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Taming the Wild Horse

With Chinese New Year just passing, we move from the slower energy year of the water snake to the year of the wood horse where we get ready to gallop! This can be a time of fast victories, unexpected adventure and surprising romance. We have to ask fast in a Horse year but if you are not 100% secure about a decision - don't do it. You don't want to gallop off in the wrong direction. -Susan Levitt, astrologist, tarot reader and Feng Shui consultant

It can feel like the world is racing around us sometimes and whether or not you follow astrology we can feel the energies around us changing and pulling us in different directions. When our lives are galloping in "a" direction or we are asked to make a quick decision, we need clarity of mind to ensure we are really on the right road. By balancing the quickness of life with slower and restorative poses, we can reconnect with our present and be able to make clear and secure decisions. Our energies re-balance and we feel grounded, confident, stable and with a clear and decisive mind.

One of the most effective restorative poses for grounding and slowing down is Legs Up the Wall Pose or Viparita Karani (literally meaning "reversed doing"). You don't need anything but a wall and room to lay for this pose.

- Start by sitting sideways close to the wall and as you lay down, pivot 90 degrees to take your legs up the wall. You should be as close as you can and still be able to have a neutral spine (tailbone on the ground, slight low back arch and flat front pelvis). Once you feel like you are in the right spot, lift your head and release the base of your skull away from your neck and soften your throat. Open your arms over your head or out to the side and allow them to rest. Feel the downward flow of fluid through your legs, the undoing and the release downward from your toes to your torso.
- Legs up the wall pose has been shown to improve circulation to the feet and legs, reduce restless leg syndrome, calm the mind and gently stretch and release the back of the legs, hips and back body.
- This pose is a gentle inversion so caution should be taken during menstruation, pregnancy or serious eye conditions such as glaucoma. If your feet start to tingle during this pose (due to decreased circulation) or you feel uncomfortable in any way, bend your knees, touch your soles together and knees apart into a diamond position to take a rest or come out.
- To finish and come out, bend your knees and roll onto your side. Stay on your side for a few breaths before coming up to a seated position on an exhalation.

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Taming the Wild Horse (Continued)

Another favourite restorative pose for slowing down and calming the system is Heart Bed Pose or Supta Baddha Konasana (reclining bound angle pose). For this pose you will need a firm pillow (or bolster), yoga block(s) and a blanket and perhaps another two small pillows for under the knees.

- Place a block under a firm pillow and place the blanket on top. Sit with your buttocks at the bottom of the pillow and lay back so the block is under your heart and blanket under your head. Raise or fold the blanket to ensure your neck is not overextended and can relax. Bring the soles of your feet together and the knees outwards to bring your legs into a diamond shape. Place the two small pillows under the knees for further hip opening and releasing.
- Heart Bed Pose is suitable for all levels and has been shown to be self nurturing, rejuvenating, promote deeper, efficient breathing, relieve upper back, shoulders and neck tension and for calming the mind and connecting with the heart.
- If your shoulders start to tingle in this pose, reposition the arms or place supports under the elbows.
- Contraindications for this pose include low back disorders such as spondylolisthesis where spinal extension causes pain. You can place a block under the buttocks to take the extension out of the low back and just have the shoulder and heart opening in the upper back.
- To come out of this pose, straighten the legs and then gently roll over onto your side. Stay on your side for a few breaths before coming up to a seated position on an exhalation.

Take time this year to slow down, connect to the present, your heart's desire and balance the quickness of the energy that surrounds you. Take that horse into a full gallop with confidence, decisiveness and clarity and enjoy the adventure that awaits.

Namaste,

Suzette O'Byrne

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