



ART *of* ATTENTION

A YOGA PRACTICE WORKBOOK

for movement as meditation

ELENA
BROWER

and

ERICA
JAGO



sounds true
BOULDER, COLORADO

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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POSE SEQUENCES

Slow everything down in your brain

make space between thoughts and actions

Notice how this increases your sensitivity

keeping you soft

Serving

your family, friends, work

Practice patience in transition

find forgiveness in every context

Emanate consistently

expand consciously

Stay

in the flow

Extend willingness

in all you do

WELCOME

Thank you for holding this in your hands. With this book, we hope you take your time, find your own voice in it, ask your questions all over it, and make it a home base for your practice and your heart. May these practices remind you that loving yourself is the only prayer, the only practice.

The most spiritual and powerful aspect of human nature is our faculty of attention. **CONSCIOUSNESS.** Attention is what allows us to see ourselves, and see within ourselves, in order to learn how we can elegantly approach anything, everything. Our ability to see ourselves and how we behave is key to harmonizing the dissonance between our inner conversation and our outer conversation, and learning how to love ourselves. May these practices spark that harmony.

To make art of our attention is to be elegant and true to ourselves. So we can be that way for other people. We still don't know how to listen or respond appropriately sometimes. We forget to be grateful. We forget to be soft. This compilation of practices is inspired by several traditions of Hatha yoga, yoga philosophy, Fourth Way teachings, and the Handel Method. Each sequence points us toward the inner work of listening, respecting, trusting, and healing.

Practice is distilled into three elemental aspects. **SANKALPA** explains the intention for the practice. The **THREE WAVE SEQUENCE** introduces a specific opening into your body through the progression of postures. And the **AWAKENING** pages conclude and close your practice. Pages at the end of each chapter invite your practice notes, intentions, and sequences.

Amidst the physical postures and transitions in these practices, we release tension, and find forgiveness. We repattern blame and shame into restful gratitude. We watch our thoughts at a distance, softly separate ourselves from them, and consequently see the unity that we are. Rather than blindly hold assumptions, we explore the very highest possibilities in our behavior, our thinking, our commerce. We cultivate an ecology of gratitude in our being, in our home, and in our practice. We set an example for everyone around us.

Whether you're a student or a teacher of yoga, you're invited to slow down, reflect, and design your experience.

May these practices bring listening, courage, and connection.

ELENA AND ERICA

FOREWORD

In ancient times, the physical practice of yoga was a means to control the body and prepare it for the rigors of meditation. Today, asana includes hundreds of postures and represents a body-based meditation designed to help us better understand who we are and how we interact with the world around us. Asana awakens the body, stabilizes and strengthens, softens and opens.

By incorporating the art of attention into our practice, all that bending and stretching, inverting, and twisting we call yoga becomes a powerful way to see our minds more clearly and open our hearts more deeply. And that's when magic happens. Bearing witness to our strengths and weaknesses, **WITHOUT JUDGMENT**, allows us to transform our relationship to ourselves into one of loving acceptance and awaken to our innate goodness. These three aspects—physical practice, self-inquiry, and surrender into what yogis call “effortless being”—come together to make yoga first and foremost a spiritual practice.

Together, Elena and Erica weave these concepts into a valuable, artful, and awe-inspiring resource. Through breathtaking photographs, profound

insights, and practical step-by-step instruction, they offer students and teachers alike concrete ways to connect with deeper aspects of themselves and emerge more compassionate and more fully engaged in the world. Elena's sequences open and ground the body, placing our attention on what we're most familiar with—the muscles and bones of our being. This disciplined commitment to the physical, known as **TAPAS** in Sanskrit, allows us to access the wisdom of the body; it provides the first step on the path toward trusting, respecting, and ultimately healing ourselves. In concert with Erica's masterful design, Elena's instructions and inquiries invite us to take action, on our mats and in our lives. Together they give us the blueprint we need to initiate that healing.

As we become more aware of our physical form, we're asked to identify and reflect on our actions. This concept of **SVADHYAYA**—self-awareness—helps us notice patterns and habits that have kept us stuck in discomfort. It allows us to approach them from a place of acceptance instead of judgment. The sequences and meditation techniques help us let go of blame and other self-destructive thoughts and emotions that no longer serve us. By forgiving ourselves and others, we can then dissolve any sense of separateness we experience.

When we let go of our fears and insecurities and embrace our true nature, we learn what it means to be fully alive. In this act of surrender, **ISHVARA PRANIDHANA**, we cultivate a mind that allows us to see the divine essence in all beings, including ourselves. Through the clarity of the practices shared, we are implored to live our yoga in everything we do, give up our attachment to a future outcome, and reside with gratitude in the present moment.

I encourage you to sit with this book and experience its gifts. The imagery and design will inspire you to dance your yoga, luxuriating in the transition from one pose to the next. You'll find Erica's sequence drawings and Elena's succinct reminders throughout the book to be invaluable teaching tools. And when you finish the last chapter, you'll thank these remarkable women for the spirit of their collaboration, evidenced in these pages, which captures the true meaning of yoga in such an exquisite, heart-opening way.

LINDA SPARROWE, FORMER EDITOR IN CHIEF, YOGA INTERNATIONAL

CHAPTER ONE PREFACE BY MC YOGI

Forgiveness doesn't always happen right away, but the process can begin immediately. Actively engaging in the forgiveness process begins our journey toward deeper understanding, and the remembrance that everything happens for a reason. When we're able to extract wisdom from our past dramas and traumas, we're able to gain direct knowledge. Looking back, we can become grateful for the things that happened to us in the past, for helping us to grow and become more aware.

The art of attention and the cultivation of compassion can often take a great deal of work, but it's important to remember that this work is extremely rewarding. When we forgive, we feel ten times lighter. We're able to think and see more clearly, and we can gain greater access to the storehouse of energy that's inside us (and all around us). Energy that was once being consumed by the past can now become an open resource (re-Source) for living more fully in the present.

When we forgive ourselves and others, the entire orchestrated universe conspires to help support our healing process.

The forgiveness process can also be very humbling; we know that there's most likely someone out there who needs to forgive us as well.

When we start to gather wisdom from our experiences, the yogis suggest that this process is similar to a bee that gathers pollen to make nectar. The bee is said to take a little poison along with the pollen, and when it's brought to the hive, it's carefully transformed into nectar. Learning to turn a negative situation into pure wisdom is an indication that we are progressing in our yoga and meditation practices. As we become more skillful agents of love and compassion, the heavy load that we've lugged around in the back of our mind begins to soften, and gradually dissolves. When we're able to reach the place of gratitude in our forgiveness process, we'll know we've made it through to the other side.

Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

Mahatma Gandhi

CHAPTER ONE

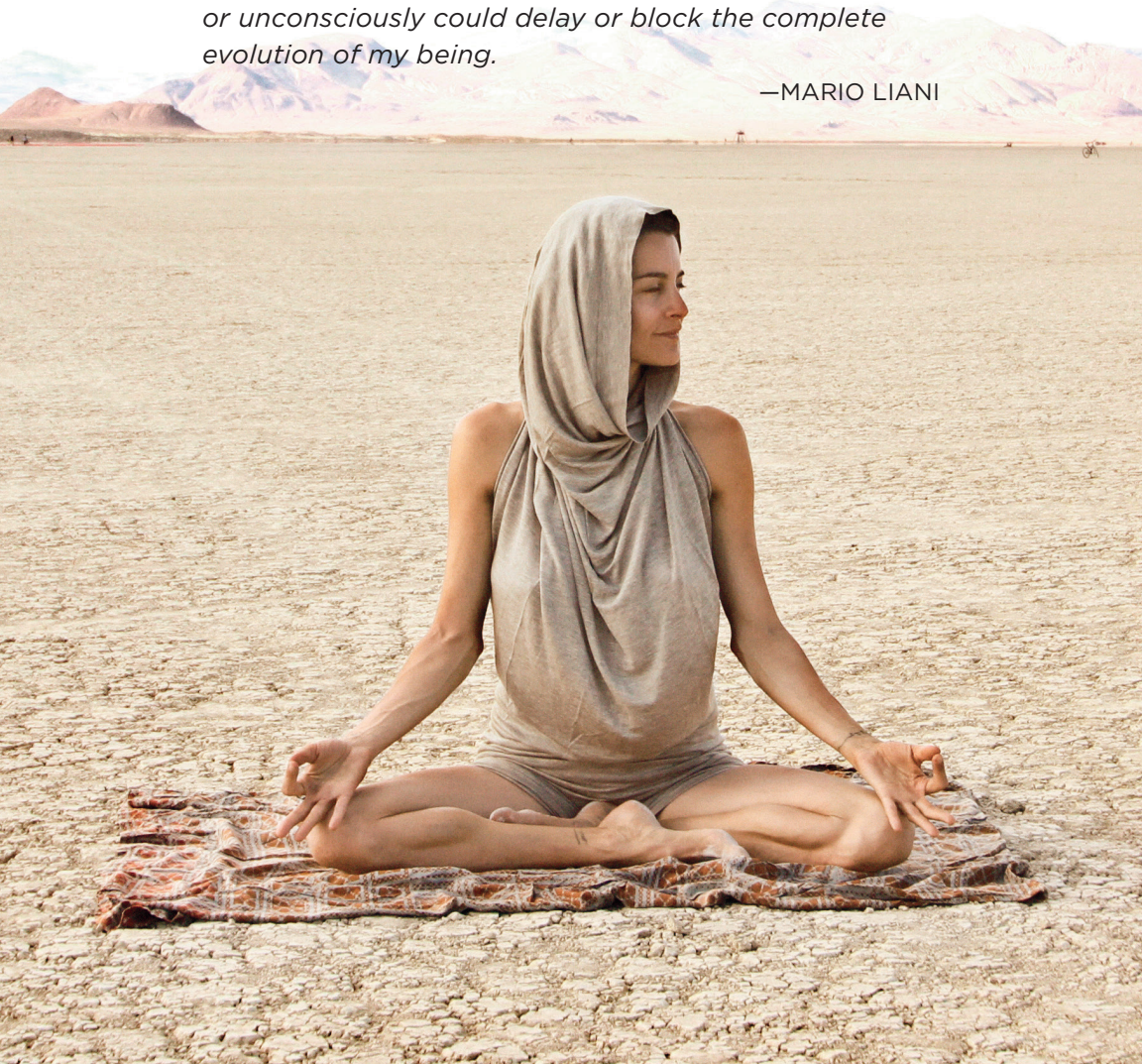
REDUCE TENSION & FIND FORGIVENESS

photography by **MICHAEL CHICHI**

Fast-paced flow sequence; focus on increasing speed and stability while decreasing tension in your body. Applicable to your poses, interactions, and relationships, this sequence will make you feel more porous, lighter, stronger, softer, and more forgiving of yourself and others.

*I forgive, heal and release everything that consciously
or unconsciously could delay or block the complete
evolution of my being.*

—MARIO LIANI



SANKALPA

WELCOME, TAKE A NICE SEAT.

Close your eyes, rest your hands on your thighs, and bring your chin to your chest. This is a sequence of flowing, delicious, increasing speed. We are practicing how to increase speed while decreasing tension in the body.

Once there was a man who described painting houses during his teens with his father, who was an expert house painter. His father was in his 60s, more than three times his son's age, yet was able to work twice as fast. The son asked his father how he was able to work so quickly and efficiently; his father replied that he had learned to increase his speed while decreasing tension in his body.

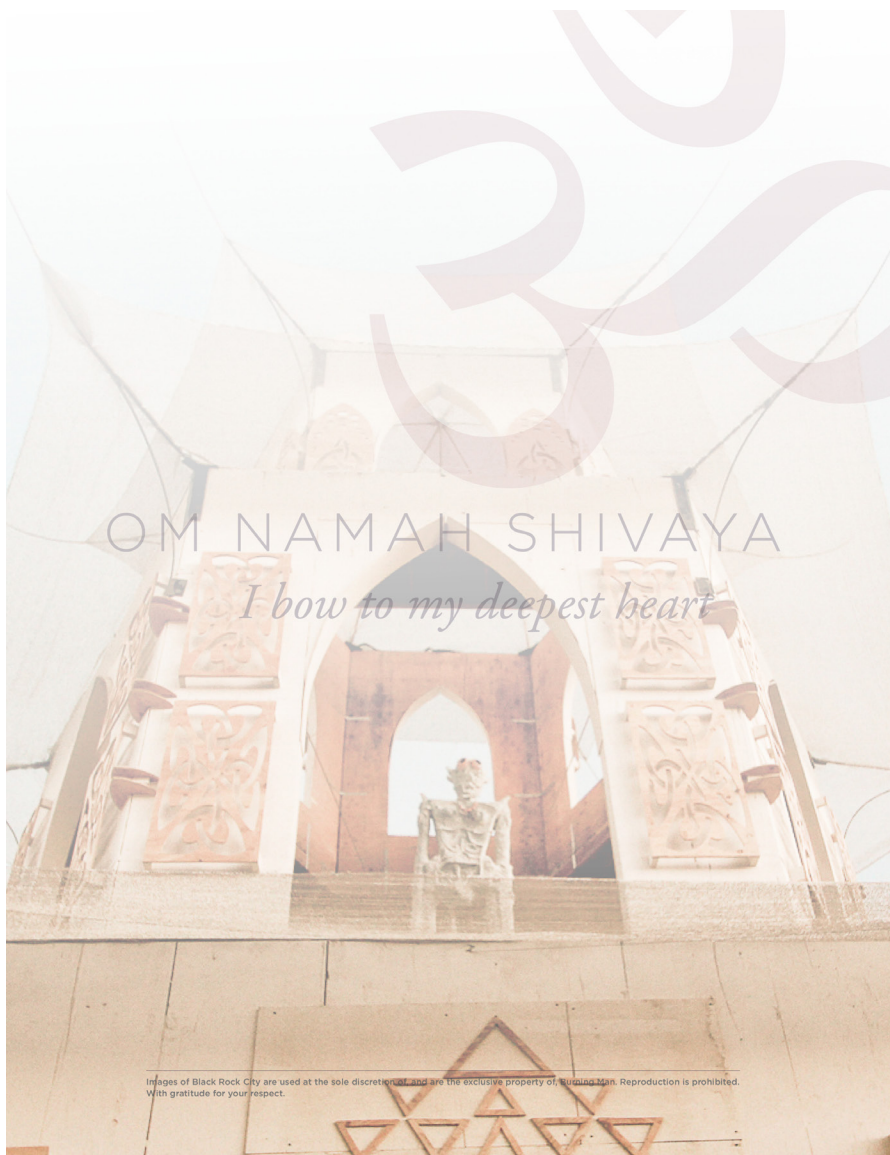
There are definitive turning points in our days, in our poses, in our thoughts, when we can choose to turn the tension level down, even amidst an increase in velocity.

Practice this: feel sharp, more awake, more porous, more lit up; be spacious enough to stay forgiving, no matter the context. Fold your hands in front of your heart. Call to your heart, connect to your heart, and slow it down.

If at any time you feel disconnected, that is your sign that you are longing for more connection.

Inhale deeply.

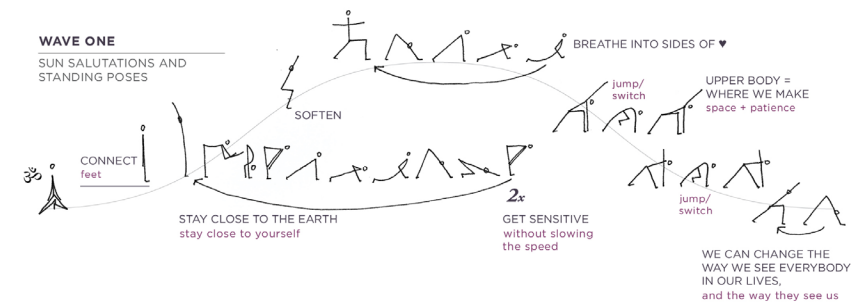




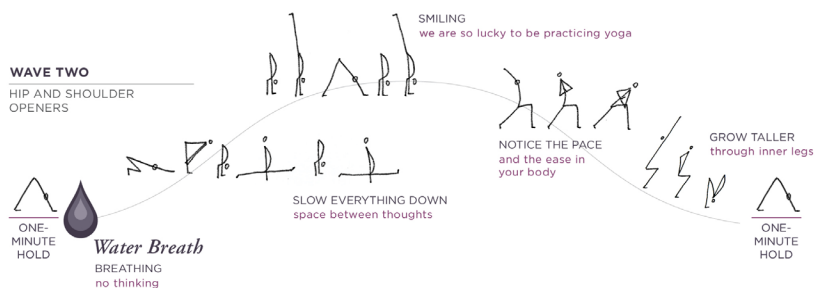
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Bring your chin to your chest. Stay close to yourself throughout the practice, no matter how quickly you move. The closer you stay to yourself, the less contraction you'll experience, and the more connected and forgiving you'll feel.

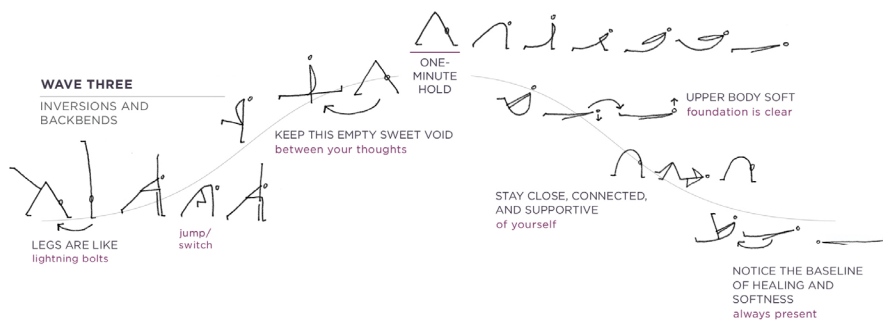
REDUCE TENSION AND FIND FORGIVENESS



WAVE TWO
HIP AND SHOULDER
OPENERS



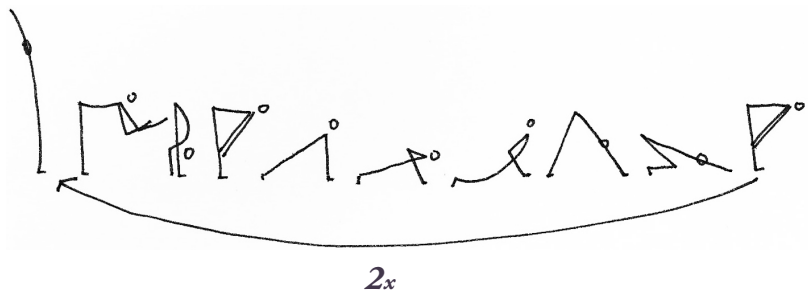
WAVE THREE
INVERSIONS AND
BACKBENDS



Begin at the top of your mat
palms facing forward

TADASANA | MOUNTAIN POSE

Close your eyes and feel where there is tension in your body. Soften your toes; breathe into the back of your belly.



Reduce the tension
without slowing the speed

Become more sensitive to your own breathing. Send your breath to the spaces in your body that need your attention the most; this will have the effect of slowing down time. Our aim is to slow ourselves down enough to truly listen to what is going on—to the people around us, and to ourselves at the deepest level.

Be sensitive

without slowing the speed



UTKATASANA | CHAIR

Soften your eyeballs, the sockets of your eyes, and the spaces behind your eyes. Soften your thighbones down into your groins; soften the back of your belly and lift it gently up toward your lungs. Spread your collarbones wide to the sides.



Stay

close to yourself

Stay

close to the earth



VIRABHADRASANA II | WARRIOR II

Practice reverence here. Even as you expand through every limb in every direction, close your eyes, soften your skin, and let there be reverence.

Reverence is a form of respectful listening, a sensitivity to all that is. Your listening is what stops contractions of any kind in your body, in any way—cellularly, muscularly, in your nervous system—allowing you to stay in the flow of the present moment.



Reverence

is a form of listening

Listening stops contractions

in the cells, in the muscles, in the nervous system

Your legs are, at all times, sturdy, steady, concentrated, and earthy. The rest of your body is open, sweet, soft, listening, and reverent.

Bend your front knee more deeply by bringing the middle of your front seat all the way beneath you. On your front leg, lift the inner thigh up and around to your outer thigh. Bend your front knee a little more deeply. Feel for any place in your body where there is tension. Soften; keep your legs strong.



jump/switch

UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA | SIDE ANGLE

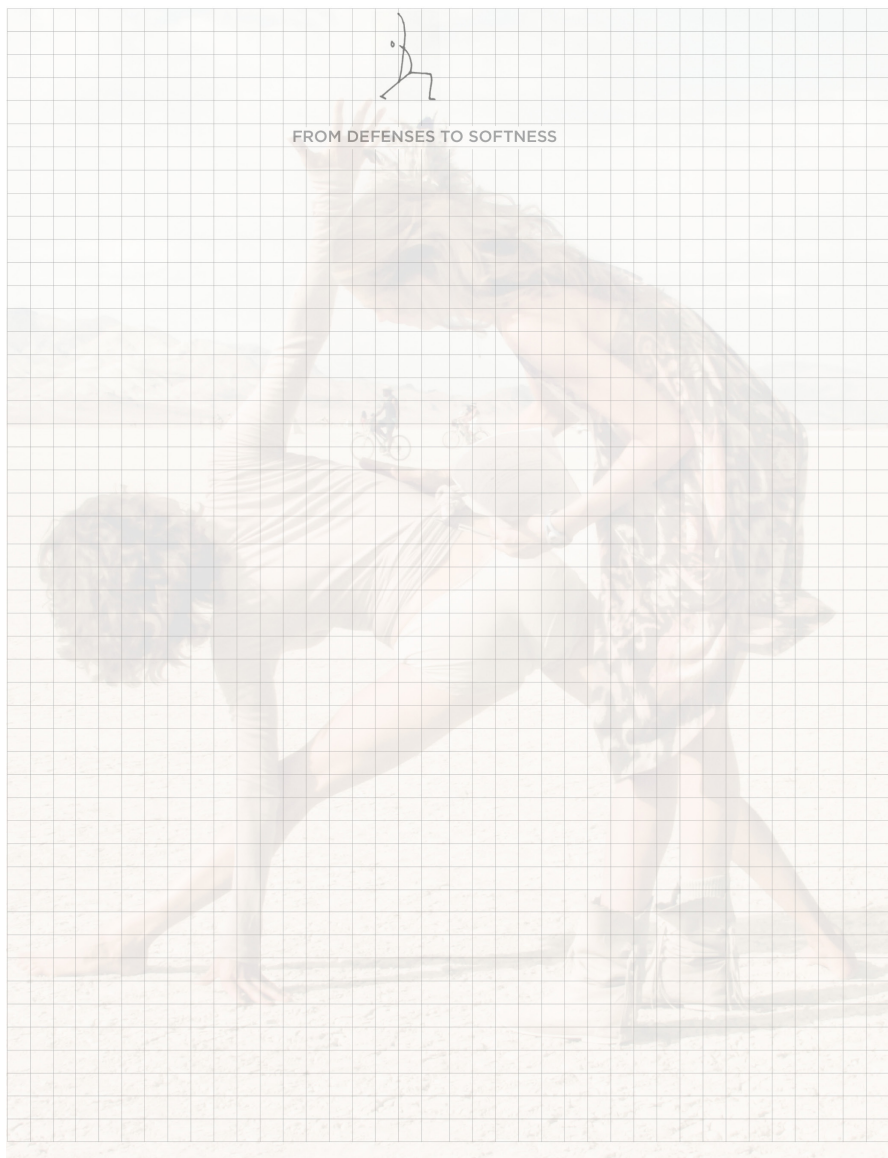
SANKALPA

I FEEL STRONGLY THAT ALL THOSE WHO ARE THINKING IN TERMS OF THE NEW HARMONY SHOULD KNOW AND RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER, AT LEAST BY NAME AND PERSONALLY IF POSSIBLE. THEIR COMMON RECOGNITION OF EACH OTHER AND OF A GREAT PLAN FAR ABOVE THEM ALL MAKES A POSITIVE FIELD OF FORCE IN WHICH MANY THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

—RODNEY COLLIN



FROM DEFENSES TO SOFTNESS



TALKING POINTS

STAY CLOSE TO YOURSELF.