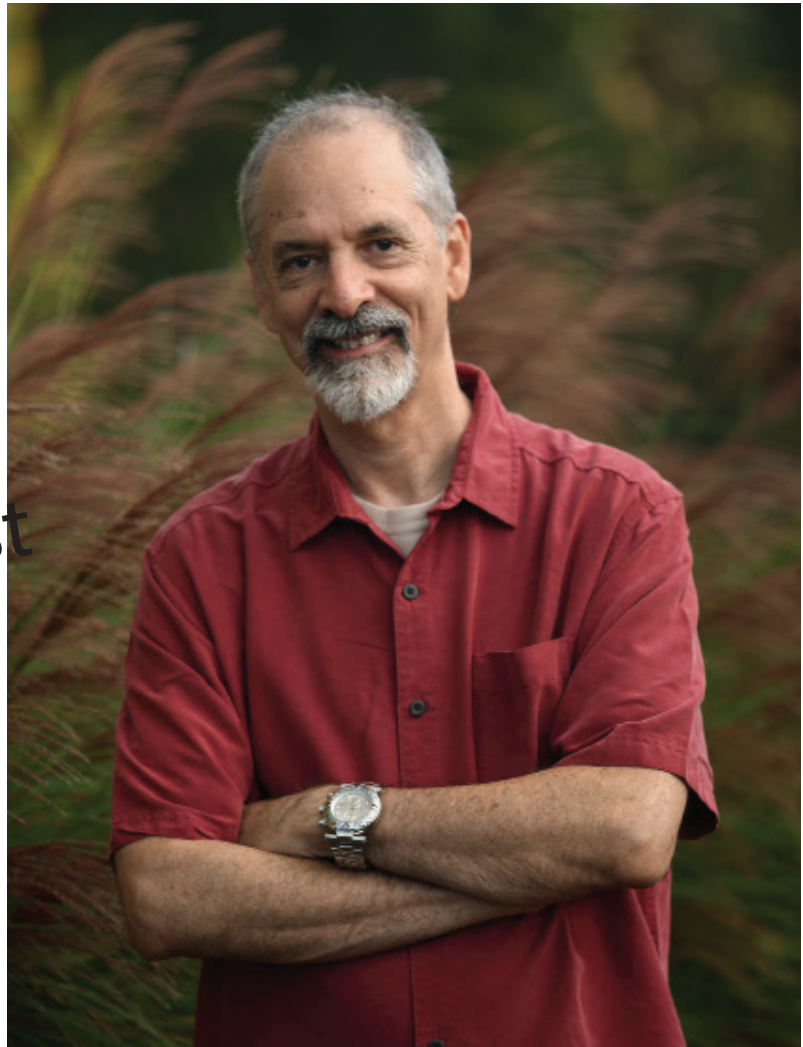


learn from yoga therapist Gary Kraftsow

The founder of the American Viniyoga Institute shares insight on Viniyoga practices and a sequence for helping to manage addictive behavior.



We use the term Viniyoga—an ancient Sanskrit term that implies differentiation, adaptation, and appropriate application—to refer to an approach that adapts yoga practice to the unique conditions, needs, and interests of each individual. This traditional yoga lineage gives each practitioner the tools they need to individualize and actualize the process of self-discovery and personal transformation.

In Viniyoga, we believe that yoga can effect positive change in each practitioner. This requires an understanding of a person's present condition, personal potential, and goals. Using the teachings and practices of yoga—including asana, pranayama, bandha, sound, chanting, meditation, personal ritual, and the study of texts—we create an integrated practice to help practitioners move through pain, grief, depression, addiction, and more.

There are four main differences between the Viniyoga approach to asana and most other forms of asana practice:

Function over form. We emphasize the function rather than the form of asana and use the science of adapting the forms of the

postures to achieve different results and benefits.

Breath and adaptation. We focus on breath as the medium for movement in asana, and the science of adapting the pattern of breathing in postures to produce different effects, depending upon the goal.

Repetition and stay. The use of repetition into and out of the postures, as well as holding the postures, enhances the structural and energetic effects of practice.

The art and science of sequencing. Viniyoga teachers create practices of different orientation, length, and intensity to suit the intention and context of each practice and practitioner.

According to Krishnamacharya, the grandfather of most Western forms of the practice, a yoga teacher must strive to understand the true needs of the student and to adapt a practice to serve those needs. He reminded teachers emphatically that teaching is for the student, not the teacher. It is through the choices that we make in sequencing that we are able to create usable and relevant yoga practices for specific students.

COURTESY OF GARY KRAFTSOW

MAP MY SEQUENCE

Patanjali and other great yoga masters recognized the diversity among people and within the same person at different stages of life. They proposed a range of tools, leaving it up to the teacher to decide which were appropriate. Those tools include asana, pranayama, meditation, ritual, chanting or mantra, and prayer.

A Viniyoga sequence is a logically ordered, context specific strategy that uses the tools of yoga to actualize an intention. It is

effective, efficient, and elegant.

In the following sequence for working with addiction, you will notice the integrated use of all of these tools. Addiction impacts us in a multidimensional way, affecting our anatomy and physiology, emotions and cognition, and behavior. As such, an integrated practice that works on all of these levels is the ideal way to create a positive direction of change in our lives.

VINIYOGA SEQUENCE

Find a comfortable, quiet space and be mindful of your breath—a primary focus of Viniyoga—as you work through the following sequence. As Krishnamacharya once said: “If you’re not regulating your breathing, you’re just doing calisthenics.”

1. SAVASANA

Corpse Pose

Notice habits of attention. Come to a state of relaxed, mindful, present awareness. Cognize:

Where you are in space?
Where you are in time?
Why you are going to practice?
What is your intention?
What do you want?



2. VISUALIZATION

Stay in Savasana. Visualize you are in a forest on a mountain. Sense the smells, feel the breeze, hear the sounds, see the light through the trees.

Imagine, as you are walking, you see a bubbling spring. There’s nothing above it – the water just bubbling up from the earth. See it, smell it.

As you look at the spring, see it as a symbol of the mystery of your birth: the water emerging from the depths and mystery of the earth, as you emerged from your mother’s womb.

See a small stream emerging from the spring. Think of the stream as the earliest memories of your childhood. Walk down the stream and see it widen as you grow in your experience.

Follow the stream down the hill, remembering the as best as you can, the joys as well as the challenges. Remember your first friends and how your self-concept formed as you went to school. Follow the stream until it merges with other streams representing your life in society, past adolescence and into young adulthood, when the

stream merges with the river of your life.

See the river get wide and peaceful: think of good memories and successes. Then see the river get fast and narrow, remembering challenging, even dangerous times.

Reflect on the choices you have made as you bring yourself down the river of your life to the present moment. Also reflect on how quickly time has passed. Looking forward, realize that the river is inexorably flowing to the ocean: to the end of life when you will merge back with your source.

PHOTO: CARY JOBE. HAIR & MAKEUP: SUZANNE BLONS. CLOTHES: MODEL'S OWN

3. TADAKA MUDRA

A Start lying on your back, arms at your sides. **B** Inhale your right arm up and over while you flex your left foot. Retain your breath for 2 seconds. **C** Exhale as your arm lowers to your side and your foot relaxes. Repeat on the other side. Repeat both sides again, retaining your breath for 3 seconds. **D** Then inhale both arms up and over while flexing both feet. Hold the breath for 2 counts. Exhale your arms down to your sides and relax your feet. Inhale your arms back again. Hold for 3 counts. Exhale to lower your arms and relax your feet.



A

4. DVIPADA PITHAM

Two-Legged Pose

A Bend your knees, arms at your sides. **B** Inhale as you lift your hips, your right arm up and overhead, and your left arm so that it is pointing at the ceiling. Hold your breath for 2 counts. **C** Exhale and return to start. Repeat on the other side. Repeat both sides again holding your breath for 3 seconds. **D** Then inhale both arms to the floor behind you as you lift your hips. Hold the breath for 2 counts. Exhale back to the starting point. Repeat holding your breath for 3 counts. Exhale to lower.



A

5. APANASANA

Knees-To-Chest Pose

A Bend your knees toward your chest, one hand on each knee. Keep your arms straight. **B** Exhale, moving your right knee toward your chest. Hold your breath for 2 counts. **C** Inhale as your right knee moves away from your chest. Repeat with your left leg. Repeat again each side, holding your breath for 3 seconds after exhale. **D** Exhale, moving both knees toward your chest. Hold your breath for 2 counts. Inhale as your knees move away from your chest. Repeat, holding your breath for 3 seconds after you exhale.



A

6. VISUALIZATION

Come to a comfortable seat and back to the present moment on the river of your life.

Reflect deeply on the reality that the river is flowing, and, no matter how far ahead, the river will soon meet the ocean and this journey of life will be over.

From this awareness, reflect on your highest values, and your goals. What do you want to achieve before you merge back with the ocean? What kind of experiences do you want to have? What do you want to leave behind?



MAP MY SEQUENCE



B On an inhalation



C On an exhalation



D On an inhalation

Repeat on
the other
side, before
bringing both
arms up.



B On an inhalation



C On an exhalation



D On an inhalation

Repeat on
the other
side, before
bringing both
arms up.



B On an exhalation



C On an inhalation



D On an exhalation

Repeat on
the other
side, before
bringing both
knees in.

7. CHANT

Stay seated. Connect with your spine, then your breath. Deepen your breath. After a few rounds, begin the chant (right).

Note: Om invokes One's True Nature as Pure Awareness in the presence of the Divine. *Namaha* implies reverence, gratitude, and commitment. The spirit of this chant suggests reverence, gratitude, humility, and commitment to do your best for your own growth and transformation.

CHANT

Om
Om
Om Namaha
Om Namaha
Om Namo Namaha
Om Namo Namaha
Om Namo Namo Namaha
Om Namo Namo Namaha

YOGA THERAPIST GARY KRAFTSOW

evolved this approach to yoga from the teachings transmitted by T. Krishnamacharya and T.K.V. Desikachar of Madras, India. Gary is the director and senior teacher of the American Viniyoga Institute; the author of two books: *Yoga for Wellness* and *Yoga for Transformation*, four DVDs, and several online workshops, including *Pranayama Unlocked*, *Meditation Unlocked*, *Yoga Therapy for Depression*, *Yoga Therapy for Better Sleep*, *Yoga Therapy for Anxiety*, and *Asana Unlocked*. Learn more at viniyoga.com.

MODEL EVAN SOROKA

is a Viniyoga therapist in Aspen, Colorado. Learn more at evansoroka.com.

8. VIRABHADRASANA I

Warrior Pose I

A Stand with one foot forward, your feet as wide as your hips and your arms at your sides. **B** Inhale, bend your front knee, displacing your chest slightly ahead of your pelvis as you arch your back. Sweep your arms out and up, and silently recite the first line of the chant (right). **C** Exhale, move your hands toward the top of your head, across your face, then to your heart, while chanting the same line aloud. Repeat 4 times total; with each repetition, chant the subsequent line. (Follow this pattern for poses 8-11.) Switch sides.

CHANT

*Om
Om Namaha
Om Namo Namaha
Om Namo Namo Namaha*



A



B *On an inhalation*



C *On an exhalation*

9. UTKATASANA

Chair Pose variation

A Start with feet hip-distance apart, arms at your sides. **B** Inhale your arms up and silently chant (right). **C** Exhale and fold forward, bending your knees and bringing your chest to your thighs and your palms to the sides of your feet. Chant aloud. **D** Inhale your arms up to standing. Chant silently. **E** Exhale, lowering your arms, chanting aloud. Repeat 4 times.

CHANT

*Om
Om Namaha
Om Namo Namaha
Om Namo Namo Namaha*



A



B *On an inhalation*



C *On an exhalation*

10. URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA

Upward-Facing Dog Pose variation

A Start in Balasana (Child's Pose). **B** Inhale to Upward-Facing Dog, keeping your knees on the floor. Silently chant (right). **C** Exhale back to Child's Pose, chanting aloud. Repeat 4 times.

CHANT

Om
Om Namaha
Om Namo Namaha
Om Namo Namo Namaha



A



B On an inhalation

11. SUKHASANA PARIVRTTI

Seated Twist

In a seated position, bring your left hand to your right knee, and your right hand to rest behind you. Inhale to lengthen, silently chanting (right). Exhale to twist your torso, looking over your right shoulder and chanting aloud. Repeat 4 times, twisting a bit farther on each exhalation. Then switch sides.

CHANT

Om
Om Namaha
Om Namo Namaha
Om Namo Namo Namaha



12. CAKRAVAKASANA

Ruddy Goose Pose

A Start on hands and knees. **B** Exhale into Child's Pose, flexing your elbows as you bring your head to the floor. **C** Inhale back to Tabletop. Repeat 4 times total.



A



B On an exhalation

13. CHANT

Come to seated. Connect with your spine and your breath. Silently chant on both your inhalations and exhalations:

CHANT

Om
Om
Om Namaha
Om Namaha
Om Namō Namaha
Om Namō Namaha
Om Namō Namō Namaha
Om Namō Namō Namaha

14. VISUALIZATION

From a seated position, revisit the flow of your life from the bubbling spring and the mystery of your birth to this present moment. See how you got to where you are now.

A Reflect honestly, for a moment, on what you do habitually with your body on a daily basis. How you spend your time as you move through your day. Ask yourself if how you are using your body is truly leading you toward achieving your highest goals.

B Reflect honestly, for a moment, on how you habitually use your speech and communication on a daily basis and what you talk about, and whether you are speaking honestly to yourself and others. Ask yourself if how you are using your speech is truly leading you toward achieving your highest goals.

C Reflect honestly, for a moment, on how you habitually use your mind on a daily basis and what you think about, and how it is serving you.

15. REFLECTION

Still seated, ask yourself if how you are using your mind is truly leading you toward your highest goals. From where you are now in your life:

A Have a conversation with yourself about what you really want, and how you want to move forward. What are the dysfunctional patterns of body, speech, and mind? How do these patterns have control over you in a way that is causing pain to yourself and others? State how you want to overcome those patterns, to resolve those issues: be specific.

B Ask for help. Pray for courage, clarity, commitment, and strength. Ask for help to overcome these patterns and to find happiness and joy, free from conflict.

C Make a commitment to yourself for your future. What will you stop doing? What will you start doing?

16. CHANT

Connect to your spine and your breath. Chant silently on both your inhalations and exhalations:

CHANT

Om
Om
Om Namaha
Om Namaha
Om Namō Namaha
Om Namō Namaha
Om Namō Namō Namaha
Om Namō Namō Namaha
Om Namō Namaha
Om Namō Namaha
Om Namaha
Om Namaha
Om
Om

17. MEDITATION

Rest, sitting in silence.



Virabhadrasana I

Warrior Pose I

virabhadra = a hero or warrior from the Mahabharata
asana = pose

MOVE WITH EASE

Stand with one foot a comfortable distance forward, and your back foot at a slight angle to the front (45 degrees or less). Your hips and shoulders face forward. On an inhalation, bend your front knee, placing your chest slightly ahead of your pelvis as you arch your back, and lift your arms. On an exhalation, straighten your front knee and lower your arms, moving back to the starting position.

KEEP YOUR CHIN LEVEL

So you avoid compression in your neck.

BRING YOUR CHEST SLIGHTLY PAST YOUR PELVIS

So you avoid compression in your low back.

KEEP YOUR KNEE OVER YOUR ANKLE

Make sure to protect your joints; don't let your knee move past your ankle.



Virabhadrasana I Adaptations



This adaptation turns the posture into a *nyasa*, or a gesture like a prayer. Inhale and bend your front knee, sweeping your arms wide and up. Exhale, moving your hands toward the top of your head, in front of your face, and then bring them to rest at your heart. Repeat 2-3 times. Exhale back to a starting position. Repeat on the other side.



This adaptation emphasizes stretching your psoas muscle. Inhale and bend your front knee, lifting the opposite arm up and back. Stay for a few breaths, arching your upper back and bringing the raised arm farther up and back on successive inhalations. Exhale and straighten your front knee and lower your arms. Repeat on the other side.



This adaptation is for working with an excessive or flattened thoracic kyphosis. It also strengthens and stretches your rhomboid muscles and stretches your intercostal muscles. Inhale and bend your front knee, arms open wide at shoulder level. Exhale and bring your hands to opposite shoulders, like you are hugging yourself. Repeat 2-3 times. Exhale back to a starting position. Repeat on the other side. 🌸

