

Yoga Asana Lesson Plan - Asteya

Introduction:

- Introduce yourself and your training/teaching background. (This class was built from an Ashtanga Yoga background following the eight limbed path)
- Introduce the layout of the class and which limbs it will be engaging with (dhyana, pranayama, asana)
- Explain the Yama of ahimsa and how it also applies to oneself, so if any of the suggested poses cause pain to the students emphasize that they are welcome to choose a different pose

Grounding Meditation (dhyana):

- Bring attention to breath and the places the body touches the ground. Allow the force of gravity to ground and connect to the earth, to this place, and to the others touching the same earth
- Land acknowledgement (this will be specific to where you live/are teaching) giving reverence to those who came before us
- Spiritual acknowledgement (this will be specific to your Yoga lineage) giving reverence to those who built this practice in India and Southeast Asia and allow us to practice today
- Set the sankalpa (intention) for the class: asteya (non-stealing) “We are all thieves. Every time we take a breath we are stealing from the Earth.” – Sri Swami Satchidananda. The answer is not to stop breathing, it is to receive our breath with reverence and gratitude for the ecosystems it comes from and be intentional with the life it gives us.

Pranayama:

- You can engage with whatever pranayama practice you are comfortable with/have training in but for this class I recommend Dirgha Pranayam to deepen the breath and connect to the gratitude that is established in the meditation
- Transition to Ujjayi for the rest of the asana sequence

Surya Namaskar:

- Repeat nine times facing the east if possible
- Modifications to release tension and find groundedness: table-top position instead of staff pose (plank position), balasana (child’s pose) instead of odho mukha svanasana (downward dog), bhujangasana (cobra pose) instead of urdva mukha svanasana (upward dog).
- Connect to the story of Hanuman who designed the Surya Namaskar in gratitude to his teacher, the sun, who gives life to everything on this planet. Perhaps imagine a small sun in your chest, shining from your heart as this series of poses begins to build heat in the body and radiate outwards.

Balance poses:

- Emphasize that students may choose a balance pose that works best for them, thinking on the sankalpa for this class to help choose: virkshasana (tree), natarajasana (dancer), or utthita hasta padangustasana (extended leg balance).
- Offer the imagery of roots growing out of the standing foot, down into the earth and pulling nutrients up into the body. The students might imagine that whatever they feel they need in this moment is flowing up those roots, they might give it a color and feel that color/light expanding through their body as they take five deep breaths in this balance.

Asana Flow:

- Spinal balance -> side plank (maybe place the bottom knee down to support) -> janu sirshasana -> wild child (repeat janu sirshasana -> wild child as many times as you would like, following the breath and finding freedom in the spine)-> staff pose and vinyasa to repeat on the other side
- Perhaps connect again to the image of sunlight coming out of the chest throughout this last sequence of poses

Release Poses:

- Janu sirshasana, Ardi matsi androsana, Upavishta or baddha konasana, Supine twist, plough, or happy baby. Choose 2 or 3 based on what the students need and give them the option to choose for themselves
- Cue the students to release any control over the breath

Shavasana:

- Cue the students to feel the earth rise up to hold their weight, and release into the gratitude for their breath.
- Connect to the Japanese Buddhist story of Gummyocho, the two-headed bird who eats poison fruit out of spite for his twin, forgetting that they share a stomach, and their fates are interconnected.
- Connect to the idea of vasudhaiva kutumbakam: “the whole world is my family” to feel supported, held, and safe
- Release into meditation for ten minutes

Closing:

- Reminder of sankalpa: asteya calls us to receive this breath with gratitude and be generous with the life it gives us, to serve all those we are connected to. Ask students to think of one thing they can do this week to serve that which they are connected to. (Examples: a kindness to a friend, being intentional with purchases, reducing waste, offering support to someone in need, attending a community meeting, donating to a cause.)
- OM shanti shanti shanti chant to close offering peace to the self, to others, and to the world