

## LESSON 7: BALANCE

### Grade-Level Outcomes

#### Primary Outcomes

**Stress management:** Identifies stress-management strategies (e.g., mental imagery, relaxation techniques, deep breathing, aerobic exercise, meditation) to reduce stress. (S3.H14.L1)

**Fitness activities:** Demonstrates competency in 1 or more specialized skills in health-related fitness activities. (S1.H3.L1)

#### Embedded Outcome

**Safety:** Applies best practices for participating safely in physical activity, exercise and dance (e.g., injury prevention, proper alignment, hydration, use of equipment, implementation of rules, sun protection). (S4.H5.L1)

### Lesson Objectives

The learner will:

- demonstrate proper breathing techniques while performing asanas.
- demonstrate new asanas and asanas learned previously.
- demonstrate an understanding of stress, and be able to relate it to his life, as shown in journal entries.

### Equipment and Materials

- Yoga mat for each person
- Block
- Appropriate yoga music
- Stress at a Glance sheet

### Introduction

*Today, we will introduce balance into the practice. The focus and physicality of balance are important parts of yoga practice. Some of you will do this easily, and others will have difficulty, but as with anything in yoga, be sure to work at your own level. The benefits are the same. We also will spend some time before the cool-down, talking about stress, simply defining it and thinking about strategies for managing it. Let's start our warm-up [see Lessons 1 and 2].*

## Instructional Task: Beginning Asana Sequence

### ■ PRACTICE TASK

Demonstrate the new poses. Move onto one knee and follow this sequence:

- Half warrior I
- *Half prayer twist*
- Half warrior II
- *Plank:* Repeat on the other side.

### Refinement

*Half prayer twist*

- Be sure to twist to the side of the bent leg.

### Student Choices/Differentiation

Video clips or posters can help students learn and remember new poses.

- If the full plank position is too difficult, students may practice on their knees (like a modified push-up).

## What to Look For

- Students maintain balance in the half prayer twist.
- Students are holding the plank straight, using their core.

## Instructional Task: Standing Balance

### ■ PRACTICE TASK

Demonstrate the new poses.

From plank, have students jump their feet to their hands and slowly come to standing.

Quiet mountain: While in quiet mountain, talk about balances and the importance of having a focus point, tight core, and controlled body.

*Tree:* Start with the foot low on the ankle and hands in namaste.

*Prayer squat:* Repeat two times on each side.

### Extension

*Tree:*

- Students move the foot as close to the groin as possible.

### Refinement

*Tree:*

- Raise hands over head.

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**EMBEDDED OUTCOME: S4.H5.L1.** While working on new poses, especially balancing poses, focus feedback on alignment so that students can perform the poses safely and with better balance.

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### Student Choices/Differentiation

Video clips or posters can help students learn and remember new poses.

- Tree: Students may choose to keep the foot low or hands in namaste.

## What to Look For

- Are students falling over?
- Students are maintaining body control.
- Students remember to stand in quiet mountain when frustrated.

## Instructional Task: Introduction to Stress Discussion

### ■ PRACTICE TASK

Have students move into a circle with their mats and sit in an easy pose. Hold a discussion about stress.

### Guiding questions for students:

- What is stress?
- What happens to my body during stress?
- What particular things make me stressed?
- Why do some people get less stressed than others?
- How does stress make me feel?
- What do I do now to handle my stress?
- What else can I do to handle my stress?
- What techniques have we practiced in yoga that can help with stress?

Go over the suggested strategies on the Stress at a Glance handout.

## Student Choices/Differentiation

During any kind of discussion, go where the conversation leads, making sure to use students' questions and comments as a springboard to further ideas.

## What to Look For

- Students are comfortable sharing.
- Students display a basic understanding of stress.
- Students might be surprised at how many stress-relief strategies they use already.
- Is this a stressed-out class?

## Instructional Task: Cool-Down

### ■ PRACTICE TASK

Have students lie on their backs in savasana (corpse pose).

Cue with breath counting.

Have students recognize a stressor, then cue them to let it go with each exhale.

## Student Choices/Differentiation

Knees can be up with feet on the floor for those whose lower back is uncomfortable.

## What to Look For

Is my tone of voice relaxing?

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## Formal and Informal Assessments

- Teacher observation and correction
- Journal assignments (see homework)

## Closure

Quiet the mind; chime the gong—have students listen and focus on the sound as long as they can.

## Reflection

- Was I able to keep the discussion of stress going?
- Was I able to feed off of student comments?

## Homework

Students bring in something that they use to de-stress, such as music, a stress ball, and so on.

Journal assignment:

- What was your overall impression of today's discussion about stress?
- What did you learn? What did you already know?
- What is something specific to you that you do to lower your stress, or to calm you down when you are stressed?
- Log all your physical activity outside of class. Include the type of activity and how long you did it.

## Resources

Brown, C. (2003). *The yoga bible*. Cincinnati: Walking Stick Press.

Martin, K., Boone, B., & DiTuro, D. (2006). *Hatha yoga illustrated*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Stephens, M. (2012). *Yoga sequencing*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Internet keyword search: "prayer twist," "plank," "tree pose," "prayer squat pose"

## STRESS AT A GLANCE

- Stress is a normal part of life that either can help us learn and grow or can cause us significant problems.
- Stress releases powerful neurochemicals and hormones that prepare us for action (to fight or flee).
- If we don't take action, the stress response can create or worsen health problems.
- Prolonged, uninterrupted, unexpected, and unmanageable stresses are the most damaging types of stress.
- We can manage stress with regular exercise, meditation or other relaxation techniques, structured timeouts, and learning new coping strategies to create predictability in our lives, such as:
  - Identify your triggers.
  - Keep a stress journal.
  - Improve time management skills.
  - Overcome burnout.
  - Do something you enjoy.
  - Learn how to say no.
  - Practice relaxation techniques.
  - Keep a positive attitude.
  - Balance work and play.
  - Talk about your problems.
  - Exercise regularly.
  - Eat a healthy diet.
- Many behaviors that intensify in times of stress and unhealthy ways of coping with stress, such as using pain medicines and other drugs, or alcohol, smoking and overeating, actually worsen the stress and can make us more sensitive to further stress.

While some treatments for stress appear promising, managing one's stress depends largely on his or her willingness to make the changes necessary for adopting a healthy lifestyle.