



INTRODUCTION TO YOGA FOR WOMEN

Week 2: Finding a balance between effort and ease

Why we need to balance effort and ease?

Many physical activities demand that we always give our 100%, but yoga is different. Because yoga wants us to go deeper, to get to know ourselves and experience benefits beyond our physical body. When we push ourselves a little too much and too soon, we not only risk an injury or flare up of an existing sensitivity, we are also less likely to enjoy what we're doing and make it a regular habit, and we certainly won't be able to maintain the connection of body, mind and breath that yoga asks for.

On the other hand, if we always aim to stay at ease, we will not experience new things and grow, in any aspect of our lives, including our yoga practice. We will stick to the poses we like, know and feel comfortable in, without even trying anything new or different. Or, if we try something once and are unable to do it, we never try it again, even though we might have built our strength and flexibility that would've allowed us to enjoy the new challenge.

Balance between effort and ease will be **different for everyone**, but as a principle I'd say aim for 50% and expand gradually from there as you become more used to the practice. This depends on what's going on in our bodies, our energy levels and understanding of the poses and movements, ways of practicing in a way that supports us. Finding your perfect mix of effort and ease, will require you to connect with your body, mind and breath when exploring in your practice to notice your response to the challenges of the poses and movements, and adjusting your practice accordingly.

I've put together some guidance below.

Effort vs Ease - Guiding Principles

- Get to know your body and your anatomy, we're all built differently and our yoga will be too
- Respect your body and energy - it's ok to be tired and take it easy on your mat
- Let the body sensations (not the mind's desire - the ego) to guide you in how far to go
- Never practice anything that causes pain
- Never force or push your body into a pose or movement
- Aim for feeling gentle stretching/pulling, warmth in the body
- Notice the difference between engaging muscles and tensing muscles due to discomfort
- Try to maintain slow, steady and deep breathing during practice
- If you've become out of breath, try to ease off, take a break to slow the breath down again

- If you're holding your breath, you've gone too far, find your breath and try again
- Maintain focus of the mind on the body and breath
- If your mind wandered off, it could be due to physical discomfort, focus and adjust as needed
- Use props to support your body to find comfort
- Build up towards more complex and demanding poses
- Use the yoga teacher's guidance through the different stages of poses
- Gradually move your comfort zone in your practice when your body is ready and up for it
- Try new things but be honest with yourself about whether you're ready for them
- Ask yoga teacher's questions if anything is unclear or you want help after the class

Key Postures Explored

I've recorded a 20 mins video for you summarising the focus of the second class that includes a short practice covering the key postures we explored last week and the new ones from this week:

- Worrier 2
- Reverse Worrier
- Side Angle
- Cobra

Next Steps

Congratulations on completing your second yoga class! Next session will be all about technique and alignment. We will practice the poses we learnt and add some more. In the meantime, I recommend making yoga a part of your life by practicing:

- diaphragmatic breathing (slow, deep breathing into your belly)
- noticing sensations in your body (body scan)
- spotting when your thoughts take you away from where you are and what you're doing
- the recorded short yoga practice with the use of a blanket to support yourself as needed