

Lancaster Studio Alignment & Breathing Exercises

Alignment

1. Full Body Bend & Stretch:

- a. Place feet parallel to each other, pointing forward, shoulder-width apart. Breathe.
- b. Stand tall, with knees unlocked, and stretch arms outward at shoulder height. Breathe.
- c. Bend forward at hip joint (with arms outstretched) until torso is parallel with floor. Keep knees unlocked. Breathe.
- d. Bend further forward at hip joint (release arms forward into “diving” position), until head/neck/shoulders/arms are dangling downward, feeling vertebrae release and stretch from base of tail-bone upward to atlas bone. Keep knees unlocked. Breathe.
- e. Stretch legs while in this position by slowly bending at the knee joint toward a locked knee position, as you are able. Breathe.
- f. Return to standing position slowly, bending from hip joint, leading with head, and allowing vertebrae to return to their full upright position.

2. Fully Body Upward Stretch:

- a. Place feet parallel to each other, pointing forward, shoulder-width apart. Breathe.
- b. Stretch arms upward above head, reaching as far as possible. Lean slightly forward onto balls of feet, while staying balanced. Breathe.
- c. Stretch higher, by lifting heels and standing on tip toes. Breathe.
- d. Return heels to floor and feel balance of weight over feet. Breathe.
- e. Return arms to normal position slowly, drawing a circle over your body as they come downward. Breathe.
- f. Feel arms dangle comfortably on very top of ribs. Breathe.
- g. Notice the alignment running upward from ankles – knees – hips – top of pelvis – center of ribs – shoulders – ears. Breathe.
- h. Maintaining alignment, imagine back lengthening and widening while neck relaxes. Breathe.

Breathing

1. Catch Breath:

- a. Maintaining alignment, place hands on the area between navel and sternum (epigastrum), smile and open mouth.
- b. Pant lightly, breathing in and out of mouth with smile, maintaining alignment (upper ribs should not be directly involved in panting).
- c. Breath in quickly (like a surprise), in the same way you were panting. Suspend all motion and keep air inside for 5 seconds.
- d. Exhale naturally, while maintaining alignment.
- e. Repeat, quickly inhaling back only the air that was expelled (catch breath). Notice outward motion of your epigastrum and middle ribs.
- f. Continue repeating until movement feels coordinated and efficient, with no loss of alignment.

2. Full Inhalation & Suspension:

- a. Stand with back to wall (buttocks and shoulder blades touching wall, but head not touching wall), placing feet (parallel and pointed forward) about 6 inches from wall. Bend knees adequately.
- b. Notice alignment upward from hips – top of pelvis – center of ribs – shoulders – ears. There should be no tension in neck/shoulder region.
- c. Maintaining alignment, breath in slowly over five counts through nose and mouth until comfortably full, allowing abs, lower back, and pelvic floor to relax and move downward/outward, and ribs to move upward/outward.
 - i. Allow these motions to happen because of air coming in. Do not artificially induce these motions. Do not fill to the point where shoulders begin to rise and neck begins to tighten. Fill only to the point where you feel comfortably full, alignment is maintained, and neck/shoulders remain free of tension.
- d. Suspend air and motion for 1 second before exhaling.
- e. Exhale completely and naturally, maintaining alignment, OR, if you have achieved success practicing full inhalation, do the controlled exhalation outlined below.

3. Suspended Exhalation:

- a. Once you have achieved success practicing full inhalation, do the following controlled exhalation after full inhalation.
- b. Inhale slowly through the nose and mouth fully and at the immediate moment of suspension.....
- e. Exhale slowly and evenly on a lip trill for 8 seconds, allowing lower abs to naturally and gradually move upward/inward, while stretching ribs upward/outward to resist natural downward/inward motion, and keeping lower back and upper abs released to resist natural inward/tightening motion.
 - ii. Maintaining upward/outward “inhale” position of ribs and released “inhale” position of upper abs and lower back during exhalation will allow airflow and air pressure to be maintained and controlled.
- f. Allow ribs to come downward/inward slightly at the very end of controlled exhale.
- g. As you improve at controlled exhalation, exhale for longer (15, 20, 25 seconds, etc.).