

YOGA FOR OPTIMAL PELVIC HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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LEARNER OUTCOMES

At the end of this course practitioners will be able to:

1. Describe the benefits of breathing and yoga for pelvic health from an occupational therapy perspective
2. Demonstrate introductory breathing techniques and yoga poses appropriate for occupational therapy interventions with clients who have pelvic health conditions

DEFINITIONS OF YOGA

“Yoga is the ability to direct the mind exclusively toward an object and sustain that direction without any distractions” ~ Patanjali from the Yoga Sutras (1.2)

ORIGIN OF YOGA

- Around 6th - 5th century BC in India
- Yoga Sutras of Patanjali- 400 BCE
- 1900 - present, Hatha yoga becomes popularized in the West
- 1989, the International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT) is established
- 1999, the Yoga Alliance (YA) is formed

THE EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA

1. **Yama** (views of our environment - external ethics)
2. **Niyama** (views of ourselves - internal ethics)
3. **Asana** (the practice of body exercises)*
4. **Pranayama** (the practice of breathing exercises)
5. Pratyahara (the restraint of our senses)
6. Dharana (the ability to direct our minds - concentration)
7. Dhyana (the ability to develop interactions with what we seek to understand)
8. Samadhi (complete integration with the object to be understood)

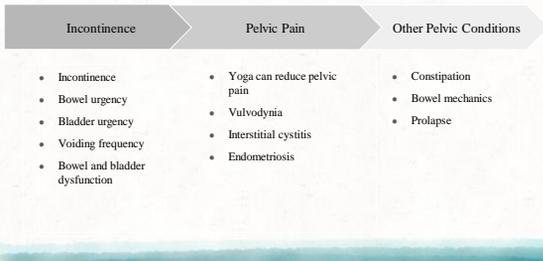
YOGA FOR ENHANCING PELVIC HEALTH

- Pelvic health challenges may be difficult to diagnose and uncomfortable to talk about
- Chronic pelvic pain and incontinence affect millions of people
- Bladder and bowel dysfunction might prevent you from traveling and other IADL engagement
- Whatever your symptoms, pelvic health can optimize your overall wellness and quality of life

YOGA BENEFITS THE BODY

- ▶ Supporting the nervous system
- ▶ Retrains the brain that movement can be pain-free
- ▶ Increases flexibility of muscles and pliability of myofascial tissue
- ▶ Increases awareness of your body
- ▶ Pairs well with mindful breathing
- ▶ Encourages you to be present and to be kind to yourself
- ▶ Strengthens the connections to the muscles within the PF and lumbopelvic area.
- ▶ Nervous system down regulation to help with interoception
- ▶ Behavior modification with nervous system regulation

YOGA HELPS PF CONDITIONS



WHO MAY BENEFIT FROM PELVIC HEALTH FOCUSED YOGA AS AN OT INTERVENTION

- ▶ Those who could benefit from increased body awareness
- ▶ Those who could benefit from intra-abdominal pressure regulation and breath control
- ▶ Those who could benefit from incorporating more movement and bodywork into their daily routine
- ▶ Those who voiced an interest in yoga
- ▶ As complementary strategy to pelvic floor therapy interventions

YOGA + POLYVAGAL THEORY

- ▶ Yoga calms the fight or flight response by decreasing the overactivity of the sympathetic nervous system
- ▶ Yoga improves vagal tone
- ▶ The vagus nerve is a bi-directional information highway between mind and body
- ▶ Yoga can also help you discover a pain-free range of motion by increasing body awareness

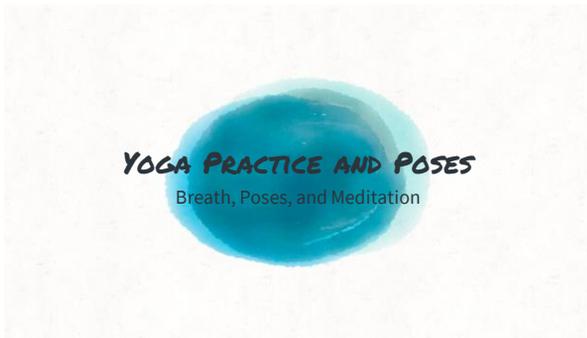
DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

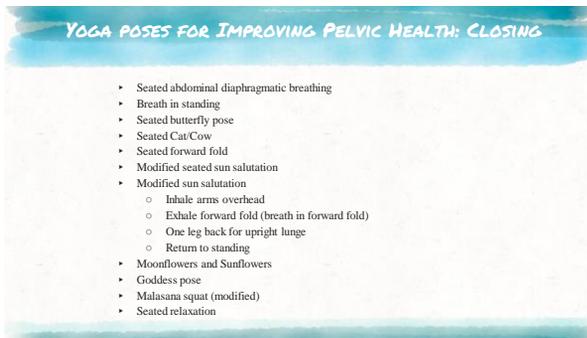
- ▶ What is it
 - Important role in respiration
 - Uses natural mechanics of breathing to assist PF
- ▶ Benefits
 - Increased parasympathetic activation
 - Improved PFM coordination
- ▶ How to do it
 - Inhale relax PFM, abdominal expansion
 - Exhale contract PFM, abdominal wall contracts

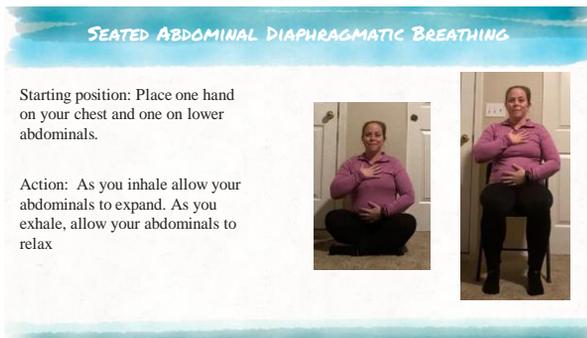
DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING



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MOUNTAIN WITH DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Starting position: Begin in anatomical position. Chin slightly tucked, shoulders down and back, and maintain normal lumbar curve of the spine. Check that your knees are not locked in extension

Action: As you inhale allow your abdominals to expand. As you exhale, allow your abdominals to relax



SEATED BUTTERFLY

Starting position: Begin in seated with feet together and knees pointed out. Add padding under your seat to lift hips for comfort.

Action: Use abdominal diaphragmatic breath to inhale deeply. Feel for expansion in the pelvic floor during the inhale. While exhaling stay upright in the pose or gentle fold forward



SEATED CAT/COW

Starting position: Comfortably seated on the ground or in a chair

Action: a. As you inhale with an abdominal diaphragmatic breath, move into cow pose. Chest reaches forward as your back is extended and lumbar curve increases with an anterior pelvic tilt. b. On the exhale move into cat pose. Shoulders are rounded forward, back flexed with a posterior pelvic tilt.



SEATED FORWARD FOLD

Starting position: Begin seated in a chair.

Action: Gently fold forward. Return to the abdominal diaphragmatic breath in forward fold position. On the inhale, notice expansion in the pelvic floor.



MODIFIED SEATED SUN SALUTATION



<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Q3Zt8GZgln>

YOGA POSES FOR IMPROVING PELVIC HEALTH:
MODIFIED SEATED SUN SALUTATION

- Inhale arms overhead in Seated Mountain
- Exhale into Seated Forward Fold
- Inhale into Seated Monkey (lift)
- Exhale into Seated Forward Fold
- Inhale into Seated Cow
- Exhale into Seated Cat (return to neutral spine)
- Inhale arms overhead into Seated Mountain
- Exhale drawing hands down to heart's center

MODIFIED STANDING SUN SALUTATION



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCpbdy--lwl>

MOONFLOWERS + SUNFLOWERS

Starting position: Begin in anatomical position with arms raised overhead. Use abdominal diaphragmatic breathing to inhale in this position.

Action: a. For moonflower, exhale and squat gently bringing elbows down ~90 degrees keeping chest lifted.

b. For Sunflowers, exhale and gently squat while scooping arms to midline and bending forward



STANDING GODDESS

Starting position: Begin with feet shoulder width apart and toes pointed outward to protect the knees.

Action: Gently squat with hands at heart center. Inhale with abdominal diaphragmatic breath and notice expansion of the pelvic floor.



MALASANA SQUAT

Starting position: Begin with feet shoulder width apart and toes pointed outward to protect the knees. As you squat, let your heels come up if that is more comfortable.



Action: Inhale with abdominal diaphragmatic breath and notice expansion of the pelvic floor.

SEATED RELAXATION

Starting position: Begin in a comfortable easy seated position. Gently lean side to side to allow for even grounding of both sits bones. Shoulders are relaxed down your back and chin is slightly tucked.



Action: Notice and release any tension in your forehead, jaw, throat, or tongue.

SUN SALUTATION



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCqL-gP5N0c>

CLOSING

May all beings be free of fear and harm
May we all be happy just the way we are
May we all be at peace with whatever comes
And may we all rest gently in the softness of our own hearts
~ The light within me honors the light within you, Namaste.

(This comes from the practice of loving kindness meditation; resource at lovingkindnessmeditation.com)

Questions?

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namasté

(nah-mas-tay)

My soul honors your soul.
I honor the place in you where
the entire universe resides.
I honor the light, love, truth,
beauty & peace within you,
because it is also within me.
In sharing these things
we are united, we are the same,
We are one.

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