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Taking Yoga to the Next Level- Postural Restoration-Inspired Yoga for the Athlete: The Sagittal Plane

Emily Soiney, Shine Physical Therapy, Portland, OR

Emily grew up in Minnesota and Oregon in a family of health care professionals. She graduated from Oregon State University in 2001 with a BS in Exercise and Sport Science and a BA in International Studies with a Spanish minor. She is a board-certified physical therapist (PT) with a Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree from the University of Minnesota. Emily passed extensive examination to become a certified Postural Restoration Certified therapist (PRC) with the Postural Restoration Institute and Craniosacral Therapist (CST-T) with the Upledger Institute. She has attended coursework by the North American Institute of Manual Therapy (NAIOMT), the Barral Institute for Visceral Mobilization, and Osteopathic Methods for Vascular Mobilization. Emily has extensive experience working with pediatric and adult clients with complex neurological and orthopedic conditions.

Emily began studying yoga in 1998 to recover from her own chronic pain. She has taught since 2004 as a registered yoga teacher (RYT) after successfully completing two 200-hour yoga teacher trainings. She continued her education through an invitation-only 9-month internship at Amrita and the 500-hour training at The Bhaktishop. In addition to her weekly class Postural Restoration-Inspired Yoga at Shine Yoga, she guest teaches workshops and teacher trainings throughout the Portland area. Her teaching style weaves ancient and modern wisdom through breath awareness and anatomically-sound poses.



Emily Soiney



As an outpatient physical therapist, I am very motivated to help others prevent sports injuries. The majority of my clients with both acute injuries and chronic pain are amazed at the results from Postural Restoration Institute (PRI) interventions. With rehabilitation so optimized by PRI principles, we know that it can offer equally effective preventative strategies. In this way, more athletes and their coaches can find enjoyable and integrative ways to prevent injuries. One of these ways is Postural Restoration-Inspired Yoga.

One of the most simple but also remarkably unique pieces of the Postural Restoration Institute's (PRI) approach is the emphasis on the body's three planes of movement. Very few of us, especially single-sport athletes, have balanced daily movement in all three planes and are mainly "sagittal animals." Anyone who walks, runs, swims, or cycles is living a sagittal (left/right division of the body) existence and this creates fertile ground for injury from patterned positions and movements.

Regaining sagittal plane alignment and stability before moving into the frontal and transverse planes is a key rehab tenant of PRI. This ensures that the ribcage and the respiratory diaphragm have the ability to travel through a neutral position as your athlete moves, trains, and competes.


Many athletes gravitate towards yoga as a way to stretch, cross-train, and maybe relieve some stress. Despite considerable training by yoga instructors in the realm of breathing, yoga postures, and basic anatomy, these teachers may not know preventative nor rehabilitative concepts and strategies. In a yoga practice there can be an overt emphasis on the sagittal plane as exemplified by

spinal flexion and extension in the sun salute and the many back-bends, hamstring stretches, and forward-bends in most American yoga studios. Therefore, as their coach, trainer, or therapist, you play a critical role in guiding your athlete towards a balanced yoga practice. This article will provide a few examples of yoga postures with PR integration to allow for optimal sagittal alignment and mobility.

- **Cat Pose:** start on your hands and knees. Exhale fully as you slowly round your back up towards the sky. Relax your head but don't let it hang straight down. Engage the serratus anterior to protract the shoulder blades, strengthen the abdominal obliques, while relaxing the chest muscles. Encourage long, slow exhales and focus on the stretching between the shoulder blades from the inhalation. PRI addition: place folded towel of approximately 1-2" thick under the left knee to facilitate awareness of the left inner thigh as well as the left outer hip muscles.

- **Cat Plank:** this is a progression of cat pose in the plank pose with flexed upper back. Stay here on knees or on feet. Focus the inhalation to stretch the space between the shoulder blades and between each spinal bone.

- **Draped Chair:** this is a name of a pose I modified for the typical chair pose in yoga. It looks like a skier coming down the slope. Heels down, thighs are parallel, and hips back will allow the work to shift into the hip extensors and adductors. Maintain this lower body position as you exhale and reach both arms straight ahead. Now the back will look like the cat pose (above). The challenge here is to keep the spine in this position while draping the upper body forward until the abs just hover over the thighs.

Please hold all poses for at least 5 breaths and up to 15 as quality of the athlete's form allows. 

Chain Link: Click [HERE](#) for an introductory article on Postural Restoration.

More Information Please!

Contact Emily at www.shinephysicaltherapy.com (clinic) www.shineportland.com (yoga studio)



Cat Pose



Cat Plank



Cat Plank on Knees



Draped Chair