

YOGA NOTES

March 2018

"Don't look away from tight places. Be present without judgment."

- Stephanie Snyder



In the eye of the beholder whether you look in, out or around

Almost four months ...

.. since we moved, and I am still astounded by the way things, and we, have settled. Once again I humbly understand how delicate everything works out if we just let it.

But in a fast paced life, with a great deal of expectation not only from ourselves but from others, it is great challenge and I need to remind myself of the beauty of life as it unfolds. Looking back it is obvious but the fear of the unknown, the future, still gets to me, every now and then.

The other day I had the pleasure of spending an entire day in the close company of the above Cape Eagle Owl. It only moved from one branch to the other in order to stay in the shade. A beautiful creature, who kept me mesmerized and intrigued to read up on owls. In some cultures they are associated with darkness, negativity or mystery and in other they are associated with wisdom and prophecy. I found it interesting how different we can look at such beautiful creature. To me it represents wisdom!

In Sweden I grew up with a childrens' program where a famous Swedish actor was made up as an owl on the roof of a cottage where a woman (equally famous actress) lived and he tried to educate her, and taught her words she didn't know. As she pretended to know, and tried to use the words, but incorrectly, her nose grew longer. He

then explained the meaning to her and when she put it in the right context, understanding the meaning, her nose went back to normal. So do not tell me an owl does not represent wisdom. Doh!

No matter if we refer to animals, like our view of the owl, the same applies for situations, judgements or just about anything; it is in the eye of the beholder. Depending on background, culture, upbringing, references and even preferences it is always subject to the beholder.

This I find comforting, as for me it is utterly impossible to be, do or act to please everybody. I can only be, do and act in a way to please myself.

At some stage in life we have all stressed about what other people think, trying to please everybody or fit in. For sure, certain things are easier to generalise and maybe even possible to label fairly commonly, like love, peace, freedom, etc, but it will still be subject to "the eye of the beholder". So why do we stress about others' views when we should only try to find our own true view.

To me this is important when I look at my own practice. When I try to connect with my intrinsic self I am "the eye of the beholder" which means I cannot compare myself to anybody else. I can only try my best to view from the only place that is true, my heart.

Namaste

Sucirandhrasana

Eye of the needle or thread the needle pose

Eye of the Needle is a supine (lying-down) yoga pose that relieves stiffness in the outer hips and lower back. If you spend a lot of time sitting, those muscles become tight and short due to the lack of use. This pose can feel great at the end of a long day of sitting at work, school, or in a car or airplane.

It is often taught near the end of a yoga class as a relaxing way to soothe and open the spine, hips, and low back.

Benefits of Eye of the Needle Pose

This pose stretches and opens the outer hips and low back, which increases the range of motion in the lower body. It also improves circulation throughout the legs, hips, and back, which can help reduce pain caused by stiffness and inactivity. In addition, this pose can help you keep the entire low back limber. It is a soothing counter-pose to backbends and spinal twists. Drawing your limbs in toward your torso causes your mind to naturally turn inward, which helps calm your thoughts, relieve stress, and soothe anxiety. Eye of the Needle Pose also increases blood flow to the pelvis and surrounding organs, which helps reduce digestive discomforts and menstrual pain in women.

Cautions

Avoid practicing this pose if you have a recent or chronic injury to your knees, hips, low back, or spine. Those with back pain, back injuries, or degenerative disk disease should approach this pose with caution, and should only attempt to practice it under the guidance of an experienced and knowledgeable instructor. Women who are pregnant should not practice this pose after the first trimester. Always work within your own range of limits and abilities. If you have any medical concerns, talk with your doctor before practicing yoga.

Instructions

- Begin by lying on your back with your legs extended and your arms resting alongside your body.
- Bend your knees, placing the soles of your feet flat on the floor. Separate your feet so they are hip-width apart. Your thighs should be parallel to each other.
- Straighten your left leg upward, extending your heel toward the ceiling. Then bend your left knee and cross your left ankle over your right knee. Bring your left, outer ankle to the outside of your right knee so your foot hovers in the air. Then flex your left foot, actively pressing through your heel while simultaneously pulling your toes back toward the left.
- On an exhalation, draw your right knee in toward your chest. Slide your left hand and forearm through the space between your legs and clasp both hands around the back of your right leg's thigh. If it is possible for you, hold onto your shin, instead.
- Keep your back flat on the mat. Release your shoulder blades down toward your waist. Broaden across your collarbones.
- Draw your tailbone and sacrum down toward the mat, lengthening your spine even more.
- Tuck your chin slightly and gaze down the center line of your body.
- Hold for up to one minute. Keep your breath smooth and even.
- With an exhalation, release your leg and place your right foot on the floor. Extend your left leg straight up to the ceiling again, and then bend your knee and place your left foot on the floor. Repeat the pose on the opposite side for the same amount of time.

Modifications & Variations

Eye of the Needle Pose is a calming stretch that can prepare your body for deeper rest and relaxation. There should be no pain and very little discomfort when practiced. If you need to modify the pose to make it more comfortable, try these simple changes to find a variation that works best for you:

If it is difficult to clasp your bottom thigh, use a yoga strap. Wrap the strap around the back of your thigh and hold each end of the strap with your hands.

To lessen the intensity of the stretch, bring the knee of your top leg further away from the side of your body. To deepen the stretch, bring your knee closer to the midline of your body.

If your stomach or chest is large, it might be difficult to clasp both hands around your thigh. Instead, draw your bottom leg slightly to the side of your body, toward its same-side armpit. Hold onto your thigh or shin with the same-side hand, and gently rest your opposite-side hand on your top leg's knee.

Tips

Practicing Eye of the Needle Pose can be a soothing way to reduce hip and back tension. Keep the following information in mind when practicing this pose: Keep your spine lengthening along the floor all the way through your tailbone. Resist the tendency to let your buttocks and hips lift off the mat. It is more important to have a long spine than to draw your knees tightly in toward your chest. If you have any discomfort in your head or neck, place a firm blanket under your head. Reduce Tension Gently

Practicing Eye of the Needle Pose is a gentle way to regain balance and equilibrium, especially after a long day of sitting. As you release excess tension and stretch out the muscles of your hips and low back, your mind will naturally begin to release stress. Practice this pose in the morning to help your body transition from sleeping to waking. Practicing it before bed will help you relax before slumber. It's a simple way to help your body, mind, and spirit stay balanced and calm throughout the day.

