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YOU MAY HAVE
 FAILED YOUR MOST
 IMPORTANT GOAL
 IF YOU OVERDO
 SOME PRACTICES
 DUE TO EGOTISTIC
 COMPULSIONS.

by Shameem Akthar

Moderation rules

It is better than not doing anything at all – yet, overdoing some practices in yoga at the expense of others can be not just counter-productive but also dangerous. That is so because every practice also has a psycho-spiritual impact.

As a teacher, I see what I myself have been guilty of as a beginner– doing the challenging poses for a longer duration and skipping the preparatory poses. For instance, the most common mistake is sacrificing the modest leg raise to the more exotic headstand. In fact, the third stage of the leg raise prepares you for the headstand by acutely, intensely challenging the neck muscles that have to hold you upside down when doing the headstand. I also know of several intense yoga instructors who overdo the backbends with such extreme severity that they end up with hernia or piles! A common reason for this, having been sorely guilty of it myself, is the ego. We work on poses or practices that look tough and make us feel elation and a thrill of achievement– all that our ego needs. However, while doing that, we overlook grounding practices since there is no round of applause at the end of holding such seemingly modest poses.

Splits done without moolabandha can even lead to incontinence. Pranayama done without a meditative temper can cause hypertension, irritability and extreme restlessness, according to Iyengar. Wrong type of retention when the mind is not ready can explode an existing emotional problem, creating psychosis. Bhastrika overdone can cause burnout. Asanas without the grounding and meditative temper of pranayama or some meditation can fatigue you. Both asana and pranayama without some meditative shavasana or corpse pose can make you hyperactive and excitable. The remedy for all this is, of course, to create a reasonable sadhana where all practices are given equal importance, and be acutely aware as to why you feel prodded to do something on a mat.

Setuasana (Plank pose):

Sit up, with legs out in front. Keep hands palms down near the hips. Let the hands face backwards, as shown. Inhale, lifting hips up in the air. Ensure legs do not fold at knees. Also see that toes are flat on ground (though this may take a while to achieve given that it calls for some flexibility). Drop neck back. Hold the pose, breathing as normally as possible. Release. Repeat a few times.

Benefits: This is a strong pose in its own right, but prepares you for more advanced one like chakrasana (wheel) and the vrschikasana (scorpion). It is able to prepare you for other poses due to the intense stretch it creates and the strength it requires to stay up.

Avoid if prone to cramps.



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