

Teaching details of Yoga Therapy Retreat with Doug Keller May 31 – June 3, 2018, Kranzbichlhof

Prana Blocks and Fascial Distortions; Their Connection to Our Patterns of Movement in Asana

Doug will introduce the Fascial Distortion Model, presented in yoga- and user-friendly terms, relate it to traditional approaches from the Hatha Yoga Pradipika and the Marma tradition, and will focus on the most relevant forms of recognizable fascial distortions approachable through yoga practice.

This will be coupled with the understanding of Movement Patterns and their Pain Syndromes (from 'stiff' to 'flexible') associated with these distortions (especially as they appear in yoga practice), and how to address releasing them. This will include a more in-depth look into the fascia itself — what it is, how it works, and how awareness of the nature of fascia can inform our practice.

The practice of poses connected with this theme will be an exploration of ways of entering into, flowing between, and holding poses that brings forth the energetic qualities held within the fascial matrix, the pranic storehouse of the mind-body.

'The Head is the Foundation'

Traditionally we think of the foundation of the body — in yoga and in our posture in life — in terms of the foundation set by the feet (and how the bones are 'stacked' above it).

But we can also look at freedom and spaciousness in posture and movement in terms of the placement and movement of the head upon the spine, with the maxim, "As above, so below." The guiding principle will be the yogic insights behind the 'bandhas' — Jalandhara bandha in particular.

Sessions based on this theme will focus on alignment and actions of the head and neck, combined with stabilization of the 'Core,' with special emphasis on stabilization in twists and head rotation — and how this attention to strengthening and the release of tension can bring greater freedom and better alignment in the rest of the body, particularly in the low back, sacrum and hips.

Insights into — and to be learned from — Scoliosis

The theme of spinal health will include an understanding of the asymmetries — side-bends and rotations of the spine that affect the rib cage, neck and shoulders — that are typical of **scoliosis** and which are also present to a much lesser degree in many of us who do not have scoliosis, but experience pain and difficulties from more subtle versions of these asymmetries.

This will include **practical tools for making assessments**, along with **tools of practice** that can be taught to students so that they can learn to be **self-correcting**, throughout the day as well as in their asana and breath practice.

This topic will lead us into basic **principles of shoulder alignment** combined with the breath and actions for the neck. We will cover all of the planes of movement for the shoulders in asana practice, which will be carried over into the next morning's asana practice.

The Myofascial 'Sutras' of the Arms

The work with the upper body will be carried over into the practice and into a deeper exploration of the **myofascial lines or 'sutras' that govern the actions of the arms** — the lines of larger muscles that govern the movement of the shoulder blades and give the arms their power, as well as the deeper lines of muscles that govern rotations and are crucial for the health of the rotator cuffs, elbows and wrists.

We will cover actions, 'openings' and stretches in non-weightbearing poses, as well as the challenges — and benefits — of poses in which the arms bear weight. Additional connections to scoliosis and asymmetries in the shoulders will be made, with suggestions for practice.

The Breath — and the Vayus

Afternoon sessions will include progressive treatment of the Vayus in relation to asana, pranayama and meditation. This approach will especially bring together deep actions of the core, the breath, the neck and shoulders in seated as well as reclining **pranayama** and breath-centered **meditation**. The breath practice will lead into **Yoga Nidra** combined with mantra awareness.

Mobilizing: Getting Stiff Students Moving Through Targeted Strengthening — and The Secrets of the Hamstrings

The problems of '**stiffness**' — particularly in the **hips and hamstrings** — that present a challenge in yoga class, as well as being a cause of typical pain problems in the lower back, are actually symptoms of our movement habits and patterns, particularly in forward bending (which is what we do more than anything else in our life of movement).

- We will explore the 'Lumbar Flexion' pattern of movement in the spine that is a significant cause of stiffness, and how to overcome it — which will strengthen the lower back, help overcome harmful postural habits, and help us make progress in achieving greater flexibility in the hamstrings and hips. Without awareness of these patterns, one can easily spend years doing hamstring stretches and see little progress!
- We will also cover sequencing for stretches that address hip pain caused by tightness, as well as sequencing for sciatic pain arising from problems in the piriformis.

Stabilizing: Helping Flexible Students Avoid Joint Pain and Injury

A problem faced by advancing yoga students as well as people drawn to yoga who are more innately flexible is the problem of **hypermobility** — which leads to joint pain and (ultimately) joint deterioration and inflammation, as well as pain in the muscles and ligaments that are meant to stabilize the joints.

- These problems arise from innate flexibility and even hypermobility, but are also made worse by movement habits and patterns that can be called the 'Lumbar Extension Syndrome' pattern of movement, which gives rise to imbalances in the use of muscles in yoga poses and in life.
- We will explore this 'Extension' pattern of the lumbar spine and how to overcome it — returning to strengthening the 'Core,' especially in relation to the psoas and hip flexors, as well as proper actions of the hamstrings and gluteals to help us make progress in balancing a healthy range of movement balanced with joint stability in yoga practice that can make the practice more pain and injury-free.
- Emphasis will especially be on promoting **sacral stability**, as well as poses and exercises addressing **hip pain** from a weak piriformis and hip abductors.

The ideas presented in this session can be helpful to moderately flexible students, as well as providing helpful tips for teachers dealing with overly flexible students.