

FROG POSE: FACING CHALLENGE WITH EQUANIMITY

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Yoga asana practice is a paradigm for your life. The physical postures in yoga invite us to notice the way in which we enter the actions of our own lives. One of my former Yoga Teacher Trainees, Susan Colantuono, said it quite poignantly:

“What I am learning and hope to incorporate into whatever teaching I might do, is that asanas offer mirrors for life. How I enter—with compassion or criticism, with awareness, or deadness, with truth or delusion; how I posture—grasping or receiving, in balance or imbalance; how I support myself—through centering, alignment and breath or through exertion; all offer a mirror of how I enter life situations.”

So, how does yoga help us in facing the challenges of our lives with greater ease?

The habit of yoga is to cultivate an evenness, an equanimity and non-reactiveness in the body and the mind. Most of us have been trained to move towards pleasure and away from pain. We flee from discomfort and often take drugs or numb ourselves with over-activity to keep us from fully experiencing it. Yoga seeks freedom from the attachment to pain and pleasure by disciplining the mind/body to notice strong sensation without judging it, and then, by breathing into it. The breath is the body's way of bringing reassurance and support embrace to the places of struggle in both the body and the mind. We neither ignore the sensation nor simply react to it; instead we observe it, bring loving awareness and breath to it, and let go of our attachment to either attraction to it or aversion.

Practicing Frog Pose* is a great way to train the mind and body to face challenges with greater “comfort.” We become more and more comfortable with discomfort, and less and less reactive in the mind.

Let's give it a try:

1. Place a blanket the long way on your mat, so that you have a softer surface for the knees and ankles to rest.
2. Come onto your hands and knees. Spread the knees as wide as you can the long way on your mat so that both your knees and your ankles are resting on the blanket.
3. Allow the ankles to line up directly behind the knees, or if this is too difficult, bring the ankles in a bit.

4. Place the hands shoulder width apart and walk the hands forward slowly, perhaps coming on to the forearms.
5. As you walk the hands forward, the hips will also come forward.
6. Once you find a nice challenge in the inner thighs and hips, curl your tailbone under just a bit and lift your low belly up towards your naval.
7. Close your eyes and focus on the breathing. As you meet stronger and stronger sensation, consciously allow your breath to flow over your mind and down into your thighs. Allow the breath to create a wave of calm, reassuring energy in mind and body.
8. Notice when the thoughts become reactive, clutching, even panicky, and simply focus on the beautiful, even, reassuring sound of your breath washing over the thoughts and ungripping them.
9. Bring compassion, love, healing with the breath. Use the smile.
“Yes you are here. I feel you. I hear your song. I am here to help. To listen. To not look away. To bring healing and friendship in your time of need.”
10. To come out of the pose, walk your hands back towards your body. Bring the feet in towards one another. Very slowly, using your hands to support you, bring the knees together. On hands and knees, stretch one leg out then the others to stretch the knees and ankles.

***Contraindications:** This pose is not for those with serious knee, hip, ankle, or lower back issues.

Frog pose cultivates the habit of meeting challenges with equanimity by bringing one back to the breath, the body, and the heart center. This kind of presence allows for the clearest judgment in the face of chaos or ambiguity and for a choice of action that is in greater alignment with our true selves. Ultimately, it helps to cultivate a quiet fearlessness—not just for the things we perceive as dangerous or scary, but for the quieter dangers of conforming to the status quo, deadening our senses with too much activity and over-stimulation, and the small ways we lie to ourselves in order to be safe and “comfortable” instead of truly awake and alive.