

JOINT SPIRALS

Begin standing with feet at hip width apart – feet parallel, knees soft. The feet, ankles, knees, hips, ribs and shoulders are all in alignment – stacked naturally. Allow the head to float on a long neck. Close eyes to focus internally. Breathe deeply into the pelvic area. Feel soles of feet connecting with the earth for stability.

Take a moment to breathe.

Visualize the skeleton. Feel the bones hanging naturally in their place.

Beginning with the head, start making small, light rotations – visualizing the crown of the head creating little circles in the air above. Release the jaw and relax the neck. Now spiral outwards with bigger and fuller rotations. Think of breathing into the head, creating openness and space inside the head, jaw and neck. Once a full, relaxed rotation of the head and neck has been reached, bring the head up straight, take a deep breath, and begin the cycle in the opposite direction. Next, allow the head to roll, creating circles, arcs and spirals in any direction – inviting breath into the head and finding a sense of openness and expansion.

Move down the spine and sternum to the upper body – chest and scapula. Allowing the arms to hang loosely from the shoulders and also allowing the head to release into the motion – begin to make small circular motions from the inside of the chest, again – spiraling wider until the circle expands, all the time breathing and finding space and openness in the upper thorax region. Come back to center, breathe, repeat in the opposite direction, and then explore more free arcs and spirals in that region of the torso.

Next, bring the focus to the ball and socket joints of the shoulders.

Repeat the same concept, starting small and spiraling out while breathing into the shoulder joints. Go in the opposite direction, and then release the shoulders into free-form arcs, spirals and circles.

Move down into the elbows, wrists, hands and fingers. Spiraling from small to large circles in all the joints followed by fluid arcs in any direction with the arms while inviting the breath into the limbs to give a sense of expansion, space and freedom of motion inside the joints.

Bring the focus back to the torso again – this time moving down into the whole rib cage. Begin small circular motions from the waist. As these circles expand and spiral outwards, use the breath to create a sense of openness inside the rib cage. Repeat in the opposite direction. Then explore fluid arcs, circles and spirals of the rib cage in all directions, allowing the head, neck and shoulders to respond freely to the motion of the rib cage.

Now bring the motion down the spine and into the pelvis.

Repeat the whole process in the pelvis with small to large circles in each direction followed by free-form exploration using circular movements and breathing down into the pelvic region to create a sense of space.

(Widen the placement of the feet if necessary to allow full range of motion.)

From here – take a few moments to melt slowly down to the floor and onto the back with both legs extended softly in the air.

(It is optional to work on both legs at once or one at a time)

Beginning with the toes creating little circles in the air, start to make small, soft rotations in the ankle joints, gradually spiraling outwards to large, relaxed circles – always breathing, visualize sending breath into the feet and ankles and expanding them from the inside, as if they were balloons.

Repeat the same process with the knees and then with the ball and socket joint of the hips, followed by free-form circular motion of the hips, legs and feet – allowing the lower back to release and twist to accommodate full range of motion in the hips. (It is especially helpful to visualize “balloons” inside the hip joints for a sense of expansion in that area)

And finally – enjoy a free-form exploration of all the joints in the body.

Initiate fluid motion through space by the use of circles, spirals and arcs of the joints. Vary the size of arc from very soft and small to expanding the limits of the full range of motion. Also vary the tempo, while keeping the motion fluid.

Maintain full, deep breathing and a sense of openness and expansion inside the body as well as in space.

INTENTIONS:

The joints of the body can be vulnerable to injury. There is often a lot of tension and compression held in the joints.

This exercise was developed with the intention of releasing each joint from tension and then gradually building up to realize it's full range of motion.

There is an emphasis on visualizing “expansion”, “space” and “openness” inside each joint – this is encouraged through the use of the breath and the image of each joint being like a balloon being inflated from within.

This exercise also recognizes the resulting relationship with space. The action of going through a joint's full range of motion creates circular gestures in space. If one could see the air, it might look like flowing water with eddies and whirlpools resulting from these gestures.