

YOGA MAGAZIN

PRACTICAL EXERCISES • NUTRITION • MINDFULNESS • LIFESTYLE & WELLNESS

www.yogamagazine.com

ISSUE 240/ APRIL 2023

HEAL YOUR BODY & MIND

HEALING
POWER OF
SOUND

PRANAYAMA
KOSHA

4 WAYS TO
RELEASE
FASCIA

CULTURAL
APPROPRIATION
OF YOGA?

5 POSES
FOR WOMB
HEALTH

POSTNATAL
yoga



UK £5.75

USA \$11.25 CANADA \$14.99
BELGIUM, FRANCE, CYPRUS, ITALY, AUSTRIA, MALTA,
SPAIN, LUXEMBOURG, NETHERLANDS,
PORTUGAL €11.00 JAPAN ¥1572.00 UAE AED58

facebook.com/official.yogamag



EXPLORE THE FASCINATING WORLD OF FASCIA FOUR TOOLS TO TEASE OUT TENSION

Words: Vicky Arundel

Vicky is a Yoga Therapist, Mentor and Teacher Trainer with the British Wheel of Yoga

BWY SPECIAL FEATURE

Research into the fascinating world of fascia has been booming in recent years, as has our understanding of fascia's critical role in how well we move and sense our bodies.

In the past, scientists dismissed fascia as inert packing material. However, research from world-renowned fascia experts such as Robert Schleip

is showing that fascia is alive with sensory nerve endings and is our largest sensory organ!

WHAT IS FASCIA?

Fascia is like a three-dimensional, fluid-filled bodysuit that surrounds and weaves throughout all the tissues of your body, creating structure

and shape, allowing movement and providing a medium through which all your other systems (nervous, immune, endocrine etc) communicate and function.

Keeping fascia healthy is key to moving fluidly, gracefully and without pain. It also plays a huge role in your capacity to feel and sense your body

internally (interoception) and in relation to the world around you (proprioception). Healthy fascia is well hydrated, allowing for lots of slip and glide between the layers, whilst unhealthy fascia can become dry, sticky and matted. Healthy fascia is also springy and elastic which allows for efficient, energy-saving movement, while unhealthy fascia leads to awkward, jerky movement that can lead to pain.

HOW CAN I TRAIN MY FASCIA?

Fascia loves specific types of movement which can be easily incorporated into a yoga practice. Here are some of the movements your fascia needs to retain its springy elasticity and hydration:

- Full-body or multi-directional movements at a variety of tempos (slow to fast) – this creates different kinds of loading through the tissues, keeping them resilient and pliable.
- Shaking, bouncing, pulsing, jumping which helps to restore the springy elastic recoil of healthy fascia.

- Pandiculation – e.g., yawning-type movements which help restore the elastic recoil of the tissues.
- Eccentric loading – movements that lengthen the tissues under load and appear to especially build resilience in fascial tissues such as ligaments and tendons.
- Gentle fascia-release and self-massage (see practices below) – with foam rollers, massage balls, blankets etc. This helps to restore healthy hydration and slip/glide of fascial layers for better movement.
- Long-held passive stretches (e.g. yin or restorative yoga) which appear to have an anti-inflammatory effect on the tissues and restore appropriate length to overly tight or tensioned tissues.

You may already do many of these types of movements. However, more linear, alignment-based, or set sequence-style yoga practices may miss out on some of the benefits of varied, multi-dimensional and organic movement that fascia loves. This is an invitation to step off the mat and explore other ways of moving, breathing and being in your body!

YOGA THERAPEUTICS AND FASCIA

In my work as a yoga therapist, I often help individuals with musculoskeletal imbalances and chronic pain. I have found the inclusion of fascial training tools, especially fascia-release techniques, to be incredibly valuable. I have seen first-hand the improvements in my clients' body awareness, range of motion and functional movement patterns. Fascia-release training is a powerful tool for working with chronic pain as it can help restore healthy sensory messages from the body tissues to the brain.

FOUR WAYS TO RELEASE FASCIA

Please note that none of these techniques should cause pain or disrupt your natural breathing pattern. Mild discomfort from tight/tense muscles is normal. Sharp or acute pain is not – it is a signal to stop or try shifting the fascia-release tool position slightly. Remember to roll on the soft tissues not on bone and avoid anything that creates neural type sensations such as tingling, burning or numbness. You can always put a blanket over the balls or prop to soften the sensations. I also recommend introducing a pause after each practice to tune into the body and feel the effects of the practice.



1) ABDOMINAL MASSAGE

Benefits: relieves tension and pressure in the diaphragm which plays a huge role in healthy breathing. For myself, I have also found this hugely beneficial for relieving IBS-type symptoms. It is contra-indicated for anyone who is pregnant or has a hiatal hernia.

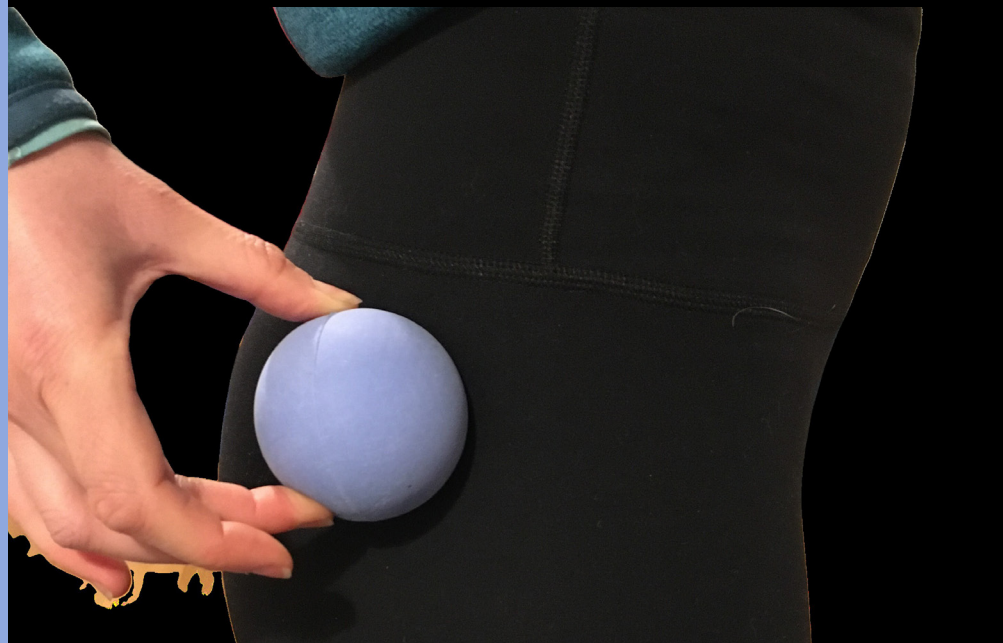
Practice: lying on your stomach, place a rolled-up blanket just below your bottom ribs on your upper abdomen region. You can experiment with the width of the blanket – I like a rolled diameter of about 2-3 inches. More thickness will be more intense so if this is a tender area, work with a very small roll and build up gradually over time. Take some slow, relaxed and soft belly breaths into the roll, focusing on releasing and relaxing any tension in the abdomen on your exhale. You can remain still, or if you prefer gently rock from side-to-side to create further sensation and stimulation. Continue for 1-2 minutes.



2) GLUTE RELEASE

Benefits: this can be one of the more tender regions to roll, but this can provide a huge relief for students with a wide range of hip and lower back pain disorders. The fascia of the gluteus medius commonly holds a lot of trigger points (knotty bands of dehydrated, unhealthy fascia) and releasing these can create widespread relief throughout the whole pelvis and lower back region.

Practice: lie on your back and take your right ankle over your left thigh for a variation of supine pigeon. Place the fascia-release ball or a pair of rolled-up socks just to the outside edge of the upper hip – then lean or tilt your pelvis over to the right to place more weight onto the tool. You may need to play around with the position slightly to find a sore, tender trigger point. Once you've found something, stay and breathe for 30-45 seconds. Then release and try to find another spot. Continue for 2-3 minutes and then switch sides.



3) HIP FLEXOR MASSAGE

Benefits: this can be a hugely relieving practice for students with lower back pain and discomfort. I also use this regularly for people who sit a lot for work, or who enjoy exercise that involves a lot of repetitive hip-flexion type movements e.g. running/cycling.

Practice: Lie on your stomach and place two soft to medium-firm massage balls under and just inside your frontal hip bones. If it is very tender you could place a blanket over the balls or use two pairs of rolled up socks instead. Rest your arms and head in whatever way is comfortable. Take slow, soft and deep breaths down into your lower abdomen. Focus on relaxing, melting and releasing into the support of the balls as you exhale. You may wish to remain still if this area is tender, or



you can gently rock the hips from side-to-side for more release. Continue for 2-3 minutes and then release and just rest on your stomach for a few moments.

4) UPPER BACK RELEASE

Benefits: The fascia in the upper trapezius (triangular stretch of muscle in the upper back) is infamous for its tendency to become thick, sticky, and sore and can lead to a whole host of issues, including headaches and neck pain.

Practice: lie on your back in constructive rest pose with the knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Place two balls into your upper trapezius region, on the upper-inner border of your shoulder blades at the base of the neck. If very sore, this may be enough and you may wish to put a block under your head for support. If you'd like more sensation, lift your hips and slide a yoga block under your pelvis as in supported bridge. This will put more load through the balls. You can remain here in stillness just letting the compressive, tactile nature of the balls do their job, or you can explore moving your arms about in space (as if conducting a universal orchestra!). Linger on any areas that feel helpful to release. Continue for 1-2 minutes and then release.



As an ex-dancer, **Vicky Arundel** has successfully used yoga and fascial techniques to return from injury. Working together with the British Wheel of Yoga, Vicky is hosting a 30-hour Online Yoga For Fascial Health Training starting 20 May 2023. Book here: <https://www.bwy.org.uk/national/event/2592/>

Contact:

E: vicky@surreyyogatherapy.co.uk

T: 07400 248177

W: <https://www.surreyyogatherapy.co.uk/>

YOGA: A LIFELONG JOURNEY

TRAIN WITH US, TEACH WITH US

BWY

AT
THE
HEART
OF YOGA

WWW.BWY.ORG.UK

01529 306851