

TOPIC OF THE MONTH

September 2013

INSIDE OUT POSTURING, continued.

Navasana :) Boat pose . . . Navasana is beneficial for our spinal cord (Vina-Danda), and strengthening our digestion. In Sanskrit the spine is known as Vina Danda, we know from our asana practice that danda means stick; Vina is a stringed instrument in India. Our spine is likened to the neck or "stick" of a guitar like instrument . . . play it right and it sings a beautiful song . . .



Navasana serves two main purposes: To support our spine and to improve digestion. For more information on Navasana go to: <http://www.befityoga.com/philosophy-lifestyle/ashtanga-yoga-poses/> and scroll down to navasana.

Navasana and our spine

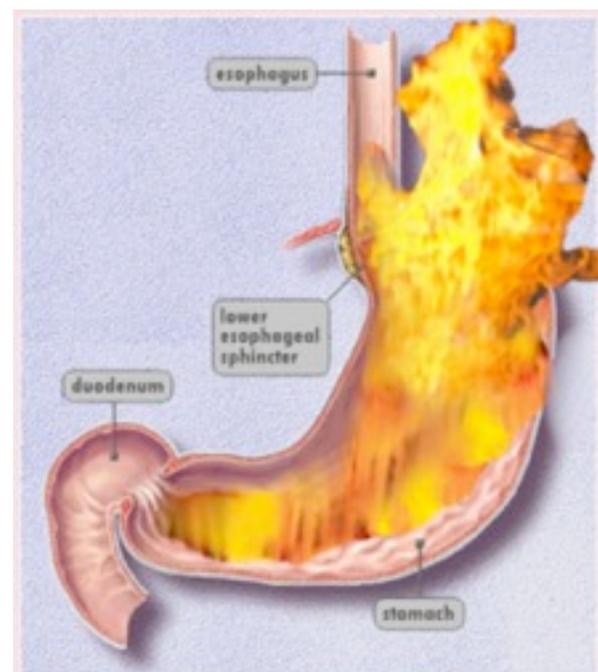
Strong abdominals support the spine. Many conventional abdominal exercises have you doing crunches . . . crunches are not an effective abdominal exercise; our abdominals' job is not to have us flex our spine -- this creates poor posture. The abdominals job is to stabilize the spine and keep it long with space between the vertebrae. Stabilizing type exercises are most effective -- where you hold neutral spine while something tries to pull you out of neutral spine. Navasana is this -- a weighted stabilizing exercise -- as we lift and float our legs the weight of our legs tries to pull our pelvis to an anterior tilt. We then are trying to keep our pelvis in a neutral alignment -- not tipping our pelvis forward or back (sometimes we are too zealous and tip our pelvis too far back to a posterior tilt) -- as we strengthen our abs to stabilize our spine it improves our posture and keeps the spine long and even. It also keeps the channel in our spine open so the nerves have plenty of space and the neurons can travel up and down the spine freely without being pinched or blocked by poor posture. 80% of the adult population will experience back pain at some time in their lives -- the root cause of this back pain is poor posture.

The pick up we do between boat poses, in Sanskrit the pose is called "lollasana", is another excellent abdominal exercise in that it is training our abdominals to contract from the bottom up -- as we walk about our days our abdominals support our spine from the bottom up making this lift a good ergonomic exercise for our abdominals. And of course this lift trains us to pick ourselves up from seated and float back to chaturanga.

Navasana and digestion

Navasana assists the transportation department in our body . . .

ॐ The pressure on the intestines from slightly holding your abdominals in is like an abdominal massage





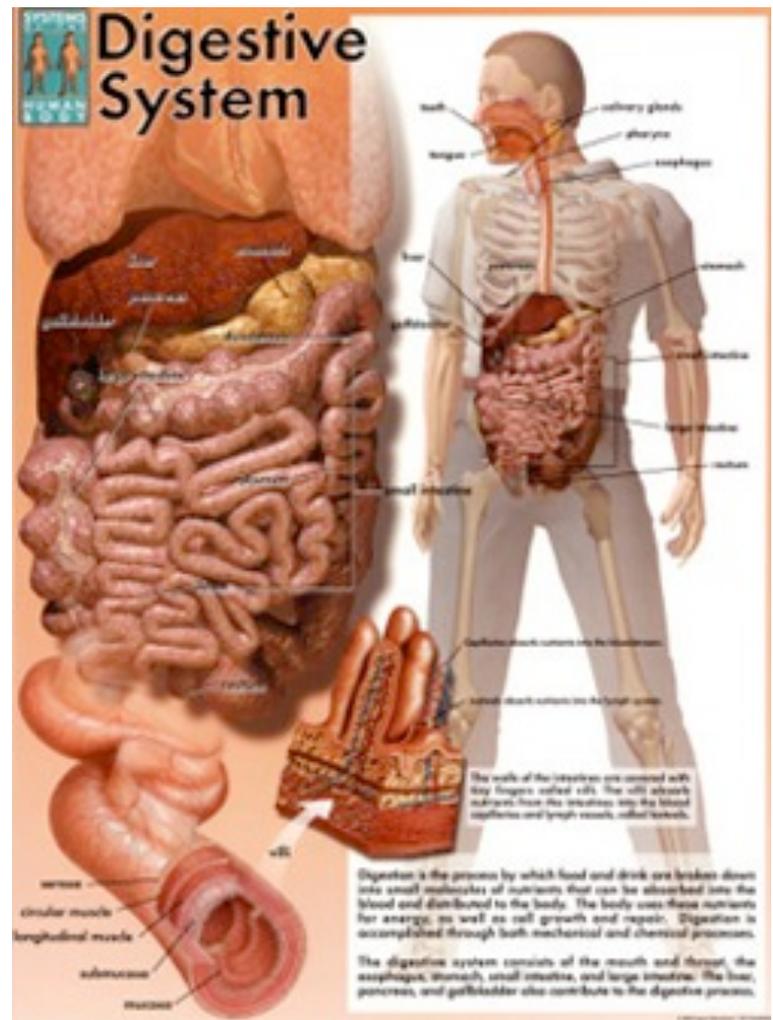
Bobbi Misiti
2201 Market Street
Camp Hill, PA 17011
717.443.1119 befityoga.com

helping to move trapped air out and stimulate the peristalsis effect (wavelike muscular contractions) of the small intestines -- helping food to move along its way . . . The Gastroenterological Society of Australia says exercise strengthens the muscles of the abdomen and stimulates the intestinal muscles to move contents through the digestive system.

Yoga texts say keeping a little good tension in your abdominals stimulates your agni or digestive fire. **Ayurveda says that 85% of our health depends on our digestion, this is because no matter how well you eat, if your digestion is weak you will not be able to break down the food you eat and absorb the nutrients from it.** In yoga and Ayurveda the term "Agni" refers to your digestive fire. (Agni is the root of the English word "ignite".) Strong abdominals improve your agni in yoga terms . . . strong abdominals improve your digestion in medical terms.

ॐ There are three steps to digestion and absorption in western terms. Our stomach acids break down food we eat (strong abdominals help this process by gently massaging the stomach and intestines encouraging more of the food particles to get in contact with acids that break them down). As the food moves into the small intestines, the pancreas excretes its digestive enzymes into the small intestine further breaking down the food. From there, the nutrients squeeze through the intestinal walls to the blood (strong abdominals help to transport the nutrients through the intestinal walls). Then our body distributes the nutrients to where we need them. Our body then uses oxygen (O₂) to combine with the nutrients in the cells to provide our cells with energy.

ॐ Digestion (paka) in yoga/ayurvedic terms is first the fire of **jatharagni** -- the fire agni that breaks down food in our stomach. Then **bhutagni** -the fire that breaks down the nutrients to one of the five elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether), and finally, **dhatwagni**, the transformation of the nutrients into building our 7 tissues (blood, fat, flesh, bone, marrow, skin, and semen/ova), then excreting what we don't need.



On an emotional level:

Our agni or digestive fire refers to not only our ability to process foods; but all aspects of life



Bobbi Misiti
2201 Market Street
Camp Hill, PA 17011
717.443.1119 befityoga.com

including experiences and memories. Agni is responsible for absorbing the nutrients we need while burning off the waste products we don't need. If our agni is strong we are able to digest and assimilate our food and our daily experiences. If our body does not digest food well then toxins (known as ama in Ayurveda) lodge in our cells; similarly the inability to metabolize emotions produces just as much toxic residue as undigested food.

All this is not magic—it is based on science . . . and yet it is a little magic . . . a miracle occurs . . . you jump and breath, and squish this, and stick your heel here, and move and realign . . . and you are miraculously healthy . . .

The sum is greater than the parts. Yes, it requires effort, but its worth it!

