

Slow Down

Context: Advanced yogis may be able to move and react quickly with complete awareness, but most of us need to slow down. We would like our ways to demonstrate the gratitude and compassion we feel for all beings, including ourselves. When we rush absentmindedly - we stub our toes, ding our cars, or taste shoe leather. As the Buddha taught in the *Dhammapada*,

The thought manifests as the word;

The word manifests as the deed;

The deed develops into habit;

And habit hardens into character.

So watch the thought and its ways with care,

And let it spring from love

Born out of concern for all beings.

As the shadow follows the body,

As we think, so we become.

Wendell Berry tells a modern version of this idea of actions and thoughts moulding one another in this excerpt from The Book of Camp Branch, in his book of poems, Leavings.

How much delight I've known
in navigating down the flow
by stepping stones, by sounding
stones, by words that are
stepping and sounding stones.

Going down stone by stone,
the song of the water changes,
changing the way I walk
which changes my thought
as I go. Stone to stone
the walker goes. The words
stand stone still until
the flow moves them, changing
the sound - a new word -
a new place to step or stand.

We will take our time during this Sadhana practice.
Make sure you can smile and breathe in every posture to allow your body
to naturally lengthen and strengthen,
to find steadiness (*sthira*) and ease (*sukha*).

Slow Down

Warm-ups: Seated Sun Breaths

Bum Walks and foot flaps

Open your legs and imagine you are stirring a huge caldron
(both directions)

Pranayama: Nadi Shodana in any comfortable seated position

Seated : Forward Bend Vinyasa

Baddha Konasana > Forward Fold w/ your left leg bend >

add side stretch over extended right leg >

place your left hand by your hip and lift into 1/2 Circle >

cross your left leg over your right (bent or straight) into a Seated Twist,
looking over your left shoulder

<< Forward Fold w/ right leg bent and continue ...

Forward Fold (both legs straight) > Inclined Plane

Kneeling: Child > Yoga Mudra > DD > Pigeon > DD > Pigeon > DD

Walk hands and feet together and reverse swan dive up to ...

Standing: Sun Breaths > Mountain > Abdominal Lift

Standing Squat > Tree > Squat to sitting > Roll down to ...

Supine: Supine Child, breathing with *ujjayi* and *dirgha pranayama*

Stretch your groin and pelvic floor as you relax your buttocks and belly.
Then attempt a supine abdominal lift, squeezing your anus and genitals.

(*Advanced*) Finally, practice *mulabandha*, lifting the pelvic and perineal floors into your body while relaxing any contraction in the anal and genital regions. Imagine domes lifting at your pelvic floor, at the base of your diaphragm, and at your soft palate - lifting energy and sending it up through the crown of your head. Find your smile and hold with steadiness and ease. Keep breathing.

Prepare for Sivasana any way you like....

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Sivasana: Excerpt from The Book of Camp Branch, by Wendell Berry

*In the notch of Camp Branch
the footing changes, year,
to year, sometimes
day to day, as the surges
of the stream move the rocks.*

*Every walk ...
"is a new walk." And so*

*go slow. Let the mind
step with the feet
as the stream steps
downward over the rocks,
nowhere anywhere
but where it is.*

Everything changes. Thus, in order to be aware, we must slow down and pay attention to each passing moment.