YOGABASICS.COM PRESENTS



A GUIDE & RESOURCE TO PRACTICING YOGA IN THE WINTERTIME

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4 MANTRAS TO EMPOWER NEW YEAR'S INTENTIONS

BY TIMOTHY BURGIN

While you can set a sankalpa (intention, goal, resolve) at anytime, the New Year is one of the most apt and powerful times to do so. An effective sankalpa is a short, positive, and precise statement about what you wish to attain for yourself and/or for the

benefit of all. Pairing and using a Sanskrit mantra with your sankalpa can create a powerful and synergetic force to propel you towards your intention with greater speed, efficiency, and ease.



You could use hundreds of sacred power words with a sankalpa, but I've discovered four mantras that are especially potent and relevant to use for a New Year's intention. These four mantras are broad enough in their energetic effects to apply to just about any sankalpa while still being potent and effective. Chanting your chosen

mantra as you focus on and work towards your intentions is a powerful practice in itself—but understanding the lesson behind the mantra will accelerate the fulfillment of your goals.

Om Gum Ganapataye Namaha

Translation: Om and salutations to Ganesha, the remover of all obstacles. May I be blessed with good luck, success, knowledge, and wisdom.

Lesson: Obstacles arrive on our path for us to learn, grow, and become better humans. This mantra encourages us to see the lessons behind the obstacles in our lives and promotes the luck, success, knowledge, and wisdom required to overcome them.

Om Sri Maha Lakshmyai Namah

Translation: Om and salutations to Lakshmi, the great goddess of generosity and abundance, the bestower of supreme blessings, and the embodiment of pure beauty.

Lesson: To receive abundance one must learn to be generous first. This mantra requires us to broaden our perception to see and receive abundance and generosity

beyond the material and physical realms.

Om Aim Hrim Klim Chamundayai Vichche

Translation: Om and salutations to the goddess in all of her forms. May you bless me with your courage and strength and allow for the speedy fulfillment of my aspirations and desires.

Lesson: When the heart is empty and the mind is busy we feel separation and suffering. This mantra strengthens the mind and heart to realize the key to the fulfillment of our aspirations and desires is gratitude and contentment.

Om Tare Tuttare Ture Swaha

Translation: Om and salutations to the goddess Tara. May you protect me from fear, danger, suffering, and illness. May you purify all the impurities of my body, speech, and mind.

Lesson: Tara embodies the spirit of Bodhisattva—the selfless and compassionate work towards

removing fear and suffering from the world. When your thoughts, words, and actions align with the spirit of a Tibetan goddess, you remove fear, danger, suffering, and illness from your life as well as the lives of others. Mantras are powerful tools—remember to use them with care, caution, and respect. While it is easy to want instantaneous results from the use of mantras and sankalpas, they work best as a process employing humility, insight, and patience.





3 MEDITATIONS TO KEEP YOU WARM THIS WINTER

BY JULIA TRAVERS

Winter weather can bring lethargy, cold, tight muscles, and a sense of detachment from the world and even ourselves. We must actively create our own warmth and body awareness in the winter. Doing so keeps our inner spark lit, connects us to our

intuition, and nurtures a sense of self-care. I've found three simple meditations for winter to be helpful in generating warmth and body awareness during this time.

1. Breath Temperature Meditation

Becoming aware of the warmth your own body generates can be both comforting and grounding in the winter. A very direct and simple way to do this is to focus on the temperature of the air that enters and leaves your body. While seated, lying down, or in any position that allows you to focus on the sensations of your breath, take a few deep breaths and bring your awareness into the area of your nose, mouth, and throat.

As your lungs breathe in air from your environment, feel the cool air pass into your nostrils or over your tongue and into your throat. As you exhale, feel the air that your body warmed pass back out. Use a quiet mental note of "cool" and "warm" to mark the breath sensations. After a few minutes, return to your normal activities or use this as an introduction to other mindfulness practices, such as the two below.

2. Torso Body Scan with Kidney Focus

Bringing mindful attention to the sensations of the torso helps you to appreciate and even amplify your own body heat. To carry out a seated torso body scan, feel your breath move into the lower belly and open receptively to the sensations there. Gradually move the awareness of the breath and sensations up through the torso. To intensify the sensations and warmth of this experience, place







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WINTER TEAS FOR YOGIS TO WARM AND BALANCE

BY CARMELA CARUSO

As the temperatures drop and winter rolls in, keep yourself warm and energized with this season's best teas. While you might enjoy drinking tea for the taste and experience, tea also energetically and medicinally guards your system against

dampness and wards away colds and viruses. Ignite your internal warmth, get your body moving, and drive away cold-weather ills with the right combination of herbs and spices—spring will be here before you know it.

Ayurveda Teas

The ancient Indian healing system of Ayurveda outlines three constitutional principles or doshas: vata, kapha, and pitta corresponding to the elements of air, earth, and fire. The winter months are kapha dominated, which tends to make us more lethargic, heavy, and slow moving.

For those who live in cold but dry climates, vata is dominant, which leads to feeling dry and ungrounded.

Counterbalance the kapha and vata dominated season with spices that add more fire to your system. Ginger,

cinnamon, clove, black pepper, coriander, cumin, and fennel seeds are especially helpful in stimulating the digestive system and bringing warmth to the body.

Balance sweet and spice with Rishi's Cinnamon Plum Tea.

Enjoy this rich blend on its own or infuse it in apple cider or wine as a mulling spice.

Eating seasonally is one of the most important tenets of Ayurveda. Enjoy the combination of orange, one of the few fruits in season during the winter months, and the rich spice of rooibos in



Good Earth's Sweet and Spicy Caffeine Free Herbal Tea.

Ginger is a great root for adding spice to plates while also soothing the stomach. Try Numi's Ginger Pu-erh Tea for a smooth and spicy blend.

Ashwagandha known as the "Indian Ginseng" is a highly recommended herb in Ayurveda that boosts the immune system, increases energy, and counteracts inflammation. Sip some tea made with Ashwagandha root to get all of the benefits. Note:

Ashwagandha is not recommended for pregnant women.

Flu-fighting Teas

With winter comes closed spaces, less fresh air, and common colds and viruses. Give your system extra love and help soothe the symptoms of sickness with these teas.

Let the minty aroma of Traditional Medicinals Gypsy Cold Care clear your sinuses and restore your body with the combination of elder, yarrow, peppermint, and the season's best spices including cinnamon, ginger, and clove.

Licorice root soothes sore throats, calms coughs, and eases intestinal discomfort. Treat yourself with Tulsi's Licorice Spice Tea.

Arm yourself for the season with Yogi Tea's Cold Season Sampler, which includes their Echinacea Immune Support blend for boosting the immune system, the Cold Season blend filled with warming spices, Breathe Deep to clear congestion, and Throat Coat for when you're feeling raspy.

Seasonal Treats

Make the most of the winter by embracing these seasonal blends.

What's winter without your favorite chai blend? Try the Art of Tea's White Winter Chai to energize your taste buds with rich spices.

Curb your sweet tooth by skipping the sugar-laden house and opting instead for Teavanna's Gingerbread Black Tea.

However you plan to spend the winter, be sure to spend time taking care of yourself. Teas are just one simple way to keep your body in balance.



THREE WAYS TO BALANCE YOUR WINTER YOGA PRACTICE

BY KATHLEEN BRYANT

Brrr! Winter is the season of kapha, the dosha that ayurveda (yoga's sister science) describes as cold, wet, and heavy—like a blanket of new-fallen snow. Kapha is comprised of the water and earth elements, and it provides us with physical

structure—the body's tissues and fluids. Strong bones; beautiful teeth; lustrous hair, skin, and eyes; physical and emotional stamina—these are the gifts of kapha dosha.

The external influences of winter, however, can aggravate kapha.

Symptoms of excessive kapha include a sense of heaviness or "stuckness" (or actual weight gain), chest colds, low energy, even depression. When kapha dosha is out of balance, you may feel a resistance to physical activity, including asana, or your poses may feel like they never get off the ground.

- 1.) If you are feeling the effects of winter too strongly, you can balance by introducing more heat and lightness to your asana practice, emphasizing vinyasa, balances, and backbends. The Chopra Center offers some simple and helpful tips for balancing kapha dosha through asana. A practice from the Bihar yoga tradition that is especially effective for warming up is named, appropriately enough, Chopping Wood (Kashta Takshanasana). It not only heats the body but also boosts the spirits.
- 2.) Another way to "unstick" yourself is to try something new, such as learning yogic cleanses (the shat karmas) from an

experienced teacher. Using a neti pot and practicing kapalbhati pranayama help to reduce excess mucus, another sign of aggravated kapha. Traditional yogic cleanses also include "blinkless gazing" or trataka, usually done by concentrating on a burning candle, which seems fitting this time of year when we invoke light with yule logs, ornaments, tinsel, and other things that sparkle and glow.

3.) At Winter Solstice (December 21), welcome the return of longer days by imbuing your Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskara) with mindfulness. Slow down this familiar vinyasa to incorporate chakra awareness and the twelve mantras that correspond to each movement. Each mantra honors an aspect of the sun. (Swami Satyananda Saraswati's text Surya Namaskara: A Technique of Solar Visualization is a helpful reference.)

Though this is a season of darkness, when the earth appears to sleep, underneath the surface

nature is gathering energy for the regeneration of spring. Take a cue from nature and make winter an opportunity to dive deeply into your practice. Explore your inner

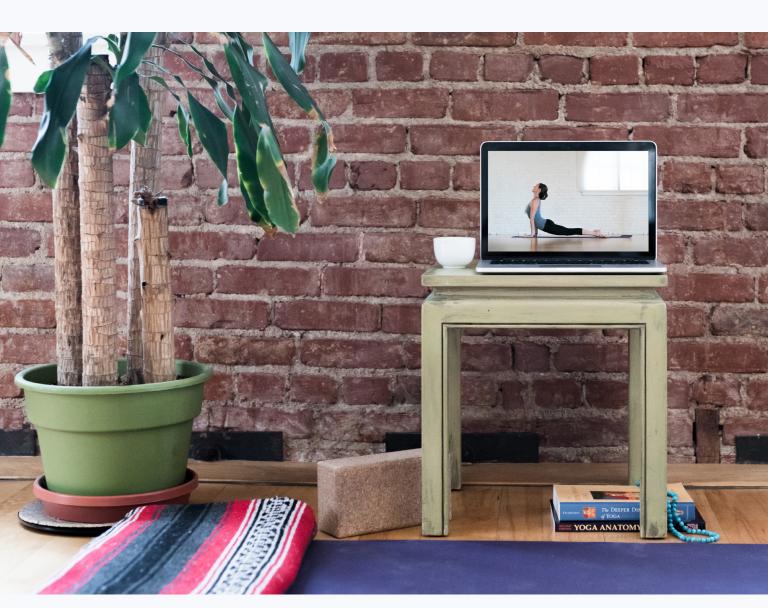
realms. Making peace with your shadows—including the long-buried impressions known as samskaras—is a good way to clear the slate for a new year.







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SNOW + YOGA = SNOWGA, BUT IS IT SAFE?

BY SARAH DITTMORE

It all started with a hashtag—yogis started tagging their wintery yoga shots on Instagram using #snowga. Since then the trend has taken off with several companies offering outside yoga classes in conjunction with skiing and

snowshoeing, and some yoga studios are offering weekly snow yoga sessions. If you have never practiced yoga in the snow you are probably thinking, "is this safe?" and, "is this fun?" or maybe you are still wondering "why?"

A snowga class is not a typical yoga class. You will not be moving barefoot through your vinyasa flow so much as standing in Warrior II with your snow boots and puffy jacket keeping you warm. Snowga is not meant to replace your regular yoga practice, rather it is meant to bring yoga into another space. These classes offer outdoorsy people an opportunity to participate in their favorite winter sports with a little yoga on the side.

Why is snowga good for you?

One benefit of snowga is the playfulness. It is a fun way to get outside and play in the snow. Most snowga classes offer a light take on the practice and remind people to get outside and have fun during winter. Snowga also helps people who do not regularly practice yoga get flexible enough to put on their snowshoes and stay safe during snow sports.

Snowga is a great practice for the mind. The weather and scenery will challenge you to stay focused

and the snow will make it difficult to get back up and keep moving if you fall. Practicing outside with the wind and snow is an opportunity to have fun with your practice and work on staying focused and centered even as the elements change all around you.

Why is snowga dangerous?

While snowga is a lot of fun, offers a chance to connect with nature, and brings yoga to people who might not usually practice, there are some risks.

One of the reasons hot yoga became so popular is because the warm climate helps your muscles relax so you can move more freely. Cold weather does the opposite. In the cold your muscles tense and your body becomes more brittle. If you do not treat your body accordingly, you could injure yourself.

When going to a snowga class, dress appropriately. Put on a few layers so that you are warm even while you are out in the snow. Of course, you will not want to wear so many layers that you cannot

move, so depending on when and where you are practicing you may still face chilly winds and cold weather during your practice.

The best way to stay safe during a snowga class is to stay mindful. Know your limits and do not push past them.

There are times to stretch your physical limits, but snowga class is not one of them. Stay where you know your body can go and be aware that due to the cold weather, you may not be able to go as deep as you can in the yoga studio. Instead, consider thinking about snowga as a practice for your mind and an opportunity to have fun instead of an intense physical practice.

Stay safe and get your bliss on this winter

Snowga can be a lot of fun and it is a great opportunity to try yoga



in a new setting, but it is important that you take the necessary precautions to stay safe. You probably won't be practicing inversions or even plank unless you are ready to fall face-first into the powder. On the flip side, classic poses such as any Warrior or lunge variations become extra fun and increasingly difficult when you are practicing outside in the snow. So if you want to try out one of these snowy classes, put on a few extra layers, be mindful of your body and its limits, and start looking for a snowga class near you!



8 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM WITH YOGA

BY ELIZABETH HOLLIS HANSEN

Nobody likes being sick, especially those of us who regularly practice yoga and make efforts to take care of our health. Every year as winter rolls around, I like to reevaluate my practice and implement a few changes and modifications to help keep the germs and bugs at bay.

Yoga is one of the most effective ways to regulate and boost immunity through its known ability to reduce stress, increase blood flow, and improve digestion.

Here are eight ways to boost your immune system through yoga:

1. Breathe

Pranayama exercises increase the intake of oxygen to the blood and improve efficiency of the lungs, helping to build resistance to infection. Deep breathing, alternate nostril breathing (Nadi Sodhana), and breath of fire (Kapalabhati) bring oxygenated blood to various organs throughout the body to ensure optimal function.

2. Practice inversions

Inversion poses such as headstand, shoulder stand, and legs-up-thewall help circulate lymph fluid through the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system filters toxins from the blood and transports immune cells throughout the body to fight off infection.

3. Meditate

When you focus in meditation, you're removed from the daily stresses that take a toll on your body and mind. This gives the body time to recover and enter a positive healing state. Studies have shown that meditation builds antibodies, the body's natural



defense against bacteria and viruses.

4. Go outside

If weather permits, take your yoga practice outside and catch some UV rays. Vitamin D deficiency is a common cause of lowered immunity in northern climates that experience cold temperatures and shorter days during winter. Give your body a natural boost by doing a few sun salutations in the sunshine. Twenty minutes is all it takes.

5. Spice it up

Ayurvedic herbs and spices that stimulate blood flow and digestion include cardamom, ginger, cumin, turmeric, and cinnamon. Sprinkle these on hot oatmeal or vegetables; or steep to make tea to keep the digestive system active and healthy throughout the winter.

6. Do the twist

Yoga poses that gently twist the spine and compress the belly, like Jathara Parivartanasana (Belly Twist) or Ardha Matsyendrasana (Half Lord of the Fishes) improve poor digestion that could otherwise cause toxins to build up in the digestive tract and lead to illness and infection.

7. Clear out the sinuses

Nasal irrigation (Jala Neti) techniques such as the neti pot are used in ayurveda for basic daily hygiene and to relieve congestion and irritation from dry nasal passages. In combination with forward bends like Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog) or Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold), they can help clear mucus and congestion. Just remember to use purified water.

8. Bring a friend to yoga

Holing up at home may seem like the best way to avoid illness. But research suggests that socializing and engaging in positive interactions with others is good for your immune system. So grab a friend next time you head to yoga class; and give your immune system the ultimate care package.



6 WAYS TO REBOOT YOUR YOGA PRACTICE

BY MELISSA STEGINUS

Is your yoga practice in a rut? Does it feel like you are practicing asanas without joy, curiosity or excitement? Throughout my yoga practice, I've learned the importance of dedication and going with the flow, but sometimes the flow can become

monotonous, boring and just blah. If your yoga practice needs a jump-start, and purchasing a new mat or new leggings isn't going to do the trick, check out these six tips to reboot your practice:

Explore stillness

If you're like me, you enjoy practicing challenging asanas. You go to class to connect to yourself through movement—and through sweat. While yoga can be a great physical workout, there are so many added benefits (and challenges!) to finding stillness.

Hold your poses for just one moment longer to relish in the feeling of wanting to move.

Double your breath count in sun salutations. Sit still for a few minutes to focus on pranayama and meditation. Tune in to times when you feel rushed (i.e. getting to class, fidgeting, Shavasana, leaving class).

Switch things up and add a yin class to your weekly regime to learn about your deep muscles and tissues. Experience the connection that comes from understanding your body's structure on a deeper level. Or open yourself up to the mental and physical aspects—whether struggle or serenity—that can come from gentle and restorative classes.

Explore movement

Perhaps for you yoga already centers on stillness. If meditation, pranayama, and gentle classes are already on your regular yogic radar, incorporate some new movements by trying a variety of classes. Flow through vinyasa classes; blend breath, movement, and focus in ashtanga; find an energy release in kundalini; get acrobatic with acro yoga; or create your personalized practice with viniyoga. It may feel intimidating, but the key is to remain open. The journey is all about explorationnot perfection.

Explore mudras

A great way to invite intention through movement is with mudras: symbolic hand gestures that guide and redirect your flow of energy. This intentional joining together of fingers is said to have a restorative, healing effect on the body. Plus, mudras can be practiced while sitting, standing, walking, talking—basically any time you can move your fingers.



Explore silence

Does your yoga practice generally consist of a rocking playlist? Mine does. While it's probably best not to ask your yoga instructor to turn off the tunes, experiment with some silence during your home practice.

Dedicate time to silent meditation. Repeat a mantra or words of encouragement as you move through your sequence. Or simply let your breath be your soundtrack.

Explore mantras

Before you transition from silence to music, explore other sound options by tossing a mantra into the mix. Mantras are deep sound vibrations created through chanting. Whether or not you delve into the spiritual aspects of yoga, chanting focuses the mind on a sound to bring stillness to thoughts and calmness to breath. Try some mantra meditations to get started.

Explore non-yoga

I'm not telling you to stop practicing *forever*. Take a week off. Maybe you've always wanted to try zumba or pilates or kickboxing but fell in love with yoga and haven't looked back. I've felt the same throughout my practice (and especially after my intensive yoga teacher training). However, I've also felt *countless* benefits from stepping back and exploring other areas of interest.

While climbing an indoor rock wall, for example, I built strength and endurance by focusing on deep yogic breath. I gained a deeper understanding about the benefits of flexibility, body awareness, and proper alignment. And I *definitely* appreciated the restorative stretches of yin yoga afterwards!

I'm not telling you to quit yoga. But, for me, taking a week off helped me discover the benefits of my practice in a whole new context!

Rebooting your practice is all about exploring the new. Get

out of your comfort zone and revisit a beginner's perspective.

Check out that new studio, recreation center, or workshop. Go to that *other* teacher's class. If you practice at home, check out community options. Bring a friend or go alone.





THE YOGA OF FOOD: EATING FOR WINTER

BY TIMOTHY BURGIN

It's obvious how winter is a time for hibernation and inactivity—most plants are dormant, animal activity is scarce, and daytime is short. It is much less evident how to live and eat in harmony with the cold, dark, damp and sometimes oppressive energy of

winter. Luckily Ayurveda, yoga's sister healing science, provides valuable insights and wisdom on how to eat in harmony with the energy of wintertime.

According to the principles of Ayurveda, the energy of winter

resonates the strongest with the dosha (bio-elemental energy) of kapha—cold, heavy, moist, grounded, and slow. When in balance, kapha is a source of strength, vitality, and stability to our bodies and minds. In winter kapha is prone to imbalance—leading to excess mucus and body weight as well as to feeling sluggish, tired and depressed. Change your diet to keep the energy of kapha balanced and strong this winter with these four simple tips.

Stay warm and keep agni strong

The cold temperatures of winter drive agni, our body's digestive fire, deep into our core. When agni is weakened we produce *ama*, toxins that according to Ayurveda are the root cause of disease. Snacking between meals and overeating diminishes our digestive fire. Eating foods with cold, wet and heavy properties—like raw veggies, frozen foods, sweets, and oily or fried foods—weakens our agni and creates excess kapha. To stimulate and

strengthen agni, drink hot or warm water (instead of cold or iced) and drink warming teas like fresh ginger or chai. Focus on eating warm, slow-cooked, slightly oily, and well-spiced foods. Fermented foods such as cheese, miso, yogurt, and sauerkraut will also help warm the body and keep agni strong. Add these spices to teas or meals to boost your digestive fire: black pepper, cayenne pepper, cinnamon, fennel seeds, licorice, cardamom, and ginger root.

Build up and nourish

When strong and balanced, our kapha dosha lubricates the joints, moisturizes the skin, and keeps our immunity strong. Winter is the best time to boost the immune system by eating foods that are fresh, organic and easy to digest. Add milk and yogurt, fresh seasonal vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and ghee to your diet to activate kapha's immunity-boosting powers. Adding more healthy protein in wintertime will encourage the body to repair, rebuild and rejuvenate structural

strength, skin health, and immunity. To boost your protein consumption consider adding additional protein powders, nuts, seeds, spirulina, yogurt, and eggs to your winter diet.

Reduce excess kapha with light, dry and high fiber foods

If wintertime is creating excess mucus and body weight and/or making you feel sluggish, tired, and depressed, then add more light, dry and high fiber foods to reduce kapha dosha.

Consuming more high fiber foods will reduce feelings of being weighed down, stagnant or uninspired. Focus on adding fresh fruits and vegetables to your cooked meals. Add drying foods like beans, white potatoes, popcorn, barley, corn, millet, buckwheat, and rye to offset the oiliness of kappa.

Ground with roots and winter squashes

Dry, cold, windy weather can also increase vata dosha. If you

experience excess vata symptoms (nervousness, anxiety, dry skin, constipation or poor sleep) it's important to ground, nourish and stabilize with seasonal root vegetables and winter squashes. Adding the heavy, dense, fiberrich vegetables like squashes, beets, carrots, potatoes, and sweet potatoes will help support winter nutrition. To keep vata dosha balanced during dry, windy weather, make sure you consume plenty of essential fatty acids, like omega-3s, as well as using additional olive oil, coconut oil, butter, and ghee in your cooking.

All of the above is general advice and should only be considered as a starting point for changing your diet for the winter season.

Experiment and make adjustments based on your individual constitution, local seasonal foods, and the specific weather conditions where you live. Most importantly, pay attention to how the weather and the food you eat affects your prana, digestion, and overall sense of health and well-being.

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