in cat pose. Flow from one to the other with the flow of your breath.
2. Come back to a neutral spine. Step knees together. With an inhale, reach the right arm and left leg. Stretch from the center of your body to the tips of the fingers and toes. Feel your spinal muscles helping to stabilize you in this pose. Spend a few breaths. You can stay here, or reach back with the hand to grab the foot for another variation.
3. Return your hand to the mat. Extend the left leg out to the left side of your body. Hold for a few breaths, keeping the leg as high as you can. Then set the foot to the left side of you on the floor to prepare for gate pose.
4. Step up on the right knee. Lay the left hand along the left leg. With an inhale, reach the right hand to the sky, then arch to the left in gate pose – a nice side bend. Lengthen again from the center of the stretch outward as you breathe.
5. Gently release gate pose, coming back to all fours. Repeat the cat/cow stretch – step 1.
6. Repeat step 2 on the other side.
7. Repeat step 3 on the other side.
8. Repeat step 4 on the other side.
9. Release gate pose, stepping up to both knees. To prepare for camel pose, step the knees as wide as your hips. Anchor the backbend through the lower body. Take hands to the low back as fists. Lengthen through the spine, then gently lift your heart in a backbend. Go only as far as feels safe and comfortable for your body. Enjoy the euphoria of this backbend.
10. Gently fold your backbend in to child's pose, a forward bend.

Receive

Close your practice with a few moments in final relaxation, receiving the benefits of this back strengthening flow.

I feel more alive and vital with every breath. namaste

