



7

PRACTICES OF CONCENTRATION DEVELOPMENT

Concentration is direction of attention to a single object. You all have the ability to concentrate. Think of the times when you watch movies, play games. It is total concentration.

But at other times your thoughts are scattered, and your mind jumps from one thing to another. It's for those times that you need to learn and practice concentration.

Learning a skill takes practice, whether it is dancing, writing, or concentrating. The practice of concentration comes by performing asanas, breathing practices, pranayama and meditation. These practices train your mind with attention and awareness.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to :

- improve memory and concentration by stimulate brain and nervous system,



Notes

- practice Asanas, Pranayama and Breathing practices, and
- practice yoga technique.

7.1 BREATHING PRACTICES

Breathing practices are to normalize the breathing rate, and to make the breathing uniform, continuous and rhythmic. The practices include hands stretch breathing, straight leg raise breathing and shashankasana breathing. It also helps to improve concentration and calms down the mind.

Sthiti (initial) and relaxation postures for all breathing practices and Asanas

Sthiti: Initial standing posture -Tadasana

Stand erect with feet close together.

- Place the hands along the thighs with fingers stretched out.
- The legs, trunk and the head are aligned in a straight line.
- Close the eyes and observe the balance.

Standing relaxation posture - Sithila Tadasana

- Stand erect with legs about six to twelve inches apart, hands hanging freely by the side of the body with the shoulders collapsed.
- Make sure that the body is completely relaxed.
- Gently close the eyes.

Sthiti (Initial) for Supine posture

- Lie down on the back with legs together.
- Stretch the hands straight above the head, biceps touching the ears and the palms facing the ceiling.
- Close the eyes.

Sithila (Relaxation) for Supine posture - Shavasana

- Lie supine on the ground with hands and feet apart.
- Slightly stretch the body and allow the whole body to relax completely with gently closed eyes.
- Become aware of different parts of the body starting from toes to head.
- Feel the spread of relaxation in all parts of the body progressively. With regular long practice, the relaxation will become deeper, natural and spontaneous.
- Then the whole body is relaxed to the extent that one forgets the body. The mind experiences alert full rest.

Notes

I. Hands stretch breathing

Sthiti: Tádásana

PRACTICE

- Stand erect with feet together (heels together and toes 4 to 6 inches apart) relaxed by the side of the body.



Fig. 7.1 Hands stretch breathing

CLASS-V



Notes

- Gently bring your hands in front of the chest.
- Interlock the fingers and place the palms on the chest.
- Collapse and relax your shoulders.
- Close your eyes.

Stage 1 : (Horizontal)**PRACTICE**

- While inhaling, stretch the arms straight out in front of your body so that the arms are at shoulder level.
- At the same time twist the hands so that the palms face outwards.
- Fully stretch the arms, but do not strain.
- Now, while exhaling reverse the process and bring the palms back on to the chest.
- Collapse the shoulders again.
- This is one round. Repeat 5 times.



Fig. 7.2
Horizontal practice

Stage II : (Vertical)**PRACTICE**

- Again repeat the same movements, this time stretching the arms vertically above the head.
- While moving up and down the palms close to the nose tip.
- Repeat 5 times.

It is important to note here that

- Collapse the shoulders at the beginning and end of each cycle.
- Exhalation should be longer than inhalation.
- Properly synchronize the breathing with hand movements.
- Maintain perfect awareness of the breathing.

Benefits

- Helps in opening the lower, middle and the upper part of the chest.
- Promotes rhythmic breathing.
- Increases awareness of breathing.



Fig. 7.3
Vertical practice

II. STRAIGHT LEG RAISE BREATHING

Stage I : Alternate legs

Sthiti: Supine posture

PRACTICE

- While inhaling slowly raise the right leg without bending the knee, as far as comfortable .
- While exhaling return the leg to the floor as slowly as possible.



Fig. 7.4 Straight leg raise nreathing



Notes

CLASS-V



Notes

- Repeat the practice with the left leg.
- This is one round.
- Perform 10 times.

It is important to note here that

- Do not bend the knee throughout the practice.
- Do not disturb the leg lying straight on the ground in order to be able to raise the other leg further.
- Perfectly match the breathing with leg movements.
- Maintain perfect breath awareness during the practice.

Stage II : Both legs

Sthiti: Supine posture

PRACTICE

- As you get stronger, you can do the leg raising exercise with both legs. Avoid this exercise if you have low back pain.
- Lie on the back with the legs together, hands stretched out over the head, biceps touching the ears and palms facing the ceiling.
- While inhaling slowly raise both the legs without bending at the knees, as far as comfortable.
- While exhaling return the legs to the floor as slowly as possible.



Fig. 7.5 Both Legs

- Perform 5 times.
- In this Sthiti there is a chance to fall down too rapidly as both legs come close to the floor. So use strength and have control over the movement



Notes

III. SASANKASANA BREATHING

Sthiti: Vajrasana

PRACTICE

- Take the hands behind the back, make a fist of the right hand and hold the right wrist with the left hand. Relax the shoulders.



Fig. 7.6 Sasankasana

- While inhaling bend backwards from the waist opening up the chest.
- While exhaling slowly bend forward from the waist bringing the forehead on to the ground in front of the knees. Collapse the shoulders.
- While inhaling slowly come up to the vertical position and then slightly lean backwards. This forms one round. Continue ten rounds slowly.

It is important to note here that

- You can separate the knees as per your comfort to avoid unnecessary pressure on the chest.
- Synchronize the breathing with the movement.
- Keep your eyes closed and maintain breath awareness.

7.2 ASANAS

Asanas - Standing, Sitting, Prone and Supine which helps in flexibility of the spine in forward bending, backward bending and side bending.

Asanas are postures which are done with

- Stability
- Ease
- Effortlessness
- Unlimited Happiness in the final position

I. PADAHASTASANA

This posture's name comes from the sanskrit word pada which means 'foot', hasta meaning 'hand' and asana meaning a 'seat' or 'posture'. This posture is also known as gorilla pose or hand under foot pose.

Sthiti: Tadasana

PRACTICE

- Stand erect with legs together.



Fig. 7.7 Padahasthasana



- Start bending forward and down.
- Allow head to slowly come down.
- Feel the changes in the head.
- Increased pressure in the eyes.
- Maintain the posture with normal breathing.
- Slowly start rising up feeling all the changes.
- Feel the changes in the eye.
- Decreased pressure in the eyes.
- Enjoy the deep relaxation in the eyes.
- Feel the relaxation throughout the body.
- Relax in Tádásana.
- Never bend the knees.

Benefits

- Improves digestion.
- Enhances blood flow to the head region.

II. ARDHACAKRASANA

In sanskrit, Ardha means 'half', Chakra means wheel and asana means a 'pose'.

Sthiti: Tadasana

PRACTICE

1. Support the back at the waist by the palms, fingers pointing forwards.



Notes



Fig. 7.8 Ardchakrasan

2. Inhale and bend backwards from the lumbar region. Drop the head backwards, stretching the muscles of the neck.
3. Maintain for a minute with normal breathing.
4. Return to sthiti.
5. Relax in Tadasana.

Benefits

- Improves blood circulation.
- Strengthens the neck muscles.
- Expands chest and shoulders.
- Improves your lung capacity.

III. VIPARITAKARANI

The name comes from the sanskrit words viparita, ‘inverted’ or ‘reversed’, and karani which means ‘a particular practice’.

Sthiti : Supine Posture

PRACTICE

- Lie on the back. The arms are straight, beside the body.
- Inhaling bend the knees and raise the legs and buttocks.
- Bring the hands under the hips to support the buttocks.
- Elbows remain on the floor.

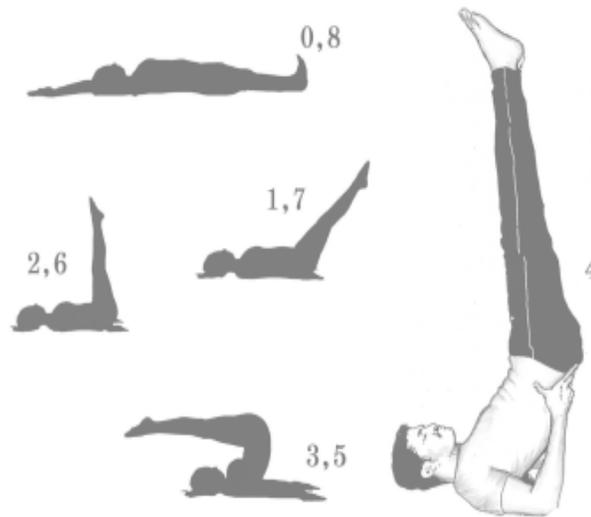


Fig. 7.9 Viparitakarani

- Straighten the legs vertically upwards. Relax the muscles of the feet, legs and hips.
- Breathing normally, remain in this position as long as comfortable.
- Exhale, bend the knees towards the forehead, slowly lower the buttocks and legs, and return to the starting position.

Benefits

- Provides deep relaxation



Notes



Notes

IV. VRIKSHASANA(Tree Posture)

The sanskrit word vriksha means ‘tree’, and asana means ‘posture’, So it is known as ‘Tree Posture’.

PRACTICE

- Stand with the feet together and the arms by the sides and watch in front.
- Bend the right leg at the knee.
- Keep the sole of the right foot as high as possible in the inside of the left leg thigh.
- Balancing on the left foot, raise both the arms over the head and joining the palms together or may bring both the arms in the front of the chest with palms joined together (Namaskara posture).
- Hold the position for 10-15 seconds

It is important to note here that

- Try to balance of the body on one leg.

Benefits

- Regular practice of this posture will improve blood circulation, concentration.
- Helps in balancing the body.

7.3 INSTANT RELAXATION TECHNIQUE (IRT)

Sthiti: Shavásana

PRACTICE

- Bring your legs together; join the heels and toes together and place the palms by the side of the thighs.



Fig. 7.10 Shavasana



Notes

- Keep the face relaxed with a smile all through the practice.
- Start tightening from the toes.
- Tighten the ankle joints, and calf muscles.
- Pull up the kneecaps.
- Tighten the thigh muscles.
- Compress and squeeze the buttocks.
- Breathe out and suck the abdomen in.
- Make fists and tighten the arms.
- Inhale and expand the chest.
- Tighten the shoulders, neck muscles and compress the face.
- Tighten the whole body from the toes to the head.
- Tighten; tighten; tighten.....
- Release and let go the whole body instantaneously.
- Legs and arms go apart with the open palms facing the roof.
- Collapse the whole body.
- Enjoy the instant relaxation.



Notes



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.1

1. Padahastasana comes from the sanskrit word Pada which means _____ and hasta means _____.
2. Viparitakarani in derived from sanskrit word viparita which means _____.

7.4 KRIYAS

Kriya in sanskrit means ‘completed action’. It is also cleansing technique. There are six Kriyas which helps to cleanse various internal organs. Here in this lesson we will learn about Kapalabhati, which is used for cleansing frontal lobe.

In sanskrit, Kapala means ‘skull’ and bhati means ‘shine’. So, it helps to improve the functions of the organs located in the skull.

I. RIGHT NOSTRIL KAPALABHATI

Sthiti: Dandásana

- Sit in any meditative posture.



Fig. 7.11 Kapalabhati

- Keep your spine and neck erect perfectly vertical to the ground.
- Close the eyes and collapse the shoulders.
- Relax the whole body completely.



PRACTICE

- Adopt Nasika mudra close the left nostril with the ring finger.
- Practice rapid breathing with active and forceful exhalation and passive inhalation.
- During each exhalation, blast out the air by vigorous flapping movements of the abdomen in quick succession.
- Inhale passively by relaxing the abdominal muscles at the end of each exhalation.
- Repeat the exhalation as quickly as possible at the rate of 60 strokes per minute.
- At the end of one minute, stop the practice.
- Now observe an automatic suspension of breath. In fact, there will be no urge for breathing for a few seconds.
- Simultaneously the mind may experience a deep state of silence.
- Enjoy this state of deep rest and freshness.

7.5 PRANAYAMA

Pranayama popularly known as yogic breathing, consists of the breathing techniques which are related to the control of breath or respiratory process.



Notes

It helps to increase your concentration and attention, creates awareness, brings relaxation, reduces stress and increases lung capacity.

I. BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA

The word Bhramari is derived from bhramara which means a 'black humming bee'. In this pranayama, the practitioner makes the sound which resembles the buzzing sound of a black bee, therefore it is named as Bhramari Pranayama.

PRACTICE

- Come into any meditative asana.
- Assume Chin Mudrá.
- Inhale deeply.
- Exhaling, produce a low pitched sound resembling the humming of a female bee.
- Feel the vibrations in the entire head. After exhalation, bring your hands back on your knees and breathe in slowly. This completes one round.
- Repeat 10 rounds.

It is important to note here that

- During the practice of Bhrámarè use 'N-kára' and not 'M-kára'.
- Touch the tongue to upper (hard) palate.
- In the beginning, 5 to 10 rounds of Bhramari is sufficient.

Benefits

- It helps to reduce anger.
- It helps in improvement of concentration and memory.

7.6 DHARANA (ON FLOWER)

Dharana is focusing on a single point which could be

- your breath,
- a mantra,
- a word, or
- any object.

In the beginning, focusing of the mind is difficult; therefore a beginner can start meditating for a few minutes only and later on can increase its duration.

Let us focus on a beautiful flower and practice Dharana.

- Sit comfortably cross-legged.
- Place your hands face down on your knees and close your eyes for a moment.
- Let your next in breath fill up your belly, and roll your shoulders up to your ears.
- Let your next out breath empty your belly and drop your shoulders away from your ears.
- Repeat this three more times.
- If you'd like, you can open your mouth on the out breath.



Notes



Notes

- Now that we are comfortable and tuned into our breath, we can begin our concentration activity.
- Gently open your eyes and find a flower, close your eyes halfway and see how long you can focus on the flower without blinking or closing your eyes all the way.
- Try to take in every part of the flower, including its color and shape.
- When you need to blink, close your eyes and imagine the flower that you were just concentrating on.
- Can you remember the color and the shape of the flower? See if you can keep it at the front of your mind as a picture.
- Focus on the picture, you just created until it fades away.
- Once this happens, you can slowly open your eyes.
- See how well you remembered the flower that was in front of you.

7.7 DHAYANA (ON FLOWER)

In the practice of Dharana, it is single point focus. We train our mind to stay at present and connect to one thing. The object of connection is just a tool to help with the practice and can be anything, from candle, to a mantra. The whole point in practicing Dharana is to notice when the mind wanders and get in the habit of bringing back to the object of focus. At some point in this practice, when the sustaining of the attention becomes effortless and for a long time, we slip from the practice of Dharana into the state of Dhyana.

Now let us continue our Dharana or focusing, make it effortless, which is Dhyana

- Choose a flower.
- Set it about a foot in front of you at a comfortable angle, preferably at eye level.
- Examine the flower to see what it actually looks like, with all of its specific contours and curves, textures, and colors.
- Close your eyes for a minute or so.
- Can you still see its image in your mind, or feel its presence in front of you?
- See how well you remembered the flower that was in front of you.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.2

1. Bhramari is derived from bhramara which means _____.
2. Dharana in focusing on a single point which could be _____ or _____.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

You have learnt some of the yogic practices which enhances concentration and helps you to focus on your learning process, it includes:

- Breathing practices - Hands stretch breathing, Straight leg raise breathing, Sasankasana breathing



Notes



Notes

- Asanas - Padahastasana, ArdhaChakrasana, Viparitakarani and Vrikshasana
- Instant Relaxation Technique (IRT)
- Kriyas - Right Nostril Kapalabhati
- Pranayama - Bhramari Pranayama
- Dharana (on flower)
- Dhyana (on flower)



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of Bhramari ?
2. What is the meaning of Kapalabhati?
3. What are the benefits of ArdhaChakrasana?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

7.1

1. Foot and hand.
2. Inverted or reversed.

7.2

1. Black humming bee.
2. Breath, Mantra, Word and Object.