Lesson 1

What I want to share with you through these lessons are a series of exercises that were developed by Paramhansa Yogananda, a yogi from India who came to America in the 1920's and quickly became one of the most popular figures in the country. Thousands of people would come to his lectures on Yoga and different aspects of Spirituality and Metaphysics. More than anything though, he brought a new consciousness to America, a new way of relating to life that was a modern expression of ancient teachings. Many of the things that he said at the time seemed extraordinary, or perhaps even strange, but, in the decades that have gone by since his passing in 1952 science has discovered many things which prove that he was simply ahead of his time.

One of the more obscure things that Yogananda taught is how various foods have different effects on our consciousness. Nuts, he claimed, help with brain power and concentration. We now know that many nuts have a high content of healthy fats, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that all play vital roles in supporting brain health and function. Oranges, he said, help to banish melancholy. We now know that the Vitamin C and folate found in oranges and citrus fruits can help reduce your risk of depression (Samuthpongtorn, 2024).

Yogananda also taught the importance of affirmations, claiming that every thought we think leaves an impression on the mind. The more we repeat a thought the stronger it becomes, and the more likely we are to think it again and believe it. He also taught that we can consciously change these impressions and create new ones. At the time, very few studies had been done on the subject, but today it is a commonly accepted fact. Scientists refer to this as *Brain Plasticity*, the brain's ability to modify is structure and function.

Yogananda's main teaching that he brought to the U.S.A. was meditation, a very foreign practice for most Westerners at the time. Today, countless studies have been done on meditation proving the positive effects that it has on our entire being. Even now science continues to confirm more and more of what Yogananda taught about meditation. Many more examples I could give, but for now, I want to bring our attention to his teachings on exercise.

Yogananda taught that the body relies on energy, more than anything, to produce health and vitality. He likened the body to a battery and claimed that you could recharge that battery by an act of will-power. He was describing what is anciently known by yogis as Prana, or life force. Other traditions call this energy Chi, or Qi. Today, scientists are calling this energy, bio-electricity and are increasingly discovering its importance for healthy functioning of the body.

Many established traditions have long recognized the importance of having an abundance of Prana in the body. When the body's store of energy gets too low, it becomes weak and susceptible to diseases, when its energy reserves are high, the body is strong and resilient. However, an abundance of energy is not the only key factor, it is also important to have unobstructed flow of prana throughout the body.

In order to achieve these two main objectives, Yogananda developed an entire lifestyle which he referred to as the Yogoda system, which means "*that which imparts Harmony.*" As part of the Yogoda system, he developed a series of 39 exercises, known today as the Energization Exercises, where the body is systematically divided into 20 specific parts that are each energized by an act of will. These exercises teach the practitioner how to draw more life force into the body by the use of their will and to consciously direct it to various parts of the body, thereby increasing and equalizing the flow of prana in the body.

In this video series, I am going to share with you the entire set of 39 Energization Exercises. In each video, I will start by sharing a bit about the benefits of these exercises before guiding you through several of the exercises. In each new lesson I will add more exercises until we get through all 39.

I would encourage you to watch each video lesson more than once and spend several days practicing the exercises before moving on to the next lesson. This will ensure that you do not become overwhelmed by trying to learn too many things at once. The exercises are simple, but if you try to rush through them you will miss some key points and develop bad habits. For best results, all of the exercises should be done slowly and rhythmically, with deep concentration and maximum will-power.

Key Points to Remember

- *The body is divided into 20 parts in the following order:*

1. Left foot	*11. Left Forearm*
2. Right Foot	*12. Right Forearm*
3. Left Calf	*13. Left Upper Arm*
4. Right Calf	*14. Right Upper Arm*
5. Left thigh	*15. Left Chest*
6. Right Thigh	*16. Right Chest*
7. Left Glute	*17. Left side of the neck*
8. Right Glute	*18. Right side of the neck*
9. Lower abdomen (below the navel)	*19. Front of the neck*
10. Upper Abdomen (above the navel)	*20. Back of the neck*

- 2 key elements of these exercises- Willpower and Concentration
- *Use your will to direct energy to specific body parts by generating tension in the muscles.*
- ***Tense*** *from low-medium-high, and* ***Relax*** *from High-Medium-Low*
- *Practice slowly and rhythmically*
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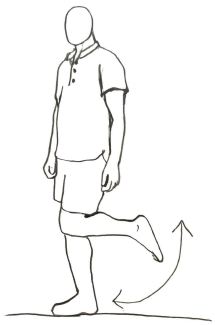
First Exercises (1-7 +39)

1. **Double Breathing Palms Touching**

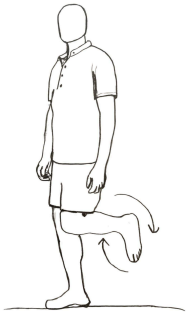
Start with your arms extended in front of you with palms touching and knees slightly bent. With a double inhalation, gradually tense all 20 parts of the body, starting with the left foot, as you swing your arms out to the side. Hold the tension for 3 seconds. Double exhale and relax, returning to the starting position.

2. **Calf Recharge**



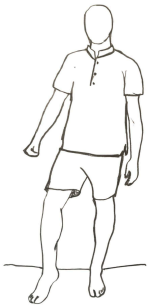
Shift your weight to the right foot and tense the left calf as you bend the knee to bring the foot behind you. Relax briefly before tensing the calf again and lowering the foot back towards the ground.

3. **Ankle Rotations**



Bend your knee, bringing the foot behind the body as shown, and with tension in the calf, rotate the ankle several times in each direction.

4. Calf and Forearm - Thigh and Upper Arm

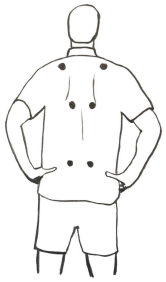


Shift the weight to the right foot. Simultaneously tense the left forearm and calf. Relax and tense, simultaneously, the left thigh and upper arm. Repeat several times alternating between calf and forearm, thigh and upper arm. Repeat on the right side. Finish by tensing both left and right calves and forearms simultaneously, alternating with both left and right thighs and upper arms.

5. Chest and Glute

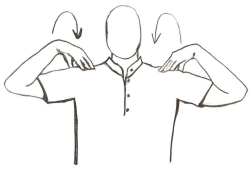
Simultaneously tense the left chest and left glute muscles. Relax and tense the right chest and glute muscles. Repeat 3-5 times. It may help you to isolate certain areas by placing your hand on the specific body part.

6. Back recharge



Tense the muscles of the lower back, alternating left, right and both sides together. Repeat this process for the mid-back between the shoulder blades and the upper back above the shoulders.

7. Shoulder Rotation



Bring the hands to the shoulders and, with tension in the shoulders and chest, rotate the shoulders in a circular motion forward and backward 3-5 times each way. Be sure to move the shoulders and not just the elbows.

39. Double Breathing without tension

Start with the hands close to the chest with shoulder blades slightly together. Double exhale and, without tension, slowly and gradually extend the arms out in front of you while slightly bending the knees. Hold the breath out for as long as is comfortable and, when you are ready, double inhale and slowly return to the starting position.

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Samuthpongtorn, C., Chan, A.A., Ma, W. *et al. F. prausnitzii* potentially modulates the association between citrus intake and depression. *Microbiome* 12, 237 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40168-024-01961-3