



Working with the Knoff rotational system and what to do about replacement knees

A conversation - Knoff Yoga Student Rachel Lee and Master Teacher James Bryan

PHi James

Thanks for your ongoing support and the Knoff Yoga system. It is definitely helpful and stops me falling back into teaching random yoga!

I have a couple of questions.

On the rotational programme, I'm never completely sure to apply it in practice. I tend to just spend more time on those asanas but still try to get through the way of the syllabus. This doesn't always work as we then spend more time going deeper into the rotational aspects and rushing through the rest. Can you offer any practical advice on this?

Second question. I have two regular students, both with 2 replacement knees. How can I adapt and teach Bhumi Namaskar when they have very little flexion in their knees?

By the way, Nicky and her schedule is quite incredible!

Best wishes to you both
Rachel

Good Morning Rachel,

Most people do not have unlimited time to practice yoga so we need to consider what tools and techniques are helpful for sustaining us over the long-term. It is important to keep in mind that "full speed" practice is 5 Ujjayi Breaths for per pose / 5 Ujjayi Breaths per side for two sided poses. That is 1 minute. 5 seconds inhale / 1 second pause / 5 seconds exhale / 1 second pause = 12 seconds. $12 \times 5 = 60$ seconds or 1 minute. Strict adherence to this guideline will help keep your practice shorter and more focused.

However, when we are learning a new pose and opening the body up, a longer time and more attention may be required and this is where the Rotational system comes into play. For example, Week 1: Earth & Sun Salutations & Inverted Poses. During this week, during this part of the practice, the idea is to spend a little more time mastering the techniques and getting more comfortable with these poses. But, the rest of the practice is done at "full speed". How long should this extra time be? The minimum to get the job done.

In my youth, I did Karate for 6 months and when we were taught to punch from the hips we did it

very slowly at first to work out the technique and internalize the movement. Once we understood it, then we slowly built up the speed. When you watched the black belts do the same punch, it was so fast you could hardly see it.

In yoga, we never go faster than the Ujjayi Breath (actually there is an exception). Yoga is meant to be meditation in motion.

On Week 5 we apply Vinyasa and 5 Ujjayi Breaths over the full practice. During this week, even if we feel we have not fully executed a pose, we still stick with the 1 minute. Actually 1 minute is a long time when paying full attention.

Another option during the first four weeks of the Rotational system to save time, is to reduce the number of asanas in a category. For example, not doing all of an Asana Group - maybe 1 or 2, but always doing all Groups, so you maintain a balanced practice. If you were really short of time, you could perform just 1 asana of each Group for example. Not ideal, but much better than no practice at all.

Eventually and the goal, is to do the full practice at the full speed. Once you have opened up your body there is no need to go slow. Once you have a handle on Discovery say, you would then never practice it slowly - get in and get the job done.

Regarding the joint replacements, you have to be super careful and modify significantly. For the knees, I suggest the students support themselves by holding the back of a chair, or better yet, holding a yoga belt or rope looped over a door handle (both sides). Then bending the knees to the point of intelligent resistance - maintaining balance between the sides. They are most likely never going to do the full squat sequence, but that does not mean they don't need to work towards it.

In the context of them participating in a public class with other people, have them get their props ready before the class and then they can work on their variation, while you take the rest of the class through the full squat sequence. Take this opportunity to educate your students on how yoga is flexible in application. The knee replacement students need to feel they are included in the class - not excluded or unappreciated.

Once someone has had surgery, which traumatizes the body area, it means a reduced flow of blood and nerve energy to this area - setting it up for long-term degeneration. To avoid this future problem, the area needs to be worked, but obviously only to the point of doing good and not harming further.

Nicky is pretty unique.

Namaste
James

Hi James
Thanks for your comprehensive response.

My question about the rotational sequence was more about teaching a class rather than my own practice. I can speed up or slow down my own practice accordingly to fit the time available.

When teaching a class of beginners doing Discovery, most weeks I struggle to get through the syllabus, especially when I focus more on the rotational asana. This is partly because they don't all come every week. Last night for example, I was teaching Dolphin and we probably spent 15 mins on it to the detriment of the backbends later!

Rgds
Rachel

Hi Rachel,

In this case, cover the weekly theme, as you have done, and then only do 1 or 2 poses from the other asana groups, maintaining a balanced practice for your students.

Also, explain why you are taking this approach so you educate your students. The goal is to make them independent at each level.

Namaste
James