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Yoga For You

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COURTESY MANOA YOGA CENTER
Shelley Choy demonstrates Gomukhasana –
Stage 2.

Gomukhasana Stage 2

(Cow Face Pose)

"Go" is the Sanskrit word for cow, and "mukha" means face. This pose looks like the face of a cow.

This is a difficult pose to master as it requires great concentration to achieve the balance. It is recommended for those who have trouble with mental focus.

Gomukhasana massages and releases tension in the calf muscles and makes them elastic. The practice of this asana brings relief to stiff knees and is a boon to runners and people who are on their feet a lot. In the final pose, the arm position helps to expand the chest and create more flexibility in the shoulders.

Here we present the final stage of the asana where the arms, shoulders and chest are stretched and opened.

1. Place a folded yoga mat and blanket on the floor. You could also sit on a rug or carpeted floor.
2. Kneel with the knees and feet together.
3. Keep the left foot in place as you cross the right thigh over the left thigh. Move the right foot next to the left one. Point the toes of both feet backward.
4. Place the hands beside the hips as you sit down onto the feet. Use the hands on the floor to help balance. You can also put the hands on yoga blocks or similar.

At first the pressure on the calves is intense. If it is too much, then come up and repeat a few times until you can sit easily.

5. Repeat to both sides a few times, and then try to balance with hands on the thighs. If the balance is too difficult, place a folded blanket over the feet to give a broader support for the buttocks. Learn to balance for up to a minute on each side while observing the flow of breath with a quiet mind. (This is Stage 1; see last week's column.)
6. Now stretch the right arm sideways in line with the right shoulder, then roll the whole arm inward as you take it behind the back. Wiggle the fingers up the back, between the shoulder blades, and press the back of the hand into the spine. Press the right elbow back and spread and open the chest.
7. Stretch the left arm sideways in line with the left shoulder, turn the whole arm out then bend the arm and catch the right hand with the left. The left elbow will now point at the ceiling and the right elbow at the floor. If you cannot catch the hand, then use a towel or yoga belt. With regular practice you will gain increased flexibility.
8. Hold for up to a minute and then release the arms and legs and do the other side, exchanging the position of the limbs.

As with all yoga asanas, you should seek a qualified teacher for guidance.

Ray Madigan and **Shelley Choy** are certified Iyengar Yoga teachers and co-direct the Manoa Yoga Center at Manoa Marketplace. Visit www.manoayoga.com or call 382-3910. Manoa Yoga Center, the authors and the Star-Bulletin take no responsibility for any injury arising from the practice of these yoga postures. Readers should seek a doctor's approval before commencing this yoga practice.

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