

YOGAwithin

The hip flexors: who knew?

In the last month I have a deep exploration of the hips. In my effort to balance my hips and figure out how to re-balance my pelvis I did not start out with any particular muscle groups in mind, but every time Elaine (Elaine Coolbrith, my body worker at ____in Watertown) began to work on my body, among the tightest muscle groups by far were the hip flexors: the iliopsoas, the tensor fascia lata, Sartorius (as well as the adductors, but that is another story!). Finally, after about three or four sessions I began to see and understand the pattern staring me in the face: I needed to do much more regular, focused work on my hip flexors if I wanted to re-balance my hips.

With this in mind I have begun a daily practice of hip opening, focusing in particular on the iliopsoas and quadriceps (which, when tight, can strongly counteract any lengthening of the hip flexors!). Below is an abbreviated version of the practice I've been using:

1. Ekapadapavanmuktasana
2. Hamstring stretch
3. Lying twist
4. Downward dog
5. High lunge with thumb at hip crease
6. Low lunge*
(with bolster in front of back thigh to temper the stretch and protect the lower knee, if necessary)
7. Side-lying quadriceps stretch
8. Low lunge (+/- back heel pulled into buttock (advanced practitioners only)
9. Suptavirasana over bolster: pull foot back underneath armpit
10. High lunge to with side twist
11. Downward Dog
12. Pigeon
13. Pigeon with back heel pulled into buttocks*
14. Upper back opener over blocks
15. (Urdva danurasana)

*note: "()" indicates that these poses or variations are more advanced and should be approached very carefully or omitted, depending upon your body and practice. When in doubt, leave these out.