



Asana and the Physical Body

Lecture

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The Koshas

- The koshas, or sheaths, are layers of our being that make up the totality of who we are body, mind and spirit.
- Any ailment may have its origins in any one of the koshas and will ultimately affect all of the other koshas, except the soul level or Anandamaya Kosha.
- Any healing practices may come in at any level but will filter through to all five koshas as well.

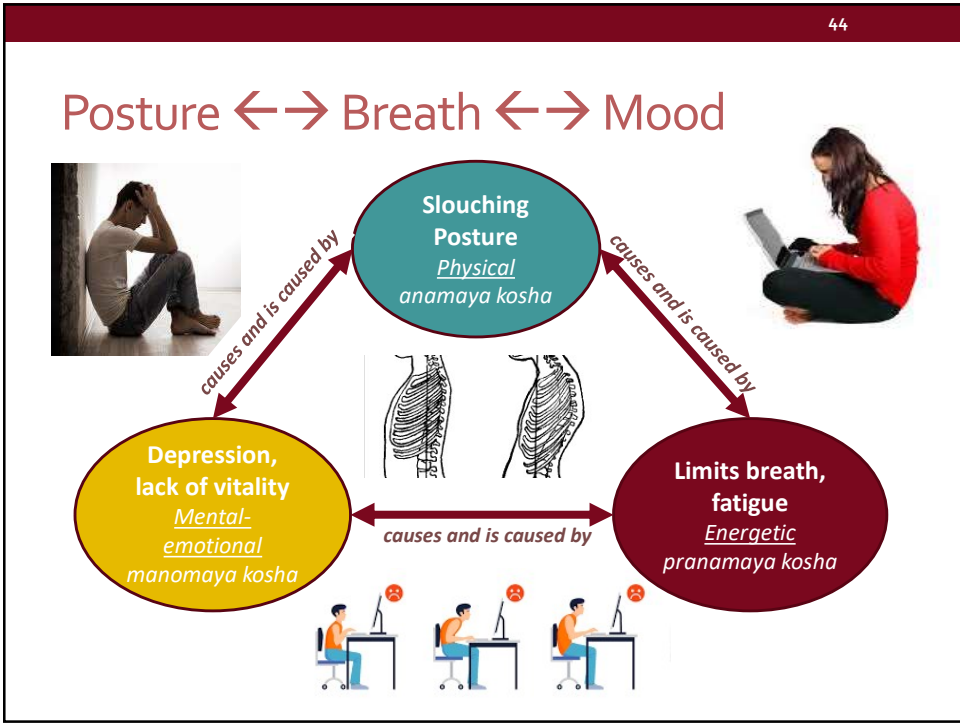


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The Five Koshas

				
<p>Anamaya Kosha The physical body (bones, muscles, organs)</p>	<p>Pranamaya Kosha The energetic body (nervous system, prana, nadis)</p>	<p>Manomaya Kosha The everyday uncontrolled mind and emotions</p>	<p>Vijnanamaya Kosha The witness conscious, awareness of the self & other koshas</p>	<p>Anandamaya Kosha The bliss inherent in ourselves, our connection with the divine</p>

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Anamaya Kosha: Physical Body



- The outer most sheath is the physical body comprised of the muscles, bones, skin, hair, blood vessels and organs.
- This is where we usually first notice illness and injury in the body because we spend most of our time focused on the sensations arising from the body.

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What is Asana?



Shows a Naga Sadhu of Nepal in Lotus position.

- Translates to "seat," Asanas are the physical poses of Yoga
- The purpose of Asana is to perfect the body by making it stronger and more flexible and eliminating illnesses.
- Asana may take many forms:
 - Standing
 - Seated
 - Reclining
 - Inverted
 - Twisting
 - Forward bending
 - Back bending
 - Side bending
 - Balancing

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How to Practice Adaptive Asana

- Notice your inclination to push yourself in your physical practices
- Where have you heard the message that “more is better” or “no pain, no gain”?
 - *Family of origin, school, work, society*
- Challenge yourself to do **LESS** so you can receive **MORE**
- Check in with why you feel like the most challenging version is “**best**”?
- You can generally receive more benefit in a propped version of a pose than in an unpropped version
- Always ask yourself, “**What is the benefit?**” of **WHAT** and **HOW** you are practicing.
- Use **props** (blankets, blocks, bolsters, straps, chairs) to make poses easier and more comfortable.

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Function > Form

- So long as healthy and safe alignment is maintained, the **FUNCTION** of the asanas is more important than the **FORM**
- All asanas can be adapted to the individual by changing the body’s relationship to gravity



Twisted Tiger



Reclining Twist

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Physical Benefits of Adaptive Asana

- Reduces pain
 - Promotes body awareness
 - Asana mobilizes joints to help relieve stiffness and pain
 - Muscle tightness is reduced, and blood circulation is increased
 - Endorphins are released, facilitating pain relief and mood improvement
 - Cultivates a more compassionate relationship with the body
- Improves bone density
 - Promotes body awareness to reduce falls and fracture
 - Asana encourages strength and stability, promotes confidence
 - Gentle low-impact yoga is the safest for those prone to bone loss
 - Strengthening, weight-bearing poses help to build bone density, especially when weight-bearing is done in new directions so bone strength can be challenged.

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More Physical Benefits of Adaptive Asana

- Boosts immunity
 - Increases communication between the body and mind by allowing for the release of neuropeptides, which link the immune system and the brain
 - Endorphin release facilitates a positive immune response
 - Promotes lymphatic drainage and mobilization
 - Helps toxins within the tissues to be released and disposed of through the immune system
- Improves balance and coordination
 - Standing poses promote body awareness and proprioception
- Promotes healthy digestion
 - Stimulate digestive peristalsis

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Mental/Emotional Benefits of Adaptive Yoga

- Promotes focus and attention
 - Enables focus on one thing at a time to reduce multi-tasking and distraction
- Reduces stress and anxiety
 - Promotes body awareness and mindfulness
 - Provides a sense of empowerment to reduce feelings of hopelessness
 - Transforms psycho-emotional conditioning into a more compassionate and authentic self-awareness
 - Provides a sense of community
 - Stimulates the para-sympathetic nervous system leading to relaxation

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View Beginning Classes

- Filmed in 2020 for The Forest at Duke's residents to watch from home.
- Beginning Mat Yoga - <https://youtu.be/coBRObWaGSw>
- Beginning Chair Yoga - <https://youtu.be/ci7Fz-xFSh4>

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