

The Importance of Alignment

When it comes to alignment the first thing to remember is to listen to your body and never force your body into any postures or stretches. Yoga has a way of evolving naturally.

Be patient with yourself, as your alignment will change dramatically as you become more familiar with the yoga practice.

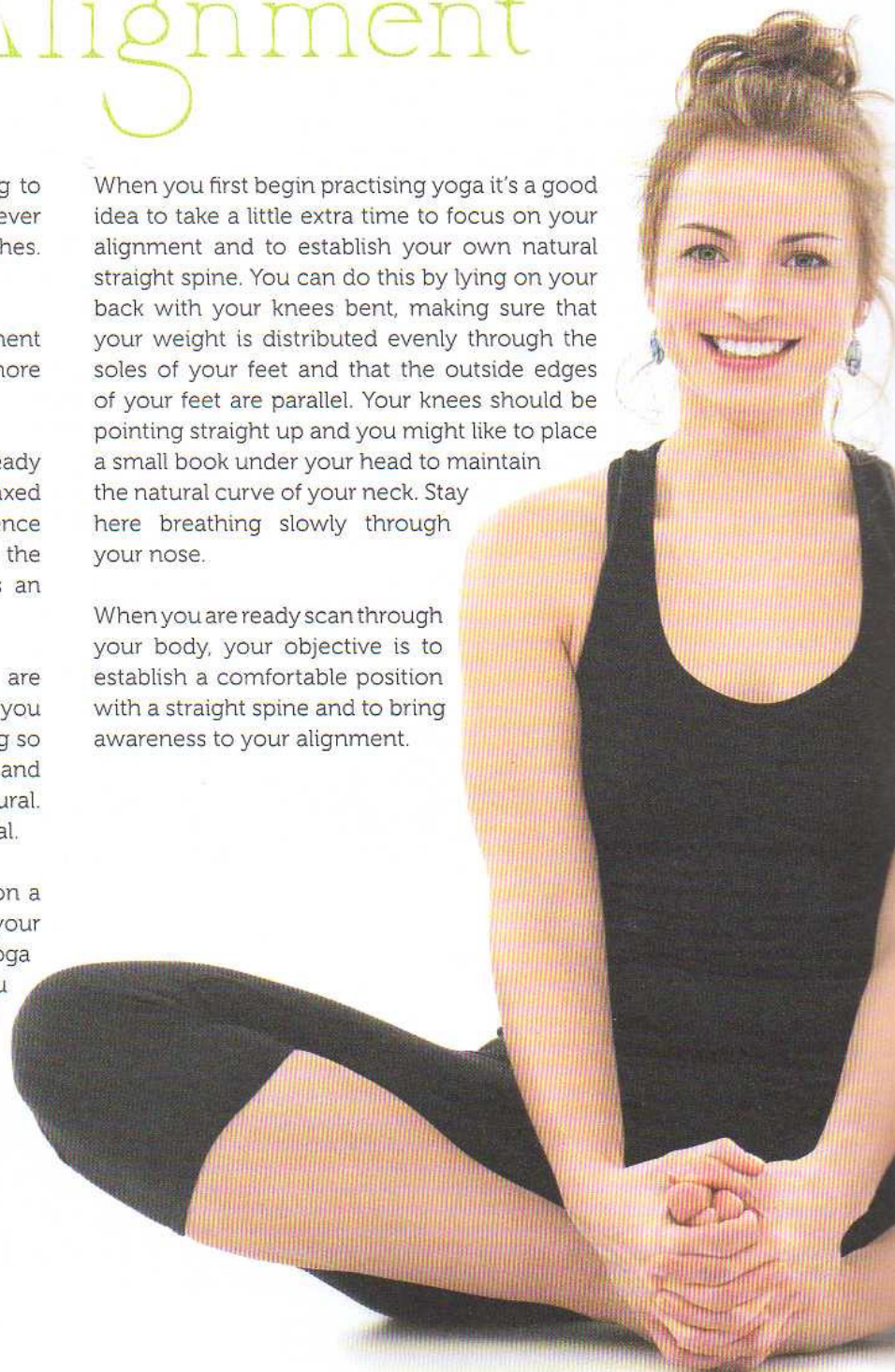
The word 'asana' translates to mean 'steady pose'. It is important to feel comfortable, relaxed and steady in each posture. If you experience pain or discomfort in any posture relax the posture and seek advice, there is always an alternative posture.

Start with basic yoga postures that are recommended for beginners. This will help you to establish a sound technique and in doing so the body will slowly become more agile and stronger, making progression safe and natural. As with anything a firm foundation is crucial.

Yoga helps us to connect with ourselves on a deeper level and will gradually filter into your life, but do not force the process. Use your yoga practice to get to know your body and how you feel as you move through different postures and shapes. By bringing awareness to your physical alignment you are developing and strengthening the connection between your mind, body and soul.

When you first begin practising yoga it's a good idea to take a little extra time to focus on your alignment and to establish your own natural straight spine. You can do this by lying on your back with your knees bent, making sure that your weight is distributed evenly through the soles of your feet and that the outside edges of your feet are parallel. Your knees should be pointing straight up and you might like to place a small book under your head to maintain the natural curve of your neck. Stay here breathing slowly through your nose.

When you are ready scan through your body, your objective is to establish a comfortable position with a straight spine and to bring awareness to your alignment.



Ask yourself the following questions: Are both sides of your body equal in length? Does your pelvis feel balanced? Are your knees pointing straight up? Is your weight distributed evenly through the soles of your feet? Are the outside edges of your feet parallel? Are both feet pointing straight forward? Do not make any big movements just ask the questions, breathe slowly and settle into your body. Practise this daily for ten minutes or longer if time permits.

In addition to the above, whenever you come to sit in a firm chair either at the dinner table or at work. Work through a similar checklist as you breathe slowly. Are you sitting with a straight spine? Do both sides of your body feel equal in length? Is your weight distributed evenly through the soles of your feet? Are your shoulders relaxed?

These simple techniques will bring awareness to your alignment. Do not force anything just let it happen.

Through a regular yoga practice we begin to realise that everything is connected. When we are correctly aligned everything works better.

Featured Posture

Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose)

This posture is great for alignment and will gently stretch the hips and inner thighs.

Sit with the soles of your feet together. Allow the knees to fall out to the side. Feel that you are growing out through the crown of your head, draw up your pelvic floor muscles and draw your navel back towards your spine. Allow your shoulders to broaden and fall away from your ears. Lightly hold onto your feet or rest the hands beside the hips. Let gravity take your knees down towards the ground, do not force anything, just breathe. Allow your breath to flow smoothly in and out through your nose. Work to lengthen your breath.

When you first practise this posture it is a good idea to sit on a yoga block, bolster or a few folded towels to elevate the hips.

"It is through the alignment of the body that I discovered the alignment of my mind, self, and intelligence."

B.K.S. Iyengar

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