

Anatomy Worksheet

Muscular System

What is the muscular system? The muscular system plays an important role in EVERYTHING! It is an organ system that consists of skeletal, smooth and cardiac muscles. Skeletal muscles (voluntary) consist of coordinated contractions. Cardiac muscles (involuntary) consist of the heart muscles and the muscle fibers that are laterally connected. Smooth muscles are controlled by the autonomic nervous system (heartbeat, lungs, etc)

How Does Meditation Aid this System? With meditation, most of the focus is around the breath. It just so happens that everything functions better when it receives more fresh oxygen as we focus on the breath, including muscles. Also, as we meditate it can build on mental strength which may just help the body and muscles push through pain or fatigue that it would otherwise not be able to experience without the aid of meditation and pranayama.

How does lunge aid the muscular system? Depending on how deep the pose is executed this is an excellent hip opener and also helps to lengthen the back side of the body.

The Takeaway: The muscle system is so important as it is generally what keeps our bodies moving. Muscles can gain both strength and length (flexibility) as we deepen our yoga practice.

How does Asana aid it? Asanas, especially like lunge, will help to stretch the back side muscles, as well as the groin and hips. It will also help strengthen the delts, core and trapezius if properly aligned/engaged.

Anatomy of Asana:

In what ways does yoga change the muscular structure to improve health? We hold the issues in our tissues! So often our bodies are accustomed to the tasks of our everyday life, perhaps slouching at a desk all day, or on the floor with our children. Yoga asana, including lunge encourages our bodies to find comfort in new positions than that we are accustomed to. This allows the muscles to lengthen and strengthen which ultimately help our mobility. In my opinion, if we move better, we feel better.

How does it help to enhance connective tissues? A low lunge will help lubricate and rinse the hip joints especially. Yogis may experience some stretching in the shoulders as well.

How does yoga go so deep it affects the skeletal structure and how so? Low lunge is going to allow some deep muscle strengthening to occur which will ultimately have an affect on our bones. As we work and lubricate muscles our joints and bones are better

suited for less inflammation/stress which allows bone density to improve and strength to improve.

Go deeper! How does it penetrate on a cellular level? This is a great pose that can assist the body in flushing toxins as we experience the compression and release of (especially) the hip joints. This allows the body to rid itself of toxins and allow fresh, oxygenated blood to flow freely.

Primary Movers: hip flexors, groin, legs, back, core

Consider the impact of asana on this system: Great posture (and yoga in general) for the muscular system, as we lengthen and strengthen our muscles it allows a flexible and strong foundation to be in place to support our temple.

Create a Class: FEEL IT!

Posture 1: Warrior I

Cues: Inhale Warrior I, press your back foot to a 45 degree angle, ground through your front foot, stack your arms up above your shoulders

Qualities: Press your shoulders down, away from your ears to lengthen your neck, bring your back hip point forward to align your hips, core is engaged

Modification: Option to shorten your stance, option for hands to heart center.

Posture 2: Lunge

Cues: Exhale lunge, drop your palms to your mat, turn your back foot and press into your ball mound, crown of your head lengthens to the front of your mat

Qualities: Isometrically draw your front heel and back toes together to create sensation in your inner thighs, core is engaged

Modification: Option to drop down to your knee

Posture 3: Half Twisted Lizard

Cues: Inhale half twisted lizard. Drop your R/L knee and cartwheel the opposite arm to catch your foot. Gaze to the side or back of your mat

Qualities: Engage your obliques to open your chest,

Modification: Option to bring your hand to your knee for a gentle twist

Posture 4: Half Split

Cues: exhale half split, release your bind, sink your hips back and down planting your palms on either side of your straightened leg, bow your head down

Qualities: keep the shoulders away from the ears to elongate your neck, hips are neutral, Flex your front foot to engage the back of the leg.

Modification: Option to lessen your lean, option to rest a block under your hips

Theme a meditation: (End of class). As you settle into savasana, take time to thank your body for all it has done. Notice how different your body may feel now than it did at the beginning of class. Bring your awareness to your toes and your feet. Do they feel warm and free? Bring your awareness to your legs, perhaps they are melting into your

mat, or vibrating with power. Bring your awareness to your torso. As you inhale and exhale attune yourself to the heated energy that rests there. Move to your throat and face, notice any droplets of sweat that cool you down. And your third eye, bring your awareness here and know that everything you have felt and experienced today on your mat has served your body on a larger level. Feel good about your practice, feel good about yourself.