



10 ways to deepen your practice...

1. Be consistent. A little practice daily is better than a lot of practice intermittently. A good strong practice is developed over a period of time, and with regularity a positive groove is formed in the mind creating a positive habit. The rewards of regular practice is that it becomes part of daily life, just as eating sleeping etc is part of your day.
2. Choose a practice that you resonate with and stick with it. Following the same sequence and order of practice can sometimes feel boring as the nature of the mind constantly seeks change and excitement. Regularity in practice and regularity in what you practice is also important. Just like digging a hole to find water... if you keep digging a little here and then moving and digging another hole elsewhere, and then another, without actually digging one hole deep enough then you will never find water. Similarly, jumping from one practice to another will never take you deep enough to reveal the fountain of knowledge within.
3. Observe how you practice... be mindful. Without consciousness and awareness practice becomes mechanical and empty. Begin by offering a positive intention or a devotional chant Sanskrit prayer. Close your practice in the same way, with a chant, palms together in prayer at your heart, bowing in gratitude.
4. Seek guidance. Developing a student/teacher relationship with a competent yoga teacher is important. A teacher is only a 'good' teacher if they practice what they preach and are keen to pass on knowledge from their own direct experience and studies. The best teachers are the ones who see themselves as students too and teach with a little humility. There are so many amazing yoga teachers who are not famous, who do not have glossy marketing campaigns and do not charge a small fortune for a class. What is important in the learning process is that you have a connection with your teacher... try a few different classes, it doesn't have to be in a fancy studio, there are some hidden gems who are just quietly teaching and doing their practice and service within the community.
5. Be patient with yourself and be content with your practice (whatever limitations and challenges face you). Try not to run ahead, be happy with the fruits of today and this very moment.
6. Live simply. Keep distractions to a minimum.
7. Eat fresh, nourishing, light, vegetarian foods bursting with vitality and Prana (vital energy).
8. Study yogic scriptures or spiritually uplifting books.
9. Cultivate friendships with others who are on the same path or more advanced than you... they will inspire and support you on your way.
10. Be sincere, truthful and loving to yourself and others.

Kakasana - The Crow

The crow is one of the most beneficial balancing postures. It helps to develop mental focus and balance, improves concentration, removes lethargy and strengthens the shoulders, arms, fingers and wrists.

The Practice

- ☪ Begin by sitting in a squatting position on your feet.
- ☪ Place your palms flat on the floor in front of your feet with fingers spread apart. Keep the hands at shoulder width or a little wider apart. Slightly rotate the hands so that the fingers are slightly inward.
- ☪ Bend your elbows and place your knees on the upper arms. The closer the knees are to the armpits the harder the posture becomes.
- ☪ Focus on a point 2 to 3 feet in front of your hands. In order to maintain balance, do not drop the head to look at your feet.
- ☪ Inhale deeply and as you retain your breath, shift your weight forward into your hands until just your hands and tip toes are on the mat. Hold this position and breathe until you feel ready to lift the feet up.

- ☪ Ease your body weight forward again and slowly lift your feet off the floor. Do not hop or jump. When both feet are up, touch the big toes together. Keep looking forward and breathe in the position.
- ☪ Even if you can't lift your feet off the ground, you will gain many of the benefits of the Crow. Practice leaning the body weight forward until you feel some pressure on the wrists and then lift one foot and then the other.
- ☪ Hold for 10 seconds, gradually increasing up to one minute. Repeat 3 – 4 times
- ☪ To release, slowly lower the feet to the floor, shake out the wrists and relax.

The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga by Swami Vishnudevendanda comes highly recommended for deeper study. For more details on Lila's yoga classes and retreats, visit: www.yogaprema.org

