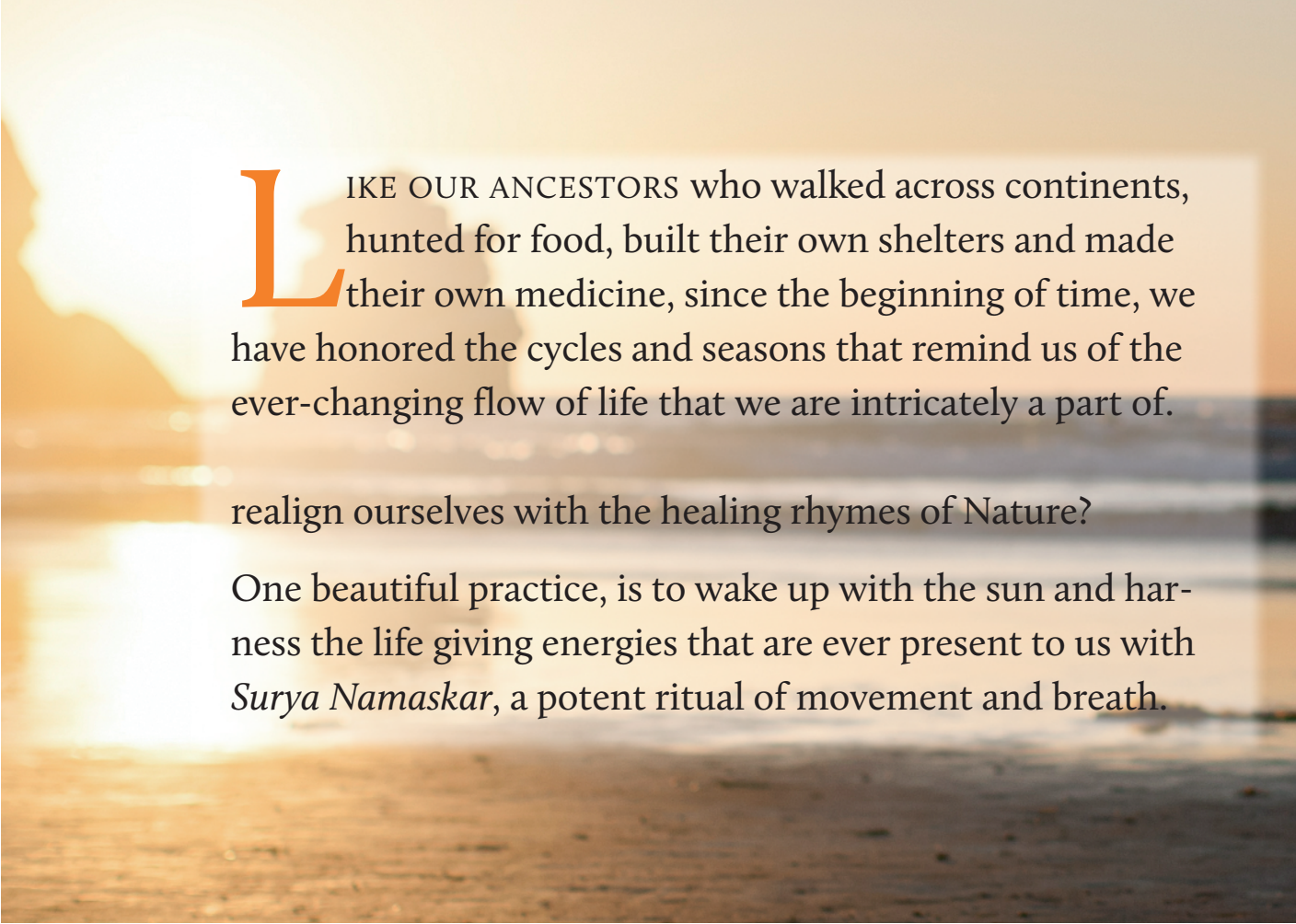




SURYA NAMASKAR

Tending
the *Fire*
Withi

SUN SALUTATION YOGA WITH TULSI BAGNOLI
PHOTOS BY IVAN DITSCHNER OF LIAM PHOTOGRAPHY, CA, USA



LIKE OUR ANCESTORS who walked across continents, hunted for food, built their own shelters and made their own medicine, since the beginning of time, we have honored the cycles and seasons that remind us of the ever-changing flow of life that we are intricately a part of.

realign ourselves with the healing rhymes of Nature?

One beautiful practice, is to wake up with the sun and harness the life giving energies that are ever present to us with *Surya Namaskar*, a potent ritual of movement and breath.

THE SUN RISES AND FALLS with each day and unconditionally radiates its light equally with all. By your willingness to arrive fully and in being open to aligning yourself to receive the sun's gifts for you, the alchemy of this ritual offering will recharge you with expansive and illuminating life energy. With those life elevating energies running through you, moving you, life is beckoned to attune once again with the natural rhythms of Nature; this is why the practice of Surya Namaskar is so deeply fulfilling and calls me back sunrise after sunrise.

This ritual offering in the form of a synchronized breath and asana practice is a kind of movement alchemy, designed to awaken and transform the mover, to stoke one's inner flame. Surya Namaskar is ideally practiced with the rising sun, facing east, as a salutation to our bright and brilliant luminary and can be practiced at any time of day or as an offering of gratitude to the Sun in honour of the potent placements throughout the day: sunrise, noon, and sunset. Whether one has a busy schedule or has a full practice, this offering will be an uplifting addition to harmonizing your day. If you only have 5-15 mins you can move through this sequence 6-12 times (3-6 rounds) to tune in or you can utilize this prac-

tice as a warm up before your regular asana practice or workout. When practiced at a slow pace, Surya Namaskar helps to tone the muscles and can be relaxing and meditative. To transform this ritual into a cardiovascular workout one can pick up the pace and lengthen the practice to 15-45 min (or at least 12 sets). Moving through these 12 postures two times equals one round, stretching on both sides of the body. May I invoke in you a practice to cultivate and kindle your inner fire.

Regular practice of Sun Salutation revitalizes your entire being and offers many interesting benefits for your body and has a great impact on the heart, liver, intestine, stomach, chest, throat, and legs; purifies the blood and improves blood circulation throughout the body; strengthens digestion, aids in reducing weight and ensures proper functioning of the stomach, bowels, and nerve centres. Practicing Sun Salutation daily also helps to cultivate your life and bring balance to the three doshas, or fundamental energies, known in Ayurveda as Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

Enjoy!

HOW TO



***Tadasana or Samasthiti
(Mountain Pose) Figure 1***

STEP ONE (FIGURE 1)

Tadasana or Samasthiti (Mountain Pose): To begin, step to the front of your mat with your feet either hip width apart or with the feet together and your weight evening distributed. Legs straight and palms folded together just in front of the heart in Namaskar or Anjali Mudra. Shoulders down and shoulder blades trailing down the back, heart lifted, tail bone dropping and feet firmly planted on the earth. Find your centre, tune into your breath and establish a slow, steady rhythm, allowing breath to be the underlining thread connecting each asana (posture). (Figure 1)

STEP TWO (FIGURE 2)

Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute): Next, inhale and stretch your flat pressed palms up overhead and lift your heart and arms towards the pull of the heavens, and send your greeting to the sun. Aiming to straighten

the arms, stay relaxed in the shoulders, navel engaged and tailbone dropping towards the earth.

STEP THREE (FIGURE 3)

Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold): As you exhale, hollow out your belly, and begin to draw your flat pressed palms down the centre of your body as you bend from the hips and come into a forward fold, connecting down into the earth. Flat press your palms on the ground, on blocks, or reaching in the direction of the earth and allow your head and neck to relax completely. Keep your legs firmly engaged with some weight on the balls of your feet to draw your hips over your heels, while keeping your toes relaxed. If you have tight hamstrings you can also bend your knees slightly.

***Urdhva Hastasana
(Upward Salute) Figure 2***



PRACTICE



Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold) Figure 3

STEP FOUR (FIGURE 4)

Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Runner's Lunge): Inhale and step your left foot back in a low lunge keeping your hands on either side of your front foot. Your right leg bends at a 90-degree angle. Open your chest forward and relax your hips down toward the ground. (Another variation is to drop the back knee to the ground and untuck the toes)

STEP FIVE (FIGURE 5)

Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-facing Dog Pose): Exhale, press your hips up to the sky while stepping your right foot back. Align your feet hip width apart, lengthen in your arms and spine and release your head towards the earth. Pressing fully in your palms, shoulders blades relaxing down your back, navel centre engaged, tailbone rooting down and heels dropping.

STEP SIX

Uttihita Chaturanga Dandasana (Plank Pose): Inhale as you draw your hips and chest forward into a yogic push up position, keeping your navel centre engaged. Staying with straight arms, hands shoulder width apart, relax your shoulders in their sockets, in line with your wrists,

dropping your chin slightly and energetically reaching out the top of your head. With active legs keep your feet hip width apart, toes tucked under, press your heels back and draw the pubis toward your navel. Exhale as you lower your knees, chest, and chin to the earth. Keeping the elbows close to your sides press the chest down towards the earth and lift the tailbone towards the sky.

STEP SEVEN

Ashtangasana (knees-chest-chin): Exhale as you lower your knees, chest, and chin to the earth. Keeping the elbows close to your sides, press the chest down towards the earth and lift the tailbone towards the sky.

STEP EIGHT (FIGURE 6)

Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose): Inhale as you slide the body forward, point the toes and draw the feet and knees together. With the palms softly resting on the earth, beneath the shoulders, elbows bent and drawn in close, lift the head, neck and chest off the floor, arching upward. Lifting from the back, gaze straight out in front or up towards the sky. One can also practice Urdhva Mukha Svanasana or Upward-facing dog pose, on an

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inhale by straightening your arms and simultaneously lifting your torso, and legs a few inches off the ground, as seen in Figure 6.

STEP NINE (FIGURE 5)

Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-facing Dog Pose): On an exhale, guided by your tailbone, lift your hips to the sky, engaging your core, roll over the tops of your toes (or stepping one heel at a time towards the ground). Returning to Adho Mikhail Svanasana, lift through the top thighs and drop the tailbone towards the earth. (Another variation is to come onto your hands and knees first and then moving back into dog pose)



STEP TEN (FIGURE 4)

Ashwa Sanchalanasana Runner's Lunge: Inhale and step your left foot back in a low lunge keeping your hands on either side of your front foot. Right leg bends at a 90-degree angle, with your knee over the ankle. Open your chest forward and relax your hips down toward the earth, left heel reaching back.

Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Runner's Lunge) Figure 4

STEP ELEVEN (FIGURE 3)

Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold): As you exhale, step the back foot forward to meet the front and return to a forward fold with your feet either hip distance apart or with your feet together and heels slightly separated.



*Bhujangasana
(Cobra Pose)
Figure 6*

PRACTICE



Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-facing Dog Pose) Figure 5



STEP TWELVE (FIGURE 2)

Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute): Inhale as you draw your flat pressed palms up your body, uncurling your torso back to standing. Allowing your head to come up last, reach your flat pressed palms to the sky, heart lifting and gazing either straight out in front or up towards your thumbs. Receive the life giving energy from the sun.

STEP THIRTEEN (FIGURE 1)

Tadasana (Mountain Pose): Exhale as you follow your hands down your face and back to heart center in Namasar Mudra, returning to Samasthiti.

Repeat the practice, this time stepping the opposite foot (right) back in lunge to bring balance to the body. Moving through Surya Namaskar twice, once on each side, completes one round. Aim for three to twelve rounds.

I invite you to welcome each day by stepping on to the earth, and consciously tuning in and tending to the fire within; moving through this ritual offering to harness the life giving energies of the Sun and uplift your day.

Namaste.