

## DAY 9 - BALANCED BODY

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### Transcript

Welcome to Day 9 of *The 12 Days of Yoga*.

Have you ever found you can do a balancing pose at home and do it perfectly, but when you get to class you can't balance at all? Or maybe one day balances are easy, another day you're wobbling all over the place?

Balancing poses are not only physical practices, they're a reflection of the mind. You need both physical strength and mental focus to be able to balance.

This session comprises two standing balances and a seated balance.

- If you're sitting on the floor, you might need a cushion or blanket.
- If you don't want to sit on the floor, you'll need a sturdy chair.
- If you feel unsteady when you perform balances, ensure that you're standing near a wall or have a sturdy chair beside you for support.

### (1:09) TANDEM/SEMI-TANDEM BALANCE

The first balance is the *tandem* or *semi-tandem balance*, one I also call the *tightrope balance*.

- Stand with one foot in the front of the other.

Have the toes of the back foot touching the heel of the front foot.

- If you feel unsteady in this position, move into the semi-tandem balance by moving the feet apart until you get to the point where you're just a little bit wobbly, but not so much that you'll topple over.

Ensure that the toes of the back foot are still in line with the heels of the front foot.

- Whichever position you are in, ensure that the feet are straight.

Think about the outsides of the feet being parallel. Sometimes to achieve the balance people angle one or both feet.

- Have your weight centred across both feet.
- Look for a steady point on which you can focus, preferably one at eye level or far in front of you so you don't drop your head.
- Play with the position of the arms.

The position of the arms will change your centre of gravity.

- You might like to have the arms out to the side with the hands in line with the hips, palms rotated out, and the chest open

- Or you could bring them closer into the body, having them in prayer position at the heart
  - Or, to move the centre of gravity up even further, you can take the arms overhead. Either keep the hands in prayer position or separate them so they're about shoulder width apart.
- Feel that you're squeezing the legs towards the centre, and when you do that you'll feel a lift through the centre of your body, through the pelvic floor.
  - Let the tailbone extend towards the ground.
  - Let the navel come back to the spine.
  - Lifting up through the spine, shoulders back, neck long, crown of the head towards the sky.

And then, breathe.

...

For something slightly stronger, push your hips forward, come up onto the toes.

...

For those who want a challenge, turn the head to look to one side.

...

On an inhalation bring the head back to centre.

And on the exhalation, turning the head to the other side.

...

Inhaling, bring the head back to centre.

And if you were up on your toes, gently coming down.

Now releasing the position.

Give the legs, the arms just a bit of a shake.

Move to the other side.

- Bring the other foot in the front.  
Have the toes of the back foot touching the heel of the front foot.
- And again, if you feel unsteady in this position, come into the semi-tandem balance, moving the feet slightly apart until you get to that point where you're just a little unsteady.
- Ensure that the feet are straight, and that the weight is centred across both feet.
- Look for your steady point.
- And bring your hands into whichever position feels comfortable for you:
  - Out to the side, or
  - The hands in prayer position at the heart, or
  - The arms up overhead, the hands in prayer position or separated about shoulder width apart.

- Feel that you're lifting up through the centre of your body.
- Your core is engaged, shoulders back, neck long, crown of the head towards the sky.

Deep breaths.

...

And if you want that stronger balance, pushing the hips forward, starting to raise up onto the toes.

...

Need to challenge yourself? Turn the head to look to one side.

...

Inhale, bring the head back to centre.

And on the exhalation, turn the head to the other side.

...

Breathing in, coming back to centre.

Slowly lower down, and release the position.

Now releasing the position.

Just giving those legs, and those arms a bit of a shake.

## (7:24) TREE

Next is the *tree* pose.

- Stand with the feet hip width apart, outsides of the feet parallel, arms by the side.
- Bring the weight into the left foot.
- Raise the heel of the right foot and turn the knee out to the side.

For some there is a tendency to take that right hip back as well. Make sure that you're not twisting through the body, and the hips remain facing forward.

- Place the sole of the right foot against the left leg.

It might not be completely to the side, it depends on the flexibility of your hip.

Having the toes on the floor is a balance in itself.

- If you want to make the balance harder, place the sole of the foot anywhere along the left leg as long as the heel of the right leg [*Correction: Should be 'right foot'*] is above or below the left knee.

If you're raising the right foot up along the leg, make sure that the hips stay level. Don't raise the right hip.

- You can change your centre of gravity by changing the position of your hands, so place the hands where they are comfortable. That could be:
  - By the side with the palms rotated out,
  - In prayer position at the heart, or
  - In prayer position above the head, or
  - Above the head and separated.

- Look for your steady point, and breathe.

...

Want a stronger balance? Come up onto the toes of that left foot.

...

Slowly come out of the position, bringing that right foot back onto the floor.

Give the left leg a shake, and then move onto the other side.

- Stand with the feet hip width apart, and bring the weight into the right leg.
- Raise the heel of the left foot and turn the knee out to the side.
- Bring the sole of the left foot against the right leg wherever it is comfortable for you ... and the toes can be on the ground.

If you take the toes off the ground, ensure that the heel of the left foot is above or below the right knee.

- Make sure that your hips are still facing forward and are level.
- Choose your arm position. Have them:
  - By the side with the palms rotated out,
  - Prayer position at the heart, or
  - Overhead in prayer position, or separated.
- Look for that steady point of focus.

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For a stronger balance, come up onto the toes of the right foot.

...

Release your position, give that right leg a shake, and then come to seated on the floor or in the chair.

## **(12:00) BOAT**

The last balancing pose, *boat*, is very strong.

It can place a lot of pressure in the back, particularly the lower back. We can also end up holding our breath, which raises the blood pressure. So this pose might not be appropriate if you have back problems, very high blood pressure or heart conditions. If you are unsure, leave it until you can check with your doctor or health specialist.

- If you're sitting on a chair, sit on the edge of the chair so that you have room to lean back.  
Have the feet and legs together and ensure that your feet are flat on the floor.
- If you're sitting on the floor and find that you're rounding your back to be upright or leaning back to keep your spine straight, sit on a folded blanket or cushion, which helps to raise the hips and tilt the pelvis forward.

Have the legs and the feet together, and then bend the knees and place the feet flat on the floor.

- Whether you're seated on the floor or in the chair, have your hands out in front of you with palms facing towards each other.
- Breathe in and lengthen up through the spine.

Feel the tail bone extending towards the ground, each vertebra placed on top of the next.

- On an exhalation:
  - Squeeze the legs together
  - Bring the navel back to the spine
  - Lengthen through the back, and
  - Lean back.

Don't hold the breath! You should still be able to talk.

- On your next inhalation, sit back upright.

If this was strong enough for you, then stay with the feet on the ground.

- If you would like to go a little stronger, point your toes and bring the tips of your toes onto the ground.
- As you breathe in, lengthen up through the spine.
- And on an exhalation, lean back, squeezing the legs together, making sure you're lengthening through the lower back.
- Hold this balance, ...
- And on an inhalation, sit back up.

One more time.

If you need to:

- Come out of the balance at any time.

It is a strong pose.

- Rest, and then when ready come back into the pose.

*[Last round of pose]*

- Have the feet flat on the ground, or the tips of the toes on the ground.
- Breathing in, lengthen up through the spine.
- And on the exhalation, squeeze those legs together, leaning back.

And for those who want a stronger balance:

- You can keep the thighs together and slowly raise one foot off the ground so the lower leg is parallel with the ground.

Then lower that leg and raise the other.

- Harder still ... you might want to bring both feet off the ground, raising them up to bring the lower legs parallel with the ground.

Ensure that you're still squeezing the legs together, the feet together.

- If you're on the floor:
  - Harder still. Keep the lower leg of one leg parallel to the ground, and straighten the other.  
Alternate. Straightening one leg and then the other.
  - And if you feel comfortable with this, straighten both legs so you're making a V with your entire body.

Whatever position you're in:

- Make sure that the lower back stays nice and long, don't let it collapse.
- Don't hold the breath.

Count out loud. This ensures that you're breathing but also provides you with a benchmark for measuring your progress.

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When you're ready release the pose.

- If you're on the chair, do some cat to release the spine:
  - Inhaling – push the tailbone back, arch through the spine, open the chest.
  - And as you breathe out, round through the back.
- If you're on the floor:
  - Lay down on your back.
  - Hug the knees into the chest, and rock from side to side, or make circles with the knees to massage through the back.

To end your session, take a few moments to rest while seated in the chair or laying on your back before continuing with your day.

Aum shanti!