

## A BARE YOGA PRACTICE TO BENEFIT THE PELVIC FLOOR

BREATHE ~ ALIGN ~ RELAX ~ ENGAGE

Sequence by Robin Bourjaily, E-RYT500

BREATHE



Breathing deeply into the belly helps tone the abdominal muscles and release and relax the pelvic floor muscles.

Lie on your back, knees bent, a thin folded towel or blanket under your head (optional). Place your hands on your belly, fingers touching, and begin slow, rhythmic breathing in and out through your nose. Try to match the length of your inhale to the length of your exhale.

## Cat/Cow



Make your way slowly from your back to all fours. In Cat/Cow, you'll follow the deep, rhythmic breathing you've established with full flexion and extension of your spine. Exhale and round your back, looking toward your thighs. Inhale and drop the belly, lift your eyes and your sits bones. Follow your breath, moving slowly. Repeat 8x.

Calf Stretch



Spinal Balance



After Cat/Cow, return to a neutral spine. Step your right foot back, tuck the toes against the floor. Stretch into the calf and breathe. Float the right heel, square your hips, and extend the left arm forward. Keep breathing as you extend from fingers to toes. Place the hand down and then the knee. Repeat on the second side.



Downward Facing Dog



From all fours, place your hands slightly ahead of your shoulders and a little wider. Tuck your toes, inhale, and on the exhale lift your hips to the sky in an upside down V shape. Keep the hips high, the neck neutral, and the heels reaching toward the floor.

Forward Fold



Half-lift Forward Fold



From Downward Facing Dog, walk your feet forward to your hands, bending your knees. When your feet are underneath your hips and parallel, lengthen your legs by engaging your quadriceps. On an inhale, slide your hands up the fronts of your shins and lengthen your spine, looking ahead of your feet. On an exhale relax back into a full fold. When you're ready to come to standing, either roll up or come up with a flat back in a reverse swan dive.

ALIGN

Tadasana – Standing in Alignment



Stand with your feet parallel, no more than six inches apart. Lift all of your toes, and feel the four corners of each foot root down. Lift up the front of the body as you soften down the back. In your mind's eye, line the center of your ears over your shoulders, your shoulders over your hips, your hips over your ankles.

Extensions



With your arms at T, bend your elbows with hands up toward the sky, palms forward. Imagine a walnut between your shoulder blades. Crack the walnut by squeezing your shoulder blades toward one another. Relax to neutral. Repeat 10x.



Chin Retractio



Starting in neutral, draw the head straight back, the chin parallel to the floor. Extend the chin forward, and draw back again. Repeat 10x.





## RELAX

The following poses relax the pelvic floor muscles even as they engage and stretch other muscles.

### Chair Pose



From standing, lift your arms over your head and sit back, reaching for a chair that isn't there. Arms, legs, and feet all stay parallel while you breathe and hold. Stand up before you fatigue. Repeat two to three times.

Goddess Pose



Step your feet three feet apart and turn your toes out. Bend your knees (knees wider than toes) and sit back with your hips. Take your arms to T and bend at the elbows. Hold and breathe, straightening your legs before you fatigue.

## Bridge Lifts



Lie on your back with knees bent and feet parallel. Squeeze your shoulder blades together, lifting your heart. Keep your chin off your chest and do not look to the left or right when you lift your hips. Draw your knees toward your toes and your heart toward your nose, keeping the glutes soft as you begin the lift and engaging the glutes to lift your hips higher only if your low back is comfortable. Inhale to lift the hips, exhale to lower. Repeat 10x.



## ENGAGE

## Kegels



Lying on your back with your legs propped up or your feet on the floor or sitting up tall in a straight-backed chair, try Kegel exercises three ways. Be honest with yourself—if you can't do the first movement easily, don't move on to the second until you can.

1. Locate your sits bones on the right and left. Draw them toward each other and then as you exhale lift/squeeze the pelvic floor muscles from that engaged place. Relax fully. Repeat 10x.
2. Bring your awareness to your pubic bone and your tailbone. Draw them toward each other and then as you exhale lift/squeeze the pelvic floor muscles from that engaged place. Relax fully. Repeat 10x.
3. Bring your awareness to all four bones. Draw the sits bones toward one another and the pubic bone and tailbone toward one another. On an exhale, engage and lift/squeeze the pelvic floor muscles. Relax fully. Repeat 10x.

\*\*\*Remember: relaxing the PFM's is as important as engaging/working them.

## Relax (BARE Bonus)



A good yoga practice always ends with a full-body relaxation called *Savasana* (translation, corpse pose). Lying flat allows the most muscles possible to relax at one time. The goal is to let the yoga practice work its magic on your body and your energy. If you're more comfortable with your legs up the chair, as in the Kegel section, that's a great relaxing pose too. Once you're comfortable, return your awareness to your breath. Close your eyes. Stay here 5–10 minutes.

## The Guest House

by Rumi

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

1207–1273, Islamic Philosopher from Persia



## EVERYDAY SUPERHEROES: YOGA & THE CONTENT PELVIS

### PowerPoint Presentation Summary

A content pelvis is comfortable, balanced, and continent. Yoga offers accessible practices that help cultivate a content pelvis.

#### Session Overview

- ✓ Explore pelvic anatomy, with special emphasis on the pelvic floor
- ✓ Learn and practice yoga-based movements to improve pelvic health for care providers and patients
- ✓ Relax and restore for pelvic and care-provider health

#### Objective

By the end of the session you will be able to teach back one way to incorporate yoga for continence into your professional work or personal life.

#### A Contented Pelvis

It's no accident that content and continent come from the same Latin root, continere. Con "together" + tenere "hold"

- as in, hold together
- related words in English: contain/container/content
- another meaning: stay – be as you are, don't change or flee: content

#### Pelvic Floor may be compromised by

- Childbirth
- Injury
- Trauma
- Overwork

#### Pelvic Floor is daily compromised by

- Standing out of alignment
- Sitting with a rounded spine (spine in flexion)

When the pelvic floor muscles (PCMs) are overworked and/or out of alignment, they get tight, weak, and unbalanced. PCMs that do not contract and, most importantly, relax successfully contribute to pelvic floor issues including urinary and fecal incontinence, overactive bladder, pelvic floor dysfunction, painful intercourse, and organ and rectal prolapse.

#### Healthy Pelvic Floor Muscles, like all healthy muscles

- Contract (fire)
- Extend (lengthen or stretch)
- Relax\*\*\*Most Important!

## Bio

Robin Bourjaily, E-RYT 200, E-RYT 500, emphasizes experiential anatomy, alignment, and joy in her yoga classes. Having completed her 500-hour teacher training in 2017 at Sun Moon Yoga in Mankato, MN, Robin offers workshops, clinics, and classes in yoga-based anatomy, yoga teacher training, and—combining her two passions—yoga and creativity. Robin holds a master’s degree in creative nonfiction from the University of Iowa. She is a writer, an entrepreneur, a yoga educator, an editor, and a mother of two. She’d especially like to thank Laura Kiely, her daughter and the model for these yoga poses.

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