

Wellbeing

Awakening Light

SET AN INTENTION FOR YOUR SUN SALUTATION, AND WEAVE PERSONAL POSSIBILITY WITH A SPIRITUAL CONNECTION TO NATURE

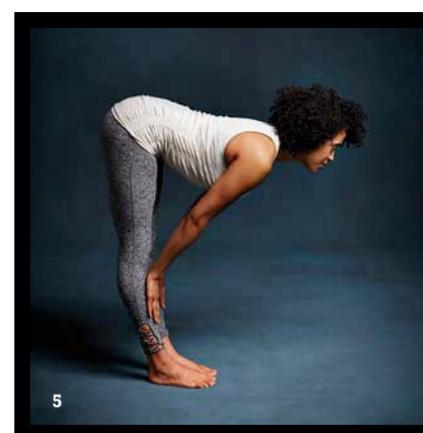
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PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAYMOND HOM

I start each of my mornings exactly the same way: I stand at the top of my yoga mat with my feet together and gaze down. I root through my heels and spread my toes. With my hands pressed together in a prayer position, I close my eyes and set my intention. What do I need from this practice today? No matter how raw the answer is, I try to honor it: I feel pulled in different directions; I want to slow down and savor. I've been impatient with my kid; I want to be gentler. I reach my arms up, take a big breath in, and bring my intention to life with sun salutations.

An intention in yoga, or *sankalpa*, as it's known in Sanskrit, is like a little prayer from the heart. My practice is my dedication to that prayer—a hope that by honoring the process of being embodied, by breathing, stretching, strengthening, I'll be able to create some space for the intention to manifest. If I

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MODEL: KATE JOHNSON; WARDROBE STYLIST: DON SUMADA WITH BERNSTEIN & ANDRIULLI; HAIR & MAKE-UP: GREGG HUBBARD WITH BERNSTEIN & ANDRIULLI; CLOTHING: ATHLETA (TOP), BEYOND YOGA (BOTTOM)



GOOD DAY, SUNSHINE

Sun salutations are a fundamental yoga sequence because they are so efficient at stretching and strengthening the body. If you're short on time, you can do sun salutations by themselves. Or you can use them as a warm-up for a longer yoga session.

The breathwork is important. Repeat the complete sequence five times while synchronizing each movement with an inhalation or exhalation that you extend to a count of five. Spend a few moments tuning in to your breath in mountain pose. After several breaths, begin to slow your breathing, inhaling and exhaling only through your nose and consciously circulating the breath at the back of the throat in a closed-mouth "haaaah." This is known as *ujjayi*, "victorious breath."

Aim for a moderate pace initially to loosen up, then increase speed to a comfortable level. **TADASANA** (Mountain) Stand with your feet firmly rooted into the earth. Draw energy up from the ground and engage your leg muscles. Bring your palms together at your heart (1) and lift your

breastbone toward them. Take time to "check in" physically and mentally, noticing the quality of your breath and your attention. Then set your intention.

URDVHA HASTASANA (Upward Salute) Lower your arms (2), then inhale and sweep your arms up toward the sky, looking up (3).

UTTANASANA (Standing Forward Bend) Exhale and fold from the hips into a deep forward bend (4). If you feel any strain in your hamstrings or back, bend your knees.

ARDHA UTTANASANA (Half-Standing Forward Bend) Inhale, press your hands on your shins (5), and lengthen your spine so that it's almost parallel to the earth.

CHATURANGA DANDASANA (Four-Limbed Staff) Exhale and step your feet back into a straight-armed push-up position (6), then bend your elbows and lower your body (7).

URDVHA MUKHA SVANASANA (Upward-Facing Dog) Inhale, roll over your toes, and straighten your arms, lifting your breastbone (8). Gaze forward or slightly upward here. If you are new to the practice

or need a gentle backbend as you warm up, do: **BHUJANGASANA** (Low Cobra) Lying on your belly, place your hands on the ground on either side of your chest and press down to lift your chest off the floor slightly. Look forward.

ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA (Downward-Facing Dog) Exhale and roll back over your toes as you lift your hips into a V shape (9). Stay here for five deep breaths. For your first downward dog, feel free to bend your knees.

ARDHA UTTANASANA (Half-Standing Forward Bend) From down dog, go back the other way: Bend your knees deeply, then step or hop your feet to your hands. Inhale, pressing hands to shins to lift into half-standing forward bend (5).

UTTANASANA (Standing Forward Bend) Exhale and fold forward deeply (4).

URDVHA HASTASANA (Upward Salute) Inhale and come up to standing, sweeping your arms out and all the way to the sky (3). Gaze up.

TADASANA (Mountain) Exhale, lowering your hands to your sides (2) or back to prayer position (1).

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can feel my intention come to life while I'm on my mat, I can feel it infuse my life off the mat as well.

The Sanskrit name for sun salutations is *surya namaskar*; *surya* is "sun" and *namaskar* means "to bow." Some scholars say the sequence extends all the way back to ancient Vedic scriptures; others suggest it was introduced in the past 100 years. Even if its origin is debated, its effectiveness is not. Sun salutations have the quality of a moving prayer. You celebrate the sun, the source of all life. You reach your arms up and honor the sky; you bow forward to the earth. You remember yourself as a microcosm of all these elements. The movements are big, sweeping, and rhythmic, encouraging deep, full breathing. They warm you up slowly, coaxing your hips and shoulders into action. The flowing nature of the series builds a bridge between a busy everyday life and the fluid, quiet state of yoga. Intention traverses that bridge.

After 10 minutes of practicing, or 15 or 20, the little prayer in my heart unfolds; I'm more calm and trusting. I ease from my mind into my body. My breath gets naturally deeper. I get a glimpse, or even a full-on deluge, of that bliss that brings me back to my mat time and again. I know then that my intention will be not just a jumble in my mind but an actual, actionable part of my day.

THE HOLISTIC AIR TRAVEL SURVIVAL GUIDE

BUCKLE IN AND GET ZEN WITH TIPS FOR SAFE PASSAGE

BY AVIVA PATZ

PREP SMART

Low cabin humidity makes it harder to fight off infections. Boost your immunity by getting a good night's sleep, eating unprocessed foods, and taking fortifying botanical formulas. Naturopathic doctor Kate Morrison doubles supplements like Echinacea Premium by MediHerb, which can help increase white blood cell production, in the days before traveling.

PEACE OUT

Look for a meditation or designated quiet room in the terminal for contemplative moments before you board. If the airport doesn't have such a space, Ayurvedic doctor Nancy Lonsdorf goes to the waiting area of an inactive gate to meditate. "I try to be easy and let go," she says.

KEEP IT MOVING

Avoid blood clots and swollen ankles by pointing and flexing your feet periodically and getting up for a stroll every 30 minutes to an hour. While you're up, stand in place and bend your knees, then rise onto your toes; repeat this four to eight times. When sitting, do basic movements like neck rolls and gentle twists, to work out kinks.

PACK TO RELAX

Put comfort in your carry-on: a soft scarf, soothing music, engaging books. If you're feeling anxious, try the herbal supplement CalmAid, which contains a lavender extract that matched Xanax as a relaxation booster in head-to-head studies.

FIGHT GERMS

"Especially during flu season, half the people on any plane are either just getting over something or just about to get something," says Frank Butler, a practitioner of Chinese medicine. And research has shown that colds are up to 100 times more likely to be transmitted on a plane than on the ground. Wipe down armrests with CleanWell Botanical Disinfecting Wipes or another natural brand. Aim the air vent away from your face, so it's not blowing bacteria at you. Wash your hands frequently.

GET SHUT-EYE

Soft eyeshades and noise-cancelling headphones help. Hasten the snooze-fest with the botanical blend End Fatigue Revitalizing Sleep Formula.

SNACK RIGHT

Sensitivity to sweet and salty foods plummets by up to 30 percent in a plane's dry air and low pressure, so there's a risk of overindulging. Sugar can lower immunity. Salt causes water retention, adding to the bloat from air pressure changes. Dietitian-nutritionist Caroline Kaufman suggests snacks rich in fiber, protein, and healthy fats, like nut butter on whole-grain bread. The combo is filling and prevents a sugar crash.

STAY CALM

If turbulence or claustrophobia gets to you, says Deepak Chopra, M.D., visualize an ecstatically happy moment: a baby's birth, a career milestone. "Overwhelm the fear by bringing on a positive memory," he says. Before you travel, make a short list of uplifting events. Or activate a stress-relieving hormone cascade with the Daoist meditation, the Secret Smile: Close your eyes and imagine the energy you feel when you're grinning broadly. Breathe deeply and feel the energy spread down your body.

AFTER YOU LAND

Reset your body clock by eating and sleeping according to local time, which might mean skipping a meal or delaying it. The homeopathic remedies *arnica* and *cocculus*, taken in 30c doses just before takeoff, every three hours in the sky, then again after landing, can help you recover after your circadian rhythm is thrown off.



Inside the simulated cabin of a DC-10 plane, circa 1968.

DEAN CONGER/CORBIS