



## **YOGA THERAPY SEQUENCE FOR POSTNATAL DEPRESSION (Module 6)**

This sequence provides an excellent route to postnatal recovery and is safe, gentle and energising for new mothers. Depending on birth experiences of mothers and other mental and physical health conditions, this sequence is suitable to use from 12 weeks after giving birth. The class is prepared to be friendly and open, providing a superb form of postnatal support during a difficult period for those experiencing post-natal depression, as many new mothers can feel isolated and shocked.

Please notice that this is not a sequence to practice when the mother is suffering postnatal psychosis. In cases of severe post-traumatic stress disorder the assessment will need to be done on a one to one basis.

This yoga class can be a time to rest in the assurance that the participant is in safe hands, and that the experience and training of the yoga therapist can allow her to enjoy the sense of being cared for, understood, supported and encouraged in her role as a woman and as mother.

### **REGISTRATION FORM:**

You will need to add this information into the Minded Institute questionnaire (which you receive later in the course) in order to have a deeper understanding of the individual needs. For example, a first time mother recovering from caesarean will need different practices from the mum on her second baby who had a rapid home birth.

Remember that in order to include the baby in the class or work in a one to one assessment, you will need to do an additional training. Additionally, many of the complications listed below require special postnatal recovery training. Raquel is available to provide individual supervision for students who wish to work in this area in depth or who wish to work with a specific client with issues that are listed below.

### **Questions for the Form**

Since the birth of this baby have you experienced some of the following:

- Sacroiliac pain:
- Back pains:
- Stiff neck/shoulders:
- Joint pains:
- Sciatica:
- High blood pressure:

- Anaemia:
- Prolonging bleeding:
- Piles:
- Mastitis:
- Anxiety:
- Exhaustion

### **Birth experiences:**

- Length of labour in total (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> + 3<sup>rd</sup> stages):
- Was the labour self-starting/induced/accelerated?
- Nature of the delivery: vaginal/ventouse/forceps/caesarean:
- Delivery environment hospital/home/water birth/other:
- Any drugs administered during labour- gas an air/pethidine/epidural/other:
- Any damage to the perineum suffered?
- Any post-partum haemorrhage?
- Please provide details about the symptoms of the postnatal depression that you are suffering at present.
- Do you have a diagnosis? If yes, please provide details.
- When was the onset of the post-natal depression?
- Did you suffer of depression while you were pregnant?
- Prior to this, have you suffered any injury or undergone any surgery that may have some bearing on your yoga practice?
- If so, please state details.
- Prior to this, have you had any miscarriages? Please give year/s
- Are you taking any type of medication at the moment?
- Have you done yoga before?
- Why have you come to this class, and what do you hope to gain from it?

The interest and concern demonstrated by the teacher in her review of the forms an important source to support the students. In addition to the clear practical benefits of having this information on file for each student, the forms can serve to give a clear picture of the kinds of students who are attending the classes, provide information about patterns of referral and it is a useful reference tool for the teacher 's further professional development.

### **YOGA SEQUENCE: Summary of Practices.**

**Caution:** Caesarean sections.

Abdominal breath is hugely beneficial in energising the belly and promoting good recovery and stress relief. Most of the gentle movements listed are suitable for caesarean section. The best practice is to encourage the woman to become aware of the sensations and degree of recovery she has already achieved, and attempt with caution whatever safe practices feel comfortable.

**The main areas we will be working in this sequence are:**

- 1) Freeing the joints using mainly as a warm up.
- 2) Back pain
- 3) Pelvic floor recovery
- 4) Building up energy to help with the feeling of anxiety and exhaustion to boost depression.

**Total Duration of session:** 45 minutes.

**Teaching steps:**

- 1) Start with joint releasing sequence
  - Wrist circling
  - Wrist bending
  - Elbow bending
  - Elbow circling
  - Shoulders lifts
  - Neck roll stretches
  - Toes and ankle circling
  - Ankles circling, ankles bending and knee bending

Synchronise the movement with the breath.

**Caution:** If clients have hyper-mobility in the elbow joint, which is very common during the postnatal period, if, you will need to modify this in the cat pose and the dog pose.







2) Cat pose: Begin to combine the movement with the breath.

As you inhale look up, stretching your neck and front of the chest and as you exhale round the lower back.

Keep both knees together and as you exhale begin to incorporate awareness on the back part of the pelvic floor. Follow with Circles with pelvis clock wise and anticlockwise for one minute and rest into child pose for another minute. (Keep the both legs together).

**Caution:** Notice if students have hyper-extended elbows, rotate the elbow joint outward 90 degrees, and bend then slightly.

**Duration:** 3 minutes



***Variation for hypermobile elbows:***



**3) Dynamic Downward dog:\_ (initially do not hold and move into more static pose).**

Request students keep both knees together creating a grip in the inner thighs. As the client remains in the static pose begin to incorporate ashwini mudra (squeezing and releasing the anus for strengthening pelvic region) into practice during and after the exhalation (this pelvic floor practice consist on lifting up the muscles around the anus and the central muscles of the perineum) promoting more awareness and strength in the back part of the pelvic floor. It is essential preparation for salutation to the sun.

**Caution:** See modification picture in for hyper-extended elbows. The client has elbow slightly bent outwards.



#### 5) Salutation to the sun for post-natal depression:

- Begin the sequence in standing up, both feet and inner thighs together.
- Bring awareness to the pelvic floor muscles and round your low back.
- Inhale rise your arms and as you exhale bending forward towards the floor keeping both legs together, as the student bending forward allow the knees to be bent if necessary.
- Then move into cat, keeping both legs together. Remember as you exhale into the cat begin to be aware of the pelvic floor muscles. Then move into down-dog and as you exhale begin to perform ashwini mudra (lift the muscle around the anal sphincter and the central muscle of the perineum).
- And pause into child pose for a few seconds then move into cat and perform it one time more.
- From the cat move into supported cobra (lower arms resting on the floor) and as you exhale lift the pelvic floor
- While performing cobra don't hold for too long, (just for a three breaths) it is better to do it dynamically rather than static.
- Then move into cat rolling back into child pose and coming into standing pose. Focus the attention on lifting the pelvic floor while you are coming into standing pose (in order to do that bring the awareness to the pressure of your feet against the floor and placing tightened your inner thighs as a grip).
- Inhale raise your arms moving backwards In order to keep your low back safe do sahajoli mudra. Then bring the hands to the heart centre and relax.

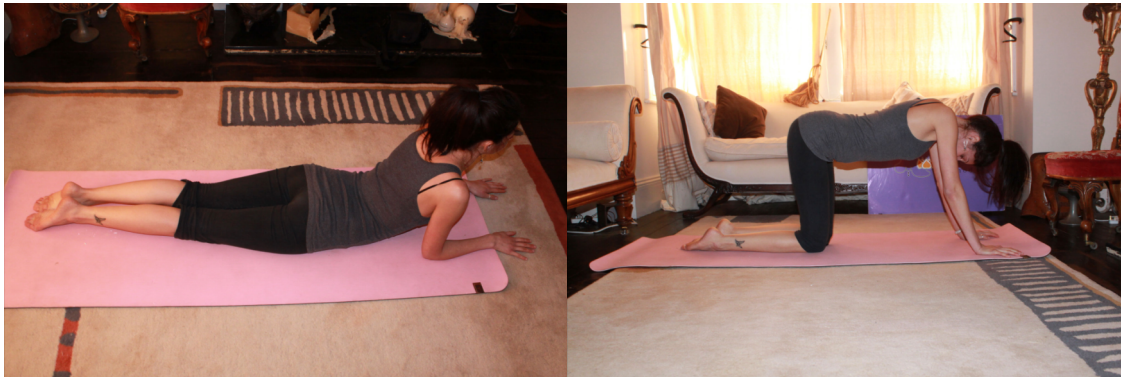
**Sahajoli teaching points:** Close the eyes and relax the whole body. Bring the awareness to the urethra. Exhale, hold the breath in and try to draw the urethra upward. This muscle action is similar to holding back an intense urge to urinate.

The labia in women should move slightly due to this contraction. Try to focus and confine the force of the contraction at the urethra. Bending a little forward during the contraction helps to isolate this point. Holds the contraction for as long as comfortable. Inhale, while releasing the contraction and relax.

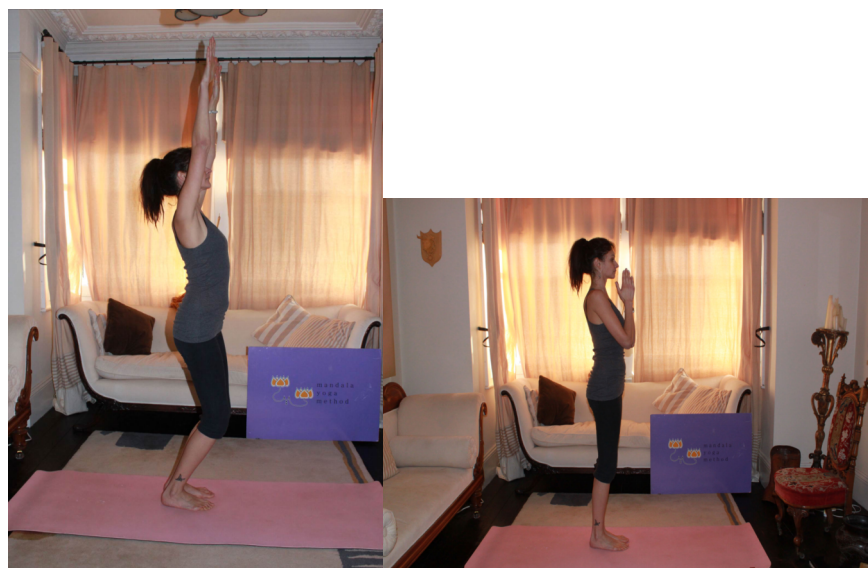
Rest in Savasana: 1 minute.











## 6) Pranayama:

Healing or “reverse” breathe:

The immediate postnatal period can be a time of great elation and also profound vulnerability and depression. It's a precious time for building the foundations of a relationship with the baby, but also a time of dramatic readjustment. Reconnecting to some of the pranayama practices can be a comforting emotional link for the mother and the baby during pregnancy.

The practical benefits of many of these pranayamas take on different significance post-natally.

The "reversal" in the term "reverse breathing" was initially coined to reflect the relationship of the breath with the Birthing breath, in which the pelvic floor is lowered on the exhale. It is only this birth and pregnancy specific practice (and not the classic system of yoga breath and bandha), which is reversed now.

### Teaching steps:

- Lie in semi supine, lie on your back with your knees bend. Feet flat on the floor.
- Place a pillow under the head so that it also supports the back of the neck and support the top of the shoulders. Spread out your arms and place them so that the elbows are level with your shoulders.
- Let the chin drop towards the chest.
- Become aware of the body and as the breath rhythm becomes easy, start to notice the soft hollowing of the belly at the end of the exhalation and the way that the lower back (lumbar spine) can ease down towards the floor as the belly "sucks down".
- Begin to draw your attention towards the exhalation and feel that this hollowing of the belly and lowering your lumbar region is building a connection to the movement of the pelvic floor.
- Inhale softly.
- While the next exhale, sense the drawing inward and upwards of the vagina towards the cervix (Mula Banda).

**Caution:** If there is no sense that this movement begins to happen spontaneously, then actively draw the muscles walls of the pelvic wall upwards and inwards as you exhale.

- Keep a gentle grip on the squeeze as you next inhale. As you next exhale, lift higher and squeeze tighter, feeling the action of those muscles quite high up inside. Repeat this cycle once more. On the next inhalation, release the hold on the muscles, and return two or three rhythmic breath cycles, as for the start of the practice.

**Duration:** 3 minutes.





## 7) **Yoga Nidra:**

Use the guidelines of Mindful to teach yoga nidra and consciousness rotation of the body.

Adjustment for post-natal recovery is important:

- Lie down on your back with support under the back of the knee, or the lower legs resting on a bolster.
- Bring your arms at the hip level, palms up or resting on the abdomen.
- Place a pillow under the neck.
- Notice that during the practice of yoga nidra the temperature of the body drops, placing a blanket create a psychological state of protection.
- Returning for lie down position from the pelvic floor never from the abdominal muscles
- Roll over into the left side placing both hands on the floor, careful with your neck and coming up pushing with your hands and pelvic floor retuning into a sitting position.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

## **Mindfulness meditation**

Use the same guidelines of Mindful for introducing to mindfulness meditation.

- During the introduction, focus on acknowledging feeling as they arise, either if they are acceptable or uncomfortable.
- Mention, just mention don't talk about or explain them.
- Use them as an example of people feelings, never as suppositions of their experience.

**Some common examples of the emotional state are:**

- ❖ Crying and tearfulness
- ❖ Guilt and inadequacy (mother feels she's the only mother in the world who can't cope)
- ❖ Loss of interest in usual activities
- ❖ Lack of bonding (bonding might not feel like it's happening causing feelings of guilt and shame)
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Anxiety (often feel panicky about the babies health necessities of the baby)
- ❖ Irritability
- ❖ Exhaustion
- ❖ Sleep disturbance
- ❖ Inability to cope
- ❖ Loss of interest in food
- ❖ Loss of interest in sex
- ❖ Lack of concentration

Finish the practice, by focusing on the senses: the light, the sounds form outside and the sound of their breath, the smell, the taste and the touch sense.

**Duration:** 5 minutes.