



September 2013

Labour Day: We are open on Labour Day, 28 October for classes at 12:30 pm (PAL50) and 6:00 pm (PAL90). The 6:30 am class is not being held that day.

New Timetable: More classes are on the way from 4 November. Additional morning classes are being scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6 am and there will also be 10 am and 12:30 pm classes every Monday to Friday. The Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning classes are still at 6:30 am but if you need an earlier time to get everything done before the work or school day begins then Tuesdays and Thursdays give you that extra half hour. On Wednesday evenings there will be 5:30 pm Power All Levels for an hour followed at 7:00 pm by an hour of Power Restore. Accompanying this will be an increase in the price of an introductory fortnight to \$25.00.

40 Days to Personal Revolution at Apollo:

This programme is nearing its conclusion. Offering profound impact on our way of being this programme brings yoga into your life in a holistic way. This programme is about making a qualitative shift in the way you live and experience your life. If you missed out this time or want a refresher course having done the programme this time, it will be repeated in autumn 2014.

Cortisol in Hot Yoga Classes: Yoga performed in a heated room has tremendous benefits:

- The heat makes your body pliable and ready to stretch.

- The heat encourages sweat and lets you use your skin as an organ of elimination.
- The heat has a purifying quality called in Sanskrit *tapas*.
- Hot power yoga has been found by various studies to be the best for raising your metabolism and burning fat.

However, there are some adverse effects that can be experienced if the heat is taken too far.

Cortisol, or hydrocortisone, is sometimes called the stress hormone. It is generated in the adrenal gland in response to various environmental factors as well as being triggered naturally at different times of the day. It has some positive benefits in our bodies but can have negative effects as well. Some of those negative effects are:

- When occurring at elevated levels for prolonged periods it can encourage the build-up of harmful belly fat.
- When occurring at elevated levels for prolonged periods it can reduce calcium absorption and reduce bone density.
- Reduced cell regeneration.
- Impeded ability to ward off illness and to heal through suppressed immune system.

We come to yoga seeking to relieve rather than increase our stress levels. Yet certain types of hot yoga increase the environmental discomfort in terms of heat, humidity and the overall heat stress index to levels that cause stress in some people. Cortisol is produced as a result. Coupled with all the other stress

factors in life (finances, relationships, work, our children's welfare, earthquake issues) excessively hot yoga can cause our cortisol levels to be chronically elevated with some or all of the adverse consequences of that.

Some markers of whether the heat is too great for you are:

- Do you feel oppressed by the heat rather than simply warmed as on a pleasant summer's day?
- Do you feel lethargic and reluctant to move because of the heat?
- Do you feel claustrophobic and panicky?
- Are you unable to bring your mind to your practice because the extent of the heat is constantly foremost in your consciousness?

At Apollo Power Yoga we are alert to these concerns. Our room heats to approximately 32 degrees Celsius and we do not humidify the room. In fact, the infra-red heat we use is a very dry sort of heating and humidity is not a major factor of intensity in our practice room. We encourage movement rather than discourage it with the level of heat we provide.

We do not seek to have people drenched with sweat as some marker of how well we have worked our students. We know our classes are powerful and will have profound benefits without the adverse effects of other types of hot yoga where the emphasis is on external heat.

Asana Spotlight: After *dandasana* in the vinyasa sequence is *chaturanga dandasana* (low plank/four-limbed staff pose). The transition from *dandasana* to *chaturanga* is an area where people tend to lose form and consequently run the risk of injury. No matter how long you have been practicing and no matter how much you want to do it "right" you are better to modify this pose and the

transition from *dandasana* than to do the pose repeatedly in poor form.

Chaturanga Dandasana involves a movement forward and downward from *dandasana*.

- From *dandasana* take an inhale, look forward and press forward from your feet. Your heels, instead of reaching back towards the wall behind you, come forward over or even in front of your toes.
- Your chest and shoulders come forward of your hands – further forward than you may think. This is important to allow you to correctly align your shoulders and elbows and to set you up for the next transition of the *vinyasa*.
- Your elbows bend until you have a right angle at your elbows. Do not go below this point. Going too low actually makes the next transition in the *vinyasa* harder. Collapse at this point means you need more strength at the next stage. Be strong and stable here.
- Your elbows, instead of bending outwards as with a conventional push-up, stay alongside your body. This is important to protect your shoulders. If you fail to come forward far enough and bend your elbows outwards your shoulders hunch awkwardly putting a lot of strain on the A/C (acromioclavicular) joint where the uppermost edge of the shoulder blade meets the outer most end of the collar bone.
- Avoid allowing your shoulders to drop forwards to the floor. Keep drawing your shoulder blades towards one another and down your back towards your hips.
- The front side of your body must stay engaged.
- Your thigh muscles are squeezed firmly with your inner thighs spinning inwards and up towards the ceiling.
- Your hips are toned and stable.
- Your belly is engaged in *uddiyana bandha*.

- Without these actions at the thighs, hips and abdomen your mid-section will sag towards the floor. In the picture you will see the front side of my body is flat and toned. My stomach is not seen clearly because of the shirt I am wearing but my core is well-engaged and my abdomen is lifting upwards to my spine.
- In any pose, if you want to feel light you must engage muscularly. A lack of engagement removes the support for some part of your body and that unsupported part of you drops heavily towards the floor.
- To modify *chaturanga dandasana* bring your knees to the floor right at the start of the actions described. Otherwise, do all that has been set out. Having your knees at the floor reduces the span of your body over which you need to support yourself.
- Do not let your hips sag towards the floor. Do not let your elbows bow outwards. Do not hang your head downwards.



What is your mental focus in *chaturanga*? From a teacher's perspective it seems many people approach *chaturanga* either with a mindset to avoid it, with dread or with an attitude of fight. Stay calm and focussed. It is in the moments of greatest challenge that we tap into our greatest power – not physical power but our power to relax and be still with what exists in any given moment.

Let *chaturanga dandasana* be an opportunity for you to find meditative peace and your mental backbone.

Ashtanga: The penultimate stage of Ashtanga is *dhyana* which essentially means meditation. Meditation is used here in a tighter more technical sense. Most of the time when we speak of meditation in general conversation we are referring to what Patanjali calls *dharana* or concentration (discussed in last month's newsletter).

The difference between concentration and meditation is that the distractions of the mind or thought stream are diminished to the point where inner calm prevails.

In the *Sutras* Patanjali identifies certain external aspects of *dhyana* and some internal aspects. External aspects are the recollection of dream-filled or dreamless sleep in a wakeful state (Book I, 32 and 38) and complete absorption in an idea within the moral scope of the *yamas* and *niyamas*.

Internal aspects of *dhyana* involve the clarification and purification of the intelligence by identifying acts and ideas of a questionable quality (Book II, 11) and the interweaving of the physical senses, the mind and intuitive intelligence to think and muse in one seamless flow of conscious awareness. By this process we lose the sense of "I" or "me".

Through *dhyana* the distractions of the mind are eliminated and in that resulting stillness one's consciousness becomes aware of the true inner self and assumes that identity.

Namaste

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