

Introduction to SilverSneakers Yoga

Workshop Goals and Objectives:

- To learn the SilverSneakers Yoga class format.
- To update fitness industry standards and safety guidelines.
- To provide a platform for instructors to exchange ideas and ask questions.
- To learn and practice the development of standing and seated choreography suited to older adults, with modifications to meet a variety of fitness levels within a single class setting.
- To improve form and develop smooth transition skills for poses, vinyasas, and breathing exercises.

Important concepts from Core Knowledge and SilverSneakers Basic:

- Correct seated posture.
- Correct retrieval of equipment and water from the floor.
- Cue a minimum 3 times for hydration, posture, breathing, and perceived exertion.
- Cue for neutral wrist while using equipment.
- Provide multi-level instruction to meet needs of participants of all skill levels.

Yoga Guidelines and Equipment Use:

- Store tools “out of harm’s way” – resistance tubing on the chair, ball and water under the chair.
- Tools *are not required* for yoga and are used as props to enhance poses and postures.
- The chair provides standing support from behind or to the side, as well as during seated poses and stretches.
- SilverSneakers Yoga is a ‘shoe-friendly’ class. What does this mean?

Yoga Postures Safety Guidelines

Contraindicated Movements

Every instructor is responsible for making “risk versus benefit” decisions in exercise selection. This responsibility is heightened for older adult exercise due to the wide variety of disabilities, diseases and musculoskeletal challenges a group setting presents. Instructors must not teach movements and/or exercises identified as contraindicated for the SilverSneakers Fitness Program *as exercises*.

- **Inversions requiring the head to go below the heart**
 - ⊗ Downward Facing Dog
 - ⊗ Forward Bends or Folds
 - ⊗ Big-Toe Pose (*Uttanasana*), as a forward fold
 - ⊗ Arm balances or other poses requiring members to get down on the floor, including headstands or handstands, Peacock Pose, Dolphin Pose, etc.

▪ **Overuse of a joint or muscle group**

Avoid sustained shoulder extension or abduction in poses, such as:

- ⊗ Warrior I
- ⊗ Warrior II

▪ **Sustained knee flexion**

- ⊗ Chair Pose
- ⊗ Extended Side Angle Pose
- ⊗ Revolved Side Angle Pose

▪ **Double leg lifts**

Avoid seated exercises with both feet (unsupported) off the floor. When modifying poses to use in a chair, avoid:

- ⊗ Staff Pose
- ⊗ Big Toe Pose (both legs extended)
- ⊗ Boat Pose

▪ **Full squats or “deep knee bends”**

Avoid poses where the angle of knee flexion is less than 90 degrees in a standing position:

- ⊗ Garland Pose
- ⊗ Easy Pose
- ⊗ Yogi Squat (chair pose with extreme hip hinge so thighs and chest are parallel to the floor)

▪ **Excessive hyperflexion and/or hyperextension of joints**

- Neck hyperextension = cervical extension greater than 30 degrees
 - ⊗ Camel Pose with chin lifted
 - ⊗ Upward Salute
- Excessive flexion of the shoulder joint greater than 180 degrees
- Forced hyperflexion of the wrist = greater than 90 degrees
- Backs of hands at waist with elbows pressing back
- Forced hyperextension of the wrist = greater than 90 degrees
 - ⊗ Heart Center (*Anjali Mudra*) with elbows lifted Photo
- Forced knee hyperflexion
 - ⊗ Standing Half Lotus Balance with hand pulling foot into groin
 - ⊗ Preparation for Dancer Pose
- Forward flexion from a seated position at the hip greater than 45 degrees:
 - ⊗ Straddle Stretch with hip hinge greater than 45 degrees
- Forward flexion from a standing position at the hip greater than 90 degrees:
 - ⊗ Pyramid Pose with hip hinge greater than 90 degrees
- Hyperextension of the lumbar spine at the waist greater than 30 degrees:
 - ⊗ Camel Pose with lumbar extension greater than 30 degrees

NOTE: Degrees of movement and joint angles are determined from anatomical position. Forced hyperflexion or hyperextension of a joint angle is applying external force to achieve a greater range of motion and/or hold a joint position.

Yoga Postures Safety Guidelines - Contraindicated Breathing Exercises

Constricted Thoracic Breathing

Though not an exercise in and of itself, be aware that shallow, rapid, and irregular respiration indicates constricted thoracic breathing. It is often associated with stress and tension and overstimulates the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system. Excessive stimulation of the “flight or fight” response causes the body to maintain an unnaturally high heart rate and blood pressure, leads to problems with digestion and elimination, and can cause cold, clammy hands and feet. Continual sympathetic discharge stresses endocrine, immune and sexual functionality. By practicing Abdominal, Diaphragmatic and “Three-Part” Breathing, one can greatly reduce the habit of *unconsciously* engaging in this type of respiration.

Suspension of or Holding the Breath

Remind class members *to breathe*. Our goal is to teach our members to breathe smoothly and evenly during the flow of *asanas*. Participants are often tempted to “hold” the breath when “holding” a pose.

Fiery breathing techniques:

Includes Bellows Breath (*Bhastrika*) and Breath of Fire (*Kapalabhati*). Avoid any technique that encourages forceful inhalations, or rapid and forceful exhalations. The pressure created during these techniques increases blood pressure and is potentially dangerous for anyone with a heart condition or glaucoma.

Class Format

Breathing Exercises – (8-10 minutes)

- Begin sitting back in chair.
- Show breathing techniques that may be practiced sitting *back* in the chair. Maintain a relaxed and erect posture.
- Progress to forward-seated breathing techniques. Sit tall, maintaining a natural lumbar curve. You may place a ball at the lower back for additional support:

Warm-Up and Range of Movement Conditioning – (10-15 minutes)

- Participants may sit or stand.
- Progress from larger to smaller muscle groups and joint ROM.
- Coordinate movement with breath. Perform one movement with the inhalation (generally an “upward” movement) and one movement with the exhalation (generally a “downward” movement.) Repeat each movement sequence or *vinyasa* four to six times.

- For those new to the practice of coordinating movement with breathing, inhaling and exhaling with specific movements can be daunting. Make participants aware that *breathing continuously throughout class* is most important. Coordinating movement with breath takes practice and will come with time.

Muscular Endurance and Balance – (15-20 minutes)

- Participants may sit or stand. Emphasize upper-body movements for seated participants.
- Hold strength and balance poses (such as Warrior I/II, Triangle, Tree) for no more than two to three breaths. Counting down from five slowly is an effective way to let participants know that it is almost time to come out of the pose.
- Before practicing vinyasas, teach each movement individually and then combine all movements with the breath into a flowing sequence.
- Offer modifications and support options for strength and balance poses.
- Offer support options for balancing poses: e.g., use the chair or place the toes of the non-supporting foot on the floor.

Deeper Stretches – (10-15 minutes)

- Participants may sit or stand.
- Hold stretches for three to five breaths or 10 to 30 seconds.
- Encourage even, continuous, focused breathing with lengthened exhalations. Use the breath to “go deeper”, but always avoid forcing a stretch.

Final Relaxation – (5-10 minutes)

- Participants must sit for Final Relaxation. Close the eyes or lower the gaze to eliminate visual distractions. Final Relaxation promotes stress reduction and helps both body and mind to fully absorb the benefits of the yoga practice.
- Relaxation techniques and cueing tips
 - “Focus on the breath and breathe quietly.”
 - Consciously relax one area of the body at a time.
 - Listen to music.
 - Visualizations: “Embrace yourself with compassion and acceptance.”
 - Positive affirmations: “I am strong and confident.”
 - Stretch muscles commonly associated with stress: neck, shoulders and back.
 - Inspirational or motivational readings, poetry (See *Relaxation Quotes* in the Reference Center.)

Workshop Summary

- Thank you for a fun an interactive day!
- Make sure check the training calendar for workshops offered in your area.
- Please remember to complete the Healthways instructor training evaluation that will be sent to you via e-mail.
- Don't forget to get your CEC's online!