

Be Cool, Calm and Collected this Summer

with Anjaneyasana, Crescent Moon Pose

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*Release the grasping demands of the ego
by resting in the sweet contentment of inner silence.*

—Yogacharya O’Brian

As a child, I always looked forward to the summer. Our family often traveled to visit relatives and participated in neighborhood gatherings. With the longer days we spent hours and hours outside in the hot sun playing baseball, swimming, fishing, biking and hiking. We packed every minute of every day, even as we became sunburned and exhausted from all of the activity. I didn’t know it at the time, but the heat and over activity often led to being unbalanced, which resulted in discontent—even though the activities I was involved in brought great joy.

The purpose of Hatha Yoga is to regain our balance and support deep meditation by harnessing the free flow of *prana* (vital energy) through the breath and the body. This is done by balancing the *pingala* (sun) and *ida* (moon) currents in the body. *Pingala* embodies the warm and stimulating energy of the sun. It symbolizes our rational, active nature. *Ida* represents the cool and nurturing energy of the moon. It symbolizes our intuitive, receptive nature.

Bringing *pingala* and *ida* into equilibrium is a major focus of Hatha Yoga—so important, in fact, that the term *hatha* signifies this balance. “Ha” represents the solar qualities and active force of *pingala*; “tha” represents the mind and the lunar qualities of *ida*. Balancing sun and moon, or *pingala* and *ida*, facilitates the awakening and arising of *prana*, and thus the awakening of higher consciousness.

Knowing this provides great hope that we can remain balanced, even in the heat and over activity of summer months. *Anjaneyasana* (Crescent Moon Pose) is a simple asana practice that brings coolness, calmness, and receptivity, which supports us to experience the fullness of our summer with equanimity.

Anjaneyasana helps us develop poise and balance, as we open our chest and breathe deeply, energizing and clearing our lungs. When practiced regularly, this pose helps us develop humility, wisdom and compassion. Taking time in this pose with our eyes closed allows us to experience deep inner calm and trust.

PRACTICE

Anjaneyasana, Crescent Moon Pose

- Begin in an upright kneeling position.
- With an inhalation, lift your hips up off the heels and step your right foot forward until your bent right knee is positioned directly over your toes.
- With the next inhalation, sweep your arms out to the sides and overhead in prayer position. Look up, being careful not to jam the back of your neck, as you reach your pinkies toward the ceiling and arch the back slightly into *Anjaneyasana* (Crescent Moon Pose). Close your eyes and hold for several breaths.
- With an exhalation, bring your palms together at the heart and return to a kneeling position. Rest here for a several breaths and then repeat on the left side.
- Complete each round with a short time for rest and integration in *Balasna* (Child’s Pose). Enter into the pose with an exhalation, as you place your palms on top of one another on the floor in front of you, bend your elbows out to the sides, and rest your forehead on your hands, keeping your buttocks resting toward your heels. Close your eyes and rest your awareness here for several breaths.

Repeat two or three times, flowing with the breath, and pausing for several breaths in each stage of the flow.

Physical Benefits

- Energizes the spine in preparation for meditation
- Opens the chest and helps develop lung capacity
- Soothes sore throat, coughs and colds
- Removes tension from buttocks
- Tones the kidneys and liver
- Stretches and strengthens quadriceps (front of thigh)
- Helps posture, particularly if you have rounded shoulders
- Relieves ankle tension
- Helps relieve sciatica 🐦

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Note: Always use your best judgment about which practices are useful for your unique situation. Consult with your physician if needed. Study with a hatha yoga instructor for more detailed practices.