



## Uddiyana Bandha - Minor

*By Master Teacher James E Bryan*

Uddiyana Bandha minor is a subtle activation and normally we do not teach it to beginners simply because they usually apply too much force and end up restricting their diaphragm. But, it is not dangerous, so if they can do it they should.

Even though we teach Yogic Full Breath and Ujjayi Pranayama right from the start, for beginners we are not strict because there is so much for them to focus on - almost like juggling. One of my silly sayings to absolute beginners is to “breathe sufficiently to stay alive” and don’t worry about it at the moment as we work with alignment. These subtle teachings are a big reason why YouTube learning is substandard.

Uddiyana Bandha minor requires a completely different muscle group compared to Mula Bandha, so really, they are not connected. Ashtangis teach Mula Bandha as if it includes Uddiyana Bandha minor - which it does not and Iyengar yogis have no idea it exists.

When teaching Uddiyana Bandha minor, I use the cue of “draw in or contract the lower belly (2 fingers width) just above the pubic bone and demonstrate it as “seeing is believing”. It is useful to teach UBm as the separate technique that it is. The belly button will draw in and slightly up as you lift to the crown of the head, but the diaphragm is kept relaxed.

A useful image to help students grasp the concept of Bandhas as lifting or supporting techniques, is that of support underwear. When we apply Mula Bandha (support from underneath), engage the buttocks (support from the back), and then UBm (support from the front), we have created both a firm lower hip area, which can then be lifted internally, which provides strong stability for the lower spine and creates a lift through the rest of the spine; which makes the pose much lighter. The trick is to maintain, or juggle all three techniques throughout the entire pose: beginning, middle and end.

Nicky says, lie down the students on the backs and get them to isolate the lower belly action. This is a good idea as it is easier to focus when done in isolation, with the feed-back of the floor.

Mula Bandha is 1st priority, buttock engagement 2nd, and UBm 3rd. Once you have “mastered” these 3 techniques, you can merge the action required into 1, but it is necessary to learn them

separately.

Think of turning on a light switch in a dark room. The light does not illuminate separate parts of the room in sequence... it illuminates everything at once and this is what we are aiming for when activating these 3 techniques.

Our goal as authentic yoga teachers is to teach the fullness of Yoga, which includes UBm.