

20-hours Therapeutic Wisdom Training with Doug Keller – Detailed Content

Thursday, March 20, 2025 from 9:00 am to 11:45 am:

The Primacy of the Joints, and Keys to Forward Bending and Backbending

Before we can even talk about muscles, our first principle must be ‘Joint Play.’ If there is not proper freedom of movement in the joints, the protective reflexes of the body will reduce both our flexibility and strength. This reflex, if it is not understood, can frustrate our attempts at flexibility in yoga, and increases the risk of inflammation as well as injury in yoga practice.

Our primary focus: the joint that is at the heart of our most fundamental movements is the sacroiliac joint.

Stiffness in the low back and pelvis is where age first shows itself, and the restriction in movement that comes with sacroiliac joint problems adds to other aches, pains, and inflammations that we associate with age.

We’ll start with some simple principles of joint play and movement for the sacroiliac joint that will provide the key for greater freedom, stability, and flexibility in forward bending and backbending, as well as reduction in low back and sacroiliac pain. This will also provide the key to greater hamstring flexibility.

The ‘map’ for understanding these fundamental movements is provided by two main myofascial lines or ‘Sutras,’ centered around the sacroiliac joint, which are in the back body (Paschima Sutra) and front body (Purva Sutra).

Myofascial ‘lines’ define the connections between muscles that govern posture and movement. An appropriate Sanskrit name for these lines, which were identified by Tom Myers in his Anatomy Trains, is ‘Sutra.’ To describe them in terms of yogic names is a convenience that helps us connect them to yoga practice.

We will explore fundamental principles for working with both of these principle ‘Sutras,’ particularly in forward bending and backbending, with an eye to best practices and sequencing for back health.

Thursday, March 20, 2025 from 1:45 pm to 5:00 pm:

‘Spirals’ Provide Resilience in Our Joints

What we covered in the morning session regarding forward bending and backbending is a foundation. However, the overall health and resilience of our joints comes from natural twisting actions — the prime example is walking. This fundamental pattern should be reinforced through yoga practice, and the ‘map’ for the myofascial ‘spirals’ that govern joint health is the ‘Spiral’ or ‘Parivritta’ Sutra. Twisting is a whole-body action that is not confined just to the spine. It is an essential dimension of yoga practice that maintains the health of our vital organs, frees the torso for healthy breathing, and nourishes and prevents degeneration of our joints.

In the lower body, this spiraling action is key to the health of the hips, knees, and feet, as well as the low back. In the upper body, it’s the key to efficient breathing as well as the health of the neck.

In this afternoon session we'll begin the exploration of the Spiral Sutra by working from the feet upward.

We'll address conditions in the feet and ankles, as well as in the knees and hips. This will lead to a number of refinements in yoga instructions as well as variations, which will allow us to address the differences in bone structure between students, and refine our approach to action and alignment in asana practice and instruction. This will be a deep introduction into the Spiral Line or 'Parivritta Sutra,' which is also a valuable link to the health of the upper body — the shoulder girdle and neck in particular. We'll continue with the role of the Parivritta Sutra in the upper body in the Friday sessions.

**Friday, March 21, 2025 from 9:00 am to 11:45 am:
Fundamental Keys to The Shoulders**

Although serious pain problems can come up in the shoulders and seem mysterious or complex, the fundamentals for mobilizing and stabilizing the shoulders are relatively simple, and can be incorporated easily and effectively into yoga poses in a variety of ways.

This morning session will go through these basic principles and their application in poses, as well as variations for making progress with limitations in shoulder movement.

There are 'Sutras' for the shoulders, which interweave the actions the hands and elbows with the mobility of the shoulders. These myofascial lines provide the connections that will be explored in mudra, between actions of the fingers and hands to the breath — the areas of the lungs that are stimulated, as well as the nostrils or 'nadis.'

The morning lays out the fundamentals for the shoulders. The afternoon will continue with an exploration of the myofascial connections of mudra, establishing a link to the Spiral Sutra in the upper body, which will further refine our work with the shoulders as well as with pranayama.

**Friday, March 21, 2025 from 1:45 pm to 5:00 pm:
The Shoulders, Neck, and Mudra: Keys to Deeper Breath Work**

The Spiral Line (Parivritta Sutra) in the upper body establishes the essential link between the Core, the shoulder girdle, and the neck.

Understanding and feeling these connections is essential to working effectively and beneficially in yoga asanas, particularly to benefit neck health and improve breathing patterns. Moreover, there are connections between the Sutras of the hands and wrists, and the muscles of the upper body in the Spiral Sutra.

We will explore these fascial lines in fundamental poses and stretches, with close attention to the wrists and elbows, as well as explore the connection between healthy movement of the shoulder blades and the health of the neck.

This will expand into an exploration of mudra and its influence on the breath in pranayama, and its subtle influence on mental focus and management of emotions.

The latter half of the afternoon will be spent on these topics, and on refining pranayama practices.

**Saturday, March 22, 2025 from 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm:
The 'Madhya' or Center in Asana and Breath**

The structural — and emotional — center of the body lies along the 'Madhya Sutra' (Madhya = Center or Middle), which involves the interplay between the psoas, diaphragm, pelvic floor, as well as the 'vocal diaphragm' in the throat.

The complement to the 'Madhya Sutra' is the 'Parsva Sutra' — the line of muscles arranged along the side body which principally include the abductors, which gets its name from 'Parsvakonasana,' which is a strong stretch to the side body.

The fluidity of breath and movement through this 'Inner Body' or 'Madhya' depends upon the stability provided by the Parsva Sutra in the 'Outer Body, from the feet to the neck.

In asana practice, we'll explore the interplay between the adductors of the Madhya Sutra and the abductors of the Parsva Sutra, particularly as they play a central role in postural and movement imbalances that involve the psoas.

This exploration will give us a set of tools for recognizing and working with asymmetries that show up in asana practice as well as postural assessment.

In past trainings we have worked with direct postural assessment, and the basics of that will be included in this session. This year we will look more closely at recognizing these asymmetries in asana practice, and how to correct for them. This will give useful tools for teaching in class situations, with ideas for variations for the asanas.

The work on Saturday will be a practical and accessible approach to working with the psoas and 'Madhya' through asana. It will also be an introduction to bandha and the deeper interplay between psoas, diaphragm, pelvic floor, and 'vocal diaphragm' of the neck, which will be explored more in depth on Sunday.

**Sunday, March 23, 2025 from 12:30 pm to 5:00 pm:
Whole Health: Bandha, Mudra, Breath, and Well-Being**

Health and the body's rejuvenation depend upon the nervous system. The hatha yogis understood this, and their stress upon the tools of asana, bandha, and mudra in connection with the breath was aimed at fine-tuning that system.

Saturday's session provided an introduction and pathway into understanding and working effectively with the bandhas as well as mudra in asana and breath.

This Sunday session will delve more deeply into linking the bandhas, from the pelvic floor to the neck and throat in posture and breath, highlighting the 'command center' (Ajna) of health that is deeply influenced by the action and position of the head and neck, and stimulation of the pathways of the breath.

We'll take this step by step, bringing together the ideas of the training, first with regard to asana, to link together the feeling and support of the bandhas.

The pelvic floor is intimately tied to the natural undulation of the spine with the breath, and is the 'root' of the connection to the diaphragm and actions of the throat in pranayama. It is supported by the subtle abdominal actions of Uddiyana bandha, as well as its connection to the 'vocal diaphragm' that is activated in the Ujjayi breath.

All of this is tied to the self-regulation of the nervous system, and will lead to an exploration into the role and meaning of the 'chakras,' especially in conjunction with our modern understanding of the vagus nerve and its function in regulating not just our physical health, but our emotional equilibrium and continued cognitive health. This will allow us to highlight the most productive approaches to asana as well as pranayama and meditation. The session will include asana practice, with emphasis on strategies and goals for asana practice with regard to different age groups, in terms of 'fascial fitness.'

It will also include practices and approaches to pranayama and focusing techniques, connected with bandha and mudra, that provide tools for maintaining emotional equilibrium and cognitive health.

And this will encompass some understanding of the chakras. In breath and meditation practices, we'll explore the experience of focus on three main chakras — Muladhara, Anahata, and Ajna — and their role and significance in these realms of health and well-being.