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The driven girl-next-door yogini shares how she's taking the world by storm with her unique style of yoga

**THE FIRST TIME** I spoke with Janie I was surprised at the wisdom in her voice, a contrast to the youthful blonde I'd seen in pictures. Since then, we've become easy friends, running into each other at festivals and enjoying a quick embrace followed by chats about the ironic busy-ness of our yogi lives. During these few years of knowing one another we've shared stories effortlessly, as only two endearingly open and honest yogis can.

Janie Larmour, 44, is a personal trainer-cum-yogi, and owner of Sydney's The Centre of Yoga, where she teaches Zen Ki Yoga, her own style based on a Japanese practice that's inspired by healing massage, Zen shiatsu and the meridians. She runs a studio, hosts her own teacher trainings and travels the world sharing her knowledge of this fascinating style, which she passionately combines with anatomical wisdom. She has released 28 yoga DVDs and has created specific healing courses for back pain, period pain, weight loss and more.

Janie is not your typical peace, love and mungbeans type yogi. She's strong willed, super fit, pragmatic and to the point. Combined with her girl-next-door approachability, contagious enthusiasm, frank sense of humour and open heartedness she's easy to love. There's something very honest and real about this yogini, and it's delightfully refreshing. Not one for being a part of the scene, she says, "I try not to get to caught up in it. I'm very down to earth. I don't get into this 'I'm a yoga teacher, so therefore I am perfect' – far from it. I try to maintain a balance and still enjoy life."

Janie's passion for keeping her body healthy and strong began in her teenage years, when she was a springboard diver, competing nationally and internationally, and training with some of Australia's best. In her early twenties

she was working as a personal trainer, training international celebrities and business professionals in Kings Cross to support her (then) acting career. Five years later, in 1997, she was studying acting and working in New York as an intern for John Leguizamo, a high profile actor who she met at a dinner with Baz Lurhmann, Leonardo Dicaprio, Toby Maguire and Davie Blaine. She was rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous, but still uncertain about the future of her career.

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During her first yoga class she had a moment of insight and decided that yoga teaching would be a great new career path. She says, "personal training was getting a bit monotonous and I felt there had to be something else." After returning to Australia, she saw an advert in the paper for a Japanese style yoga teacher training. "It was down the road and fitted my schedule so I signed up. I guess yoga found me rather than the other way around", she recalls fondly.

After completing her training, Janie spent nine years travelling from East to North, studying with her many teachers in order to understand and refine her practice. During this time she passionately immersed herself in this practice that fascinated her. She says, "I was astonished at the changes in my body shape and how I could actually strengthen my internal organs and make real changes to my health."

Janie opened The Centre Of Yoga in

2006 and was soon teaching up to 25 hours a week. During this time, she developed a keen passion for anatomy, and wanted to incorporate more of this into her teachings. She says, "I was taught in my yoga teaching that a lot of my anatomy training and PT work was wrong, null and void, and naively for a short time I believed that. I discounted what I knew in order to take on this new esoteric knowledge. I would hear my inner voice telling me what to say so I started to apply the anatomy. It was amazing the difference in results I was getting." Janie's enthusiasm is contagious as she shares her passion for anatomy, "I've had teachers do my specific *Anatomy & Movement for Yoga Teachers* course who were only taught meridians and energy and have amazing break throughs because now from learning proper applied anatomy, they understand the stuff they've been teaching for the last 10 years.

Comments like 'I'm so embarrassed I've been teaching without knowing this before' are not uncommon."

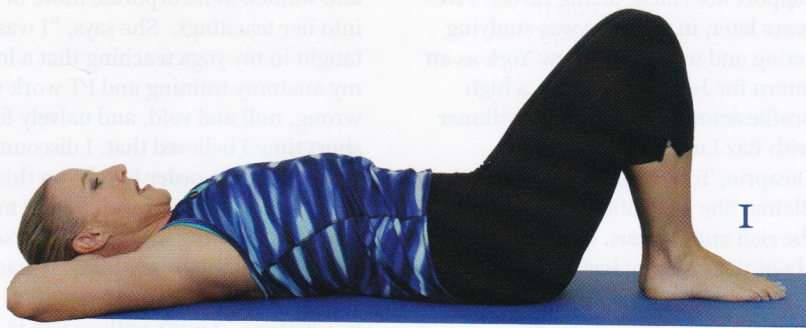
Janie is passionate about sharing her learning with students completing their Zen Ki Teacher Training, not only from a physical perspective but an emotional and philosophical one. "I teach all of my teacher trainers not to get caught up in any teacher's 'guru' status. The more someone seems perfect, the further away from that they usually are. You can never know everything. Knowledge takes time. You can't fast track it. On the flip side, you can't get caught in a trap of not feeling good enough. You have to learn to trust your intuition and be honest with yourself." Her passion for yoga comes from a deeper passion to help people. She says, "so much human suffering (emotional, physical and psychological) can be alleviated by moving your body in the right way. You just need the right recipe!"



# In full BLOOM

## Using Zen Ki Yoga to tone for spring time

Zen Ki Yoga (a registered trademark) is a Japanese form of yoga that is very focused on the core. It is based on Traditional Chinese/Japanese Medicine and changes its focus with each season. In spring time the liver and gall bladder meridians are the focus, which work on detoxing the blood, flexibility in the mind and body, keeping our joints healthy, opening and lightening the body and getting rid of excess winter weight. Use this energising sequence incorporating a range of meridians for balanced wellbeing to tone the internal organs prepare for the warmer months. In Zen Ki Yoga we don't really have official names for poses as they are more associated with meridians and depending on the focus, many poses will stimulate or relax several meridians.



### Pose 1

This move will open your sides, get your belly working with your spine and get some blood flow through the lower back and pelvis ready for the rest of the sequence.

Feet are close to the bum with knees and ankles together. Interlace your hands behind the head with your elbows and shoulders on the floor. Ensuring you keep your knees squeezed together, exhale and take your knees to the right, keeping your left elbow and shoulder on the floor. The left foot should come off the floor because it's glued to the inside of your right foot. Inhale come back to the middle and exhale to go to the left with the knees. Repeat in a soft fluid side to side movement for 8 – 10 times. You must keep your knees together strongly for the whole time like you are holding a 5 cent piece between them. This is the part that makes your belly work with your back.

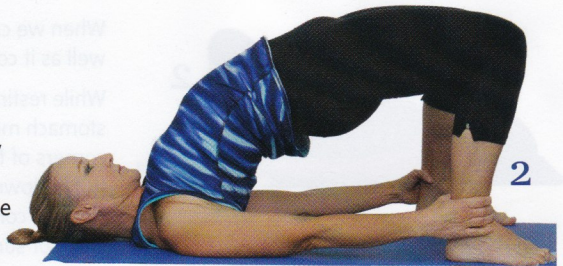
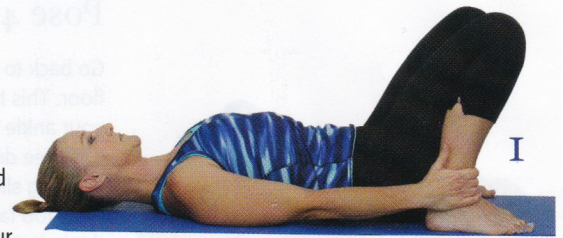


## Pose 2

Using this bladder meridian (water element) and stomach/spleen meridian (earth element) move to squeeze out old blood and energy from the lower back, open the front of body and stimulate the meridians that rule our digestive system.

Pull your feet just wider than your body beside your bum and if you can reach and grab your ankles. Only hold your ankles if you can keep your heels on the floor and your chin down so the neck remains long. If you can't reach, simply press your palms on the floor near your sides. Try and make your feet parallel (pointing straight ahead). Exhale as you lift your bum as high as possible, keeping your heels pushing down. We are after the big round arch under your back. Inhale to come down and bring your lower back to touch the floor (so scoop the pubic bone up slightly). Repeat going up and down for 8 – 10 repetitions. This is quite a rapid movement. You will probably get 10 repetitions done in 6-7 seconds.

If you don't flatten your back before arching again, you are not getting the energy transfer through the discs of the lower back that we are after. When you are up high, you squeeze blood out from your lower back and when you come down, the fresh blood and energy comes into the discs between the vertebrae. If we are unable to get an arch in our back it shows us our spleen energy is not functioning as well as it could be. Our spleen has a major influence on our digestive system, menstrual cycle and period pain.



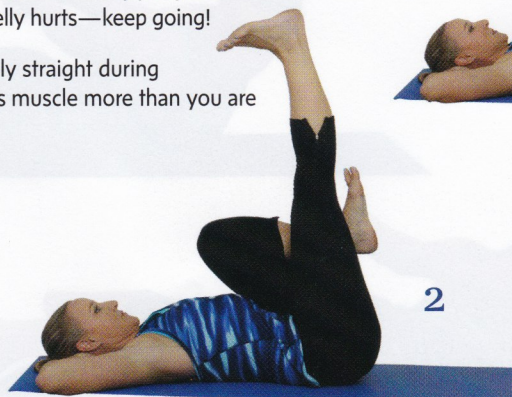
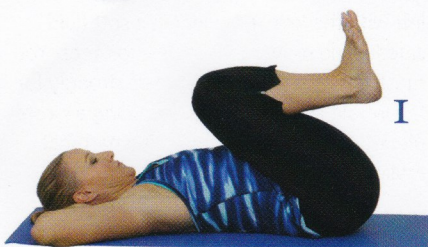
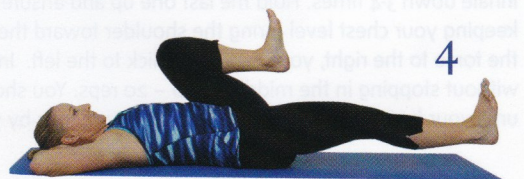
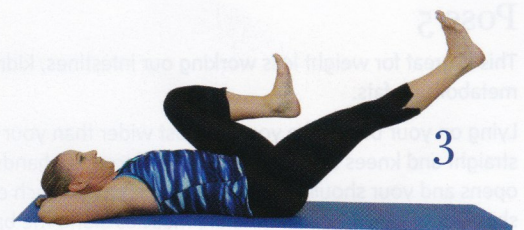
## Pose 3

Small intestine meridian (fire element). This will develop belly strength (your core) on a very deep level in your lower belly.

Pull both of your knees in close to your chest. Pull your feet back strongly until your Achilles tendons are stretching strongly. This switches on your meridians, gives access to the deep, lower belly and protects your lower back (there are meridian points on the kidney and bladder meridians in the back of your ankle that relate to your lower back). Straighten out your right leg to the ceiling, keeping your left knee as close to your chest as possible. Point your left knee to your chin and NOT out to your shoulder. Even though this is only about an inch in space, it's the difference between accessing your belly above your pubic bone (what we want) and tightening your sides (not what we want). Exhale as you lower your straight leg to an inch of the floor, then inhale and lift it back up, keeping the knee locked out straight. Repeat 10 times. Hold the last one 2 cm off floor and then inhale lift 4 cm, exhale back down to 2cm high, inhale up 4 cm etc and repeat 20 times—if you can! Pull knees to chest and rest for a few moments to get your breath back, then repeat on the left. Then hold both knees at your chest again to rest until your breath comes back to normal.

You might need to do less of these to start. Ensure you keep your bent leg as close to your chest for the deep belly power, however, if it hurts your back, this means your belly has given up and your back muscles have taken over, so you need to put the bent leg foot on the floor (just the toes if you can, but your entire foot otherwise). As you build your belly strength you will need to do less of this. Only put your foot on the floor if the back starts to hurt. If your belly hurts—keep going!

It's important to keep your straight knee completely straight during the leg lifts otherwise you will be using your psoas muscle more than you are using your belly.





## Pose 4 Stomach/spleen meridians.



Go back to the starting position of pose 2, holding your ankles, but keeping the bum on the floor. This time take your right knee down toward your left foot by rolling onto the inside of your ankle trying to get the inside of your right knee to touch the floor, without letting your left knee drift outward. Your left big toe must stay on the floor and your left knee stays pointing slightly in. Stay conscious of how far your knee will let you go. Don't force the right knee too far down or you will hurt your knee. You should feel a stretch across the top of your thigh, but no sharp pains in the knee. Inhale to bring the knee back up and then repeat taking your left knee in and down. Repeat each knee counting for 10 (5 on each). Press and hold each one down for a second or so.

When we can't get the knee to the floor it tells us our digestive system is not functioning as well as it could.

While resting in savasana for a few minutes notice the energy in the front of the legs. The stomach meridian runs through all the most front points of the body, from the cheek, the corners of the mouth, the nipples, the belly just out from the navel to the outer front of the thigh, down the muscle just on outside of the chin bone to the second toe. It is very much our first connection to the world and what is in front of us, so it rules our 'awareness' of the self, our surroundings, what is coming up and happening around us.

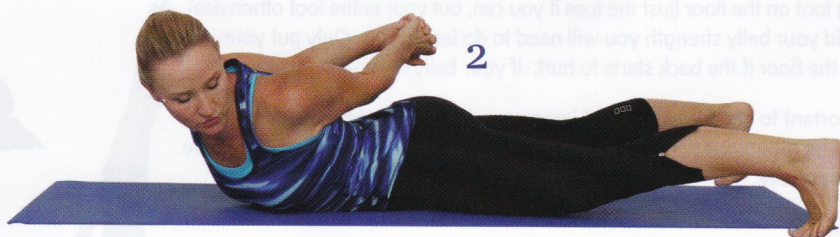
After resting, pull your knees to your chest, lift your head and rock and roll to come up and onto your belly.

## Pose 5

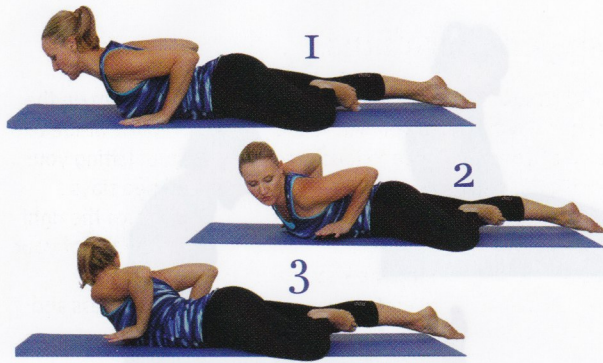
This is great for weight loss working our intestines, kidneys and one of our spring meridians—the gall bladder, which is responsible for metabolising fats.

Lying on your belly, take your feet just wider than your mat and your tuck toes under, pushing through your heels so that your legs lock out straight and knees are off the floor. Interlace your hands behind your back and try to get your palms together, squeezing them so your chest opens and your shoulder blades squeeze toward each other which will assist in activating the small intestine meridian running through the shoulder blades and down the big muscles along the back.

Exhale to lift your upper body, keeping your feet on the floor. Lift your hands slightly off your bum and reach them back as far as possible. Inhale down 3-4 times. Hold the last one up and ensure your arms are still lifted. Inhale, then exhale and swing your upper body to the right, keeping your chest level (bring the shoulder toward the thigh) and your two hips down (move from the waist, not the bum). As you swing the torso to the right, your hands will flick to the left. Inhale to the middle then swing to left (hands flick to right). Repeat this quickly without stopping in the middle for 10 – 20 reps. You should end up with carpet burn on your belly if you do it right. Come down and rest until your breath returns to normal with your hands by your side, palms up, toes turned in, heels out and head to one side.



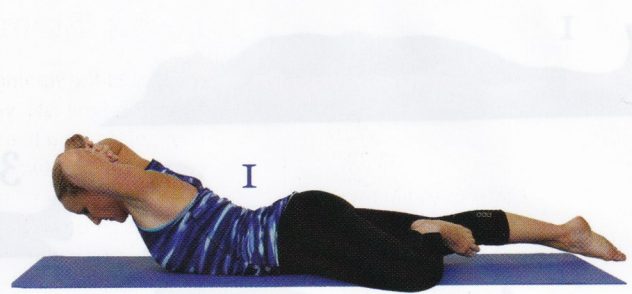




## Pose 6a

The next two are great for toning the waist, building strength in the lower back, kidneys and bowels. The kidneys and bowels are organs of elimination. We also access the gall bladder as we swing the body for fat metabolism.

Still on your belly, bring your hands beside the chest. Make sure your wrists are up against your ribs just below the chest muscles/breasts and elbows pointing up and toward each other. Bend your right knee out and press that foot into the left thigh, so that your heel is above the knee and the ball of the foot is below the knee (no higher). Your hips, if tight might become uneven which is okay, but try to level them as much as you can. Exhale to lift your hands and upper body off the floor, using your back muscles. Keep your foot pressing firmly into the leg and the straight leg stays on the floor. Inhale down and exhale to lift 8 times. Hold the last one up of the floor and keeping the chest level (and wrists against ribs) swing your upper body to the right, inhale to the middle and exhale to the left. Repeat this without stopping in the middle 10 times. Then repeat on the other side.



## Pose 6b

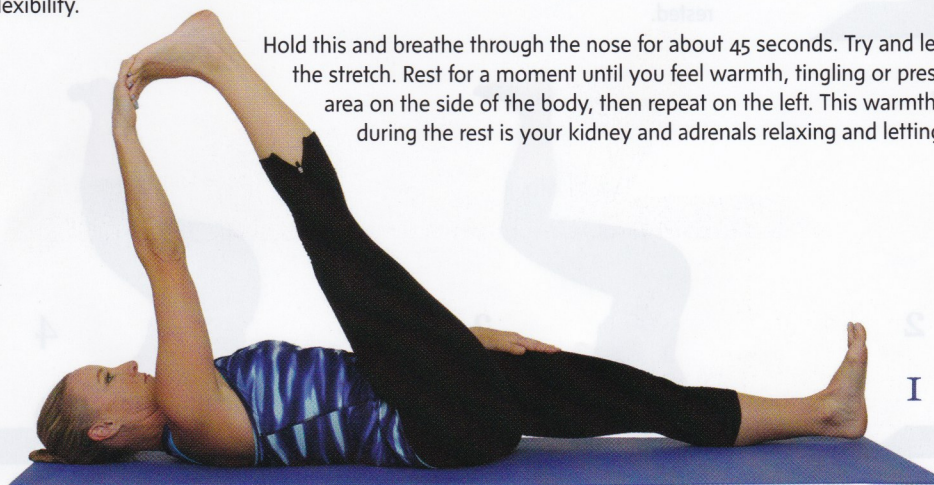
This is exactly the same as the last pose but stronger. This time interlace your fingers so the webbing of the hands comes together. Lift the elbows with your face still on the floor and lift your upper body from here. When you come down each time, don't drop your elbows. When you swing side-to-side keep the chest and elbows level. Come out of this and rest or if you leave this out until you get stronger, rest after #6 on the belly the same as #5.

You may chose to do A and B on the right before moving to do both on the left side or do A, have a rest and then do B.

## Pose 7

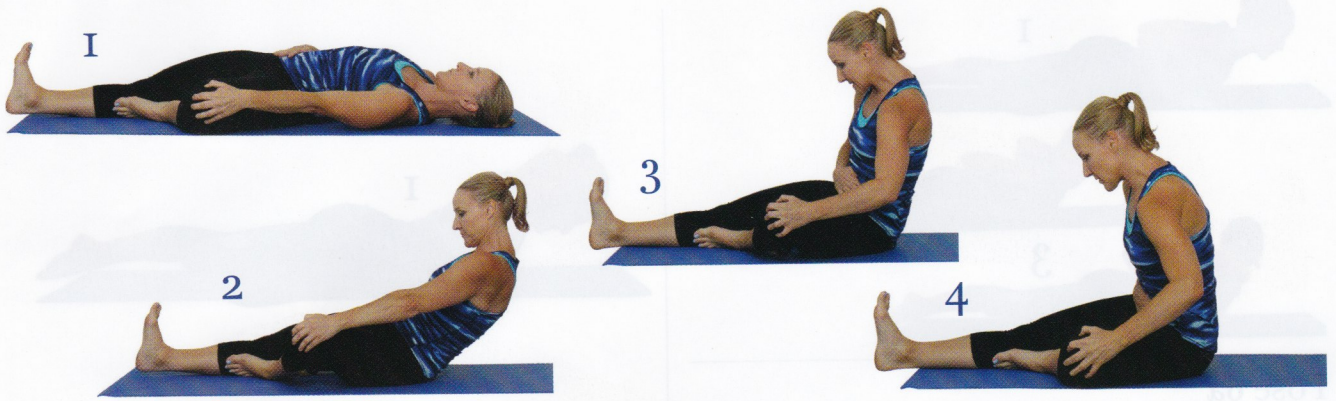
Kidney stretch. This will relax the lower back, the kidneys and switch off the adrenal glands to bring us back to 'relax mode', as we are usually in a constant state of fight/flight which is our sympathetic nervous system. This is a great one to do by itself at the end of the day. If you can't be bothered doing anything much, DO THIS POSE. If you are in fight/flight mode (sympathetic nervous system) when you come home, you can't digest your food properly and you don't rest/sleep as well as when in relax mode, with your parasympathetic nervous system on.

Pull your right knee to your chest, lengthen out your left leg and pull your left foot back strong. Hold over your toes and onto the padding of the right foot with your right hand. Place your left hand on top of the left thigh, stretching your fingers down the front of your leg toward your kneecap. Take your right leg as straight as you can to the ceiling, keeping your right leg in line with your right shoulder. It doesn't matter if you can't straighten the leg as long as the left leg (on the floor) is straight and lengthening, and the fingers are down the left leg to activate the kidney meridians more strongly. Keep holding over the toes onto the padding of the foot though. When you hold your toes, you feel all the ligaments and tendons in the bottom of your foot become rigid, which tightens the back of the leg. Soft toes = soft back of leg = faster flexibility.



Hold this and breathe through the nose for about 45 seconds. Try and level up the pelvis and relax into the stretch. Rest for a moment until you feel warmth, tingling or pressure in your mid-back/kidney area on the side of the body, then repeat on the left. This warmth, tingling or pressure you feel during the rest is your kidney and adrenals relaxing and letting go.





## Pose 8

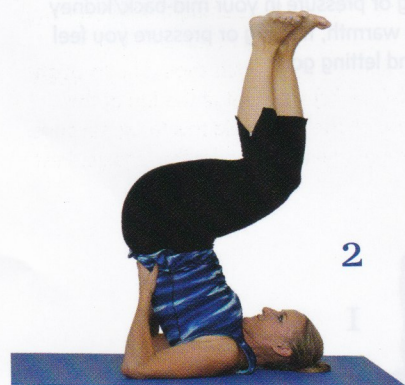
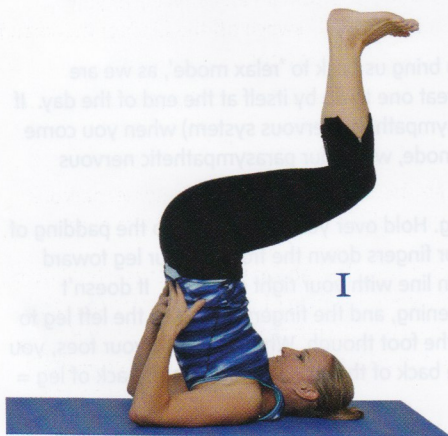
Small intestine sit-up for tone and weight loss. This will strengthen your small intestine so that it works efficiently. The small intestine is where you absorb most of the nutrients into the bloodstream so it's important that it works well. Unfortunately, most of us have an expanded small intestine. Sometimes it's more expanded on one side and that is the side you will find the hardest in this pose. Do extra on the harder side.

Lying down on your back, bend your right knee out to the side placing your heel above the knee and the ball of the foot below the knee (no higher or lower than this). Keeping both shoulder blades on the floor, slide around until you can hold your right knee with your right hand. Make sure you go all the way around to the point where you can press your fingertips into the groove just below the knee cap. Hold over the kneecap, not the inside or outside of the knee. Push through your straight leg (left leg) with the foot pulled back strongly. Your left hand sits on your belly just below your navel. Inhale to the hand on the belly and as you exhale, try to sit up without lifting your bent knee or your straight leg. It doesn't matter if you only lift your head and shoulders and squeeze into your belly. You could also have someone hold your straight ankle and your bent knee so that you can sit all the way up until you can do it yourself. Inhale to come down slowly (don't collapse). Sit up 10 to 15 times each side and then do 10 extra on the harder side. Make sure when you come down that you keep your hand over your knee with the fingers in the groove at the base of the kneecap (don't let your hand slide off the knee otherwise you miss the work into the small intestine). Also don't roll down onto your shoulder to come down. Even though we are bent sideways, you want to come up and down as level as possible.

## Pose 9

This is great for the liver and gall bladder (wood element) – the spring meridians, but also the intestines by twisting and cleansing.

Come up into shoulder stand and bring your legs into a position like you are sitting in a chair upside down. Bend your elbows so your hands are at the back of your waist. Twist from your waist slowly to the right and left, exhaling to each side and inhaling to the middle. Go as far as you can on each side keeping the upper body still. When you twist make sure your feet remain above your knees not above your buttocks, so that your feet are drawing a semi-circle on the ceiling. This will ensure the spine stays stacked above itself as you twist. Come to the middle, roll down from this slowly and rest for a few moments on your back. If you have discomfort in your back you might want to repeat pose 2 here after you have rested.





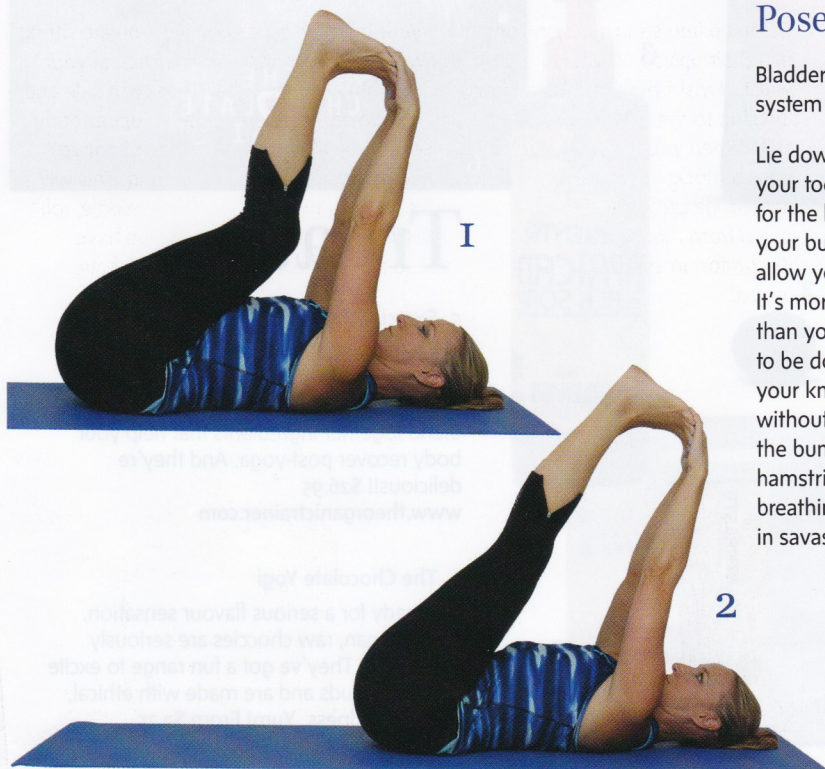


## Pose 10

This will strengthen your bladder and pelvic floor. It will tone your bum, your lower back and develop your deepest core muscles.

Lie on the floor with elbows bent and close into the sides of your body, pressing into the floor. Take your legs as wide as you can and lock them out with the toes pulled back so that your heels come up off the floor (this doesn't mean lifting your legs though). Your heels are up because your feet are pulled back strongly and you are pressing the back of your knees down. We are going to attempt to lift the bum (it probably won't make it off the floor), but we are not going to use the heels at all—we want to push them forward to lengthen the spine as we strengthen it. Roll your legs inward slightly so you come slightly onto the inner calf muscle, this will give you deeper access to strengthen your pelvic floor! Pressing on those inner calf muscles (not heels) exhale to lift your bum. Your heels continue to push away from you—they DON'T slide up the mat to get your bum higher—this is dangerous for your spine—remember, lengthen to strengthen. Inhale to lower down, but don't collapse. Keep your feet pulled back the whole time and go up and down x 4. Hold the fourth one and try to lift your right leg, keeping your bum in the air, then lower it and try to lift the left leg x 2 each. Don't expect to be able to do the leg lifts right straight away. But when you are able, your bladder is at it's strongest. To make this easier, repeat this entire move with your legs hip width apart - then you can work towards getting wider with your legs. The wider they are the more difficult it will be, like adding weights at the gym. Make sure you rest in savasana.

Even if you can't do the whole thing properly, you will still strengthen your bladder and pelvic floor. The bum lift alone will give you strength, but also the 'attempt' of lifting the leg will give you lots of bladder strength. Don't cheat as you'll switch off the bladder meridian if you push your bum down to lift the leg; the "attempt" will give you deeper access to the bladder and pelvic floor.



## Pose 11

Bladder meridian stretch to relax your entire spine, nervous system and lower back and buttocks after the last pose.

Lie down, bringing your feet above your chest and hold over your toes and onto the padding of your feet (same way as for the kidney stretch, but both feet at same time). Press your bum toward the floor using your belly muscles—don't allow your feet to drift to your bum to get it down though. It's more important for your heels to be above your chest than your bum down, then it's more important for your bum to be down than for your knees to be straight. Attempt to get your knees a little straighter but only as far as you can without your bum lifting up. The stretch should be through the bum, lower back (if tight) and right at the top of the hamstrings, then through the legs. Hold this for 45 seconds breathing calmly through the nose and let the legs go. Rest in savasana.