



TOP TEN

PRO YOGA TIPS



Welcome!

Welcome to a transformative journey! You're about to discover ten incredible tips that will elevate your yoga experience to new heights. They're simple enough to add them to your yoga practice starting right now!

I'm Vikky Santana, your guide on this exciting path. With 37 years of personal practice and over 14 years of teaching, I've gathered these gems not just from my journey but from witnessing the amazing benefits in my students' practice.

Your journey is unique and I'm here to support every step of the way. These secrets are more than just tips; they're the keys to unlocking a deeper, more fulfilling yoga practice.

So, take a deep breath, embrace your inner strength, and let's dive into this adventure together. Your yoga journey is about to get even more incredible!

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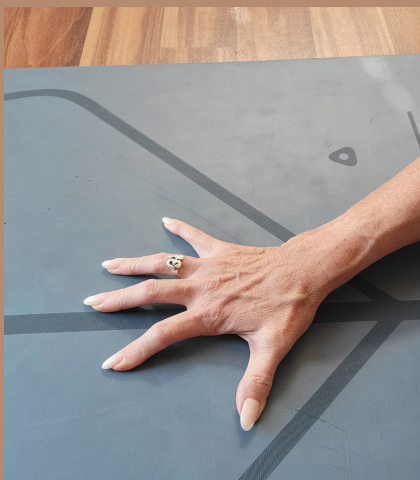
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01



PTFMA



I call walking controlled falling. What I mean is that our foot gets in front of us just in time to stop us from falling. We use momentum for locomotion. It's no surprise we've adopted it in our yoga practice.

Pushing the f***ing mat away (PTFMA) with whatever is touching the mat is the ONE secret that changes everything! When we push the mat away, we activate muscles deep down and they in turn create a 'cage' of safe range of motion."

Even better, when we PTFMA we are being incredibly efficient. The right muscles are turned on and that means weaker muscles are not compensating. Our yoga practice becomes invigorating instead of exhausting.

Next time you're in chaturanga, PTFMA with the hands more than you think necessary. Pretend my hand is between your shoulder blades and you are pushing the mat away enough to push into my hand with your upper back.

02



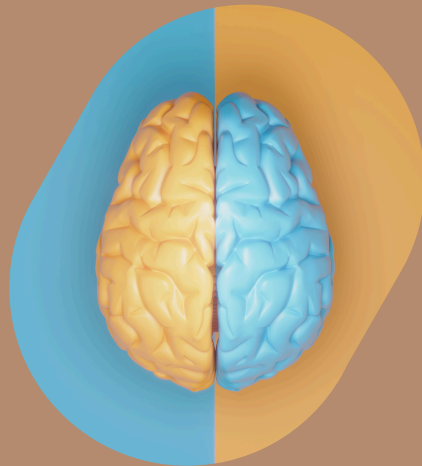
Belling Breathing

We've become a nation of chest breathers. Our breath is short, fast and shallow. This activates the part of the nervous system for fight/flight/freeze and it reduces the amount of resources available in our practice. In our daily lives, chest breathing activates our stress response so before anything even goes 'wrong' we are tense. Let's change this.

Lay on your back and place your hand on your belly. As you inhale, visualize the belly gently rising as it fills with breath. It's a very gentle process. Don't force the belly forward. Allow the breath to simply and gently fill the belly. When it's time to exhale let the breath go and it will easily leave the body. We start learning it laying our backs because it's easier to feel it while the spine is neutral.

After ten cycles you'll find you're notably calmer. Incorporate this into your practice and your life. It's a a game changer.

03



Compartmentalize

I understand. Our lives are often hectic. We attempt to squeeze an overwhelming amount of tasks into limited time, leaving us drained. It might seem tempting to tackle several tasks simultaneously for efficiency, but I must point out that our brains aren't wired for that. The truth is, we can't genuinely concentrate on more than one thing at a time.

This same principle of multitasking has been integrated into the way we construct our yoga poses. The essence of our yoga practice lies in learning to isolate different aspects of our breathing and gradually building poses step-by-step.

By mastering the art of compartmentalizing our thoughts and honing our focus, we expend less energy and become remarkably efficient and productive.

Consider the vinyasa sequence as an example. It comprises four unique poses. Many of us tend to use momentum to “get through it.”

By slowing down and applying one breath to each part of the the vinyasa you master each pose. You'll make bigger and more solid progress by building any pose one step at a time.

04



When to Inhale/Exhale

Twisting and folding while our lungs are fully expanded from an inhale, is challenging. This difficulty likely leads us to forcibly pull and push ourselves into yoga poses. However, this approach is essentially a battle against physics. For instance, if we engage in a Forward Fold while inhaling, we end up working against the natural expansion of our body cavity. The air in our lungs has volume. It takes up physical space. Apply the following simple concepts.

Twist and fold on exhalation. Back bend and exit folds and twists on inhalation.

These principles apply consistently, regardless of whether you're sitting, standing, in a handstand, or headstand.

05



Where to Gaze

Balancing is essentially a feedback loop involving motion, touch, and sight. The sensory input we receive through our eyes plays a crucial role in dictating how our body responds to visual stimuli.

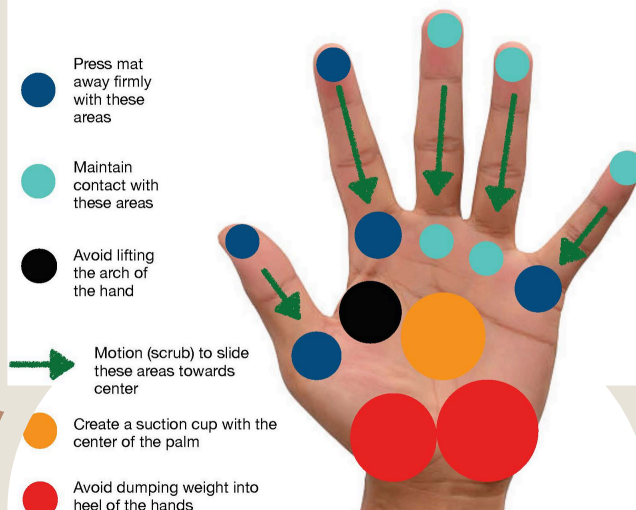
In standing yoga poses, if we fix our gaze on our reflection or our instructor, we're focusing on something in motion. Our eyes then send signals to the body to make adjustments based on these visual cues. There's a good chance that if we are gazing on something moving, we won't find balance.

However, focusing on a stationary point can convey a sense of stability to the body. While there are nine Drishti, or focal points, in yoga, let's simplify it. The key is to gaze using the eyes without turning, tucking, or dropping the head.

In standing balance poses, keep your jaw parallel to the mat and direct your gaze just past the tip of your nose to a point on the ground in front of you. Maintain this laser-like focus while entering, holding, and exiting the pose.

06

How To Activate Hands in Yoga And Avoid Wrist and Shoulder Pain



Talk with the Hand

Our hands play a vital role in our yoga practice, functioning much like an additional pair of feet. The way we engage our hands significantly impacts the strength, power, and conditioning of our upper body. It's crucial to practice balancing the pressure on our hands during poses.

The key point to remember is to resist the temptation to place your weight on or push down with the heels of your hands, as indicated by the red circles in the image. With consistent practice, you'll learn to distribute your weight across other areas of your hands more effectively.

One effective technique is to grip the mat with your fingertips. This action not only helps root your hands but also activates the muscles in your forearms, which are the primary source of hand strength. By focusing on this aspect, you can enhance your yoga practice and build greater upper body resilience.

07



Scrubbing

In yoga, "scrubbing" is a technique to activate muscles in the hands and feet by creating a sliding motion without actual movement. This deepens muscle activation up the arms and legs. It involves a sliding motion, where the hands or feet themselves don't actually move, but instead, the muscles up the arms and legs are deeply activated.

To help you get started, here are some key poses where scrubbing can be effectively applied:

- For the Heels of Hands Scrubbing Inward:
 - In arm balances, use scrubbing to create stability and strength.
 - In Chaturanga, scrubbing can enhance muscle engagement and support the pose.
 - In Upward Facing Dog, this technique aids in distributing weight evenly and strengthening the arms.
- For the Heels of the Feet Scrubbing Inward:
 - In standing backbends, scrubbing helps in grounding and stability.
 - In Bridge pose, this technique aids in activating the leg muscles more deeply.

These practices illustrate how scrubbing can be an integral part of yoga, enhancing strength, stability, and engagement in various poses.

08



Co-Activating Muscles

If you've ever felt a burning sensation in your front thigh during Warrior I or II, it's often due to unintentionally overworking the quadriceps. These muscles are smaller and tire more quickly.

Instead, focus on engaging the larger and stronger gluteal muscles:

1. Ensure optimal alignment and be aware of the three corners of both feet on the mat.
2. While maintaining full-foot contact with the mat, emphasize pushing slightly more with the outer edge of both feet and the heels (pinkie toe side).
3. Experiment with the intensity of this push. A moderate amount is effective; too much can cause imbalance in the feet.

This adjustment helps distribute the effort more effectively, reducing strain on the quadriceps and engaging the stronger glutes.

09



One Legged Poses

If your ankle tends to roll outward in Tree Pose or other single-leg standing poses, it might be because you're unconsciously pushing the mat away with the outside of your standing foot or not pushing the mat away at all.

When we don't PTFMA, we miss the chance to activate muscles. This not only gives us strength but creates a sort of cage around joints facilitating stability.

With single leg standing pocus focus on pressing down through the base of your big toe. This action activates the arch of your foot, providing a grounding and stabilizing effect. The big toe and its mound play a crucial role in balancing as we walk, although we often do this without thinking.

Fun Fact: Your big toe carries 2 x times more weight than all the other toes combined!

In yoga, we aim to consciously engage these natural tools, enhancing our balance and stability in poses.

10



Savasana

You've heard the meme, "Every time someone leaves Savasana early, a unicorn dies." Ok that's not true....duh.

Here's why it is important. From a physical standpoint, Savasana plays a crucial role in calming the nervous system and integrating the changes experienced during the yoga practice. After the physical exertions and challenges of various poses, Savasana offers a moment of complete rest. This allows the body to shift from the active, stimulated state often induced by exercise to a more restful, parasympathetic state.

The takeaway is in Savasana we're giving our nervous system the chance to switch to rest and digest. Then when we emerge into the world we're not in a self created state of stress which leaves us over sensitive to the challenges of life.



Having devoted 37 years, approximately 62% of my life, to studying and practicing yoga, I've gained profound insights into this discipline. However, it wasn't until about 20 years into my practice that I encountered a plateau. This moment prompted me to delve deeply into various aspects of yoga – anatomy, physiology, philosophy, diverse styles and traditions, psychology, and neurology.

Looking back, I realize how much more enriched my earlier practice could have been if the teachings in group classes had intertwined specific activational mechanics of poses with the philosophical, psychological and neurological aspects of the mind.

"I discovered the true extent of my abilities when I released myself from the burden of expectations."

Since that realization, I've made a conscious choice to incorporate this depth into my own classes. My primary goal for you, as my student, is to provide the information, support, and freedom necessary for you to thoroughly explore both your yoga practice and your life. This approach is devoid of judgment, criticism, and withholding of information – principles that guide not only my teaching but also my personal practice.

Teaching and practicing yoga is my life's work, and I hope that you find profound value in the teachings I share. My aim is to offer a holistic and enriching yoga experience that extends beyond physical poses, touching upon the deeper layers of self-awareness and personal growth.

Vikky

Support Streams



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I've made Evolution Yoga in Coconut Creek Florida my home studio. It's an amazing place where all types of yogis come, evolve and thrive.



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