



SUPPLEMENT

TOOLS FOR THE JOURNEY

♥ Chair Yoga Practice ♥ 50 minutes

By Achalan Gene Barnett

1) Sit on a firm chair, preferably one with a padded seat, and connect with “I.”

2) Start to move your body through “I,” reflecting SELF. Use your breath. Stretch. Connect. Observe. Allow. This is your Warm-up. Find places in the body that call out for your attention or that have been trampled upon or hiding, and gently include them in your movements and stretching.

3) Stand up and place hands in prayer position. Inhale through the nose and lift arms to sky and then, moving both arms apart, make a big circle stretching your fingers outwards, exhaling through the mouth, bringing them back full circle to prayer position. Do this around 12 times going as slow or fast as you like.

4) Twist side to side with arms out and ‘floppy.’ Lift each heel as you come around. Let your head and neck be part of the action (keep ‘turning the other cheek! J). Exhale on the swing, and inhale back to center each time. Gradually pick up speed. Gradually slow down. Be still, hands on heart, eyes closed, connect with “I” as reflected in SELF. Connect with SELF.

5) Stand behind the chair. Place hands on back of chair about a foot apart. Place feet the same distance apart. Start walking backwards, still holding on to chair but also pressing down so it doesn’t slip. You will end up in an “L” shape where your legs are straight and your back is flat like a table-top, your arms and shoulders stretched as are your hamstrings and spine. Let go of your head and neck and do “falling out breaths” with sound, allowing whatever is there (emotions, animal instincts, silliness, laughter, etc.) to come out without forcing. You can use these falling out breaths*(inhale deeply and slowly through the nose, and let the exhalation fall quickly out the mouth) any time you like during your practice. In this pose, you will notice that each time you exhale, your chest will drop a tiny bit; your belly will drop a tiny bit, and your shoulders begin to stretch as well. Make sure your neck and head are down and soft and long. To come out, bend your knees and walk yourself back to the chair, standing upright, and close your eyes and connect standing to Source (SELF). Linger after each pose and rest until you feel “assimilated.”



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Continued from Previous 6) Turn chair around to face you so its back is farthest from you. Walk around a bit rolling your shoulders, loosening your face and jaw and neck as you do so. Come back to a place about 8" from the seat of the chair. Find a standing position where you can focus on your feet connecting with the earth, with the floor. Rock back and forth, spread the toes, find the most surface area the soles of your feet can cover, and find your ground.

7) Place the right foot at the center of the chair seat with the bent right knee directly over the right heel. Place your hands lightly on your right thigh. Lift your chest, relax your neck and face, breathe slowly and deeply. After a few breaths, lift your arms parallel to each other, palms facing each other, and bend your knee a little bit farther. Breathe slowly and deeply for about half a minute. After that, return the hands to the thigh and then "hop" back a bit until you can get your right leg straight and the sole of your right foot supported by the back of the chair, heel pressed forward slightly. Consider the hinge at the hip. With a flat elongated spine, slowly hinge forward sliding your hands down your right leg. If they can reach and clasp the back of your chair, great. If not, keep them on your leg. When your spine begins to round, straighten it out again by lifting the chest and chin, take some more breaths. Then hinge forward some more until your spine starts to round. Then let it round, and relax your neck, head, shoulders and elbows and relax down more and more (via gravity) with each exhalation. Spend about a minute here. Slowly come up with rounded spine, and return right foot to the floor and move around the room doing any movements you choose as you reconnect with Source.

8) Repeat same sequence with left leg.

(NOTE for 7&8: When your arms are lifted, with the right foot on the chair, you can add the extra step of bringing the arms out wide to both sides horizontally with palms forward, and slowly stretch them back behind you, parallel to each other, opening your chest. When doing the opposite side, when your arms are lifted, with the left foot on the chair, you can turn the palms backward and meet your hands behind your back, interlace your fingers and then raise the arms, relaxing the neck and face for a few breaths, even leaning forward if you can, taking falling out breaths.

9) Sit on the chair, using only the front quarter of the chair. Reconnect with your body, with the "I" and self. Place your right ankle squarely on the left thigh surrounded by supporting flesh (don't twist the ankle or put it on bone). Place your left knee directly over left heel. Place your right hand on your right knee and push till you feel the stretch as no more than a dull ache. Breathe for a while. Then place both arms loosely over your right shin and begin to lower your spine forward towards the floor. It is important to go little by little, letting gravity do all the work. It is like an effortless journey. Good time for falling out breaths. Linger at the bottom for a while, and then slowly come back up with a rounded spine. Return right leg to floor and sit comfortably. Reconnect with "I."

10) Do exact same routine with left leg.

11) This time, still sitting, spread the legs a little wider than the chair legs and place your loose arms forward and allow your spine to come down slowly using gravity and falling out breaths if you like just like the last two poses. You will find you can go further as a rule for all 3 if you occasionally reposition your sitting position as well as the heel supporting your weight. It is individual for each person. Take a little more time with this one, lots of falling out breaths. Let emotions come out if they are there, or try animal sounds deep from the belly, and then very slowly come on up with rounded spine.

12) Sitting at the front quarter of your chair, "shlump" back with your chest and arms open and your neck supported (you can use a neck pillow or sweatshirt, hand towel, etc.) with your head back. This is meant to be a relaxing back bend without trying. It should feel very good after the prior three exercises. If you access any fear or terror, let it out through your mouth (perhaps scream it up to the sky, or howl like a wolf!) And then continue to breathe and relax more, gently through your nose.

13) Sitting now about one fourth of the way from the edge of the chair, bring your right hand to your left ankle (or approximately to it) and raise your left arm behind you, reaching up with fingers, and look up toward the hand. Breathe slowly and deeply through the nose. After a while, you may want to ask yourself "Who am I?" and "Who am I now?" periodically, and allow yourself to

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Continued from Previous Page receive. Return hands to lap, and come into alignment with “I.”

14) Repeat same sequence starting with left hand.

15) Sit in the middle section of the chair and bring your arms behind your back. Clasp the right wrist with the left hand in a relaxed manner, your arms totally relaxed. Slowly extend chest out for flat back extension, breathe slowly and deeply for a few breaths, and then round your spine and let gravity take you down. Keep letting go of your neck. In fact, throughout this routine, keep reminding yourself to let go of your neck (often a congested passageway between brain and body). Luxuriate here for as long as you like, breathing gently through the nose, and then, like a puppet on a string, with your eyes closed, slowly come up to sitting, hands in lap, feet on floor, connecting with “I” and allowing your self to receive SELF. Stay here as long as you like before relaxation (next).

16) Relaxation. (Allow a full 10 minutes.) Place chair on firm ground. Lie down in front of chair and place your legs on the seat of the chair with the knees bent as appropriate (to fit the chair). Insure that your spine is flush on the floor and totally comfortable (especially the lower spine and sacrum), feel your legs comfortable and heavy on the chair. Allow your arms to be supported comfortably on the floor a few inches away from your body with the palms up, and your eyes closed. If you feel you need more support for your neck, use neck pillow or sweatshirt, etc., as above. Insure every part of your body is supported and comfortable. Start a short process of allowing your body to soften and sink, your back, your legs, your arms, your chest and belly, and head and neck, and finally your eyes soften and sink back into their sockets. If you have an eye pillow this will greatly enhance your experience. After getting settled, breathe gently through the nose. And . . . this is a really great time to connect and simply hang out in Source, however that works for you. Drink in the nourishment.

17) When 10 minutes or so has passed, bend your knees toward your chest, and roll over into fetal position and continue to rest. Here might be another good opportunity to ask “Who am I now?”

18) Alternate nostril breathing will be helpful to further quiet the mind and revive the spirit. Sitting comfortably on the chair, perhaps with a pillow in back of you to support a straight but not rigid spine, make a gentle fist with the right hand. Release the thumb and two little fingers. Place the thumb closing off the right nostril and exhale through the left nostril. Inhale through the left nostril and then place the two little fingers closing off the left nostril and exhale through the right nostril. Continue this pattern of inhale – switch – exhale. The breath is very gentle, quiet and steady. The eyes are closed. Do this for three to five minutes as you are guided. Afterwards, put your hands on your lap and notice whatever is emerging.

19) Meditation – for a few minutes do your own form of meditation, work with “I,” SELF, or simply follow your uncontrolled breath in and out with your “I.”

20) At the very end of the practice you might try doing a visualization involving Will, or a piece on Purpose for the rest of your day, etc. Or just get up and go! Or stay. As you get up and walk, see how the yoga affected your body, mind, heart, sense of “I” and SELF.

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