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# YOGA

MAGAZINE

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YOGA  
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*Beach Body*  
EXERCISES PART 2



THIS MONTH'S POSES

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Upward Staff

Extended Hand to Big Toe

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# TEACHER OF THE MONTH

*Caroline Shola Arewa*



## ENERGY CONSCIOUSNESS CHANGE

Within a few short years yoga totally transformed my life. Not only was I healthier, happier, and more content, I was also wiser and had more direction in life. I had taken a two and a half year trip to India and eleven Asian countries after giving up a successful fashion business. I knew there must be more to life than clothes, cocktails, and parties. That was almost 30 years ago and I was right. Yoga has remained a guiding force in my life and work ever since. The transformative experience of yoga inspired me to become a Humanistic Psychologist. It led me to explore the subtle energy that animates us and to train in Complimentary Medicine. I went on to train Therapists for many years, winning a prestigious CAM (Complimentary and Alternative Medicine) award in 2008 for pioneering and outstanding contribution to the industry.

In India I was fortunate to study with Swami Vishnudevanda and with Swami Joythimayanada in Sri-Lanka, who first introduced me to complimentary medicine. I have practiced numerous styles of yoga and teach a combination of flowing, dynamic and mindful postures based on the five elements, I call this Energy Flow Yoga. I also created Energy 4 Life, a wellness coach training; they both focus on helping people raise Energy levels and re-balance the Chakras to restore health, happiness and fulfilment. I am the Author of four books, including Way of the Chakras and Energy 4 Life, and I work internationally with individuals, groups and organisations.

Photographer: Jonathan Perugia  
Stylist: Imani Douglas Walker

# BEGINNERS POSE

Dandasana relates to the staff of Djheuti in Egyptian or Hermes in Greek mythology. This is depicted through the Caduceus symbol which relates to nadis or energy pathways and the chakras. The Caduceus shows two intertwined serpents representing two major nadis; the negative Ida nadi and the positive Pingala nadi. Shushumna is the central sattvic/neutral column. This is called Merudanda in Sanskrit and describes the sacred Mount Meru. Meru meets the earth at the Root Chakra and reaches up towards the sky at the Crown Chakra, creating a staff or rod through which energy can travel. Meru is an existing mountain in Tanzania, close to the birth place of human kind, to the ancient Egyptians it means 'all things surrounding love'.

This beginner's posture is fundamental to all the more advanced seated forward bends and spinal twists. It helps strengthen the whole back of your body, the spinal column and supporting erector spinae muscles as well as the legs, hamstrings and also your abdominal muscles. As the body is held in this lengthened pose, energy can flow freely through all the chakras, stimulating the corresponding nerve plexi and endocrine glands. This is a powerful posture and should not be underestimated, as it has numerous benefits.

## HOW TO PERFORM

### Dandasana Staff pose

- Sit with your legs outstretched, your spine upright and feet flexed. If needed place a folded blanket under your sitting bones (ischium) to create a lift. This will ease pressure in your hamstrings and pelvis, supporting you to maintain the posture.
- Place your arms alongside your body with your elbows slightly bent.
- There is no weight on your hands.
- Make sure your shoulders are relaxed, chest open and place your chin parallel to the floor.
- Allow your breathing to expand and contract as you gently open and relax your rib cage with each breath. This posture releases constriction and creates opening in the chest and Heart Chakra.
- Feel the weight of your lower body grounding down into the earth, and lift your upper body towards the sky.
- Focus your attention on your Heart Chakra and hold the posture for 3-7 deep breaths.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

Anyone with a lower back injury or slipped disc needs to be cautious in this pose. It can be done against a wall with your knees supported with a rolled up blanket.

# DANDASANA

## Staff Pose



# INTERMEDIATE POSE

This invigorating standing posture is part of the Ashtanga first series. It is an expansive and uplifting pose that provides an opportunity to create space in every cell of your body. It is cleansing and energising. Energy expands in four directions stabilising the posture and creating a sense of openness and freedom. As the posture is held, tiny adjustments are constantly being made in the muscles and nervous system. Breathing has to be slow, even and full, while a calm focused mind is maintained. The skills learnt while practising this posture also serve us off the mat in everyday life. Developing calm inner strength, presence and a focused mind that is able to adjust easily can be very useful.

Standing postures are good for strengthening your back and leg muscles, aligning the entire body and toning the internal organs. They also stimulate the Root Chakra and ground the body. As this is also a balancing pose it has the added benefit of increasing concentration and confidence.

## HOW TO PERFORM

### Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana (Upavistha variation)

### Extended hand to big toe pose (Open variation)

- Stand in Tadasana (Mountain pose) with your feet together, spine upright, open across your chest and relax your shoulders and lift out of the hips.
- Deepen your breath and focus your gaze on a still point ahead of you, this helps you to balance.
- Bring your right knee towards your chest and take hold of your big toe or foot.
- Bring your left hand to your hip and extend your right leg out in front of you.
- Engage your core abdominal muscles, straighten your left knee without locking it and stabilise your joints and posture. Lift up and out of the earth.
- Now open your right arm and foot out to your right side. Stretch your left arm out and breathe.
- Lift up in the posture, open your heart centre, focus your mind on your breath and experience the art of balance. Hold for 3-7 deep breaths. Repeat on your left side.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

It is important to listen to your body and go as far as is right for you. This pose can be done with your left hand supported against a wall. Or your right leg supported on a table or the back of a chair. Do the same on both sides.

UTTHITA HASTA  
PADANGUSTHASANA  
(Upavistha Variation)



# ADVANCED POSE

The posture can be entered from the headstand. It is one of my favourite headstand variations. This inversion has much in common with Dandasana, being an upside down version of the staff pose.

It has the added benefit of increasing muscular strength and control. Pressure on the intervertebral discs in your spine is released during this pose, which is good if you have a sedentary occupation and spend long hours sitting at a desk. It also aids venous return, which is the flow of venous blood back to your heart to be oxygenated. The Crown Chakra is stimulated, hence headstand being referred to as the king of all postures. Blood flow to the pituitary, the master gland and the brain is also increased. So it provides a good mind tonic and stimulates the entire body. It also develops concentration and control of your mind and body.

## HOW TO PERFORM (from the headstand)

### Urdhva Dandasana Upward staff pose

- Come up into your headstand, breathe evenly and prepare your mind for variations. A good way to do this is to visualise yourself in the variation you are about to do, in this case Urdhva Dandasana.
- Then pull up on your abdominal muscles, strengthen your arms and shoulders so your posture is secure.
- Slowly hinge at the waist and begin lowering your straightened legs, until they are parallel to the floor. Your heels can be flexed or relaxed.
- Hold the posture upright as you breathe gently and focus on the Crown Chakra.
- Gently release the posture, by slowly lowering your legs to the floor and assume the counter pose, which is child pose. Hold child pose for half the time you were standing on your head.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

If you have high blood pressure, this posture is not appropriate.

If you have any neck or shoulder injuries avoid this pose.

It also places some tension on your lower back so again if you have lower back problems you may need to avoid this posture.

URDHVA DANDASANA  
Upward Staff Pose

