



# Autumn Chakra Tune-Up Workshop

Home Practice Guide

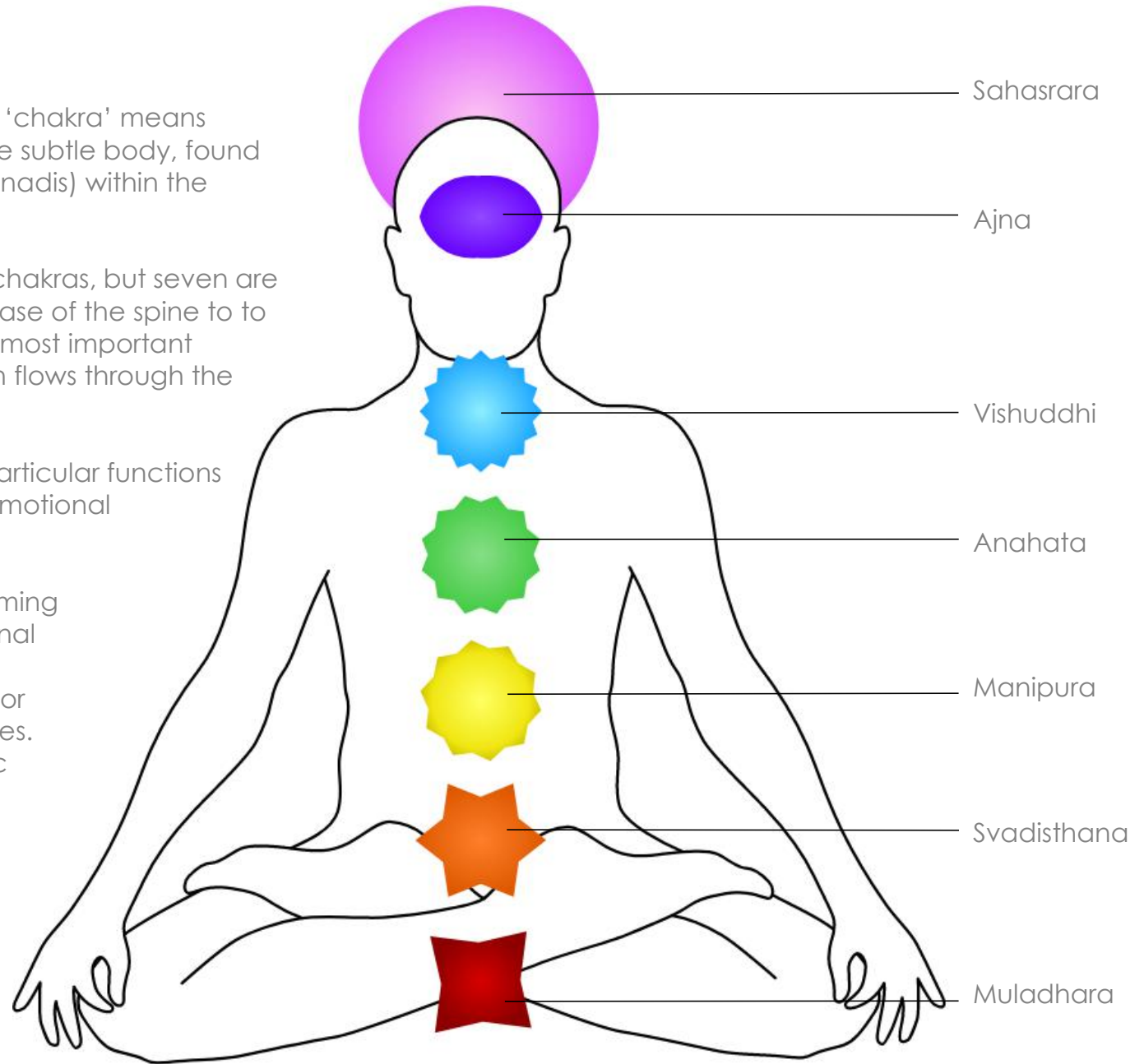
# What are chakras?

We can think of chakras (the Sanskrit word 'chakra' means 'wheel') as spinning wheels of energy in the subtle body, found at the meeting points of energy channels (nadis) within the subtle, non-physical body.

By some estimates, there are up to 72,000 chakras, but seven are considered the most important, from the base of the spine to to the crown of the head, located along the most important energy channel, the sushumna nadi, which flows through the spinal column.

Each chakra is associated with a colour, particular functions within the body, and with psychological, emotional and mental qualities.

The chakras can fall out of balance, becoming either deficient or excessive, through external situations and internal habits, for example, long-held physical tension within the body or limiting beliefs we may have about ourselves. But, through awareness, breathing, specific postures and visualization, we can bring them back into balance. An excessive chakra can become a dominating force in a person's life, while a deficient chakra is unable to receive or manifest energy efficiently, bringing a sense of being physically or emotionally closed down in that area.





## Muladhara

Muladhara, the root chakra, is located near the base of the spine: at the perineum in men and at the cervix in women.

Associated with the colour red, it is our survival and security centre, and relates to our basic primal needs, our sense of stability and groundedness, and can become blocked by fear.

An excessive muladhara may manifest as feelings of stubbornness and heaviness (both physical and emotional), or as a workaholic lifestyle (all work and no play).

A deficient muladhara chakra may manifest as flightiness or a disconnection from our physical needs.

With this connection to stability, our asana practice will support the spinal column, strengthen the legs and energise the body.





## Svadhishthana

Svadhishthana, the sacral chakra, is located in the lower abdomen.

Associated with the colour orange, it is our creative and sexual centre, and governs our relationship with money and power, and our ability to feel joy and pleasure. It can be blocked by guilt.

Linked to water and the flow of creativity and passion, it deals with the transient nature of awareness: our ever-shifting pattern likes and dislikes, attachments and aversions.

An excessive svadhishthana chakra might manifest as overwhelming desires or cravings, while a deficient svadhishthana may prevent us from experiencing pleasure.

Our asana practice will support the Sexual organs, lower spine, pelvis and hips, and the bladder

## Manipura

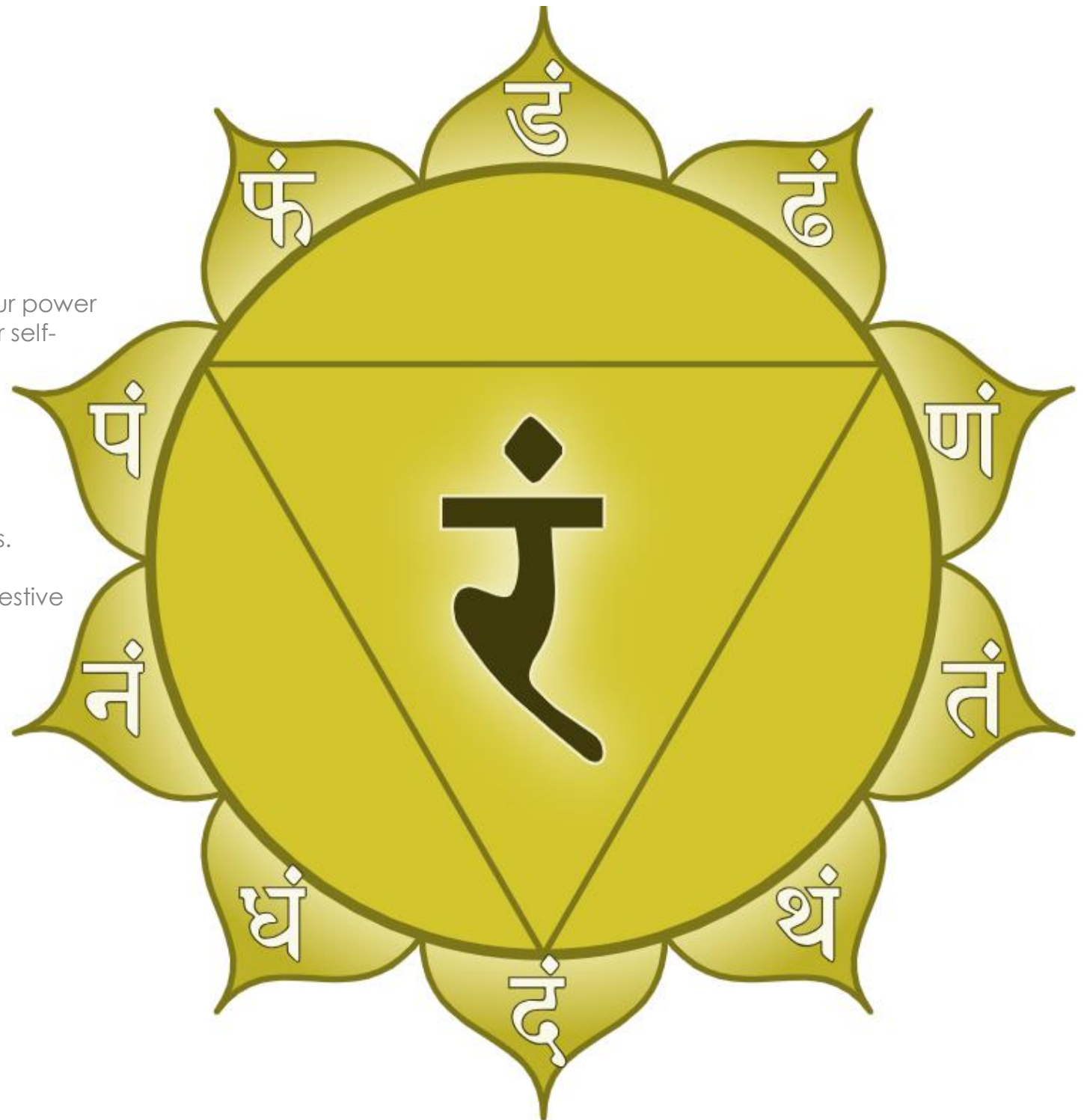
Manipura, the solar plexus chakra, is located above the navel

Associated with the colour yellow, it is our power centre, and relates to our will power, our self-confidence and self-esteem, and our capacity to make things happen. It can become blocked by shame.

When excessive, it can lead to hot-headedness and arrogance, but when deficient can cause timidity and shyness.

Our asana practice helps the whole digestive system, and the mid-spine

It's also related to how we digest: on a physical level, how we digest the food we eat, but on a mental and emotional level, how we digest our thoughts and our experiences.







## Anahata

Anahata, the heart chakra, is located in the chest, and it serves as a bridge between the lower and upper chakras.

Associated with the colour green, it is our love centre, and relates to compassion, forgiveness and unconditional love, for ourselves as well as others, and is also about creating harmony and balance. It can become blocked by grief.

People with excessive muladhara chakras may be overly concerned about others in a way that is not helpful. A deficient anahata chakra may manifest as depression, loneliness or an inability to give or receive love.

Our asana practice, focusing on backbends to open up the heart chakra, will support the heart and circulatory system, the lungs and respiratory system, and the arms and shoulders.

## Vishuddhi

Vishuddhi, the throat, is located at the throat.

Associated with the colour blue, it is our expression centre, and is all about how we communicate with those around us. And how we express ourselves creatively. When in balance, it helps us to speak our truth and effectively listen to others, but it can become blocked by lies.

An excessive vishuddhi might be expressed as an inability to listen or to be overly talkative, while a deficient vishuddhi may prevent us from expressing ourselves or communicating effectively.

Our asana practice will help the throat and thyroid, mouth, jaw and neck.



## Ajna

Ajna, the third eye chakra, is located at the eyebrow centre.

Associated with the colour indigo, it is our perception centre, and relates to our wisdom, our intuitive ability and our ability to visualise.

Governing our perception of the outside world, it can become blocked by illusion.

An excessive ajna gives rise to distorted perception. A deficient ajna may prevent us from seeing things in a new way.

Our asana practice helps the neurological system, eyes, ears and nose.





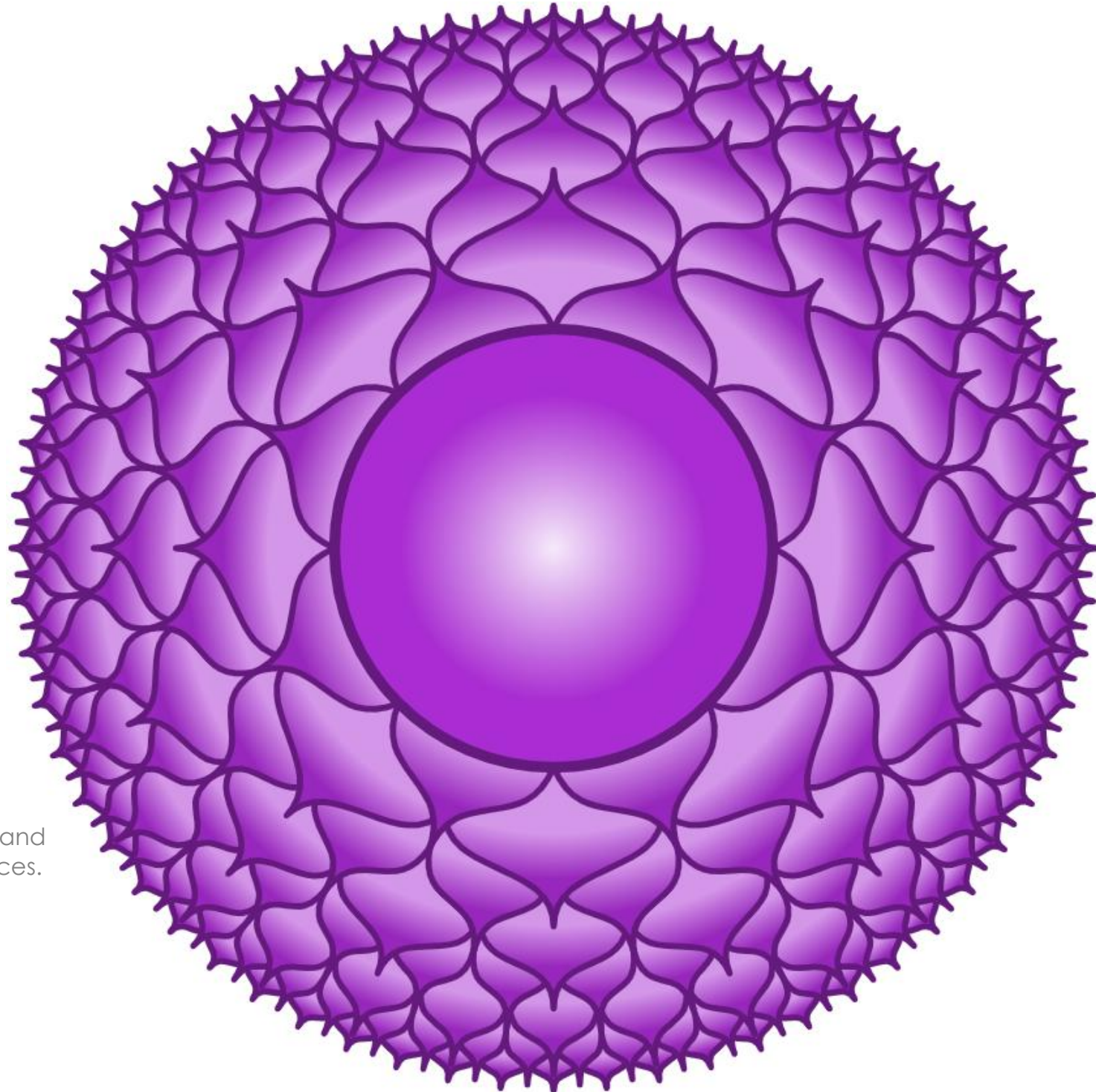
## Sahasrara

Sahasrara, the crown chakra, is located at the top of the head.

Associated with the colour violet but also sometimes white, it is our spiritual centre, enabling us to connect to all things and something bigger and deeper than just ourselves. It can become blocked by ego attachment, the ego being that which mistakenly leads us to consider ourselves as completely separate and distinct entities.

When excessive, we can feel disconnection from the material world, or a sense of spiritual superiority. When deficient, we may experience a loss of self or a lack of connection with the meaning or significance of life.

Sahasrara is most effectively balanced through inverted postures such as headstand and through meditative breathing practices.



## Relaxation

Before starting your practice, take some time to relax your body and mind, which makes it easier to focus your attention on your practice.

From a comfortable seated position, start by bringing your attention to your natural, effortless breath, just watching as it enters and leaves the body, and observing some of its qualities: the depth of your breath; the speed of your breathing; or where you can feel movement in the body as a result of your breath.

As best you can, try to let go of any expectations of yourself or your practice. This will help you to enjoy your practice without worrying about achieving any particular result.

You might also wish to scan your attention around your body, which helps to focus your attention further and gives you the chance to notice how the body is feeling right now.

See if you can become utterly absorbed by your practice, absolutely conscious and alive to each breath, each transition, each part of each movement, and make this a moving meditation.



## Warming up

### The seated twist:

Twist to the side on an outbreath, looking for height through the crown of your head.



### Cat balance:

Take this balance on each side, and flex/rotate the ankle on the lifted leg.



### Cat/Cow stretch (Marjariasana):

Tilting the tail bone up, relaxing the belly and lifting the chest as you inhale, and tip the tailbone down, rounding the back, drawing the navel in towards the spine and tucking the chin into the chest as you exhale.

Try to let the movement flow from the tail bone to the top of your head,





## Surya Namaskar - the Sun Salutation

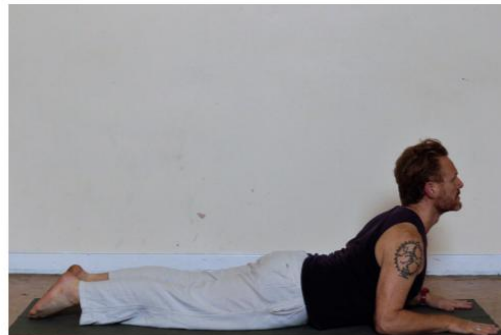
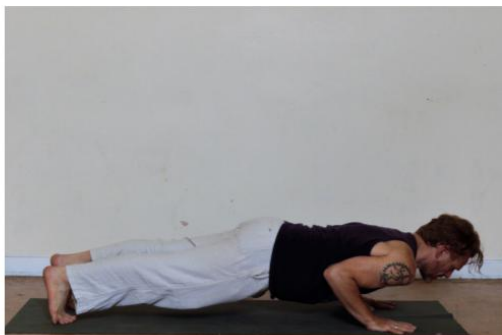
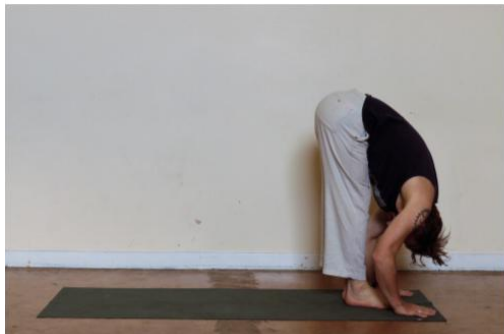
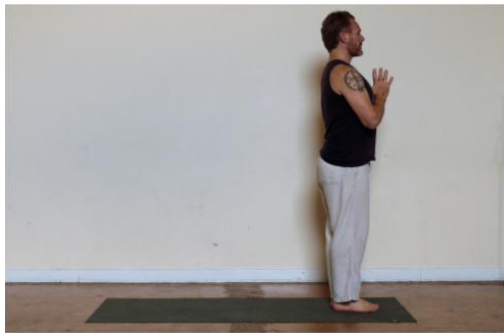
Surya - *'Sun'; the solar deity*  
Namaskar - *a respectful form of greeting*

There are probably as many versions of the sun salutation as there are yoga teachers. The important thing is to find the version you enjoy the most, so you find yourself wanting to practice.

Let your movement flow with your breath and see if you can make the practice a moving meditation.

Prayer pose (Samasthiti)  
Tall mountain  
Forward fold (Uttanasana)  
Flat back pose  
Forward fold (Uttanasana)  
Lunge (Banarasana)  
Downward-Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)  
Plank (**option: knees down**)  
Chaturanga (**option**)  
Cobra (Bhujangasana)  
Downward-Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)  
Lunge (Banarasana)  
Forward fold (Uttanasana)  
Tall mountain  
Prayer pose (Samasthiti)





## The Sunburst Flow

This variation of Surya Namaskar is great for opening up the chest and shoulders, plus you get a great back bend in the upper spine, which is stimulating and energising.

Prayer pose (Samasthiti)  
Tall mountain  
Forward fold (Uttanasana)  
Flat back pose  
Forward fold (Uttanasana)  
Lunge (Banarasana)  
knee to floor  
Lifting arms  
Hands return to the floor  
Lunge (Banarasana)  
Forward fold (Uttanasana)  
Tall mountain  
Prayer pose (Samasthiti)







# Muladhara, the root chakra

The focus here is on grounding through the feet, legs and pelvis for a strong and stable foundation.

## Tadasana (Mountain pose)

Tadasana is the foundation for all standing postures.

Try to develop a sense of rootedness through the feet, for a solid connection to the ground beneath you, while also feeling tall and extended through the crown of the head.

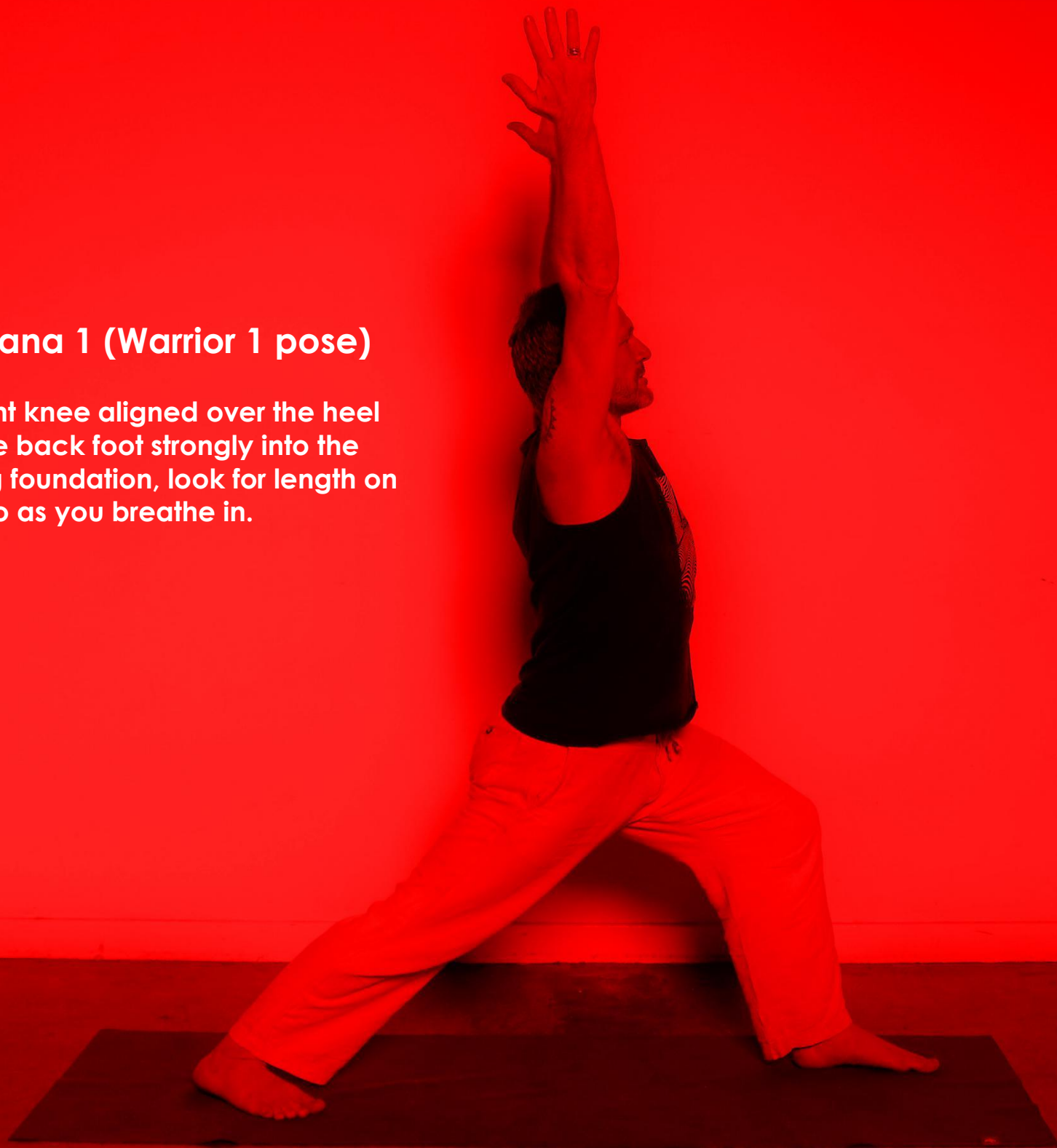
*"The more you stretch downward through your legs and sink both feet into the floor, rooting yourself into the earth, the more you will be able to stretch upward, skyward"*

Erich Schiffman, *Moving into Stillness*



## Virabhadrasana 1 (Warrior 1 pose)

Keeping the front knee aligned over the heel and pressing the back foot strongly into the floor for a strong foundation, look for length on the sides of torso as you breathe in.





# Svadhishthana, the sacral chakra

The physical focus for this chakra is the lower abdomen and the pelvis, and finding mobility in the hips.

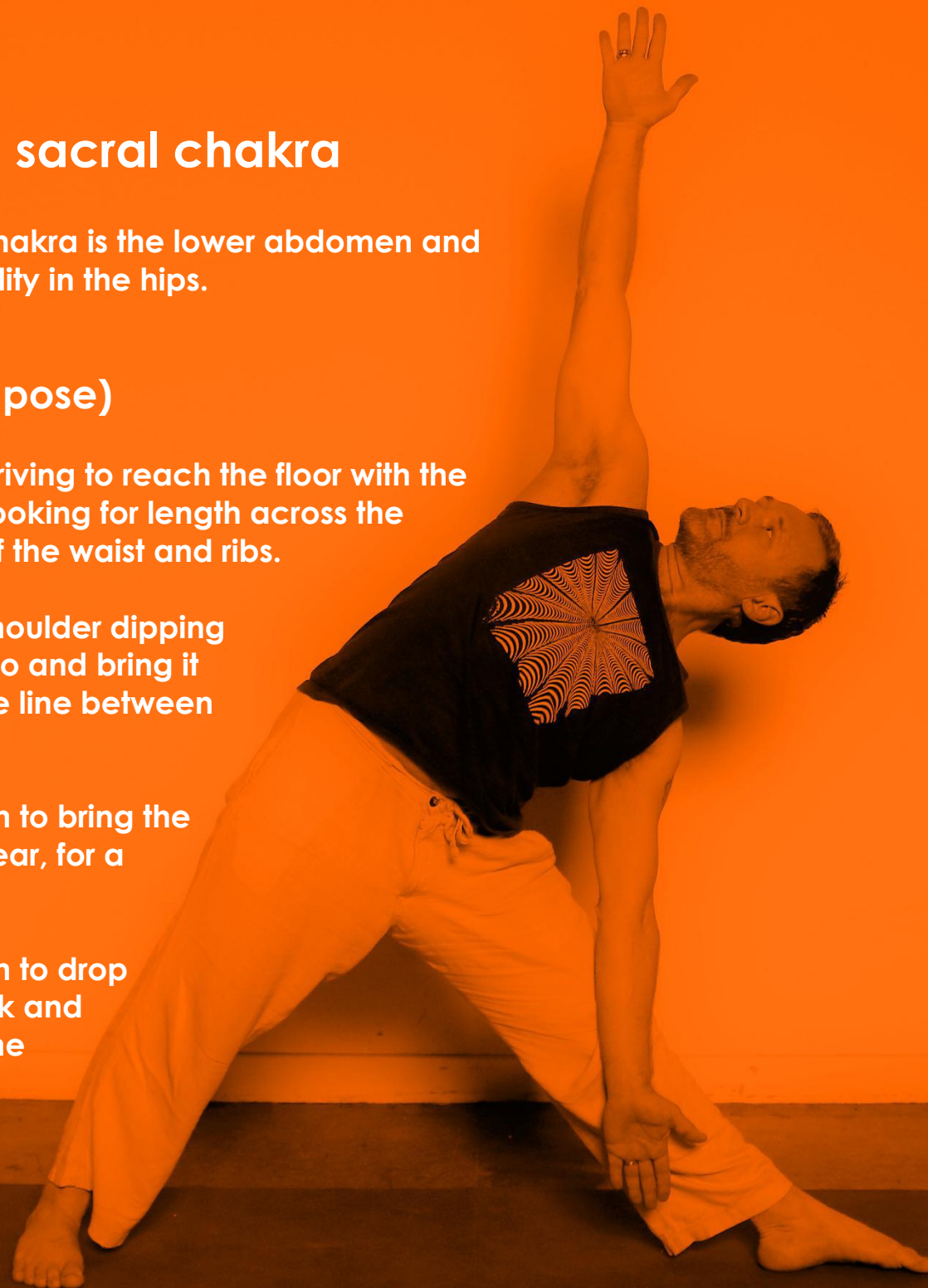
## Trikonasana (Triangle pose)

Remember that we're not striving to reach the floor with the lower hand. Instead we're looking for length across the arm span and in the sides of the waist and ribs.

If you feel the upper most shoulder dipping towards the floor, lift the torso and bring it back into alignment with the line between your heels.

As a variation, you may wish to bring the top arm in line with the top ear, for a deeper stretch to the waist.

Alternatively, you might wish to drop the top arm behind the back and reach the fingers round to the top of the out-turned thigh.

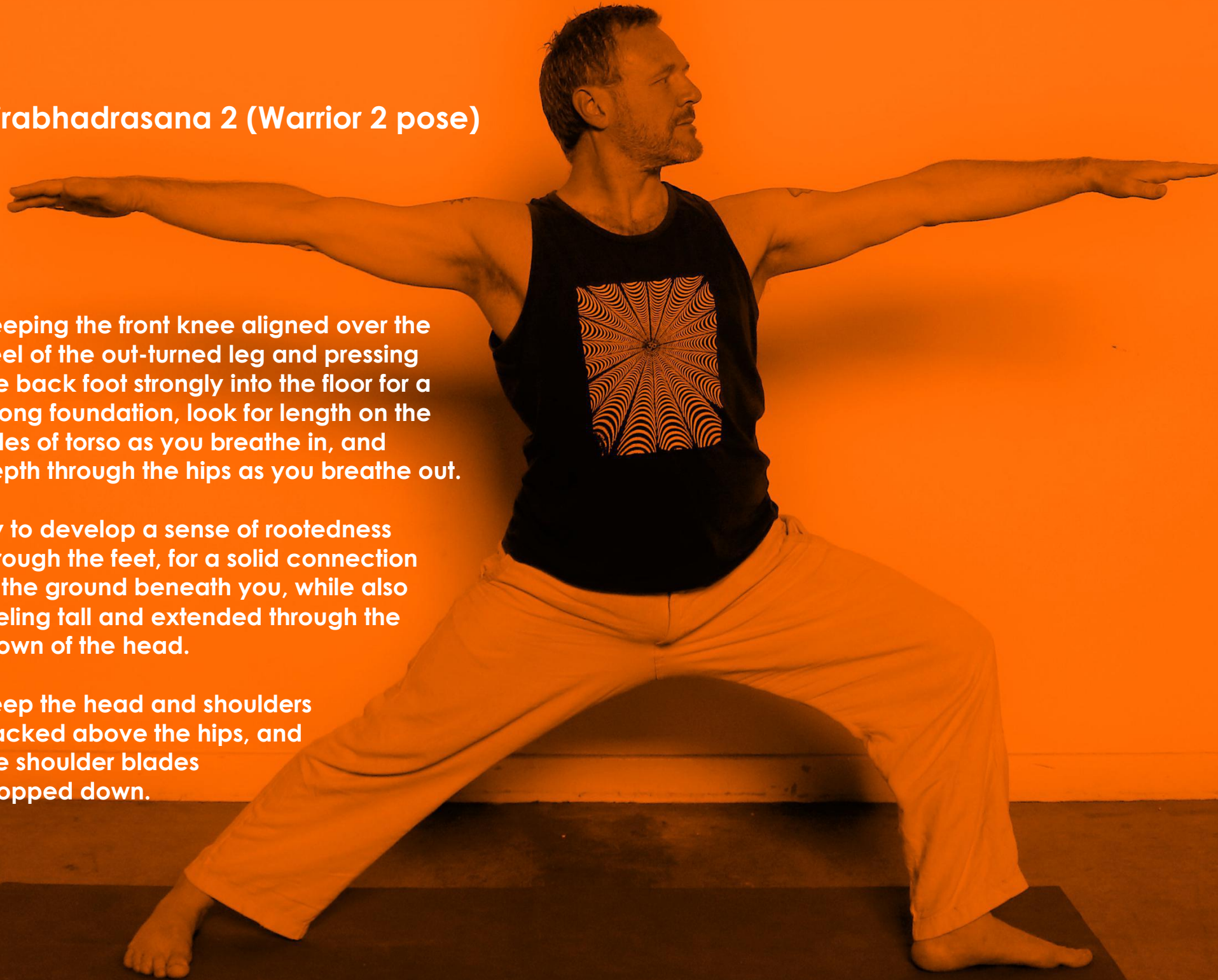


## Virabhadrasana 2 (Warrior 2 pose)

Keeping the front knee aligned over the heel of the out-turned leg and pressing the back foot strongly into the floor for a strong foundation, look for length on the sides of torso as you breathe in, and depth through the hips as you breathe out.

Try to develop a sense of rootedness through the feet, for a solid connection to the ground beneath you, while also feeling tall and extended through the crown of the head.

Keep the head and shoulders stacked above the hips, and the shoulder blades dropped down.





A man is shown in a side profile, performing the Viparita Virabhadrasana (Reverse Warrior) yoga pose. He is standing on a dark mat against a solid orange wall. His right leg is bent at a 90-degree angle, with the foot flat on the floor. His left leg is extended straight back, with the foot also flat on the floor. His torso is tilted back, and his head is looking upwards. His right arm is extended straight up towards the ceiling, with the palm facing up. His left arm is extended straight down towards the floor, with the palm facing down. He is wearing a black sleeveless shirt with a white geometric pattern on the back and light-colored pants.

## Viparita Virabhadrasana (Reverse Warrior pose)

From Virabhadrasana 2, turn the front palm upwards and keep your gaze here as you lift the front arm upwards, reaching down with the back arm.

As you breathe in, try to extend in the front ribs, and as you breathe out squeeze the back ribs.



## Manipura, solar plexus chakra

The physical focus here is on the solar plexus, the digestive system and the mid-spine, working with twists and asanas to strengthen the core.

### Parvrtti Parsvakonasana (Lunge twist)

Starting from a lunge, join the palms and hook an elbow over the opposite knee, drawing the torso into the front thigh.



## Navasana (Boat pose)

Keep the sternum lifted to avoid rounding in the upper back.

To challenge yourself, you may want to take hold of the big toes and draw the shins in closer to the face.





## **Ardha Matsyendrasana (Half Lord of the Fishes pose)**

**Keep length on the spine, lifting through the crown as you inhale, and turning deeper into the twist as you exhale, drawing the bent-knee thigh closer into the torso**





## **Ardha Matsyendrasana (Half Lord of the Fishes pose) - lifted foot version**

**Extending and lifting one leg, and holding onto the foot with one hand, twist in the opposite direction as you exhale, reaching back and stretching into the ends of your finger tips.**



## Anahata, the heart chakra

The physical focus is on backbends, opening our hearts to the world and support the heart and circulatory system, the lungs and respiratory system, and the arms and shoulders.

### Bhujangasana (Cobra pose)

Keeping the belly pressed into the floor to maintain length in the lower back, press down and draw backwards through the hands to facilitate forward movement through the sternum.



## Salabasana (Locust pose)

Press downwards through the top of the feet lift the head and chest as you inhale, peeling the upper body away from the mat.

Keep the gaze downward to maintain openness in the back of the neck, and stretch back into the finger tips.



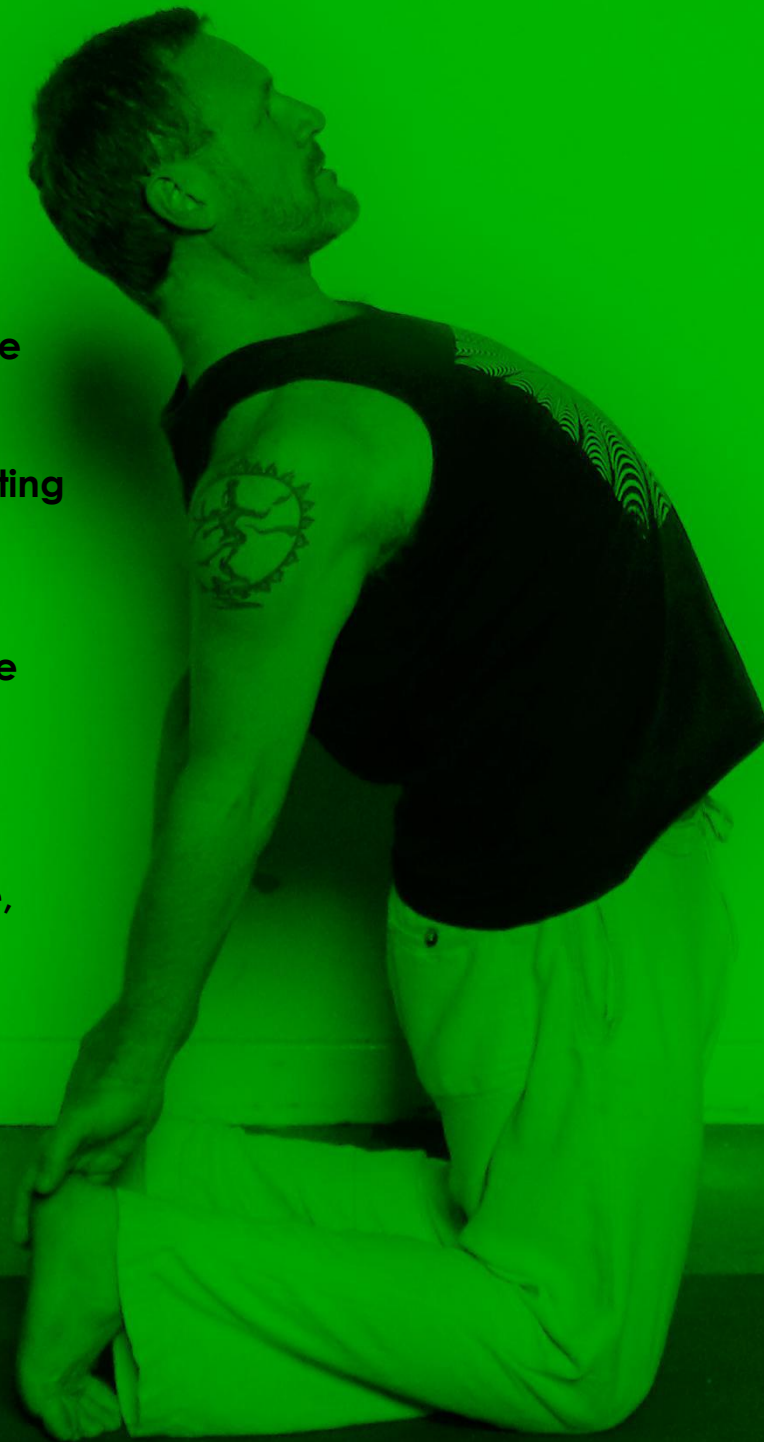


## Ustrasana

This is a strong back bend so make sure you have some support for the lower back at all times, with either at least one hand on the lower back or supporting the weight of the upper body through the contact of hands against heels.

Look for forward movement through the hips, maintaining vertical alignment of the thighs so as not to lean back from the knees.

Keeping the head in line with the spine, lift upwards through the sternum.



## Vishuddhi, the throat chakra

The physical focus is on the throat and thyroid, the mouth, the jaw and the neck.

## Dwi Pada Pitham (Bridge pose)

Moving with your breath, lift the hips as you inhale, peeling the spine away from the mat and, as you exhale, rolling each your vertebrae back down on to the mat, one after another.

Try to maintain even pressure through the soles of your feet.



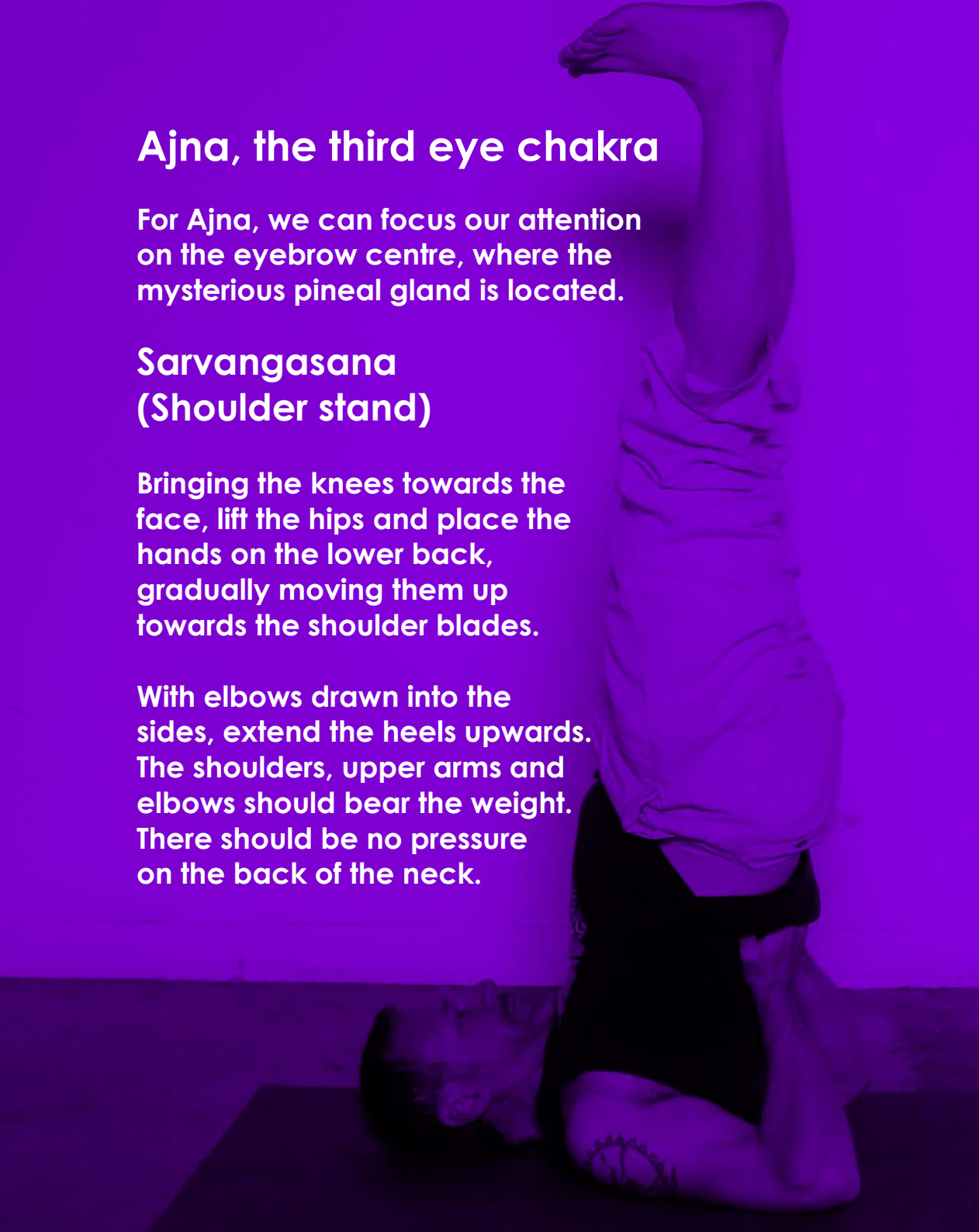
## Ajna, the third eye chakra

For Ajna, we can focus our attention on the eyebrow centre, where the mysterious pineal gland is located.

### Sarvangasana (Shoulder stand)

Bringing the knees towards the face, lift the hips and place the hands on the lower back, gradually moving them up towards the shoulder blades.

With elbows drawn into the sides, extend the heels upwards. The shoulders, upper arms and elbows should bear the weight. There should be no pressure on the back of the neck.





## Halasana (Plough pose)

From Sarvangasana, take the feet over head, with the hands maintaining support for the back.

Once the toes touch the floor, extend into the backs of the knees, and focus on breathing steadily into the upper chest.



## Matsyasana (Fish pose)

This is the traditional counterpose for Sarvangasana and Halasana.

With the arms under the body, press down through the elbows and lift the chest, letting the crown of the head rest gently against the floor. There should be no pressure on the crown.



# Sahasrara, the crown chakra

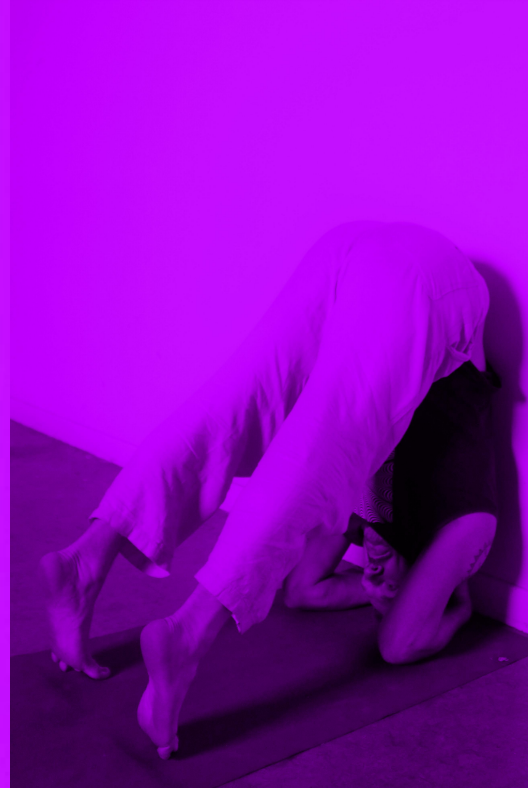
## Sirsasana (Head stand)

Interlocking the fingers and forming a triangle of support with the bony part of the forearms and elbows, support the back of the head with the hands and let the crown touch the floor. Press downwards through the forearms so that the crown does not feel pressure, and lift the hips, coming up on to tiptoes.

Slowly walk the toes forwards until the back makes contact with the wall. Lift one foot, pressing the forearms and elbows into the floor, then gently push from the other foot to hop up.

Once the hips are balanced over the head, extend the heels upwards.

The strength of this pose comes from the foundation through the forearms and elbows. If you experience discomfort or pain in the neck or shoulders, you should come down immediately.





# Relaxation

Bring yourself into Savasana (corpse pose) and let your attention settle on your breathing. When you are ready, take your attention around the body.....

Aware of **muladhara** chakra the base of your spine, visualise the colour red and say to yourself, “**I am here**”

Aware of **svadisthana** chakra, just below the navel, visualise the colour orange and say to yourself, “**I feel**”

Aware of **manipura** chakra at your solar plexus, visualise the colour yellow and say to yourself, “**I can**”

Aware of **anahata** chakra at your heart centre, visualise the colour green and say to yourself, “**I allow myself to give and receive love freely**”

Aware of **vishuddhi** chakra at your throat, visualise the colour blue and say to yourself, “**I express myself freely. I allow myself to go with the flow of life**”

Aware of **ajna chakra** at your eyebrow centre, visualise the colour indigo and say to yourself, “I see clearly that everything is unfolding as it should”

Aware of **sahasrara chakra** at the crown, visualise a violet light and say to yourself, “**I understand. I am not separate from the Universe. I am one with the Universe**”



# Mudras

Mudras are subtle physical movements or gestures which create different energy circuits in the body, altering mood and perception, and deepening concentration. We can use them to complement and enhance our pranayama practice. There are many different mudras: we're going to look at just three:

In **chin mudra**, we join the tips of the index finger and thumb, with the rest of the fingers extended.



This mudra helps activate the diaphragm, supporting deep belly breathing, and causing prana to flow in the pelvis and legs.

**Chin maya mudra** develops from chin mudra, with the folding down of the other 3 fingers towards the palm.



This mudra activates the ribs, helping them expand sideways on inhalation, and causing prana to flow in the torso and in the throat.

For **Adhi mudra**, fold the thumbs across the palms, and fold over the other three fingers.



This mudra activates the pectoral muscles, helping the chest lift upwards, and causing prana to flow in the throat and head.

# Pranayama: the yogic breath

Often translated as 'breath control', **pranayama** really means 'the control or expansion of vital energy' (prana). We can use different breathing techniques to manipulate the flow of energy or prana around the body, and help us even out the fluctuations of the mind.

The **yogic breath** technique involves using the lungs to their full capacity, helping us to gain control of the breath and increase our oxygen intake. This technique is especially useful in situations of high stress or anger for calming the nerves and bringing mental clarity.

- In a comfortable seated position, close the eyes and bring your awareness to breath to your natural breath. Let your weight sink into your sitting bones while you feel tall in the spine and extended through top of head.
- Resting your hands on your belly with your middle fingertips just touching, spend a few moments being aware of the movement of the breath in the **belly**. As you breath in, let the belly soften and expand so that your middle finger tips move away from each other. As you breathe out, let the belly deflate so the middle finger tips come back to touch against each other. You might even want to engage the abdominal muscles gently as you breathe out, drawing the navel towards the spine.
- After a few moments, bring your awareness to the movement of breath in your **ribs**, resting your hands on the sides of your rib cage, letting it expand outwards as you breathe in and contract as your breathe out.
- After a few moments, rest your right hand on the **upper chest** and breathe into the upper part of the lungs, letting the sternum lift and lower the hand.
- For the full yogic breath, we combine all three, breathing into: the **belly** so it expands fully but without force or strain; continuing to breathe in to allow the **ribs** and to expand; and breathing in further still to allow the **chest** to lift, before releasing with a long, slow outbreath.
- Imagine your breath is like the swelling of the sea, which can be nice to visualise as your practice.
- Notice how you feel when you breathe slowly and evenly.



## All about the Om

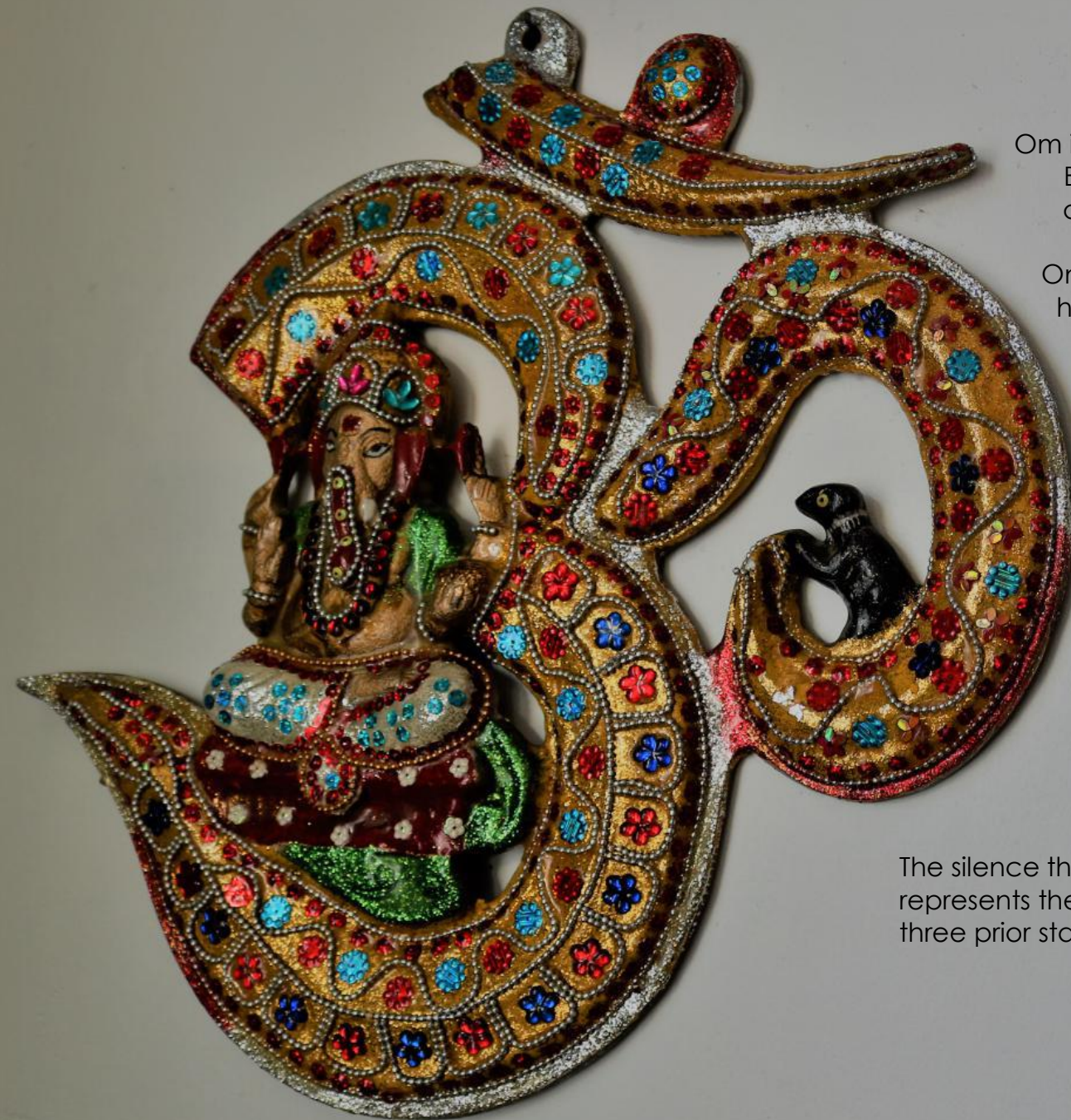
Om is considered the basic sound of the universe. By chanting Om we tune in to that sound and acknowledge our connection to the universe.

On a more practical level, repetition of Om can help us to let go of mental chatter to calm the mind and focus our attention.

OM, or 'Aum', consists of three sounds:

- the '**Aaaah**' sound, arising from the belly, formed with an open throat and voiced with the mouth open, represents the creation aspect of the universe
- the '**Ooooh**' sound, coming from the middle of the mouth, with vibrations felt in the chest and throat, represents the sustaining energy of the universe
- the '**Mmmmm**' sound, made with lips closed and with vibrations felt in the whole head, represents the transformative energy of the universe

The silence that follows the sound of Aum, known as Turiya, represents the absolute consciousness and pervades the three prior states.





"OM. The eternal Word is all: what was, what is and what shall be, and what beyond is in Eternity. All is OM."

Mandukya Upanishad



तत्त्वमसि

tat tvam asi  
You are That

richard fowler **yoga**

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