

# Chair Yoga for Everyone

Illustrated and Annotated Manual  
for Yoga Teachers and Practitioners

with Sherry Zak Morris, E-RYT

Includes Chair Yoga Fundamentals and Class Sequences  
for Deskworker, Senior, Wheelchair Yoga Classes and More

Over 120  
Chair Yoga  
Sequences with  
Therapeutic  
Modifications



Bonus Material:  
**Senior Chair Yoga Series**  
with Paula Montalvo, RYT, 79 yrs young

Empowering Yoga Teachers with Knowledge,  
Skills and Confidence

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## MISS SASSY PANTS

We all can benefit from a little more stretch to the front of the shoulders. This pose came about when I suggested to the Senior Chair Yoga class that they should walk around the house holding this pose a few times a day. And then we got to laughing that it looked like we were being sassy... and there you go. A new Yoga pose name.



What a fun way to counteract rounded, slumped shoulders.

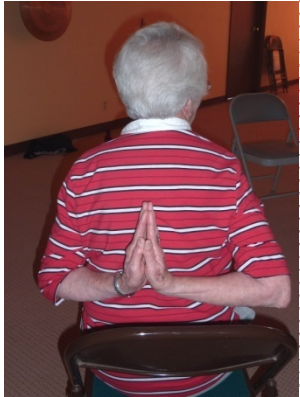
There are so many arms and hand options to try. Start with one, and then try others as the shoulders and chest start to open.

## THERAPEUTIC MODIFICATION

Norma has kyphosis, so this pose is especially good for her, but her range of motion is currently quite limited. But, she still can be sassy!



**PAT'S POSE**



Pat is in her mid 70's and she said she started working on this pose when she was in her 50's. It's never too late!

**SHOULDER SHRUGS**



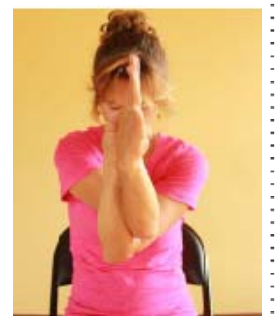
A simple shrug up and back helps broaden the collar bone, drop the shoulders and squeeze the shoulder blades together all at the same time. Make sure to do this a few times!

**EAGLE**



There are so many variations of Eagle arms - from a simple hug, to the full wrap. Give it a try on both sides and notice the difference.

For seniors, I try not to hold the breath for too long as this is not optimal for people with un-medicated hypertension. But for a class of deskworkers, I offer up a big inhale while holding the pose in the forward fold position. This helps to increase lung capacity while "cleaning out" the lungs as the exhale releases more stale air.



**CHAIR YOGA FOR EVERYONE**

**WITH**

**SHERRY ZAK MORRIS**

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## ARMS - ELBOW FLICK STRETCHES

I learned this sequence when I was researching carpal tunnel exercises for one of my corporate clients. The concept being to release the elbow joint so that the nerves can run freely up and down. All the small micro movements of computer work tense up the arm and often times the nerves get pinched in the process. Any tingling sensation in the elbow wrists and fingers indicate nerve issues. Move, stretch and release those areas throughout the work day.



Bend the arm at a 90 degree angle and place the palm of the opposite hand under the upper arm for support. Spread the fingers wide and then quickly extend the arm straight down and forward.



I call this motion "Flicking" because it is a quick movement. Repeat this flick 2-3 times on each side.



Hold the arm at a 90 degree angle, but parallel to the body. Support the arm with the opposite hand.



This flicking motion is like a karate chop sideways. Draw the arm in towards the body and then flick it away. Repeat 2-3 times on each side.

## HANDS/FINGERS- JUST JOINTS

By the time we all become Seniors, we will surely have a bit of stiffness in our joints – and many times it starts with the fingers and hands. This is a great sequence for getting into all the joints of the upper body. I call it the “multi-tasking pose”.



Start with the arms out and front, fingers spread wide. Open and close the fingers a few times. Then rotate the wrists while the fingers are still opening and closing. Even try the flicking movement of the fingers as they open up.

Add the elbows into the movement by bending the elbow in and out, while still rotating the wrists and moving the fingers. Lastly, add the shoulder joint, moving one shoulder back and then the other. Combine all 4 movements together and just keep moving.

## THE HULA



While the joint movement is still flowing, adding the side to side movement of a hula. Remember, no one is sad or worried when they are doing the hula!

## THE WAVE

Then end it with a big reach up and a waving motion side to side. Swaying like a big palm tree!

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Teaching to people in wheelchairs can be very intimidating for yoga teachers. The fear comes from not wanting to hurt anyone because of the perception that they are frail, weak and limited. The most important advice I can give to any teacher wanting to teach to physically or mentally limited students is... remember they are perfect souls inside. That is why I start the class encouraging the students to close their eyes. Because when our eyes are closed, we don't know the color of our skin, the age of our bodies, or the judgment/pity in the eyes of people around us. Inside we are light, bright spirits that can still experience that spark that is life. That is where you want to encourage your students to visit.... As often as they can.

As Seniors are living longer, there will be a growing need for chair yoga in assisted living centers, community centers and extended care facilities. Add to that equation the multitude of people of all ages who have had accidents, strokes or have been born with physical limitations that confine their physical being to a wheelchair. They can benefit from yoga just like everyone else on this planet.

They will feel your presence when you walk into the room, and they will know if you are fearful or if you are glad to be there. If there was one personality trait you need to succeed at teaching to this community of students – it is joy. Your joy for life will be effervescent for them. They need that energy of joy to take them to a different part of themselves. I always say that a yoga teacher is simply a guide – help them to explore and enjoy the sensations they can. Always focusing on what they can do today, not what they cannot do. Love conquers all! Do not fear.

## CENTERING AND BREATHING

I believe that people forget how to really breathe. I see it when I teach to the deskworkers and I see it especially in the assisted living centers I teach at. Shallow breathing deprives the body of needed oxygen that is so important for all of our physical and healing processes. And let's not forget the life force that we sip in with every breath. I use this Belly Breathing sequence often to remind students how it feels to breathe deeply and slowly. Even a few rounds of this slow, mindful breath will relax the nervous system and calm the mind.



Begin the class by asking the students to close their eyes. Invite them to bring their palms together at the heart for a breath or two.



Place the right hand on the chest and the left hand on the belly. Encourage them to notice the movement of their hands as they breathe. As they become more comfortable noticing, then ask them to bring more breath into their bottom hand as the belly expands with breath.