

Tackle Transitions

Yoga Workshop with Aaron Styles

Off The Mat

The only thing in life that's consistent is change. Some of the changes we encounter are small and may seem insignificant. Other changes we encounter are large and may seem life changing. Our ability to trust in the flow of life helps us to easily navigate through these transitions. While it's not always easy, we must learn how to adapt.

You can expect to feel negative emotion when change is occurring. Sudden changes are often the hardest to adjust to. The loss of a job or sudden end to a relationship can be devastating. Many things in life are out of our control. While you may feel angry, sad, or depressed, the one emotion that often arises is worry. We worry about how our future will be after the change has occurred. Just remember that you've encountered many changes in your life before - this is just one more to overcome.

When you can't change the direction of the wind — adjust your sails”

H. Jackson Brown Jr.

Meditation

Meditation is a practice that has many benefits including increased self awareness, mastery over the mind, and relaxation. Many people have the common mis-perception that in order to meditate we need to be completely still and void of all thought. Meditation is a practice, not a perfection. Thoughts will come and go it's the nature of the mind. By sitting with ourselves and maintaining an inner focus we are able to learn more about our thoughts, emotions, and actions. We are often able to shift our perspective and see things differently.

Meditation can be great to practice during times of transition or change. It can help ease the stress that often accompanies transitions. Transitions often bring in many thoughts about the future. Meditation helps us to stay present. Below are a few meditation techniques for you to try the next time you are dealing with a difficult change in your life.

Counting Meditation

Find a relatively quiet place to sit for meditation. Close your eyes and bring your awareness to the breath in your abdomen. Watch the expansion of your inhalations and softening of your exhalations. On an inhalation count one, on the next exhalation count two. Count the next inhale as three, next exhale as four, and so on until you get to 10. Simply start over back at one if you get lost or count past ten.

This To Shall Pass Mantra Meditation

A mantra is a saying or word that you repeat to yourself. You can create your own unique manta or use the manta This To Shall Pass. Find a relatively quiet place to sit for meditation. On your inhalations say to yourself “This to” and on your exhalations say to yourself “Shall pass”. Trust the power and intention of the words you use. Visualize all your worries and fears dissipating.

Mindfulness

- Turn negative thoughts into positive thoughts. Anytime you notice that you're thinking negatively about the situation, change your perspective and discover something positive.
- Don't attach to the situation. Remember that there is so much more to life than just the one or two things that may be bringing down your spirits. Continue to do the same things you would normally do; visit with friends, watch your favorite TV show, spend time outside, enjoy your hobbies.
- Embrace the transition rather than try to fight it. Enjoy it as best you can - make the most of it!
- Love yourself! Don't put yourself down. We all make decisions that may not lead us to where we wanted them to go. Don't ever think that you're not good enough or powerful enough.
- Remember that when one door closes, another door opens. Look for new opportunities that will arise.

“The secret of change is to focus all your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”

Way of the Peaceful Warrior: A Book that Changes Lives by Dan Millman

On The Mat

Transitions on the yoga mat may not be the same as transitions in our lives, but they can still be tricky! When transitioning between yoga postures you want to focus on safe alignment and smooth movements. Each transition is unique and requires body awareness; the ability to discern where the body is in space. Factors that may affect how easily a person transitions between two poses include strength, flexibility, and body proportion.

Strength: Certain postures and transitions require enough muscular strength to hold the body in place or create movement. If you notice that you are “collapsing” or “crashing”, it may be sign that certain muscles require a little more strength for stability.

Flexibility: Certain postures and transitions require that the body is flexible enough to move a certain way. If you notice you are “getting stuck” or feeling tensile resistance during a transition it may be a sign that certain muscles or muscle groups need to lengthen.

Body Proportion: Every body is unique in size and shape. Our skeletal structure can affect how we feel and look in certain yoga postures. We can change the length of our muscles. We can not change the length of our bones. The size difference between our arms verse our legs and vice-versa can affect how we move during transitions. Where we carry weight (muscle/adipose) in our body can also make a difference when transitioning.

Downward Facing Dog to Low Lunge



1. Start in Downward Facing Dog



2. Inhale, Lift the right foot up. Lift the left heel as well to bring the hips higher.



3. Exhale, keep the hips high as round the back and draw the knee towards the nose.



4. Step the foot inside the thumb

Common Complication

The foot doesn't step close enough to the hands.

- Hips too low.
- Lack of core engagement.
- The knee isn't bent enough.
- Tight hamstrings/weak hip flexors.
- Back heels doesn't lift enough.
- Lower body is longer than upper body.



Modified Variation



1. Start in Downward Facing Dog



2. Inhale, Lift the right foot up. Lift the left heel as well to bring the hips higher.



3. Exhale, step the foot forward.



4. If the foot does not make it up to the hands, hold the right ankle to bring the foot forward.

***One or both hands may need to lift slightly to allow the foot to clear.

Floating to the top of the mat



1. Start in Downward Facing Dog



2. Inhale, Lift the heels high.



3. Exhale, Bend both knees and bring the buttocks back towards the heels. Maintain core strength. Pull the navel towards the spine. Look slightly forward of your hands.



4. At the bottom of the exhale, pounce off the feet. Bring the hips high. Use the hands as breaks.



5. Land with the feet in-between the hands.

Common Complication

The feet don't make it forward to the hands

- Hips stay too low.
- Feet stay too low to the mat.
- Not enough weight into the hands.
- Lack of core engagement.
- Tight hamstrings/weak hip flexors.
- Lower body is longer than upper body.

Frog Hops (Float Forward Prep)



1. Start in a short downward facing dog.

2. Bend the knees. Bring weight into the hands, pounce of the feet, and lift the hips high.

3. Lower the feet slowly back to where they started.

- Progressively distance the space between the hands and feet.
- Once you're comfortable with slowly landing down, practice hopping the feet just the behind the wrists, and eventually between the hands.

Pike Forward (Advanced Variation)



Chaturanga to Upward Facing Dog



1. Chaturanga

- Bent elbows at 90° or slightly above.
- Elbows point back.
- Shoulders hug back away from the ears.
- Knee caps lifted and legs engaged.
- Low belly drawing in to keep the hips in line from shoulders to feet.



2. Upward Facing Dog

- Shoulders over wrists.
- Hands press firmly into the mat.
- Shoulders are down and hugging back to open the chest.
- Legs are active and off the floor.
- Gaze is slightly upwards with a long neck.

Improper Alignment



- Not bending the elbows enough = weak triceps
- Hips sagging = weak core or little core activation.



- Bending the elbows too much = weak triceps , weak core, or poor body awareness.



- Shoulders rounding forward = weak rhomboids or poor body awareness.
- Hanging in the shoulders = not enough pressing down through the hands.
- Head falling back = poor body awareness.
- Thighs on the floor = not enough activation through the tops of the feet.

Improper Alignment = INJURY

Foot Transitions

Flip-Flip

Flip one foot and then the other. Be mindful not to sway the hips side to side. Remember to alternate which foot you flip first if you choose the flip-flip



Roll Over

Press back through the toes to slide on to the tops of the feet. This transition can take time to build the toe strength and comfortability.



Floating to Chaturanga



1. Start in Ardha Uttanasana: half forward bend (pictured) or Bakasana: crane pose (not pictured)



2. Bend the knees. Bring weight into the hands. Lift the heels. Maintain a strong active core.



3. Pull the chest forward as you simultaneously lift the hips and shoot the feet back. Land with bent elbows at 90° in Chaturanga.

Improper Alignment



“Soggy” Chaturanga - Chest too low

Common Complications

The feet don't make it far enough back.

- Focus more on pulling the heart forward for length.
- Actively press through the heels to straighten the knees.
- Trust the lean forward.

Landing in Plank verse Chaturanga

- Trust that your arm and core strength will support you.
- Key in to your body awareness.

Landing in a soggy Chaturanga

- Build arm & core strength.
- Be mindful of body awareness.

Warrior One to Warrior Two



Warrior 1

- Front toes point forward.
- Back toes point comfortably towards the front of the mat with the heel turned inwards.
- Hips squaring towards the front wall.
- Arms overhead.



Transition

- Bring weight into the front foot.
- Lift the back foot completely off the mat.
- Land the back foot parallel to the back of the mat; the toes may turn slightly forward.



Warrior 2

- Front toes point forward.
- Back toes point comfortably towards the long edge of the mat; toes may point slightly forward.
- Hips squaring towards the side wall.
- Arms reach forward and back parallel to the floor.

Common Complication

The back foot doesn't lift off the floor.

- Can cause wear & tear on the back knee.
- The back foot doesn't reposition correctly for warrior two; causing awkwardness in the hips and the ability to fully open.

Warrior One to Warrior Three



1. Start in Warrior 1.



2. Lift the back heel coming into a lunge.

- Draw the ribcage back



3. Shift your weight forward into the front foot.

- Transfer weight into the “Four Corners” of the foot.
- Keep the instep of the foot lifting.
- Maintain engagement through the core.
- Reach forward with the arms.
- Move slowly.



4. Shift forward enough to lift the back leg

- Upper body and back leg parallel to the floor.
- Standing leg stays strong and engaged.
- Maintain core engagement.
- Reach through the back heel and arms.
- Crown of the head lengthening forward.
- Hips squared toward the floor.

Improper Alignment



Chest Too Low - Hips Opening



Back Leg Not Lifting Enough

Common Complications

Chest Too Low - Hips Opening

- Focus more on pulling the heart forward
- Look at the back toes and turn them to face the ground.
- Think about drawing your inner thighs together.
- Press back through the lifted leg more.

Back Leg Not Lifting Enough

- Trust the lean forward - often fearful of falling
- Shift more weight into the ball of the front foot.
- Reach forward with the upper body more.
- Weak hip extensors

General Instability (Generally during the transition)

- Focus on harnessing your core energy and move from your center.
- Slow it down - there's no rush
- Feel the standing leg firm in and ground down.
- Focus on the four corners of the standing foot.
- Maintain full body & breath awareness

Flip The Dog



1. Start in Downward Facing Dog



2. Inhale, Lift the right leg



3. Shift your weight forward into the hands.

- Bring the shoulders forward a few inches for stabilization.
- Press down into the hands.
- Lift the back heel



4. Bend the lifted knee and open the hips.

- Continue to feel a lift of the shoulders.



5. Get lighter on the right fingers.

- Peel the heel of the right hand off the floor.
- Shift more weight into the left hand.
- Energize the right knee towards the sky.
- Keep the hips elevating.



6. Transition In.

- Lift the right hand off the floor and stretch it forwards.
- Roll to the little toe side of the left foot.
- Start to tip over so the right foot leans towards the floor on your left side.
- Keep the hips elevating.



7. Flipped Dog "Wild Thing"

- Land on the ball of the right foot.
- Keep the right knee bent - left leg straight.
- Reach the right hand away from the hip to stretch the side of the body.
- Relax the head.
- Keep the hips elevating.



8. Transition Out.

- Lower the right hand back to the floor.
- Roll to the ball of the back foot
- Keep the hips elevating.



9. Return to a one legged Downward Facing Dog



10. Return to Downward Facing Dog

Improper Alignment



Hips Drop - Joint Instability

Common Complications

Hips Drop

- Moving too fast
- Weak core
- Poor body awareness
-

General Instability

- Focus on harnessing your core energy and move from your center.
- Slow it down - there's no rush
- Feel the standing leg firm and ground.
- Focus on the four corners of the standing foot.
- Maintain full body & breath awareness

Warrior Two to Half Moon



1. Start in Warrior Two



2. Shorten the stance by stepping the back foot in.



3. Shift your weight forward into front foot.

- Maintain an active core.
- Press into the four corners of the standing foot.
- Lean the crown of the head forward.
- Begin to lift the back leg and actively press it back and up.



4. Land in Half Moon

- Lower the hand beneath the shoulder with the thumb in line with the little toe.
- Stay grounded in the bottom leg.
- Stretch the crown of the head forward.
- Lift the little toe edge of the top foot higher.
- Lengthen through the ribs and side body.
- Stretch the top arm upwards.

Improper Alignment



Common Complications

Hand too close to the foot

- Reposition the hand underneath the shoulder.

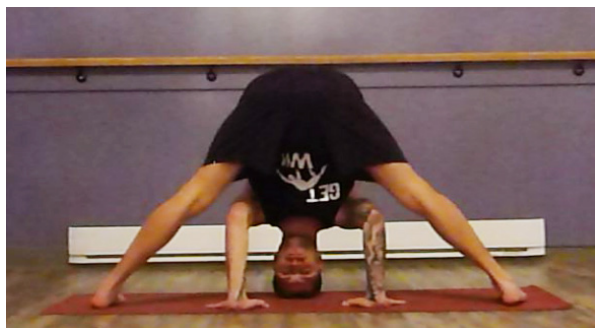
Back Leg Not Lifting Enough

- Lean the chest and head forward
- Lift the little toe side of the foot higher.
- Weak hip abductors.

General Instability (Generally during the transition)

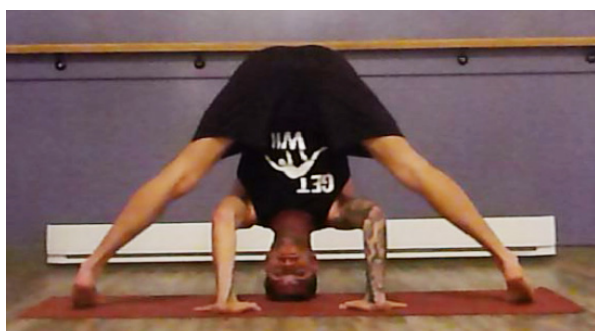
- Focus on harnessing your core energy and move from your center.
- Slow it down - there's no rush
- Feel the standing leg firm in and ground down.
- Focus on the four corners of the standing foot.
- Maintain full body & breath awareness

Wide Legged Forward Bend to Tripod Headstand



1. Start in a Wide Legged Fold

- Place the hands on the floor between the feet.
- Stack the elbows over the wrists.
- Lower the head to the floor so you can see your fingers.
- The feet must be wide enough to allow you to put weight into the hands and head.



2. Rock your weight into your head and hands.

- Lift the heels off the floor.
- Make sure the head and neck feel comfortable.
- Lift the shoulder up and away from the floor.



3. Pike the legs up to a straddle.

- Maintain an active core.
- Spread the legs wide as they lift.



4. Bring the legs up towards the ceiling.

- Stack the hips over the head.
- You can keep the legs in a straddle or bring them together.

Common Complications

Legs not lifting enough or at all.

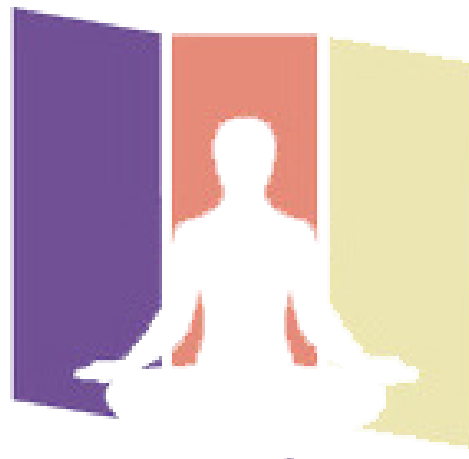
- Weak core/hip strength.
- Spread the legs apart to lift them up.
- Practice pike work on towels or a blanket.

Uncomfortable for neck.

- Lift the shoulders up and bring more weight into the hands.
- Reposition the hands to suit your body mechanics.
- Weak neck muscles

General Instability (Generally during the transition)

- Focus on harnessing your core energy and move from your center.
- Slow it down - there's no rush
- Maintain full body & breath awareness
- Overcome fear.



www.StylesYoga.com
www.TheHotYogaSpot.com