



MORNING YOGA FOR BODHISATTVAS: Body, Heart, and Mind

WEEK 1:

SAKYAMUNI'S BODY OF HUMAN PATH

REALIZING SOMATIC ARCHETYPAL QUALITIES, inspired
by Taigen Leighton's *Faces of Compassion*

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Before you begin

How do I understand Bodhisattva

archetypes in body, heart, and mind? How can I learn to study qualities of awakening from a skillful stance of alert repose? How can I study concentration without pitting parts of my body and mind against each other?

This eight-week class focuses on somatic practice of the qualities of an awakening being, seeds of which are and have always been in our own body and mind. I offer these practices to support your stability and ease in seated practices.

The method of this class is to apply Iyengar yoga practice — known for attention, awareness, and inclusion of all parts of body and mind — to our practice of Buddha's Four Noble Postures of sitting, standing, walking, and lying down. Yoga was developed to learn concentration and meditation. Though zazen itself is not learning meditation, yoga training helps us develop the capacity of the levels and layers of embodied life to meditate and realize the Buddha Way. In these 45-minute classes, we do a yoga pose and then sit to feel what we have done.



The poses and practices presented here are suitable for most beginners. You can come as you are and choose a level of support appropriate for your current condition. For instance, to protect the wrists or support a stiff body, place the hands on blocks or a chair, instead of the floor. You can explore by repeating poses or actions, gently and gradually building your capacity in a pose or an action. Yoga is a developmental and educational practice for body, heart, and mind. Quality is more important than quantity.

Though this photo guide can help support your practice, it does not replace your own physician or your own teacher, who can set safety boundaries, observe you, and offer corrective advice. If you have questions or doubts about your ability to do a pose or an action, please seek the guidance of a qualified professional to support your explorations.

Thank you for your presence and practice.



1 MOTIVATION “ME”

Many motivations are possible

on the path. For instance, practice can be exercise for physical health.

URDHVA HASTASANA VARIATIONS:

- Stand with the feet hip width apart.
- Bring arms up and down several times, palms forward.
- Now bring arms up and down several times, palms facing each other.
- Now stand once again with the feet hip width apart. Notice the changes in body and mind, when you practice as exercise for physical health.
- Practice “to benefit me” is a valid motivation, for health.



1 MOTIVATION “ALL”

The Buddha’s archetypal quality of motivation was “for all beings.” He practiced with the aim of united, integrated benefit for all beings inside and out.

URDHVA HASTASANA:

- Stand with feet at hip width. Close eyes to feel and equalize weight on front and back foot, inner and outer foot. Now stand with eyes open.
- Repeat “Palms forward arms up”, with hips, back body, shoulder blades and backs of hand in line with heels. This helps you feel and bring the shoulder blades to support the ribs.
- Now repeat “Palms forward arms up” with fingernails in line with outer heels, palms with inner heels. This allows you to feel outer body distinct from inner body.
- Stand in Tadasana or sit upright to find new “beings” now included in your physical attitude.



2 TRUTH OF SUFFERING

While still Prince Shakyamuni, the Buddha awakened to the truth of suffering, and the unavailability of sickness, old age, and death.

ADHOMUKHA SVANASANA with SHOULDER ACTIONS

- Start on all fours, palms flat, index fingers forward. First, repeat the action of “shoulder blades to the back of the chest” from the Tadasana variations. Straighten the legs and go to Adhomukha Svanasana.
- You may find your stiffness or your obstacles as you translate an action from one pose to another. Good! Stiffness is usually a slight or moderate pain that you can work with.
- Extend one arm forward, first palm down, then palm-elbow-upper arm facing the midline, to explore and resolve the stiffness. Then keeping the shoulder blades to the back of the chest and the upper arms up, straighten your legs and draw your thighs back to go into the pose. As you repeat these actions, you can discover and face deeper levels of stiffness.



3 Leaving Home

On realizing the truth of suffering, Prince Shakyamuni left home. In daily life, we can renounce our attachment to unconscious “auto-pilot” conditioning, and discover more authentic ways of being.

UTTHITA HASTA PADASANA



- Stand in Tadasana, with feet and legs together. As in the first Tadasana, equalize the weight on the front and back, inner and outer foot.
- Now separate the legs. What happened to the ways your feet carry the weight of the body?
- Go back and forth. Can you discover how to stand with legs wide, to equalize the weight on the front and back, inner and outer foot?
- Plot spoiler: Standing with feet together, we can equalize the weight. With feet apart, autopilot takes weight to the inner foot. With legs wide, keep weight on the outer edge of the foot.

3 Leaving Home Anew

When the leg position changed, our feet could no longer be on auto-pilot. We had to go deeper to find a more personal and authentic understanding

of how the weight can be equalized on the inner and outer edges of each foot.

SUPPORTED PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA

- Now place the hands on a chair, on blocks, or on the floor. Keep the weight equalized on the inner and outer edges, and on the front and back of each sole. Keep the weight equal on the two feet.
- What happens to the mind when you add:
 - Thighs back as in Adhomukha Svanasana
 - Shoulder blades to the ribs as in Urdhva Hastasana
 - Return to Tadasana to observe body-mind changes.





4 Effort and Concentration

Prince Siddhartha practiced with the greatest yogis of the time. The very refined states of concentration did not resolve his main question of how to end human suffering.

Though he mastered space and time, as soon as his meditative effort ended, so did his concentration. Next he practiced asceticism to conquer the mind. But he realized that to truly address suffering, he could not pit one part of body and mind against another. He dropped his ascetic practice and learned the middle way.

CHATUSH PADASANA

- Place a block under the sacrum at a medium-effort height for you. Press the upper arms and soles of the feet down, and lift the buttocks off the block. Experienced practitioners, no block; hold the ankles.
- Shoulder blades in, buttocks to hamstrings, hamstrings to buttocks.
- Balance the effort in every part of the body. Quiet the face and mind, and go in.



5 Study the Human Condition

So far we have been studying concentration of body and mind. We have walked in Prince Siddhartha's footsteps of effort, and letting go of effort. The turning point came when he took food and sat under the Bodhi tree, to apply

strong, refined powers of concentration to the human condition. That night, Prince Siddhartha went beyond meditative effort and concentration. He faced and resolved desire, aversion, and confusion. When the morning star rose, he said, "How wonderful! I now see that all beings are fully endowed with the virtuous characteristics of the fully awakened ones." Prince Siddhartha had realized Buddhahood, and spend the rest of his life teaching and exemplifying the Path.

SUKHASANA VARIATIONS:

- In a simple cross-legged position, rest the head and arms on a block or chair — to each side and to the front.
- Now sit in a comfortable position to integrate what you have done.
- Thanks!