

Asana Excellence Series: Refining and Energizing Alignment

Course objectives

At the completion of this course, the participant will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the body's two possible organizational strategies for gravity orientation
- ✓ Explain the concept 'base of support' and how it affects the body in a yoga pose
- ✓ Explain the concept 'dimensionality' and how it affects the body in a yoga pose
- ✓ Identify the 3 options for proper alignment & the 3 options for weight distribution
- ✓ Identify the 4 configurations of toe structure
- ✓ Identify the 2 primary muscles groups used in internal core stabilization
- ✓ Teach the 'pelvic lift' exercise to activate internal core support

- ✓ Teach two yoga poses for training hip stability during single leg balances
- ✓ Teach two exercises that train abduction/adduction of the scapula
- ✓ Identify (recognize the appearance of) 'hip hiking,' and offer a cue to correct it
- ✓ Identify (recognize the appearance of) hunched shoulders, and offer a cue to correct it

- ✓ Demonstrate and describe the proper activation / alignment of the thighs (inward or outward) for the following types of yoga postures:
 - Standing, Forward bends, Back bends, Inverted

- ✓ Identify and demonstrate at least one yoga pose that will benefit (energize) each of the following organs and glands:
 - Stomach
 - Liver
 - Small and large intestines
 - Pancreas
 - Gall bladder
 - Spleen
 - Bladder
 - Kidneys
 - Heart
 - Diaphragm (muscle)
 - Lungs
 - Brain
 - Adrenal glands
 - Thymus gland
 - Thyroid & parathyroid glands
 - Pituitary gland
 - Pineal gland

- ✓ Describe and demonstrate the following three mudras:
 - Cin –mudra, Jnana-mudra, Dhyana-mudra

◆ *How does the body's organization toward gravity affect posture, alignment and attitude?*

Before we introduce the two possible organizational strategies for gravity orientation, let's start with some basic background material. There are two theoretical gravity centers in the body:

1. G – the lower gravity center (pronounced “gee”)
2. G' – the upper gravity center (pronounced “gee prime”)

We are all familiar with G, the lower gravity center of the body. The approximate location of G is a point slightly below and anterior to spinal levels L – 3 and L – 4 (just below the navel). G is the center of gravity around which the lower girdle operates (Frank, 29). New to many of us is the concept of G', which is the higher gravity center of the body. The approximate location of G' is in the center of the chest, at a point anterior to spinal level T – 4. G' relates to the gravity-organization of the head, trunk and shoulder girdle (Frank, 29).

In their optimal placement, both G and G' will be located along the body's central channel, which runs slightly anterior to the spinal column. However, both G and G' rarely line up exactly as they should. Thus there are four possible arrangements regarding the relative locations of G and G' in the body. To keep this concept simple and easy to understand, we will classify the four arrangements in terms of being more anterior or more posterior to the body's central channel. Here are the four possibilities and what they look like:

1. G' anterior; G posterior
2. G' posterior; G anterior
3. G' anterior; G anterior
4. G' posterior; G posterior

EXPERIENCE IT! Take a few moments to align your own body in each of the four configurations. Notice what type of attitude, emotions, or perspective seems to arise within you as a result of each postural adaptation. Specifically, did you notice a difference in your characteristic sense of self when G' was in the anterior position vs. the posterior position? In general, most people feel that G' in the anterior placement produces a more confrontational, aggressive, and ambitious attitude, while G' in the posterior placement produces a more apologetic, subservient, shy, or withdrawn attitude.