

Shanti Yoga Teacher Training

Shanti Yoga School

Halloween Hips

Awareness, Patience, Release = Transformation

Physiologically, hips are the nexus between upper and lower body. They house the keystone of our body, the sacrum. The sacrum can also be thought of as the seat of our home, the hara. It is the root of our spine. The pelvic girdle, including the sacrum, stabilizes and provides movement for all that lies below and above.

In yogic philosophy, the hips are associated with the first and second chakras which also relate to our foundation, our roots and our feeling of safety.

Opening Meditation:

Visualize an oak tree and ponder its qualities: strength, endurance, stability, deep-rootedness and an ability to draw up nourishment. Mentally repeat affirmation based on the qualities of the tree: "I have the strength to endure the upheavals of life." "I am grounded and secure." "I embody courage." "I draw sustenance from the world around me." Before you move, express gratitude to the tree.

Opening (5 minutes)

Begin with a check-in pose, a pose to return to throughout the class & especially at the end, when you invite students to notice changes after a patient practice of hip-opening. The pose should be gentle enough to be practiced without much preparation (standing forward bend with hands on a block for support, reclining pigeon pose (**ankle-to-opposite-knee hip stretch**) or reclining one-leg hamstring stretch using a strap). Guide students to only go as far as they can comfortably. Let them know that sensation is information about where they are in the present moment. As you relax, introduce basic anatomy info about the hips that will encourage the theme of awareness/patience. Explain that the hips have many layers of muscles, and that as one layer relaxes, they may become aware of the sensation in a deeper muscle. Encourage them to explore the "mystery not the mastery" of the pose as the sensation shifts in a pose. Intersperse **Happy Baby** between sides....again, providing an opportunity to become more aware.

Warm-up (10 - 15 minutes)

Draw **knees to chest**, one at a time for warming up the groins & outer hips. **Straight legs lowering** to feel the work of the gluteals to stabilize. Add the block between the knees ab work to build awareness of our hip muscles to stabilize. Reclined Eagle hip stretch & twist to stretch the muscles just worked. **Bridge Pose & locust**, palpate gluteus. Supta Padangusthasana w/ strap to stretch outer thighs.

Roll up to **cat pose** & do dog & cat tilts to further explain action of pelvic girdle on lumbar & hamstrings. Then to **Cow Face Pose**, explaining the thumb imprint. Interweave the fingers & lift from thumb print up through arms (up through Psoas)....find this length as we move into standing poses.

Standing Poses (15 - 20 minutes)

Goddess pelvic clock swirls

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Sq Hips - Low lunge, Down dog, Powerful Squat, Crescent, Warrior 1, Revolved Triangle Open Hips - Warrior 2, Triangle, Side Angle

(explain the difference between open & square hips & counterposing). These poses create heat in the hips and prepare for deep opening.

Build up to standing balancing poses (**Tree & Shooting Bow**) that use deep rotator muscles of the hips to anchor/stabilize the balance. To bring the theme of patience to this part of the class, stay in the poses a little bit longer than students are accustomed to & encourage them to find a way to be both steady and comfortable. "What would you do differently in this pose if you had no idea whether we could be here for 5 more breaths or 500 more breaths? What can you do to relax unnecessary struggle in the pose, while still honoring its integrity?" Complete with an integrating flow series that incorporates all the above poses.

Deep Release (15 - 20 minutes)

After a sufficiently challenging standing sequence, students will be eager to explore yoga poses that require less effort and that are more grounded. For this, choose a sequence that will stretch muscles all the way around the hip. **Seated forward bends**, including head to knee pose, can emphasize the hamstrings and lower back. Crossed-legged poses, including **Cow Face Pose** (esp the PNF hand clasp), provide greater access to the abductors and external rotators of the hip. **Seated side bend** allow students to feel how the muscles of the side trunk and low back connect to the pelvis. Low lunges and reclining hero pose open the hip flexors. **Bound Angle** and **Wide Angle forward bend** open the groin and adductors. **Pigeon pose** might be a good peak pose, as it requires openness in many of these areas. Once you've made instructions for entering and modifying the poses clear, give students a bit of silence to simply be in the pose. It typically takes students five breaths to shift their focus from listening and trying to understand the pose, to actually experiencing the pose. After five breaths, ask students to notice what they feel, and then give them the space to observe sensation. Let students know that the sensation of stretch should dissolve rather than intensify.

Closing (5 minutes)

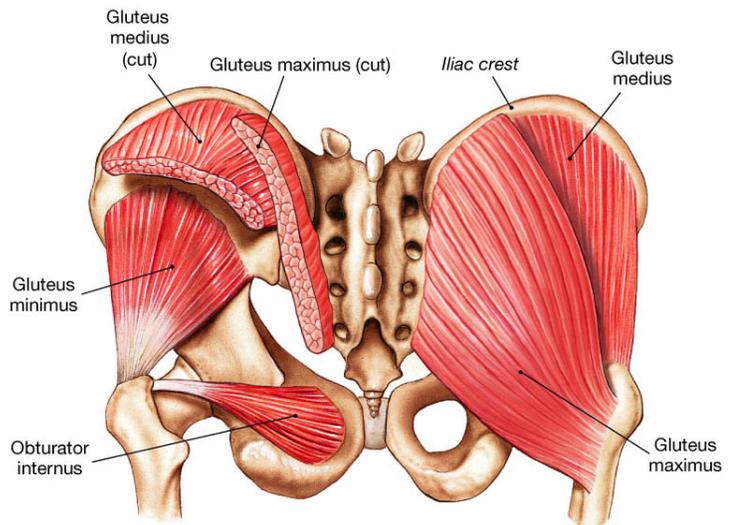
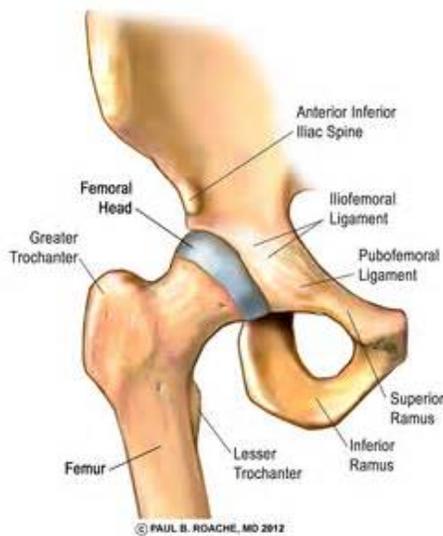
Bring students back to the same check-in pose from the opening of class. Ask them to notice how the pose feels now. Ask if certain landmarks (such as how far they can reach in the pose) have changed. Students who have practiced with sensitivity and patience throughout class may observe that the internal experience of the pose (the sensation of stretch) has stayed relatively the same, while the external shape of the pose has deepened dramatically. Others may notice that the essential shape of the pose is the same, but it is a much more comfortable place to be. Both observations demonstrate the take-home message of the practice: when we practice with patient awareness & persistence, transformation occurs.

Notes

- Throw away your file folders!
- Position feet in a way that feels good to YOU! There's no one-size fits all.
- Explore your own range of motion in YOUR pelvis. Find YOUR neutral.
- Healthy movement is a little movement in a lot of places.
- Avoid repetitive stress.

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- Create variety.
- Back out and then back in to poses. Be playfully aware, curious & compassionate.
- When possible, choose open-chained movement.
- Consider hybrids of Warrior 1 and 2.
- Teachers...
 - Remember, your job is to empower students, to make yourself unneeded.
 - Encourage your students to always get props & show them ways to use them.
 - Never go back and forth between open and closed hip repeatedly. When you do make transitions, unweight the front leg.
 - Build stability first. Understand that hyper mobility is where most injuries occur.
 - Learn what poses can offer as far as muscular engagement, release, and stability as a way to guide people's focus to what is happening in postures
 - Let yourself or your students position their feet and/or hands in an asymmetrical way even in symmetrical poses.
 - Consider creating classes that allow for repetitive exploration of similar joint positions.
 - Consider dynamic exploration of each pose before settling on the static shape.
 - Consider not moving people in unison and allow for exploration so they have a better chance of exploring and figuring out what works for them.
 - Enjoy, experiment, and trust yourself, you're the best operator of your body, learn to use it well!



(c) Gluteal and lateral rotators, posterior view