



*Body Awakenings*  
March 2005

# Awakening News

*Welcome to our first official Newsletter*

**Free Yogalates Classes:** Next week I am offering two classes for Free! Both are 'General' Yogalates classes (sorry Over 50s & Prenatal yogis) - Thursday 17 March 7.30pm at Sutherland and Saturday 19 March 8am at Carrs Park. If you are interested please email or call to book your place. Regulars your class will be free also - please let your friends know.

**Awakening News Article:** 'The importance of the breath in Yogalates' is on page 2, can also be viewed online end of next week [www.bodyawakenings.com.au/newsletter.htm](http://www.bodyawakenings.com.au/newsletter.htm). You can subscribe to receive quarterly Awakening News by email at this website also.

**Attention Regular Yogis:** Thank you for your continued support. If you have any suggestions or questions regarding classes or your personal practice please feel free to email or call me at any time. I am updating my website to include testimonials, when you have a free moment I would really appreciate if you could give me a brief description of your experience so far with Yogalates. eg Tamie Burke, Cronulla, wrote "I can really feel the difference Yogalates has made to my breathing - already reducing my asthma attacks, also my deep abdominal muscles feel stronger after only 5 weeks - I am sitting up straighter!"

**Health Fund Update:** Yogalates is not yet recognised by some health funds (a few major ones are currently looking into) however if you are a member of Teachers Federation or NRMA you can claim your classes - so please request a receipt upon payment. For Remedial Massage Therapy all health funds are covered except MBF and Australian Unity (currently waiting on) and Medibank Private.

**Attention Business Owners:** If you have a business and would like me to include your contact details on [www.bodyawakenings.com.au/links.htm](http://www.bodyawakenings.com.au/links.htm) please forward them to me with a brief description of your business.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

*Namasté*

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## Pose of Interest



**Savasana** (pronounced *Shah-VAHS-anna*) – Corpse pose

Otherwise known as your relaxation pose at the beginning and/or end of class. One of the most challenging poses because it involves allowing the entire body to relax, for many yogis this can seem almost impossible. Just 5 minutes of relaxation refreshes the mind, problems that may have seemed overwhelming become more manageable, inner peace bathes the soul. Suggestions to help deepen your relaxation:

- Be comfortable - listen to your body, know its needs and reap the benefits of Savasana. Place a bolster/pillows under knees to support tender lower back; place a small cushion/folded hand towel under the head to lengthen the back of the neck (if chin is poking towards ceiling); lay a bolster long under the Thoracic spine (chest area) and head to open up the chest & shoulders; raise the head and shoulders with pillows if suffer from high blood pressure; use an eyepillow to stop flickering eyelids, allowing the eyes to sink and soften.
- Align the body - upper body in line with lower (ie right shoulder, right hip & ankle); feet hip width apart; arms beside body palms up to open chest; forehead and chin parallel to ceiling; nose, chin, sternum and pubic bone in one straight line. This can help you discover imbalances and tension in the body.
- Belly breathe to relax body, slow down its rhythms and your thoughts, release tension on the out breath.
- Remove internal distractions by focussing on the pathway or sound of the breath; or repeat a Mantra ie "so" as you breath in "hum" as you breath out; or visualisations ie third eye centre or Pranic energy flow throughout the body etc. The body will not relax fully with a busy mind.

## ***The importance of the breath in Yogalates™***

In Yogalates™ we use breathing techniques (Pranayama) to either relax or stimulate the body;

- ∞ **Belly breathing** helps to relax the body and release tension. When the lungs fill completely the belly naturally expands to make room for the downward expansion of the lungs (belly is not forced to balloon). Internal organs are massaged and the belly is soft, helping to release stored tension and fear and unlock the site of intuition. The smooth deep rhythm of breath, fills the lungs with O<sub>2</sub> and Prana (life force) and empties the bottom lungs of stale air and toxic waste, and influences the calming of the mind and nervous system. It can reduce the heart rate – be cautious if suffer from low blood pressure. The long term benefits are healthy diaphragm (breathing) muscle, increased lung capacity and O<sub>2</sub> intake, improved health and function of internal organs and nervous system. The belly breath is beneficial for relaxation, and Yogalates postures where the spine doesn't need the support of the core abdominal muscles (ie reclined hamstring stretch, Childs pose). It calms nerves so muscles can soften and lengthen, improving flexibility.
- ∞ **Lateral Thoracic Breathing - LTB** (Chest breath) stimulates the body by containing the expansion of the lungs within the chest area (Thoracic) which massages the heart increasing heart rate and blood flow – be cautious if suffer from high blood pressure/heart conditions. By holding navel towards the spine for both the in and out breath - flattening the lower belly and narrowing the waist - the breath flares the lower ribs to the sides, upper belly lengthens, upper chest rises, mid-back spreads - allowing the whole chest to expand whilst maintaining a strong lower torso. Drawing up pelvic floor muscles stabilises the pelvis and increases the contraction of lower abdominals. LTB protects the spine and invigorates the body during Yogalates, it's important to release the belly between exercises to prevent tension in the body. Long term benefits are increased strength and stamina of core stabilising muscles, increased flexibility of lungs and intercostal muscles between the ribs. See header of page 1 for examples of postures where the core muscles are required to support the suspended torso using LTB.

The ancient Sanskrit word '**Yoga**' translates as 'Union' - union of body, mind & soul; union of individual soul with universe/Higher Self/God. Focussing the mind on the breath quietens the mind and allows you to become conscious of your posture, areas of tension and imbalances in the body, you also prevent injury by listening to your body and not pushing past your limits. Yoga asanas (postures) were developed to create an awareness of the body – discovering imbalances between left and right side, front and back - by being with the breath you can learn what your body needs to create balance, and this can change everyday. Yoga is not competitive, try not to notice what anyone else in the yoga room can or can't do. By thinking about others you are missing an opportunity to benefit you!

**Pilates** involves exercises working isolated muscle groups using LTB. Co-ordinating movement with the breath develops left & right brain function. Usually exerting the most effort with an *exhalation* – when the core muscles are drawing deeper to strengthen the spine in the movement. The benefits are tenfold when focusing on the breath during the exercises. The slower you train a muscle the faster it learns and grows – like most of us! Muscles need plenty of oxygen to function properly, holding the breath can create tension leading to pain and sometimes cramping.

Good posture requires *all* of our muscles to be strong as well as flexible – this includes our abdominals! Rigid abdominals can distort the natural curves of the spine, reduce breathing capacity and create tension in internal organs. The LTB increases strength and stamina in the deep abdominal muscle and pelvic floor so they can naturally switch on at 40-60% – improving everyday posture, protecting the spine. The Belly breath, as long as the belly isn't forced to balloon out – overstretching the muscles, creates supple abdominals allowing more movement in the spine and deeper breathing.

When you breathe you are also breathing Prana – the body's life force – by improving your breathing system you are generating a stronger flow of energy throughout the body. For the non-esoteric yogis you could consider the increased negative ions you bring into the body (research has shown negative ions are believed to improve mental energy, alleviate depression and stress and boost our immune system). For the esoteric yogis you could deepen your spiritual practice by focussing on the Pranic flow throughout the body to encourage self-healing.

The next time you are practising Yogalates™ and find you are holding your breath – practice safely and either reduce the intensity or have a break. Unless you are breathing you are not truly practising! Try not to get caught up with when you are meant to be inhaling or exhaling, that will come with practice. Just breathe, someday that's all your body needs.