

Spinal Twists

We seek to cross our legs in the most spontaneous, natural, and functional way possible. Let the entire body settle.

One way to help us abandon the body is to become aware of the points of support, and to let the feet and the parts of the legs in contact sink into those supports. The pelvis as well. Let the whole body surrender into the points of support.

Another way to help us settle could be a long exhalation—perhaps a long sigh, or even a few yawns.

Let the temperature of the room reach us. Let the body inform us about the temperature of the room we're in. This places us in a state of tactility, in a more global sensitivity.

Feel the body and the floor, the body and the space around, the body, the floor, and the space around—but without making it a focus of concentration.

In this seat, the pelvis is heavy. Perhaps the coccyx is heavy; perhaps it's not—just notice.

Now, tilt onto the sit-bones—those two small bones under the buttocks—and let them plant themselves into the ground. Delicately, the pelvis becomes vertical and stabilizes. We could say we've installed the "ground floor" of the house.

Become aware of the two lower ribs. As if we were hooking these ribs with two small hooks and pulling upward. The entire rib cage is cleared from the digestive tract. This "first floor" corresponds to the dorsal region.

You might notice that when the chest rises and opens, the shoulders naturally descend. Now, the crown of the head reaches as if to push against the ceiling.

We place the "second floor." It's possible that even here, tensions appear in the upper back, shoulders, or neck. Let it be. Let yourself be moved by the tensions, and let yourself be moved by the relaxation. Whether tense or relaxed, everything is fine. The crown of the head is just above the coccyx in your felt sense.

Place the left hand on the right knee and the right hand behind you, in line with the gluteal fold, on the fingertips in a "crown" shape.

If you have shoulder difficulties, you can place the back of the hand on the floor behind you—it's more relaxing for the shoulder. If you can, use the fingertips. Tilt onto the front of the sit-bones. The chest opens gently. The shoulders "flow" into the hands. Be careful not to block the coming and going of the breath; keep it fluid.

Inhale, exhale. Notice that on the exhale, the belly tucks in. You can keep the abdominal core slightly engaged, even on the inhale. Doing this supports the lumbar. Perhaps the spiral of the back toward the right accentuates slightly.

With the same spontaneous movement, go to the other side: right hand on the left knee, left hand behind. Keep the shoulders well relaxed. Keep the spinal axis vertical. The coming and going of the breath.

Perhaps you can hold the abdominal core slightly, even on the inhale. Don't force; don't go too far. We don't want to add tension to the back. When the physical body stops in the twist—this spiral of the spine—imagine that the spiral continues energetically toward the left. Long inhale, long exhale. Return.

I return. Feel what's happening in the back, shoulders, and neck. Feel the face, hands, and feet—very alive. The space around, the floor.

The pelvis rolls back and rounds. The coccyx touches the floor, the sacrum moves back, lumbar round. Extend the legs. Feet hip-width apart, falling outward.

Pelvis completely heavy. Feel the weight of the feet, calves, and thighs. Place the hands behind you at hip level. The fingers can point backward. You can lift the palms and place the thumbs toward the pelvis.

Gently tilt the pelvis forward. The navel rises, the chest rises. The elbows may come slightly closer together. The chest rises more—watch the reactions in the legs. Keep the ground "soft" under the legs. Chest rises more. Shoulders pivot slightly, perhaps.

If you can, the head explores toward the back (Purvottanasana). Long inhale, long exhale. Let the legs be settled into the floor.

If the coming and going of the breath is very alive, the chest acquires an immense breadth—the right breast a bit more to the right, the left breast a bit more to the left.

I return. The pelvis rounds first, the head returns. Gently slide the legs to cross them again. Spontaneously—don't interfere with the most natural way.

Feel the reactions. Stay in the globality: the body, the floor, the space. Don't look for anything particular to feel. Whatever is there is enough. Don't get attached to words; listen to your feeling without labels.

Good! Now, the same gesture but with sensitivity at the fingertips. The fingers rise, and the entire front of the body rises with them. Fingers, hands, arms... stop when they are parallel to the floor.

Hands are roughly at chest height—not too high, so the shoulders can relax. Chest rises, shoulders descend. Long arms, long fingers. Palms are alive. Fingers reach out as if to cross through the wall in front.

Rest the arms on space as if space were not empty. The arms slide from left to right. We stop before feeling density in the back. The shoulder blades come together a bit at the back.

With the fingers that want to cross the walls. Careful to keep the shoulders relaxed. During the coming and going of the breath, we remain well seated on the front of the sit-bones. The chest is cleared from the digestive tract. Gaze straight ahead. Can you let the breath circulate? The exhale flows, inhale comes.

Turn the palms forward. Gently compress the space in front with both arms, as if space were alive. The hands approach each other but do not touch. Then they move apart.

Perhaps you can feel this force of attraction and repulsion between the hands, playing with it between the forearms and biceps. Feel this mass, this density, as something alive.

Bring it toward you and cross the forearms, placing the hands on the upper chest. Feel the clavicles under your fingers. Arms are heavy, elbows fall. The seat is on the front of the sit-bones, chest cleared. The four movements of the breath: inhale springs forth, pause (full), exhale flows, pause (empty).

During the empty pause after the exhale, turn the torso slightly to the right. Not too far. The torso stays right, and the head turns to the left. Feel the different directions of the spirals: the back toward the right, the cervicals toward the left. Let these spirals continue energetically even if the body is still. The breath comes and goes. Let yourself be moved.

Now, move to the other side without overthinking: torso left, head right. Long exhale, long inhale. Stay within your comfortable range, but you can amplify the movement by feeling its direction. Return to the center, release the hands.

The pelvis collapses, coccyx flattens, sacrum moves back, lumbar reach for the wall behind. Extend the legs. Feel the weight of the heels, calves, and thighs. The pelvis sinks into the floor.

You can place the back of the hands at hip level without pressing. The pelvis tilts forward and verticalizes. Chest rises. Bend from the hips, leaning forward slightly. Stop!

Check: navel far from pubis, chest far from navel. Chin slightly tucked. Let the hands slide forward. Keep a long line from pubis to throat and avoid rounding the lower back. Perhaps go a little further, but don't round the lower back.

Maybe you can place hands on the soles of the feet, or maybe on either side of the legs—it doesn't matter. Bend the elbows and abandon the shoulders (Pashchimottanasana). The breath comes and goes. Did you harden the ground under the legs? Let the legs melt into the floor. Keep the back straight with that long line from pubis to throat. Let the inhale and exhale move you.

Place the left hand to the right side of the right leg. Right hand on the right hip. The torso turns, unfolding toward the right and the sky. The head turns toward the left shoulder.

Two or three breathing cycles here. If you feel stiffness in the legs, don't force it—release. If you went too far, come back a bit. Return to the center, keeping the long line from pubis to throat. Don't round the back.

Right hand to the left of the left leg. Left hand on the left hip. Torso pivots left and toward the sky—a small twist. The head rests toward the right shoulder. Discover the coming and going of the breath.

I return and cross the legs. A natural verticality settles in—very alive. Feel the reactions: the body, the floor, the space around. Don't look for anything specific. Whatever tingles, whatever is dense or luminous—whatever presents itself. Don't get attached to words; listen to your feeling without labels.

Lie down on the back. Legs slightly apart, feet falling outward. Chin slightly tucked, shoulders low and wide. Place the palms on the floor and do nothing more.

Notice that the body naturally surrenders to the points of support. You have to do nothing for the body to settle. Notice where it settles most easily.

Discover the journey of the breath in the body—the caress of the breath, the wave. The wave rising on the inhale, descending on the exhale. Let the body have the time it needs to settle.

Well, feel the left heel on the floor. The left knee bends, the heel slides toward the left buttock.

Settle the left foot. The right knee appears; heel slides, knee bends. The foot caresses the floor, then settles.

Notice how the hips remain passive in this movement. Adjust the feet so they are hip-width apart, parallel, and close to the buttocks. Perhaps adjust the lumbar by lifting the pelvis slightly. Shoulders stay low and away from ears. Feel how the points of support have changed.

Both arms rise until they are above the shoulders. Palms face each other. The pelvis rises—lifting off the floor (Bridge pose). Keep all toes adhered to the ground.

Knees stay hip-width apart; don't let them splay. The knees reach for the wall far in front. The pelvis is as if suspended—no muscular effort if possible. Don't go too far.

Now the chest is cleared.

Shoulders remain settled on the floor. The breath flows. As if the pelvis were magically suspended. Simultaneously, the arms move back.

And the back unrolls vertebra by vertebra—long and wide. The back settles bit by bit. The pelvis settles...

The arms behind. If you have shoulder problems, you can always adjust—bend the elbows outward.

If it's okay for you, stay like that with hands behind the shoulders. A few long breaths. Feel the pelvis continuing to spread out even after it's on the floor.

The coming and going of the breath and the opening of the chest. The face very alive, the hands, the feet...

The arms return to the sides. Cross the forearms and place hands on the upper chest. Arms are heavy, elbows fall. The pelvis rises again. All toes grounded.

Knees hip-width apart, heading far from the face. Chest rises too, but don't force. Whatever is easy. Big toes are on the floor. The back unrolls little by little. Each pearl settles, detaching one from the other. The pelvis settles on a soft ground. Keep the hands where they are.

Small twist: both knees to the right, head to the left. Inhale: head returning and return to center. A moment of natural suspension. Exhale: knees to the left.

Keeping both shoulders grounded—especially the right shoulder here. Face toward the right. When you need to inhale, the knees and the head return.

A moment of suspension. Exhale. The small twist for the knees and for the head. Stop.

And so on. Find your slowest rhythm. And if Ujjayi invites itself, the air filtration in the back of the throat on the exhale... we breathe.

Well. Return to center. Release arms and legs. Legs lengthen. Do nothing more.

Notice how the body settles easily in this position. Perhaps there are tense zones, perhaps vacant zones—just notice. Can you be moved by the caress of the breath?

Sensing the reaction to the previous poses—how the body adjusts, what it stimulates. Stay in the globality. The body is solid, space around it. Don't want anything in particular. Don't hang on to anything. Just a presence there. Sit up into a seated position.