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The Warrior III posture is an intensified continuation of the Warrior I position previously demonstrated in this column in May. When you begin yoga exercises, you might find your thoughts are preoccupied with all that you have done or have yet to do, and your body is not quite as supple as you had anticipated.

Fortunately, yoga allows for transition time. Most practices begin with an opening phase of gentle yet thorough movements to awaken the body, stoke the breath and cultivate the attention.

Good poses facilitate circulation and lead you into your sequences with ease. They address the major joints and large muscle groups, gently awakening the arms, shoulders, legs and hips.

Technique

1. Start with the downward-facing dog pose.
2. Inhale and bring one leg forward, placing it just beside the respective palm. Now align the knee over the ankle.
3. Inhale again and lift the back leg up to the level of the hip, parallel to the ground. Straighten the front leg and shift your entire body weight onto the front leg. Gently lift the pad of the palms, coming over the finger tips. Lift the chest up, and look slightly forward and down with a fixed gaze. Now stay strong through the front leg and maintain the vertical alignment of hip, knee and ankle by pressing your foot strongly on the ground. Maintain this position for a few breaths.
4. Inhale and walk the hands one step forward, trying to lift the chest further with arms and fingers interlaced to keep the torso parallel to the floor. Breathe evenly in the pose while balancing. The body (except the front leg) should be kept parallel to the floor. The front leg, which should be fully stretched and stiff, should be kept perpendicular to the floor. Pull the back of the thigh of your front leg and stretch the arms and the back leg as if two persons are pulling you from either end, maintaining a perfect 'T' shape.
5. Release the back foot down first and place the hands by the side of the front foot. Step back to downward-facing dog and repeat with the other leg. After completing the position on both sides, relax in the child pose.

Benefits

This pose improves your balance, harmony and poise. It also strengthens the leg muscles and is especially good for runners as it gives vigor and agility. The pose also tones the abdominal organs.

Cautions

For people with hyper-extended and knocked knees, or bow-legged practitioners, please micro-bend the knees to avoid further injuries and recruit all the muscles of the leg. It is recommended that you practice this pose under the supervision of your yoga teacher.



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