



November 2013

**New Timetable:** Our new timetable has been in place for a few weeks now. We hope you are enjoying the expanded timetable. Let us know your preferences. The studio is here to serve you so let us know of your experience.

**Children's Yoga:** We receive enquiries about yoga for children regularly. We are willing to run classes for children, set at a level appropriate to the development of the children participating. If you are interested in having your children practice yoga please contact us by e-mail, [hamish@apollopoweryoga.co.nz](mailto:hamish@apollopoweryoga.co.nz), indicating that interest, how many children you have that would participate and what sort of time would be most suitable to you both during term time but also during the holidays.



**40 Days to Personal Revolution at Apollo:** Our 40 days programme finished on 3 November with a concluding session: meditation, practice and a light, fresh brunch. A big thank you to those who took part and made this such a great course. We will run another around autumn 2014 so keep your eyes peeled for notices.

**Wanderlust:** The line-up has been released. Follow Wanderlust on facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/WanderlustFestivalNZ>) or view them online ([http://www.akl.wanderlustfestival.com/.](http://www.akl.wanderlustfestival.com/))



We are pleased to be a Wanderlust Partner Studio for this event at Lakeside Park, Western Springs, Auckland on Sunday 23 March 2014.

**Showers at Apollo:** Work to install showers in the changing rooms at Apollo will begin in three weeks. With the winds of grace behind us we may have the work done by Christmas. The studio will remain open during the work – subject to advice to the contrary from the contractors – and the rooms leading off the practice room will be used as changing rooms temporarily.

**Grab One Vouchers:** Take care yogis. These vouchers expire. You must use all five classes within 45 days after taking the first class under

the voucher. Also, if you have not started using your voucher yet, the vouchers will expire unless the first class is taken by 31 December 2013. Finally, only one voucher per person please. These were the terms and conditions from the outset and we are sticking by them. Please do not ask for extensions of time.

**How Often Should I Practice?** Yoga students often ask how often we should practice asana (poses). The answer is... it depends. Different frequencies of practice achieve different ends.

#### *Stress Reduction and Weight Control*

Even one practice per week will provide some benefits. A recent large scale study (over 15,000 participants) found that people who practice yoga at least once per week, for at least 30 minutes, gained less weight between the ages of 40 and 50 than those who did not practice yoga. In fact, those participants who were overweight at the age of 40, and practiced yoga, actually lost weight (on average) during the decade before they turned 50.

Practicing ½ hour once per week would not make enough of a caloric difference to affect weight gain or loss, so the most likely explanation for the result is that the stress-reduction benefits of a regular practice helped yoga students to keep their weight in line.

#### *Strength and Toning*

Power vinyasa is a form of yoga which increases muscle mass and gives us leaner, more sculpted bodies. Achieving those results requires a more regular practice of 3-4 times per week. Just as with other physical activities such as running, swimming and cycling, several sessions a week are necessary in order to progress and get fitter. We don't expect to run faster or for longer if we only go running once a week – we just stay at the same level. It's the same with yoga practice. To get stronger and longer we need to be rolling out our mats 3-4 times per week.

An example is a woman who has practiced other styles of yoga for several years now, but stepped up to power vinyasa a few months ago. She's been a regular at Apollo, coming to classes several times per week. She told us recently that she is noticeably stronger now than when she started PV. She delightedly reported that she is now able to haul her lawnmower up to the top of her very steep lawn without having to hang onto the fence as she used to! This is a wonderful example of how the functional strength that we gain through power vinyasa helps us in our daily lives outside of the practice room.

#### *Pain Relief*

One of the greatest benefits of a regular power vinyasa practice is its ability to relieve chronic back pain. This is because the PV practice developed by Baron Baptiste has such a strong emphasis on developing core strength. Firing up our core muscles to do the work they were intended to do relieves our back muscles, and therefore relieves the chronic pain that so many people experience.

To relieve pain that occurs on a daily basis, it is generally necessary to practice power vinyasa on a daily basis also. This doesn't have to be a full 90 minute workout every day, though. Even a 20-30 minute session of sun salutations, core work and a few backbends is enough to keep the backache at bay.

A stark example of the power of a daily PV practice to relieve back pain is Margo. Those of you who have stood behind Margo in the practice room have probably noticed that she has a very crooked spine – a double sideways scoliosis. Her spinal x-ray has caused doctors to comment that they are surprised she's not in a wheelchair. The pain caused by this condition was getting progressively worse. She also began to lose the use of her right leg, as her lower vertebrae pressed on her sciatic nerve.

Margo had been practicing yoga for many years, but without committing to a daily power vinyasa practice, and was still living with significant daily back pain. However, by following Baron Baptiste's 40 Days to Personal Revolution, she was able to develop a daily asana and meditation practice. It meant sacrificing her morning swim, but it was worth it when she realised that she was not suffering back pain any more.

The 40 Days programme provides participants with a series of six PV asana practices, ranging in length from 20 to 90 minutes. That means it's possible to squeeze in a practice every day, and by committing to the daily practice for 40 days, the new and beneficial habit is formed.

"I do notice a real difference in how my back feels if I skip a day or two – it starts to tighten up and the next thing I know, I'm hobbling around like an old lady, clutching my back and groaning. It's a pretty easy choice – roll out my mat once a day and stay mobile and pain-free, or skip practice and suffer the consequences."

"Although I had been practicing yoga 3-4 times per week for many years, and had even completed several 30 day challenges at Bikram, my back pain was always with me. The 40 Day programme was different because the power vinyasa style of yoga, practiced daily, gave me so much more core strength. I think it was also significant that I was able to develop a daily meditation practice through the 40 Days. Although there is obviously a physical element to my back pain, I now wonder whether some of the pain was caused by tension and stress which was released through my daily meditation."

"I know that I could not achieve these amazing pain relief results in any other way. My spine has been too crooked for too long to be corrected by surgery, and anyway, I don't really want to have metal rods inserted in my back. Taking anti-inflammatories and other drugs for pain relief did nothing for me, and

had negative side effects. A daily power vinyasa and meditation practice is a small price to pay for the huge benefits I receive."

So, how often to practice? It depends on what you want to achieve with your practice. A regular power vinyasa practice of even once per week will help with stress relief and weight control. Stepping up to 3-4 times per week will strengthen and sculpt your body. And if you're seeking to alleviate chronic back pain, a daily practice is the best bet. It's your choice.

**Asana Spotlight:** *Urdhva Mukha Svanasana* (upward facing dog) follows *chaturanga dandasana* in the *vinyasa*. This is a smooth and relaxed backbend, the power coming from the base and the space coming from relaxation at the shoulders.

***Urdhva Mukha Svanasana*** again involves a movement forward but in this case also upward from *chaturanga dandasana*.

- From *chaturanga dandasana* draw your chest forward between your arms. Draw your thoracic spine forward and the anterior (front) side of your spine upwards. As you do so you will roll forward onto the tops of your feet.
- If your feet do not come into plantar flexion easily you may need to modify by keeping your toes tucked under.
- Press downward to the floor firmly through the tops of your feet (or your toes if modifying) and through your hands.
- Lift the crown of your head up towards the ceiling and your inner chest wall up with it.
- Stack your shoulders vertically over your wrists. Align your shoulders over your wrists to allow you to access bone strength here.
- Come into the power of your inner thighs. Spin your inner thighs up towards the ceiling with your pinky toes turning outwards and down to the floor.

- In the full expression of the pose your shins, knees, thighs and hips are all lifted off the floor. The full expression is not necessary in everyone. Come into this pose to the extent that is comfortable in your body.
- Depending upon the mobility of your spine or the energy you have you may want to modify by relaxing your hips to the floor. If doing so, still stack your shoulders over your wrists but bend your elbows backwards somewhat.
- In whatever variation you are taking, melt your shoulderblades down your back. Avoid letting your shoulders hunch up towards your ears. Lift elegantly through your neck and the crown of your head.
- The spinal extension in your lumbar spine is profound in this pose. Avoid collapsing and compressing uncomfortably into the backbend. Keep lifting your head upwards as you come into the backbend to elongate your spine and create space in the intervertebral discs to allow for extension.



**Ashtanga:** *Samadhi* is the final stage of the eight limbs of Ashtanga yoga enunciated by Patanjali in the *Sutras*. Having been through the sub-divisions of various of the eight limbs (five *yamas*, five *niyamas* etc) you will not be

surprised to hear there are several stages of *samadhi*.

*Sama* means even or balanced. *Dhi* is vision or intelligence. For the purposes of the *Sutras* the vision/intelligence contemplated here is that of the spiritual eye.

B.K.S.Iyengar (*Core of the Yoga Sutras – the Definitive Guide to the Philosophy of Yoga*) defines *samadhi* as “absorption, experience of the grace of the soul, experience of unalloyed bliss.”

Book One of the *Sutras* is called the Portion on Contemplation and discusses the stages of *samadhi*. There are two types of *samadhi*: *sabija* and *nirbija*. The former is divided into stages as well. Progression from one stage to another involves the shedding of layers of attachment to the mind in the form of memories, thoughts and so on. In *nirbija samadhi* there are no attachments, not even to the idea of oneself.



In this highest state of *samadhi* no impressions enter the mind, intelligence or consciousness. All sense of self is extinguished and only awareness remains. There is no pain, fear, regret or grief as these are all forms of attachment to the mind and its operation. In the pristine clarity that remains there is just pure awareness.

This state is a logical extension of the process of concentration and meditation. Paring back one's awareness from a swirl of rapidly changing thoughts in a stream to focus upon one object and then to relinquish even that one object is a process of gaining control over and ultimately independence from one's mind.

As it is our mind that carries our view of ourselves – our ego – independence from the mind releases our sense of ourselves and lets the true inner self simply be.

Namaste

©Hamish Kenworthy 2013

